**Virtual War Memorial Profile/Biography**

**Introduction:**

On May 2, 1896, a boy named William Hicks was born in Mount Torrens, South Australia. He was the son of Mrs. Eliza Ann Hicks, and Aaron Hicks. William Hicks was one of many young Australians who answered the call to serve during the First World War – a conflict that would reshape not only global politics but also the lives of those who lived through it.

Born and raised in South Australia, Hicks left behind the familiar comforts of home in 1916 to join the Australian Imperial Force, embarking on a journey that would take him across continents and into the heart of one of the harshest theatres of war: the deserts of the Middle East.

Known for his role as a driver in the 1st Field Squadron Engineers, Hicks contributed not on the front lines with a rifle, but in the vital engineering efforts that made victories possible -constructing roads, fortifications, and water systems in brutal desert conditions.

Though his name may not appear in history books alongside generals or politicians, William Hicks represents the everyday courage and quiet endurance of the Anzacs. His service, sacrifice, and resilience tell a story worth remembering.

**Early Life and Enlistment:**

William Hicks was born in South Australia in the late 1890’s (1896 to be precise), a time when the colony was undergoing great economic and social change. Though precise details about his early childhood remain scarce, wartime correspondence and enlistment records suggest he was raised in a close-knit family. His mother, Eliza Ann Hicks, is listed in Red Cross inquiries as a concerned relative during the war, pointing to strong family ties and a supportive home environment.

Growing up in the rural or semi-urban stretches of South Australia, William likely witnessed the expansion of Australia’s identity as a young Commonwealth nation. Like many young men of his generation, he would have been influenced by the patriotic surge that followed the outbreak of World War I in 1914.

In 1916, at the age of approximately 20, William Hicks enlisted to serve in the Australian Imperial Force. He was assigned the service number 3000, and his attestation papers show he volunteered for duty during a period when reinforcements were desperately needed following the Gallipoli campaign and early operations in the Middle East.

After enlisting, Hicks embarked from Australia aboard the Clan McEwen and arrived in Moascar, Egypt, for further military training. It was here that he prepared for the harsh realities of desert warfare - a foreshadowing of the demanding service that awaited him in the Sinai and Palestine campaigns.

**Impact of War:**

The experience of war left a lasting mark on William Hicks, as it did on many soldiers who served in the harsh and relentless conditions of the Middle Eastern front. His time with the 1st Field Squadron Engineers was characterised by extreme heat, limited supplies, and constant exposure to disease and exhaustion. In 1918, Hicks was hospitalized in Abbassia with fever, a reminder of the ever-present health threats that plagued the troops in the region.

The psychological toll of war likely influenced his post-war life. Returning to South Australia in July 1919, Hicks re-entered a society that had been deeply affected by loss, grief, and change. The transition back to peace was often difficult for returning soldiers, and Hicks was no exception. It is believed that he reintegrated quietly into his community, supported by strong family connections.

The war also impacted his family. Their concerns were part of a broader narrative of Australian families enduring long months of uncertainty and anxiety as they awaited news from the front.

For William Hicks, the war was not just a chapter of service; it was a defining part of his identity. His contribution to the engineering corps demonstrates how success in war depends not only on combat but on those who build, repair, and sustain. Hicks’s endurance and commitment remain very important of the quiet heroism that shaped Australia’s wartime legacy.

**Legacy and Remembrance:**

William Hicks was remembered as a dedicated and humble soldier whose contributions may not have made newspaper headlines but were vital to the war effort. In post-war South Australia, returning soldiers were celebrated in community gatherings, and the contributions of servicemen like Hicks were often acknowledged in Anzac Day commemorations.

While records do not show whether Hicks received any official medals or honours beyond his service documentation, his legacy endures through military archives, Red Cross records, and the gratitude of a nation rebuilding after the war. His quiet return and continued presence in his community added to the social fabric of post-war South Australia.

Today, William Hicks stands as a symbol of the many Anzacs who served with dignity and resilience. Through biographies like this one and the preservation of his military service details, future generations can appreciate the courage and service of an ordinary man in extraordinary times.

**Conclusion:**

William Hicks’s story is one of quiet dedication, resilience, and service. Though he may not have sought recognition, his role in the war effort was essential and enduring. His journey - from enlistment to return - echoes the experiences of countless Australians whose contributions shaped the nation's legacy. Remembering Hicks is a reminder to honour all those who served, both in battle and behind the lines, with steadfast commitment and unshakable resolve.

**Bibliography:**

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