

**CHARLES WILLIAM MILLAR WHYTE**  
**Lieutenant – 3rd Tunnelling Company**

Melbourne, Victoria was the birth place of Charles William Millar Whyte on February 28, 1888 the son of William and Jean Whyte. He stated he matriculated from Melbourne University and was a graduate of the Ballarat School of Mines as a Mining Engineer.

Recruiting had begun in the last quarter of 1915 to raise a Mining Corps for active service abroad and at the Victoria Barracks, Sydney, NSW on September 29, 1915 Charles Whyte applied to enlist with the A.R.E. [Aust. Royal Engrs]. Personal particulars on the Application gave the mining engineer's postal address as care of Mr A.S. Harrison 'Barbalara', The Avenue, Strathfield, a widower and thirty-four years of age. His height was 170cms (5ft 7ins) with a chest measurement of 94cms (37ins) and the preliminary medical examination declared him fit for service. Attestation Forms were completed adding his weight of 69kgs (152lbs) with a dark complexion, grey eyes testing to good vision and dark brown hair. Church of England was his religion.

On October 4, 1915 he was sworn in at the Engineer Depot, Moore Park, Sydney, NSW and while training at the Engineer Officers' Training School applied for a Commission with the Mining Corps, A.I.F. He joined the Mining Corps on December 14, 1915 and signed a second Attestation form on January 18, 1916.

Commission application details given were previous military experience as an unallotted 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant and postal address of Broken Hill Club, Broken Hill, NSW. His status was married and next-of-kin was his wife Mary Teresa Whyte of 'Adare' Lower Hutt, Wellington, N.Z. His Application was Gazetted in the Commonwealth of Australia Gazette in issue no. 158 of December 26, 1915 after recommendation to the appointment and provisionally posted as 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant to the No. 3 Company, Mining Corps on December 1st. The application was dated and signed by him on February 10, 1916 with the final medical approval given by the Corps' Doctor at Casula camp, near Liverpool, NSW the following day. Distinctive marks were two vaccination scars on his left arm, two moles in the centre of his back and also a scar in the centre of his chest.

On New Year's Day, 1916 he was promoted to Lieutenant per military order No. 55/1916.

In early 1916 he married in Sydney, NSW to Mary Teresa Harnett therefore next-of-kin became Mrs M.T. Whyte of Main Road, Lower Hutt, Wellington, New Zealand and allotted two-fifths of his pay to support her.

In the War Report written after the war, reference to his appointment in the establishment of the Mining Corps was given:

The following officers joined as various dates up to the time of embarkation and officers of No. 3 Section were at that date:

No 3 Section

Lt C.W. Whyte, 2/Lt H.V. Veale, 2/Lt A.C. Morris.

At a civic parade in the Domain, Sydney on Saturday February 19, 1916, a large crowd of relations and friends of the departing Miners lined the four sides of the parade ground. Sixty police and 100 Garrison Military Police were on hand to keep the crowds within bounds. The scene was an inspiring one. On the extreme right flank, facing the saluting base, were companies of the Rifle Club School; next came a detachment of the 4th King's Shropshire Light Infantry, then the bands of the Light Horse, Liverpool Depot, and the Miners' on the left, rank upon rank, the Miners' Battalion.

Lieutenant Whyte was one of 1,248 members of the Corps who boarded HMAT A38 *Ulysses* in Sydney, NSW on February 20 and sailed for the European theatre. Arriving in Melbourne, Victoria on February 22 the Miners camped at Broadmeadows for a stay of 7 days while further cargo was loaded. Another parade was held at the Broadmeadows camp on March 1, the Miners' Corps being inspected by the Governor-General, as Commander-in-Chief of the Commonwealth military forces.

Leaving Melbourne on March 1, *Ulysses* arrived at Fremantle, Western Australia on March 7 where a further 53 members were taken on board.

