

CAPTAIN ALBERT COLIN MORRIS

3rd Tunnelling Company

William Watkin Morris, chemist, married Teresa Colins Kettle in July 1872 at Brecknock, Wales. The marriage produced six children before the couple emigrated to Australia on board *Cahors* with the four surviving children, Ellen Maria Yarnold, John Fosbrook, Cyril and William Reginald, arriving in Sydney on 26 May 1884 from Leith, Plymouth, via Cape Town.

Alberts' father, a chemist at German Creek, died in June 1887 at just 40 years of age.

Born on 15 July 1886 at German Creek, Richmond River, Ballina, New South Wales (NSW), Albert was the eighth child born to William and Teresa Morris.

Alberts' early education was at East Maitland High School, followed by 4 years at the University of Sydney (1905-1909) where he was awarded a Bachelor of Engineering (Mining & Metallurgy).

The Electoral Roll of 1913 records Albert Colin Morris, Engineer, living at Mica Street, Broken Hill, NSW.

He completed an Application to Enlist in the Mining Corps on 21 October 1915. He was at the time the Chief Surveyor to the Zinc Corporation, Broken Hill, NSW, which he recorded as his postal address.

He recorded education qualifications of a Bachelor of Engineering (Mining and Metallurgy) achieved at Sydney University in 1909 and a Mine Manager Certificate of Competency achieved in NSW in 1913.

Military qualifications included two years service (1907-08) with the University Scouts. From January 1915 he was associated with the 12th Field Company, Broken Hill. A medical examination at the time recorded that he was 5ft 2ins tall and weighed 8 stone 12 pounds and his Application was recommended on 15 November 1915 by the Commandant of the 4th Military District (South Australia).

On 27 November 1915 he completed the 'Attestation Paper of Persons Enlisted for Service Abroad' naming as his Next-of-Kin his mother, Mrs. Teresa Collins Morris of "Broadview", Middle Head Road, Mosman, Sydney.

He recorded that he was currently serving with the Australian Mining Corps and had completed the 9-week School of Instruction at the Engineers Reinforcements Depot, Moore Park, Sydney.

Albert was appointed as 2nd Lieutenant in the Australian Imperial Force on 27 November 1915, the appointment confirmed on 10 February 1916.

A medical examination on 11 February 1916 at Casula, NSW recorded that he was 29 years and 7 months of age, stood 5ft 3ins tall and weighed 128 pounds. He had a dark complexion, grey eyes and black hair. He was of the Presbyterian faith. Albert signed the Oath to 'well and truly serve' the same day.

The 1st Australian Mining Corps consisted of three companies and a technical Headquarters. Recruiting began sometime in November 1915.

The original No.3 Company consisted of Company Headquarters and 3 Sections recruited in the 6th M.D. (WA). This major portion of No.3 Company was recruited by 2nd Lt L.J. Coulter, A.I.F. who was sent from N.S.W. to W.A. for that purpose.



Coulter brought the 3 sections his Company recruited in WA to Sydney, arriving on December 26th, and marched into Casula Camp where he was joined by the 4th Section of Tasmanian Miners, bringing the strength up to establishment – 15 officers and 349 O.Rs.

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

O.C. Lt L.J. Coulter
Lt H. Trousselot Adjt.

No 1 Section Lt A.J. Hillman, 2/Lt W.W. Grainger, 2/Lt J.O.O. McArdell.

No 2 Section Lt H.W. Brown, 2/Lt A.W. Kennedy, 2/Lt O.R. Howie.

No 3 Section Lt C.W. Whyte, 2/Lt H.V. Seale, 2/Lt A.C. Morris.

No 4 Section Lt B. Priestman, 2/Lt G.T. Crawshaw, 2/Lt N. Buley.

Albert and the Mining Corps embarked at Sydney on board *Ulysses*.

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.

Following the farewell parade in the Domain, Sydney, the Australian Mining Corps embarked from Sydney, New South Wales on 20 February 1916 on board HMAT A38 *Ulysses*.

The Mining Corps comprised 1303 members at the time they embarked with a Headquarters of 40; No.1 Company – 390; No.2 Company – 380; No.3 Company – 392, and 101 members of the 1st Reinforcements.

Ulysses arrived in Melbourne, Victoria on 22 February and the Miners were camped at Broadmeadows while additional stores and equipment were loaded onto *Ulysses*. 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.

Departing Melbourne on 1 March, *Ulysses* sailed to Fremantle, Western Australia where a further 53 members of the Corps were embarked. 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. After a delay of about a month for repairs, The Mining Corps sailed for the European Theatre on 1 April 1916.

The ship arrived at Suez, Egypt on 22 April, departing for Port Said the next day; then on to Alexandria.

'On the arrival of our troop ship in Alexandria in April 16, a party of some 120 out of our 1200 miners, with the wanderlust strong upon them, broke loose suddenly from our troop ship (Ulysses) as she lay at the wharf, rushed the sentries, and went careering like a lot of released school boys up the main street of Alexandria, making for the heart of the city.

Some bad sport, perhaps one should rather say, one sound disciplinarian, telephoned to the military police. And in due course the sappers were met by some charabancs driven by genial gentlemen, who offered them a lift.

