

Battle of Hamel Victoria Cross

Harry Dalziel V.C.

Celebrating 100 years
4 July 1918 - 4 July 2018

Private Henry Dalziel V.C.

15th Australian Infantry Battalion, A.I.F.
4th July 1918, at Hamel Wood, France

CITATION:

For most conspicuous bravery and devotion to duty when in action with a lewis gun section. His company met with determined resistance from a strong point which was strongly garrisoned, manned by numerous machine-guns and, undamaged by our artillery fire, was also protected by strong wire entanglements. A heavy concentration of machine-gun fire caused many casualties, and held up our advance.

His Lewis gun having come into action and silenced enemy guns in one direction, an enemy gun opened fire from another direction. Private Dalziel dashed at it and with his revolver, killed or captured the entire crew and gun, and allowed our advance to continue. He was severely wounded in the hand, but carried on and took part in the capture of the final objective. He twice went over open ground under heavy enemy artillery and machine-gun fire to secure ammunition, and though suffering from considerable loss of blood, he filled magazines and served his gun until severely wounded through the head. His magnificent bravery and devotion to duty was an inspiring example to all his comrades and his dash and unselfish courage at a critical time undoubtedly saved many lives and turned what would have been a serious check into a splendid success. (London Gazette: 17th August 1918.)

Dalziel's actions occurred during the Battle of Hamel, when the 15th Battalion was given the task of capturing a position known as Pear Trench.



RIGHT:

Atherton Cricket c 1915. Harry in the centre, back row, wearing white with black belt.

BELOW:

Harry Dalziel V.C. c.1918/19, five months after his action at Hamel. This is likely an official photograph taken in London.





BUCKINGHAM PALACE

5th January
1949.

Dear Sergeant Dalziel,

I was most touched to receive your letter of the 12th November and the Victoria Cross which you won on American Independence Day 1918.

I know that it must be a very treasured possession, and I am deeply grateful for the honour of being offered this Victoria Cross as a gift.

However, after consulting the King, and after much thought, I do not feel that it

is right that I should accept such a present on behalf of my son.

I do not wish you to think that I do this through any lack of appreciation but it is because I feel most strongly that you should retain this mark of the King's, and the Commonwealth's esteem for supreme valour in battle.

In returning your Victoria Cross, I do so with profound understanding of the depth of loyalty and affection, which prompt your action.

I am, yours sincerely
Elizabeth

ABOVE:

Harry sent his V.C. to Princess Elizabeth (now Queen Elizabeth II) for her as yet unborn child. Princess Elizabeth sent the Victoria Cross back with a handwritten letter beautifully explaining her reasons for not accepting the Medal. It was written on gold embossed Buckingham Palace Stationery. A lovely letter.



ABOVE:

Capture of Hamel Village on 4 July 1918. Painting by A. Pearce, War Artist (via Mairie d'Hamel)



ABOVE:

First Award Ceremony on 26 June 1857. The first presentation of the Victoria Cross took place in Hyde Park on 26 June 1857 where 62 V.C.s were presented by Her Majesty to recipients who included five civilians.

IMMEDIATE RIGHT:

In 1919, Harry travelled on the Steamer, Kuranda, from Townsville to Cairns on his way home from the war.

BELOW, TOP LEFT:

Harry arrives at Atherton Station by train from Cairns in 1919. The procession leaves the Station led by a Guard of Honour, followed by a flower bedecked car carrying Harry, followed by other groups of the parade.

BELOW, TOP RIGHT:

Harry's mother Eliza Maggie Dalziel finally gets her son home after his 4 years away at the War. Taken in Atherton, 1919. When she first heard of his winning a V.C. at Hamel she said, "Of course, I'm wonderfully proud of my 'soldier boy', as he always described himself in his letters, BUT NEVER MIND THE V.C., as long as I get my boy home safe and well." He wasn't exactly well but that never stopped him. In the front row from right to left sits sister Nellie, Mother with a grandson and sister Mrs 'Midge' Foley. In the back row with Harry is an Ambulance Supervisor and his wife.

BELOW, BOTTOM LEFT:

Mephisto, a monster German tank captured in July 1918, France. Arrived in Brisbane in 1919. Installed at the Old Queensland Museum, Fortitude Valley. Search Queensland Museum For Mephisto PDF

BELOW, BOTTOM RIGHT:

Harry with a mate c.1940.