On Wednesday March 8, 1916 the whole force, with their band and equipment, paraded at Fremantle prior to leaving Victoria Quay at 9.30 o'clock.

The ship hit a reef when leaving Fremantle harbour, stripping the plates for 40 feet and, although there was a gap in the outside plate, the inner bilge plates were not punctured. The men on board nicknamed her '*Useless*'. The Miners were off-loaded and sent to the Blackboy Hill Camp where further training was conducted.

Finally departing Fremantle on April 1, *Ulysses* voyaged via Suez, Port Said and Alexandria in Egypt. The Captain of the ship was reluctant to take *Ulysses* out of the Suez Canal because he felt the weight of the ship made it impossible to manoeuvre in the situation of a submarine attack. The troops were transhipped to HM Transport B.1 *Ansonia*, then on to Valetta, Malta before disembarking at Marseilles, France on May 5, 1916. As a unit they entrained at Marseilles on May 7 and detrained on May 11 at Hazebrouck.

Soon after arrival, the Australian Mining Corps ceased to exist as a whole and was redesignated into three Tunnelling Companies which were dispersed where the British Armies required them immediately.

Lieutenant Whyte went to the 254<sup>th</sup> Tunnelling Company, R.E. for briefing on his Section's duties on the front and was attached for duty on May 13, 1916 with the No. 4 Section, 3<sup>rd</sup> Aust. Tunnelling Company.

Lieutenant Whyte was wounded in the head on July 22, 1916 and taken to the 2<sup>nd</sup> N.Z. Field Ambulance and either died at the scene, on the way to or at the Ambulance Station. He was deemed as killed in action due to a shell wound to the head perforating his cranium. The Unit Diary of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tunnelling Company reports the following after he was struck off strength:

July 22

Company Orders No 58:

Lt C.W. Whyte was killed by bursting shell on 22/7/16

Being their first officer to die and only thirty-six years of age his death was again noted in the After War Report of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tunnelling Company:

The first officer was Lieut C.W. Whyte, who while travelling in a box motor car at Armentieres was struck by a fragment of shell which landed on the road in front of the car & exploded killing Lt Whyte & wounding one other sapper & the driver of the car. This was on 22/7/16.

His burial took place at Bailleul Communal Cemetery Extension, Bailleul, France with a service conducted by Rev. E.H. Fitch who was attached to Headquarters of the 41<sup>st</sup> Division.

His widow Mrs Mary T. Whyte was advised on July 31, 1916 that her husband had been killed in action on July 22, 1916 by Base Records.

On August 16, 1916 Base Records received a letter from the Public Works Department, NSW requesting the date he was appointed as Lieutenant and the date of his demise. Base Records replied within two days being 1/1/16 as a Lieutenant and 22/7/16 for his death.

Mr John R. Edwards, Solicitor of Argent Street, Broken Hill, NSW advised Base Records on August 21, 1916 that he was the Executor of the Will of the late Lt C.W. Whyte and required for the purpose of obtaining probate to obtain a Military Certificate of Death for the deceased soldier. Base Records replied on August 29, 1916 stating that official documents relating to the death of Lt Whyte have not been received but noted their request to be dealt with when they came to hand.

Mr J.R. Edwards wrote again on September 27, 1916 inquiring if the documents relevant to his previous request had yet come to hand. He was applying for Probate of the Will on behalf of the widow and wanted to expedite as much as possible. On October 9, 1916 Base Records acknowledged receipt of the letter from John R. Edwards and enclosed the military certificate of death. Mr J.R. Edwards replied with a letter thanks on October 18, 1916.