The offer was of course accepted, and presently the vehicle swung into a courtyard, the gates of which were promptly closed, and the sappers then realised that they were prisoners. One hundred and twenty of them were locked up in a building designed for a maximum of 60. The sappers called it the 'boob'. The night was very hot and the "boob" threatened to become a veritable Black Hole of Calcutta.

In the early dawn, an agonized SOS came from the military police to our ship to say that the sappers were tunnelling under the walls of the boob, and that it was tottering to its foundations, and would we send up a strong-armed party at once to hold and remove the prisoners.'

Major T.W. Edgeworth David

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 Mining Corps was transhipped to B1 *Ansonia* for the final legs to Marseilles, France via Valetta, Malta.

Arriving at Marseilles on 5 May, most of the men entrained for Hazebrouck where they arrived to set up their first camp on 8 May 1916.

A 'Mining Corps' did not fit in the British Expeditionary Force, and the Corps was disbanded and three Australian Tunnelling Companies were formed. The Technical Staff of the Corps Headquarters, plus some technically qualified men from the individual companies, was formed into the entirely new Australian Electrical and Mechanical Mining and Boring Company (AEMMBC), better known as the 'Alphabetical Company'.

On 13 May, Albert was attached for duty with the 4th Section to the 254th Tunnelling Company, Royal Engineers.

He was promoted to rank of Lieutenant on 15 June 1916 and became the Commander of No.3 Section from 23 July 1916.

He was granted temporary rank of Captain while commanding his section from 24 July 1916.

Temporary Captains, R.Y. Langdon and A.C. Morris were promoted Captains as from 1 January 1917.

On 26 February 1917 Albert injured his knee accidentally. On 2 March he was admitted to the 33rd Casualty Clearing Station with a simple fracture of the right fibula.

He was transferred by 20 Ambulance Train to the 20th General Hospital at Camiers on 4 March and the next day evacuated to England from Calais on board Hospital Ship *Brighton* where he was admitted to the 3rd London General Hospital on 5 March.

On 12 March he was transferred to the 6th Auxiliary Hospital, and then to Cobham Hall (a 16th century manor house on 150 acres used as an Australian hospital in WW1) on 23 March.

He was discharged to No.1 Command Depot, Perham Downs, on 12 April and then to the Details Camp on 17 April.

He proceeded overseas to France on 7 May and marched in to the Australian General Base Depot, Etaples, before re-joining his Unit at Noeux les Mines on 13 May 1917.

Sergeant Hughy Dodd, AEMMBC, recorded in his diary:

"29 September 1917

It would not be believed if anyone out there was told that you could walk almost 10 miles underground from Givenchy to Loos but seeing is believing."

After consultation between the G.O.C. & C.E. Canadian Corps, the G.O.C. 3rd Canadian Division and the C.O. 3rd Aust. Tunnelling Company, a decision was arrived at to proceed with the construction of an underground, defensive system on Hill 70 to strengthen this important salient.

Work was begun on 2nd January 1918.



Briefly outlined, it was proposed to make Hill 70 a very strong position, manned with machine guns and each machine gun was to be supported on each side by a rifle section or Lewis Gun Crew to act as supports, in case of attack by the enemy.

AWM Image ID: E01712

Western Front: Western Front (France), Nord Region (France)
Loos - 31 January 1918 - Captain A. C. Morris, Commander of No. 3 Section, 3rd Australian Tunnelling Company, standing near an intermediate entrance to Hythe Tunnel, in a communication trench known as Hythe Alley, at Hill 70, near Loos.

The Gravel Pit in advance of Lyme Trench was to be connected by a tunnel to an existing 60cm light railway which had been constructed by the Canadian Engineers, up to the old British Line No.1 as its Junction with Loos Sunken Road.

Besides M.G.E.'s Observation Posts and Exits for Rifle Sections on Lewis Gun Parties were to be constructed, and each of these were to be connected with the Main Tunnel Subway.

An extensive garrison underground was to be constructed & manned, to be self-contained, and to be supplied with food and materials sufficient to withstand a siege for some time if the enemy should happen to break through the Line at any time.

The German resistance put up Moquet Farm, by a similarly constructed stronghold and garrison, where 60 men had resisted first the superior British Forces & driven them back with loss, secondly had held at bay the Canadians and had finally resisted very much more superior numbers of the Australians & inflicted great losses on them, before they were overcome and had to surrender, gave Major Sanderson the ideas for the Hill 70 scheme.

The main tunnel was driven under the old German Line No.1 and the main Lens – La Bassee Road, and constructed under and parallel with the existing main communication Trench known as Hythe Alley. The preliminary reconnaissances, surveys and alignments of the scheme and the marking out of the inclined shafts in opening up the work, were carried out by a party in command of Lieut H. Russel, M.C.

AWM Image ID: E04566

France. 31 January 1918. Hill 70, near Loos, showing the camouflage covering the dumps of chalk which had been brought to the surface in excavating the Hythe Tunnel Subway System. The concealment of this chalk proved a big problem, as about 12,000 tons had to be disposed of within a short distance of the enemy's lines. The 3rd Australian Tunnelling Company was employed on this work. Identified are, Captain A. C. Morris (left), and Lieutenant D. Wentworth (right).

