

The Harvey Brothers

Brothers Fred, Percy and Chas Harvey never returned to Golden Bay from their World War One service, all dying on the Western Front, two of them injured on the same day in the same battle. Only one Harvey brother, Bill, came home but, badly injured he died 12 months after the war's end. The four Harvey brothers were amongst 41 from the Collingwood district who died in World War One.

Their parents Frederick and Fanny Jane (nee Kenning) Harvey had nine children, all born at Bestead Gully on the Aorere Goldfields: Maude (born 1880), Emma (1882), Lavinia (1884), Betsy May (1885), William (Bill) Frederick James (1888), Thomas Henry (Harry, 1889), Charles (Chas, 1891), Percy (1894) and Frederick (Fred, 1897).¹

The family moved to Rockville and it was from here that four of the Harvey's five sons set off for war. But there were to be no happy homecomings and Frederick and Fanny Harvey and their daughters and son Harry, who did not go to war, were forced to endure telegram after telegram informing them of the death of yet another son and brother. To add to their misery, Frederick senior, died on August 20 1919,² followed by his oldest son, the seriously war-wounded Bill, three months later. Fanny Harvey died aged 82, also on 20 August, 1937.³ All three were buried in the Collingwood Cemetery.

William Frederick James Harvey (service no. 6/254)

Bill Harvey was working as a labourer for H. James in Collingwood when he enlisted as a Private. Both he and his brother Percy embarked from Wellington with the Canterbury Mounted Rifles on 16 October 1914, and arrived in Suez, Egypt on 3 December.

Bill saw service in Egypt before transferring to the Canterbury Infantry Regiment and leaving Alexandria for the Dardanelles. He arrived at Anzac Cove, Gallipoli on 12 April 1915. His military record shows he spent much of his time in and around the Dardanelles in hospitals suffering illnesses commonly experienced by the soldiers. On 4 July he was admitted to hospital on Lemnos with measles and after returning to duty on 7 August, during the Battle of Chunuk Bair,⁴ found himself back in hospital a week later with diarrhoea and enteritis.⁵ He spent the next few weeks in and out of various hospitals and clearing stations before being deemed fit to rejoin his unit on 16 September 1915. At the end of December the Canterbury Mounted Rifles returned to Egypt and mounted training resumes.

No sooner had he reached Alexandria than Bill was back in hospital with influenza in January 1916 and mumps the following month. Transferring to the 2nd Battalion of the Canterbury Infantry Regiment, Bill embarked on 7 April 1916 with his brothers Percy and Fred for Marseilles, France.⁶ From there he moved to the Western Front where his battalion and division moved to the front line and engaged in trench warfare around Armentières.⁷ The battalion was moved out of the area in August and commenced training in new methods of fighting, in particular advancing under a barrage of fire, and in September marched to fight in the Somme.⁸ In October Bill's battalion was transported to Bailleul in Belgium and began regular tours of duty on the front line.⁹ By the end of that month Bill was back in a field ambulance station with scabies but rejoined his unit on 13 November.

At the end of February 1917 the battalion was relieved and marched to billets in the Rue des Fiefs, near Sailly, France.¹⁰ In March the 1st and 2nd Canterbury Battalions positioned themselves around the bombed ruin of the town of Messines and started bombarding enemy

defences. Throughout May the men were engaged in preparations for a major attack to secure the Messines and Wytschaete ridges,¹¹ began on 7 June 1917.¹²

It was on this day that Bill received a serious gunshot wound which badly fractured his right leg. He was taken initially to the 77th Field Ambulance and then on to the No.1 Australian Field Ambulance before being admitted the next day to the No.8 Stationary Hospital at Wimereux. On 24 June he was transported back to England where he was admitted to the No.2 New Zealand General Hospital at Walton. Bill was classified unfit for service for at least six months by a medical board on 6 July and left for New Zealand on board the hospital ship, *Marama*, which embarked from Avonmouth, near Bristol on 14 July.

Back in New Zealand Bill became an in-patient at Nelson Hospital in August and was then granted a privilege-leave certificate on 22 September. He returned to Collingwood and his family, now living in Ferntown, Golden Bay, still suffering from his wounded leg and said to have shell shock.¹³ He was formally discharged from service on 12 October 1917. In time he managed to do some manual work but the discovery of more shrapnel in his calf muscle forced him to give up work on the advice of his doctor and required more medical attention and x-rays.¹⁴ But Bill died suddenly on his 31st birthday on 5 November 1919 in the Collingwood boarding house he had been living in, almost a year since the war's end. A report in the *Colonist* newspaper on 8 November said he had been receiving medical treatment for a heart condition for some time.¹⁵ "On the widowed mother the hand of misfortune has fallen heavily in recent years," the report said. Bill was buried in Collingwood Cemetery.

Percy Harvey (service no. 7/209)

Along with his brother Bill, Trooper Percy Harvey, a labourer for Arthur Skitton, enlisted on 13 August 1914 and left from Wellington with the Canterbury Mounted Rifles on 16 October 1914.¹⁶ Arriving in Suez, Egypt on 3 December, Percy transferred to the 2nd Battalion of the Canterbury Infantry Regiment on 25 March 1915.

Just three months later, on 26 June, he departed for the Dardanelles. On 16 August his military record states he was admitted to a casualty clearing station at "Anzac" and then into the 1st Australian Stationary Hospital in Egypt¹⁷ with diarrhoea, a common affliction for the men fighting at Gallipoli. He spent several months recuperating.

In April 1916, along with his brothers Bill and Chas, Percy was transferred to France, moving through Ballieul, Boulogne and Camiers, where he spent time in hospital for another sickness.