IMMEDIATE RIGHT:

Circa 1933. Harry joined the Citizen Military Forces (CMF) in 1933 as sergeant.

MIDDLE:

Back home in 1919. In uniform at the family home in Carmel Bank, Atherton.

BELOW:

Harry's medals are:

- Victoria Cross (Hamel Victoria Cross)
- 14/15 star.
- British War Medal.
- Victory Medal.
- Australian War Medal 1939/45 (not in the Below photo)
- Australian Service Medal (not in the Below photo)
- King George VI Coronation Medal
- Queen Elizabeth II Coronation Medal

Harry's eight medals can be found in the Hall of Valour, Australian War Memorial in Canberra. Frank is holding Harry's medals in page 23 photograph.







ABOVE:

The swimming hole, which may be below the Atherton State School. Harry in the water, sister Nellie, and brother, Bill on the bank. c1927

RIGHT:

Harry Dalziel V.C. and Sister Elizabeth Mosey. Sister Elizabeth Mosey was awarded the Royal Red Cross 2nd Class Medal in 1918. This photograph was most likely taken on 13 December 1918, directly after the visit to Buckingham Palace.





ABOVE:

Opening of Parliament House Brisbane, 1933. Harry was the first V.C. to have the honour of being in such a ceremony. He is to the left of the flagbearer, and wearing his V.C.

FAR LEFT:

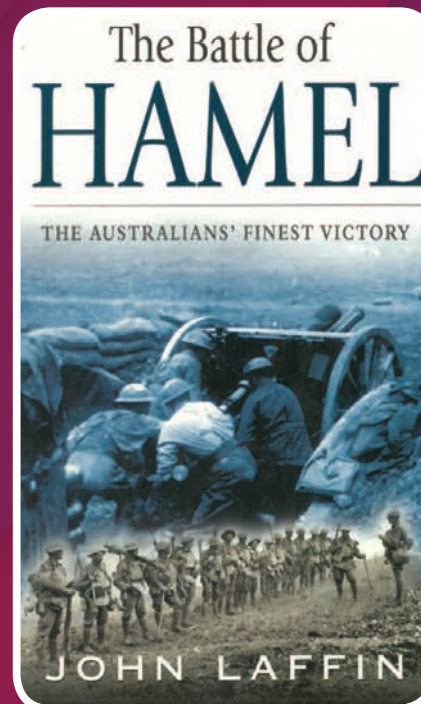
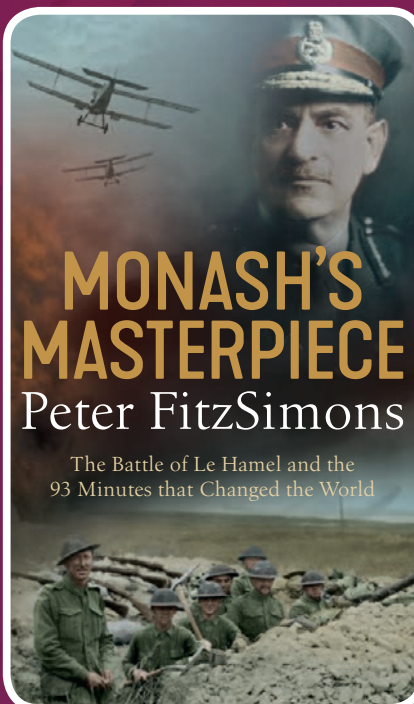
Harry married Ida Maud Ramsay in Brisbane on 8 August 1920 at the Congregational Church, Fortitude Valley, Brisbane.

MIDDLE:

'Monash's Masterpiece', by Peter FitzSimons. Available through Hachette Books 2018.

MIDDLE:

The Battle of HAMEL
THE AUSTRALIANS' FINEST VICTORY
by JOHN LAFFIN
Kangaroo Press





ABOVE:

Taken on 23 April 1938 in Sydney, 22 V.C. winners stand together. Harry is fifth in from the right. The winners, in no particular order were E. T. Towner, J. Carroll, T. L. Axford, J. Rogers, H. Dalziel, G. N. Ingram, Percy Statton, W. Curry, W. D. Joynt, S. M. McDougall, W. Peller, J. P. Woods, Thomas Caldwell, J. J. Dwyer, W. Ruthven, J. Hamilton, Bede Kenny, A. D. Lowerson, C. W. Sadler, Walter E. Brown, A. Porella, and W. Jackson.