An Inventory of the personal effects belonging to Lt Whyte's trunk was compiled which are detailed below left on November 2, 1916 on the transport *Wiltshire*:

Quantity of Military Books and Papers	4 Books	3 Scribblers	3 Diaries
1 Book of Poems	1 Testament	1 Sword	1 Pair Slippers
1 Waterproof Cape	1 Pair Underpants	1 Pencil	1 Pair Leggings
Overall pants	1 Towel	1 Pyjamas	1 Cap Cover
1 Waterproof Helmet	2 White Shirts	4 Singlets	3 Flannel Shirts
5 pairs Socks	1 Fly Net	1 Belt	1 Lanyard
1 Revolver in case	1 Breeches	1 Safety Razor	1 Toothbrush & Paste
1 Brown Belt, straps & pouches	1 Holdall Shaving Kit	3 Photos	2 Housewives
5 Handkerchiefs	2 Hair Brushes	1 Watch case	1 plate False Teeth
1 Service Tunic Khaki Drill Breeches	Tunic & Pants	1 Set Badges	1 Pocket Knife
1 Pair Field Scissors	Field Dressing	1 Comb	
2 Coins	Curio	Correspondence	

In a Paper Parcel dispatched on November 2, 1916 was:

Letters, Cards, Photos, Gold Ring, Wallet and a Small Bag with Religious Keepsakes.

Mr J.R. Edwards made a further request on December 14, 1916 to Base Records to obtain another copy similar to the Military Death Certificate previously received as he required a copy to collect his client's Insurance money. His reply of thanks dated January 4, 1917 was received by Base Records for the requested Certificate they forwarded on December 19, 1916.

Base Records wrote to his widow on December 15, 1916 when information had been received advising her of his death and burial details in accordance with the Department's policy in connection with deaths of members of the A.I.F. Advice of the forwarding of her late husband's personal effects was sent by Registered Packet (601) on January 27, 1917. These were received and receipted by Mary Whyte on February 21, 1917.

The Public Trust Office at the Chambers, 67 Castlereagh Street, Sydney sent a request on September 10, 1917 for a death certificate in duplicate, the address of the deceased prior to enlistment and the name and address nominated as next-of-kin of Lt C.W. Whyte.

On November 27, 1918 Base Records sent the Commission Form issued by the British War Office to the rank of Temporary 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant in reference to his first appointment and not to his later rank, to his widow. Mrs Mary Whyte signed the receipt for the Commission Form from Base Records on March 1, 1919.

Major Sanderson, commanding officer of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tunnelling Company sent to his widow in Lower Hutt, Wellington on April 28, 1919 photographs of the last resting place of Lt Whyte.

Lieutenant Charles William Whyte, 3<sup>rd</sup> Tunnelling Company received the British War Medal (32143) and the Victory Medal (31920) for his supreme sacrifice for his country. These medals were forwarded directly to Mrs Whyte in registered parcel 7321 on February 2, 1922. The pamphlet 'Where the Australians Rest' was sent on February 7, 1922 along with the Memorial Scroll (356566) to his widow. The Memorial Plaque (356566) was dispatched on December 5, 1922.

On August 3, 1924 Base Records wrote to Mrs Mary Whyte at Knight's Road, Lower Hutt, Wellington, NZ but the letter was returned 'not found at this address'. It contained the location details of her husband's burial place in the Bailleul Cemetery, France.

Mrs Jane Whyte of 32 South Street, Ascot Vale, W.2, Vic sent a letter to Base Records on July 12, 1928 wanting information about her son Charles who joined the A.I.F. and promoted to Lieutenant but was killed in about June 1916. She lost all trace of him but had heard he had a wife and two children and that his wife would be drawing his pension. She said the last time she had heard from him was in Adelaide, S.A. She had written there but was advised to correspond with Base Records as Adelaide had no record of him. He was her eldest son and was most anxious if such was the case. On July 19, 1928 Base Records replied but regretted the information Mrs Whyte gave was insufficient to identify her son Charles. They requested if she could supply full Christian names, date of birth, place of birth or a trade they would do a search and notify her with the result. No further correspondence is available on this subject.

Lieutenant Charles William Whyte's grave is at Portion II Section F, grave no. 56 of the Bailleul Communal Cemetery Extension, France.



Photo of headstone by kind permission of  
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