Percy wrote to his sister Emma Solly on 22 April about conditions in France. "It's a cold show this and we feel it more after being so hot in Egypt. It has been raining very near all the time since we arrived here and today is miserable cold and wet...We are camped in a very fair place with straw to ly [sic] on and the two old folk often ask someone in by the fire..."¹⁸ Percy also said all "the boys" (his brothers) were well "but for a cold" and signed off with "a few French kisses for you to dish out and about".

A week later he penned another letter from behind the front: "It has been lovely weather this week and today is perfect – makes me wish I was home but no such luck and by the row the big guns are making, things are pretty solid at the front and we are in no hurry to get any closer, although I'm afraid it won't be long before we move." Telling Emma the men had

been given protection from exposure to gas, he follows with: "I think the Germans game is just about played out and it will be a good thing when things are all settled up won't it?"

On 7 August 1916 he rejoined his unit at Etaples. It was during the Battle of the Somme on 21 September 1916 that he was shot in the thigh and his brother Fred injured in the same battle on the same day. Percy, now a private with the 2nd Battalion of the Canterbury Infantry Regiment, was admitted to the No.1 Canadian General Hospital at Etaples on 26 September but died in hospital two days later, 28 September 1916. He was aged 22 years old and is buried at Etaples Military Cemetery, Pas-de-Calais, France.

Frederick Harvey (service no. 6/3342)

Private Fred Harvey was a labourer for W. Solly when he enlisted at Trentham in August 1915.¹⁹ He embarked from Wellington on 13 November 1915 with the 8th Reinforcements of the Canterbury Infantry Battalion, bound for Suez, Egypt. On 7 April 1916 Fred was transferred from Egypt to France. He spent six days in hospital in the field in June with tonsillitis and on 21 September was wounded in action by a gunshot to the buttock and admitted to the No.1 New Zealand Field Ambulance the following day. After returning to his unit he was again injured by a gunshot to the thigh on 12 October and four days later admitted to the No.3 Convalescence Depot.

Fred rejoined his unit on 28 October but nine days later, on 6 November 1916, was killed in action in the field during the Battle of the Somme²⁰, aged 28 years. He is buried in Cité Bonjean Military Cemetery, Armentières, France.

Charles Harvey (service no. 23/1661)

Rifleman Chas Harvey was farming for A.G. Grant when he enlisted in November 1915.²¹ He embarked with the New Zealand Rifle Brigade as part of the 3rd Reinforcements, 1st Battalion, E Company, on 8 January 1916, bound for Suez, Egypt. There, on 10 March he too transferred to the 2nd Battalion of the Canterbury Infantry Regiment and eventually reached the Western Front.

On 25 September 1916 Chas was wounded in the arm and sent back to England to convalesce at Codford before returning to active service on the Western Front.

Chas had survived the Somme and Passchendaele when he was shot in the head in the Belgium battlefields of Ypres on 30 November 1917. He died aged 25 in the 3rd Canadian Casualty Clearing Station on 14 December and was buried in the Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery, Poperinge, West-Vlaanderen, Belgium.

This researched Biography for the HARVEY boys was compiled by Karen Stade, Nelson Provincial Museum, in 2014.

¹ Names and birthdates of the Harvey children contained in an email written by Jane McDonald to Fiona Cliff, 15 March 2010, courtesy of Golden Bay Museum.

² Frederick James Harvey, <http://www.tasman.govt.nz/services/cemeteries/cemetery-records-search>

³ Fanny Jane Harvey, <http://www.tasman.govt.nz/services/cemeteries/cemetery-records-search>

⁴ 1915-Canterbury Mounted Rifles Regiment Timeline, <http://www.nzhistory.net.nz/war/canterbury-mounted-rifles/1915>

⁵ William Frederick James Harvey, military record, National Archives of New Zealand.

⁶ William Frederick James Harvey, military record, National Archives of New Zealand.

⁷ Captain David Ferguson, *The History of the Canterbury Regiment, N.Z.E.F. 1914 – 1919*, Chapter VI., 'From Egypt to France: Trench Warfare at Armentières', Auckland: Whitcombe and Tombs Limited, 1921, <http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-WH1-Cant-t1-body-d6.html>

⁸ Captain David Ferguson, Chapter VI., 'From Egypt to France: Trench Warfare at Armentières', and Chapter VII., 'The Battle of the Somme'.

⁹ Captain David Ferguson, Chapter VIII., 'Trench Warfare After the Somme; and Preparations for Messines'.

¹⁰ Captain David Ferguson, Chapter VIII. 'Trench Warfare After the Somme; and Preparations for Messines'.

¹¹ Captain David Ferguson, Chapter VIII. 'Trench Warfare After the Somme; and Preparations for Messines'.

¹² Captain David Ferguson, Chapter IX. 'The Battle of Messines'.

¹³ Carol Dawber and Cheryl Win, *Ferntown to Farewell Spit*, Dunedin: River Press, 2003, p.35.

¹⁴ William Frederick James Harvey, military record, National Archives of New Zealand.

¹⁵ 'News of the Day', *Colonist*, 8 November 1919, p.4.

¹⁶ Percy Harvey, military record, National Archives of New Zealand.

¹⁷ Great War Nurses, Australian War Memorial, <https://www.awm.gov.au/exhibitions/nurses/ww1/>

¹⁸ Percy Harvey, letter to Emma Solly, dated 22 April 1916, France. Courtesy Golden Bay Museum: Harvey Archive, Sparrow Collection, J. McDonald.

¹⁹ Frederick Harvey, military record, National Archives of New Zealand.

²⁰ The Battle of the Somme, <http://www.greatwar.co.uk/battles/>

²¹ Charles Harvey, military record, National Archives of New Zealand.