

## William James Cox



Driver (Dvr) 47 William James Cox enlisted in the 10<sup>th</sup> Light Horse (LH) Regiment in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Light Horse Brigade at Guildford on 5 October 1914 and was attached to the machine gun section.

He embarked overseas on 8 February 1915 and disembarked in Egypt on 9 March.

Within a few weeks of the Anzac landing, battle and medical casualties had taken a huge toll on the Australian numbers, and it was decided that the light horsemen would reinforce the infantry in the front line, without their horses.

The LH machine gun sections were requested initially, so Dvr Cox and his section left Egypt on 8 May and landed on Gallipoli a few days later, where they took up duty at Pope's Hill and Walker's Ridge.

To break the stalemate that had existed on Gallipoli since the landings in late April, the allies undertook several "feint" attacks in early August. At 4:30 am on 7 August 1915, the men of the 8<sup>th</sup> & 10<sup>th</sup> Light Horse Regiments, rose from their entrenched positions on Russell's Top and charged the Turkish trenches over a narrow strip of ground of no strategic importance called The Nek.

Tragically, the inadequate artillery barrage lifted seven minutes early and the well sited Turkish machine guns decimated successive waves of light horsemen. In less than 30 minutes, the 8<sup>th</sup> Light Horse sustained 234 casualties (out of the 300 men they started with) while the 10<sup>th</sup> Light Horse lost 138 men.

Dvr Cox contracted influenza on 29 August. He was evacuated to Malta and treated there from 1 – 7 September, then transferred to England where he was admitted to the 1<sup>st</sup> Southern General Hospital in Birmingham on 17 September.

While his service record is silent regarding his discharge from hospital, Dvr Cox was still in England when he went absent without leave between 3 – 10 January 1916, for which he was awarded 15 days' detention, and the forfeiture of eight days' pay.

At some point after that, he left England and was back in Egypt by 15 April, when he returned to duty with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Light Horse (Brigade) Training Regiment at Tel el Kebir.

On 8 July 1916, Dvr Cox was transferred and taken on strength of the 1<sup>st</sup> Field Squadron Engineers in the Anzac Mounted Division at Kantara. While they carried out normal engineering constructive and destructive works, most of their time was spent cleaning out bores and ensuring suitable water availability for the units they supported.

He served with this unit until 28 February 1917, when he was taken on strength of the newly formed 2<sup>nd</sup> Field Squadron Engineers in the Australian Mounted Division at Dier el Belah.

Dvr Cox contracted bronchitis and was treated at the 3<sup>rd</sup> LH Field Ambulance at Sueilma between 19 June – 4 July, then rejoined his unit.

He became ill with a septic foot on 31 March 1918, which saw him evacuated back to Egypt and hospitalised at the 14<sup>th</sup> Australian General Hospital at Port Said from 7 June – 13 July, after which he was granted leave until 24 July.

He rejoined the 2<sup>nd</sup> Field Squadron at Wadi Auja, in the Jordon Valley, on 12 August 1918.

The engineers had closely followed the allied advance through Palestine and were situated outside Damascus, which had been captured on 1 October, when Dvr Cox was diagnosed with influenza on 5 October. He was treated between 5 – 8 October then released to his unit.

When they had entered Damascus, the allies were shocked to find more than 20,000 wounded and/or very sick Ottoman soldiers situated throughout the barracks and hospitals in the town. As a result, the sanitary conditions in the area were very poor, and Dvr Cox subsequently contracted dysentery on 10 October.

He was admitted to the German Hospital in Damascus on 10 October but ultimately died of his illness there on 13 October 1918 and was buried in the hospital grounds two days later.

Driver 47 William James Cox's body was exhumed after the war and re-interred in the Damascus British War Cemetery, Palestine in late 1921.

Name: Cox, William James	
Service Number	47
Date enlisted	5 October 1914
Place enlisted	Guildford, WA
Rank on enlistment	Driver
Initial Unit	10 <sup>th</sup> Light Horse Regiment
Previous military service	Senior Cadets – 2 years Australian Field Artillery – 18 months
Date and ship embarked for overseas	8 February 1915 HMAT A47 <i>Mashobra</i>
Stated age/DOB (if known)	19 years 6 months
Place of birth	St Leonards, Victoria
Marital status	Single
Occupation	Junior Porter (WA Railways)
Religion	Church of England
Next of kin and address	Cox, Mr Frederick, father, Newcastle Road, Midland Junction, WA
Permanent address	Midland Junction, WA
Appearance	Fresh complexion, light brown hair, blue eyes, height – 5 feet 9 <sup>3</sup> / <sub>4</sub> inches, weight – 9 stone, 5 lbs, chest measurement – 35/37 inches
Final Rank	Driver
Final Unit	2 <sup>nd</sup> Field Squadron Engineers
Theatres of war served in	Egypt, Gallipoli, Sinai, Palestine
Fate	Died of disease (dysentery)
Date and place died	13 October 1918 German Hospital, Damascus, Palestine
Cemetery details	Damascus British War Cemetery, Damascus, Palestine Row D, Grave 2
Honours/medals	1914-15 Star, British War Medal, Victory Medal
Notes	Brother of Frederick & James Cox. Remembered on the St Leonards Honor Roll and St Paul's Anglican Church Honor Roll.