



In Memory of

Private

HENRY COOK STARK

8, 9th Battalion, Australian Infantry

who died age 20

on 22nd May 1915

Son of the late John and Phoebe Stark, Toowoomba, Queensland.

Remembered with honour
ALEXANDRIA (CHATBY) MILITARY AND
WAR MEMORIAL CEMETERY, EGYPT



PRIVATE
HENRY COOK STARK
9TH BATTALION, AUSTRALIAN INFANTRY
SERVICE NO: 8



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL P03452.002

Four brothers of the Stark family enlisted in the AIF between 1914 and 1916; the youngest, and first to sign up, was 19-year old **Henry (Harry) Cook Stark**. The men were the sons of (the late) John and Phoebe Stark of Norwood Street, Toowoomba. There were at least two daughters in the family both of whom were married when their names appear in the files. Phoebe died before the Armistice in 1918; this may explain why the men put each other or their sister Mrs Pascoe as NOK.

Henry has the lowest regimental number of any soldier on the Memorial. Clearly he was keen to sign up on the declaration of war. He was a school-master by profession (at Wilsonton in 1914) and a graduate of the Toowoomba Grammar School. Henry volunteered on 21 August 1914; he was still serving in the infantry of the citizen forces. He just scraped over the height requirement for 1914 at 5'6½"; he weighed 120 pounds, and Dr Alex Horn described him as having a brown complexion, with brown eyes and brown hair. He was a Methodist and wrote his eldest brother Joseph as NOK.

The first contingent sailed for the Middle East on 24 September 1914 with the original 9th Battalion aboard the *A9 Omrah*. After further training in Egypt this contingent departed in early March for the Dardanelles and the dawn landing at Gaba Tepe, Gallipoli, on 25 April 1915. The men of the 9th Battalion were probably the first ashore and on that fateful day Henry was shot in the abdomen. He was evacuated to the ships within a day or so and returned to Egypt aboard a hospital-transport. Telegrams sent to his brother Joseph from the 15th General Hospital in Alexandria are preserved in the archive; they make for poignant reading as Henry's condition deteriorated:

16/5/15 EGYPT REPORTS WOUNDED PROGRESSING SATISFACTORILY WILL ADVISE ON RECEIPT FURTHER PARTICULARS.

24/5/15 REGRET REPORT PRIVATE H.C.STARK DANGEROUSLY ILL WILL ADVISE UPON RECEIPT FURTHER PARTICULARS.

29/5/15 DIED WOUNDS TWENTY SEVENTH MAY PREVIOUSLY REPORTED DANGEROUSLY ILL.

Henry had actually died on 22 May. Abdominal injuries with organ damage were usually fatal in the Great War. He was buried at the Chatby Cemetery, now known as the Alexandria (Chatby) Military and War Memorial Cemetery (grave M.133). In 1916 his mother received a parcel of his effects.

Joseph, in his mid-thirties and the oldest of the brothers, was the second to enlist: the senior man of the family volunteered on 18 May, four days before Henry died, and very likely driven partly by a desire to help at this critical time as his brother lay between life and death in Egypt. Joseph was married with a responsible managerial place on the railways. He had a very successful career in the AIF, posted to the engineers and finally as a captain, becoming superintendent of the British 5th Army Light Railway. He survived the war. Second son Edward signed up in August 1915. He was also married, fought with the Signals Corps, became a sergeant and won the Military Medal for bravery. He was gassed but survived the war to return in June 1919. Lastly, Herbert went away in 1916. He fought with Henry's battalion, the 9th; was wounded at Ypres and returned home in 1918.

In 1967 Herbert wrote to the army claiming the 50th Anniversary Gallipoli Medal issued in 1965 by the Australian Government. His short note claiming the medal is worthy of reproduction here for what it shows of that generation:

Dear Sir, Regarding the issue of the medal and medallion to next of kin of original Anzacs. I am the next of kin of Private H.C. Stark – original member No. 8 of the 9th Battalion who left Australia with the first contingent for overseas. (He) was my brother, & died in hospital at Alexandria from wounds received at the landing at Gallipoli & I apply for what medals are due. I myself went to the war later on & was No. 7108 reinforcement for the 9th Battn. & served overseas for a couple of years, being invalided home on account of wounds received. I might also say my 2 other brothers also served overseas, and are now deceased. Yours faithfully.

Toowoomba Grammar School Archive Records state that he started at the school on 4th February 1908 and left on 17th June 1911. His achievements in sport were playing in the 1st IV Tennis team in 1911.

External Links:

[CWGC](#)

[AWM4 AIF unit war diaries 23/26/5 9TH BN APRIL 1915](#)

[Australian War Memorial Honour Roll](#)

[Australian National Archives Military Records](#)