

Henry William Robinson



Corporal (Cpl) 642 Henry William Robinson enlisted in the Railways Corps in Melbourne on 1 February 1917 and embarked overseas on 19 February.

Enroute to England, his troopship HMAS *Ballarat* was torpedoed by the German submarine U-32 in the English Channel on 25 April 1917. All 1,752 people on board were taken off the ship within an hour and no lives were lost. Initial efforts to tow the ship to shallow water failed, and she sank off The Lizard the next morning.

Cpl Robinson disembarked in Devonport later the same day, where he joined the 1st Australian Railway Operating Depot at Bordon and was taken on strength of the 15th Australian Light Railway Operating Company (LROC). The company left England on 29 May and landed in France the next day, where they travelled north to Poperinghe.

The British Army formed the light railway companies during 1916, and they were deployed to the Western Front from early 1917. Their operation facilitated the more efficient movement of men and supplies from the major railheads to the front lines, reduced the heavy reliance on horse transport and avoided the cluttered and, often damaged, road networks.

At times, there was also a significant movement of men between the light railway operating companies. For example, Cpl Robinson was detached for duty with the 33rd British LROC (11 September – 1 October 1917) and the 5th New Zealand LROC (29 January – 13 February 1918), after which he returned to his own unit, which was re-designated the 1st Australian Light Railway Operating Company on 28 February 1918.

After another short detachment, this time to the 20th British LROC from 30 April – 12 May, he was granted leave in England between 18 July – 2 August, and again from 3 – 19 April 1919, after the war had ended. He left France for the final time on 2 May and embarked for return to Australia on 1 July.

Corporal 642 Henry William Robinson disembarked in Melbourne on 17 August, where he was discharged from the AIF on 27 November 1919.

Name: Robinson, Henry William	
Service Number	642
Date enlisted	1 February 1917
Place enlisted	Melbourne, Victoria
Rank on enlistment	Corporal
Initial Unit	Railway Corps
Date and ship embarked for overseas	19 February 1917 HMAT A70 <i>Ballarat</i>
Stated age/DOB (if known)	26 years 3 months
Place of birth	Williamstown, Victoria
Marital status	Married
Occupation	Fireman (Victorian Railways)
Religion	Roman Catholic
Next of kin and address	Robinson, Mrs Elsie, wife, Dandenong, Victoria
Permanent address	Dandenong, Victoria
Appearance	Sallow complexion, black hair, blue eyes, height – 5 feet 7 ½ inches, weight – 10 stone, 8 lbs, chest measurement – 37/40 inches
Final Rank	Corporal
Final Unit	1 st Australian Light Railway Operating Company
Theatres of war served in	France, Belgium
Fate	Returned to Australia
Date and ship embarked for Australia	1 July 1919 HT <i>Karmala</i>
Date discharged	27 November 1919
Nature of discharge	Termination of Period of Enlistment
Honours/medals	British War Medal, Victory Medal
Notes	Attended St Leonards State School. Brother of George, John and Leo Robinson. Died 3 February 1966. Remembered on the St Leonards Honor Roll.