LEFT :

March 1941. US Pacific Squadron of 7 ships, led by Rear Admiral John H Newton of the cruiser CHICAGO, docks in Brisbane. This was a visit of goodwill as the US was not yet engaged in WW2. Newton meets Harry when he was informed that the V.C. was awarded for action on the 4th July. Some 250,000 lined the streets of Brisbane to watch the march of US sailors and marines & Aussie Servicemen.

My V.C.

29 Aust Inf Trg Bn

6 November 1942

By Sgt Henry Dalziel V.C.

In action with a Lewis Gun section, 4th July 1918 was myself, Driver Henry Dalziel. We were harassed by murderous fire from a nearby enemy stronghold. The Australian advance was held up. My gun had cleaned up one nest, but another planted in a different direction opened fire. I dashed at it killing seven Germans with my own revolvers. One German bloodhound wounded me in the hand, but I soon had him on the ground. I lunged at him with my German dagger, catching him right over the heart. His dying cry upset me and I shivered.

At Pear Trench.

The Australians pushed on. Blood was pouring from my wounded hand but I advanced with the others. We passed Pear Trench which had only 23 machine guns and coming to a deep down cement dugout which held half a company of German men. Our No 1 gunner held his Lewis Gun on his hip and fired down the steps of the cement dugout. The poor Huns came up with their hands above their heads calling "Merci Comrade". They were handing out watches of different makes, gold and silver leaf wrist watches of beautiful designs. I felt like a war lord with my two revolvers pointing at them and one dagger on my belt. We sent them off with their beautiful watches to the "moppers up". This was a grand experience for me and I relished every minute of it. We found Huns dead in all directions, up in trees, under duck boards, in shell holeseverywhere.

Our artillery had been doing great work. The smoke screen was a great success, and the creeping barrage kept creeping along. The Americans were with us, a platoon in each company. "Win the War" they used to say and in they would go into our barrage. They never had any instruction at "chalkpit" the previous night, so I was told.

We came to our objective and then I took over the Lewis Gun placing it about twenty paces from where we were digging in with all the equipment at my disposal. I had a good position, filled sandbags I had on my legs and placed them in front of the gun. Then when all was ready, I got behind it and started off in short bursts. I could see the Germans running out of one broken down trench into another much the same at about three hundred yards distance. I trained my gun on the object and it was the best of shooting for quite a while. However my ammunition ran out, so I had to go and look for more.

The tanks had dropped some gun fodder at about 250 yards behind the line so I ran out to find it. "Merci Monsieur" one machine gun dogged me up, only for my vamoose he would have had me. I noticed when he had finished firing, I had two spent bullets stuck in my puttee. A near miss. I had to crawl on my hands and knees over the hill. I had a charmed life and carried on to the ammunition dump. I could see the ammunition in boxes scattered all over the place. The first box I saw I put on my shoulder and made my way back, and then the fun commenced. They were throwing everything at me from the needle to the elephant. One whiz-bang burst behind me. A 5.9 came at me nearly hitting the box. I was going to carry on only I fell into a shell hole full of water. I crawled as I have never crawled before, placing my belt around the box of ammunition. I could see my cold blooded machine gun nest near at hand so I pushed on and almost fell over into it. To my consternation I found that I had brought hand grenades instead of ammunition for my little "Tilly" Lewis machine gun. Those German hearts would feel sore if I did not provide them with more ammunition.

I gave the grenades to the troops digging in, and got going again. I knew the road and I did not take long finding the ammunition. A few stray shells were lobbing around me but they did not concern me. The Germans might have been clearing out, but to my sorrow they were advancing again, coming on in hoards about five hundred yards away from our objective. I got down to my gun again and this time it was real shooting. All along the line our machine guns rattled and our artillery had them in a quandary. The smoke screen from our guns dimmed the German advance. A little German boy tin hat and grey uniform only about 14 or 15 years old came crying to me "Merci Comrade Merci" out in "No Mans Land". Two burley Yanks came at him with their bayonets fixed. Stop I cried, raising my two empty revolvers. Don't move or I will blow your bloody heads off I said to them. Take this little German back to the Captain. Possibly, he may get some information from him. they took him back, and after I had fired my last pannier, I went back over the hill.

On passing the dressing station, I saw a German soldier with his foot blown away and the two Yanks and the little Fritz conversing together. One of the Yanks came over to me and said "This German soldier wants to speak to you". "Comrade, he said to me, you have saved my son", and without any hocks to it, he shook my hand. I departed for the ammunition dump.

After crawling and puffing and dodging shells, and falling into shell holes, I managed to get back with another box of ammunition. I had to change my cocking handle over to the left side because my right hand was getting stiff. My feet were sore and my head ached as if there were two or three heads on my shoulders. I got down to my Lewis gun again after filling several magazines. The Germans were slacking off a bit but the sniper fire still kept on popping away. They had several pot shots at me so I climbed a little nearer to the ground and hugged my little Lewis gun. I started to roll about in pain. I got out of my machine gun nest and scrambled back again. I put another magazine on and got into the Bochs again. I felt a pain in my head with blood streaming from the left side of my head near the temple. They had hit me at last. My dispatch overseas to Blighty or my last resting place was over.

IMMEDIATE RIGHT:

Harry and Elsie with their first child, David, in 1942.

BELOW, LEFT:

Queen Elizabeth, Premier Nicklin and Harry Dalziel V.C. and Elsie. The Queen Mother meets Harry while visiting Australia from 14 February to 7 March 1958. Queen Elizabeth wished Harry a Happy Birthday when they met on 18th February, 1958.

BELOW, TOP RIGHT:

Harry and Elsie with children, baby Frank, David and Ann in 1947. Their home was a war service home in Oxley, opposite the Oxley Railway Station.

BELOW, BOTTOM RIGHT:

At the opening of Camp Warrawee on 23 September 1956 by Dr R. C. Halse, the Anglican Archbishop of Brisbane. Harry is in the front wearing his medals.







ABOVE:

V.C.s in London, 1956. Harry stands behind the two ladies in the front row, one in white, the other in a dark dress with a white hat.

RIGHT:

Marching in Brisbane on ANZAC Day in 1955. Harry leads the 15th Battalion AIF during the March.

FAR RIGHT:

Harry and Elsie standing outside their home in 1956 before Harry leaves for London to attend the V.C. Centenary. Note the Fedora, Overcoat and Gladstone Bag.





LEFT:

Harry meets Lord de L'Isle in Brisbane at a Garden Party at Parliament House, to welcome the next Governor General in 1960.



ABOVE:

Victor Dalziel, one of Harry's younger brothers.

LEFT:

Prince Charles meets Elsie Dalziel (pictured in plaid) in Brisbane. Prince Charles visited Australia in 1966, 1967, 1970.



ABOVE:

Photos of Carmel Bank, in Atherton, previously the Dalziel family home.

IMMEDIATE RIGHT:

A family photo of Harry's children, David and Ann, with grandchildren and great grandchildren at the opening of DALZIEL LODGE, YMCA WAR MEMORIAL CAMP WARRAWEE, Brisbane on 4 July 2016.

BELOW, TOP LEFT:

David, Lisa, Nick Dalziel with Mark Donaldson, V.C., at the Australian War Memorial Hall of Valour Opening in February 2011.

BELOW, TOP RIGHT:

David, Lisa, Sandra and Nick Dalziel with Governor General, Quentin Bryce, at the Australian War Memorial Hall of Valour Opening in February 2011.

BELOW, BOTTOM LEFT:

Harry's son, Frank, holding Harry's medals at the AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL on 4 July 2016.

BELOW, BOTTOM RIGHT:

The Australian Corps Memorial, Le Hamel, France.





BELOW:

Anzac Day in Sydney, 1938. 22 Australian V.C. winners from World War 1 and some from the Boer War. Harry sits in the front row on the left in his CMF uniform.



A YOUNG LEWIS GUNNER, A QUEENSLANDER FROM ATHERTON WON A VICTORIA CROSS AT HAMEL IN FRANCE, ON 4TH JULY 1918.

Henry (Harry) Dalziel V.C., a postscript

It is worth noting that Dalziel, known as "Two Gun Harry", was the thousandth winner of the V.C., which he received in the ballroom of Buckingham Palace on 13th December, 1918. He saw action at Gallipoli, Mouquet Farm, Pozieres, Guedecourt, Lagnicourt, Bullecourt and Messines. He was said to have been wounded 32 times during the war, on the last occasion, at Hamel, his skull was smashed in and his brain exposed. Skilful medical treatment in France and in Britain saved his life and he lived for another forty-seven years.

"I am convinced that there are no troops in the world to equal the Australians in cool daring, courage and endurance"
- Monash wrote to his wife from Gallipoli.

www.harrydalzielvc.org

Compiled by David Dalziel, taken mostly from family records