No.3 Section under Captain A.C. Morris was engaged on the work, principally mining, until the 3rd of March following, upon which date, changes in Divisional Occupation of the Sector changes of policy, necessitated that the scheme as originally proposed should be relinquished.

Albert proceeded on leave on 7 February 1918, re-joining his unit on 22 February. On 20 February he was due 3 Blue Chevrons for his uniform. Each blue Service Chevron denoted one year's service from 1 January 1915. A red Chevron denoted service before 31 December 1914.

On 24 May 1918 an audit board consisting of Captain A.J. Hillman, Capt R.J. Langdon, and Captain A.C. Morris, were detailed to examine all books and accounts of regimental funds, canteens, cinema, barber shop, sports, officer's Mess, Sergeant's Mess and other funds quarterly.

On 3 July 1918, an audit board to audit, the accounts of the Regimental Funds, Canteen, Cinema, Barber's Shop and Messes, was detailed consisting of: -

Captain A.C. Morris
Captain J.O.O. McArdell
Lieut. K. Byron Moore.

AWM Image ID: E02485

France 19 June 1918 - Group portrait of some of the officers (without hats) of the 3rd Australian Tunnelling Company, outside their Nissen hut quarters at Neoux-le-Mines.

Back row, left to right: Lieutenant (Lt) J. B. SHAW MC; Lt D. WENTWORTH; Lt K. B. MOORE; Lt R. G. ASHCROFT MC; Lt R. DePASSEY; Lt O. J. STERNBERG; Lt C. C. SHAW MC.

Front row: Lt W. R. JONES; Captain (Capt) A. C. MORRIS MC; Capt A. J. HILLMAN MC; Major A. SANDERSON DSO MC, Commanding Officer; Capt R. Y. LANGDON MC; Lt E. P. HORN, Adjutant and Quartermaster; Lt J. ROBERTSON.

On 20 August 1918, Albert was detailed to attend a Musketry Refresher School at Matringhem to last 10 days.

The report from Commandant, First Army Musketry Camp concerning Albert read:

‘Report on Captain A.C. Morris who attended the Special Short Course for R.A. and R.E. Officers concluded 1/9/18.

RESULTS OF EXAMINATIONS

	Marks obtained Maximum	
Oral. Aiming and Firing Instruction	165	200
Written. General Knowledge of Subjects	98	100
Dealt with during the Course	263	300

Order of Merit 4

Strength of Course 10

General Remarks: Has very good knowledge – is an energetic and capable instructor. Very keen – should be invaluable in rifle training of his unit. 3/9/18’

On 28 September 1918, Major Alexander Sanderson, O.C. 3rd Australian Tunnelling Company, recommended Albert for the Military Cross:

‘This officer has been employed on the Hill 70 front for over 2 years. He has commanded a section since 24.7.16. During the past 7 months his section has completed over two miles of Infantry Subway in very exposed positions on the Hill 70 front. The success of this work is largely due to the example of gallantry and devotion to duty always shewn by Capt. Morris.’

The award was recommended by H. H. Yuill, Lt. Col, Royal Engineers, Controller of Mines, First Army, and approved by the Chief Engineer, First Army.

During early September, the 3rd Australian Tunnelling Company had been engaged in its usual construction work along the I Corps front. Captain Albert Morris was recommended for the Military Cross for his outstanding and courageous work at Hill 70 in leading his section, No.3 Section, in the successful construction of over 3,000 metres of infantry subways including the Hythe Tunnel, in exposed positions over a seven-month period. The work was all but completed by mid-September.

Crumps and Camouflets – Australian Tunnelling Companies on the Western Front: Damien Finlayson – p.375

On 11 November 1918, Albert proceeded on 30 days Special Leave.

It is believed that when Albert was on leave in 1918 and staying with relatives in London he met Muriel Alice Webb, the girl next door.

Muriel was the daughter of Thomas Henry and Alice Sarah Mary (nee Mills) Webb. Thomas was a Bank Manager and had died in 1916.

In the A.I.F. Honours List 427 of 1 January 1919 Major A. Sanderson MC was awarded the DSO and Captain A.C. Morris received the MC.

He marched out of 3ATC on 15 February 1919 to begin demobilisation and repatriation to Australia.

Albert was a member of 3ATC from May 1916. 3ATC first saw action at Boars Head in the lead up the Fromelles diversion ‘stunt’ of July 1916. The Company was allocated to the First Army and were engaged variously at Laventie-Fauquissart, Givenchy, Loos, Lens, Double Crassiers and Vermelles and other places on the Western Front.

On 27 November 1916 at the ‘Black Watch Sap’, Hill 70, an enemy camouflet (or a premature explosion, depending on different accounts) killed 20 members of the company. The next day 2 more members were killed in the same area by an enemy camouflet. The 22 members of 3ATC were buried in 14 adjacent graves at the Hersin Communal Cemetery Extension.

The Companies major effort was at Hill 70 where they constructed the extensive Hythe Tunnel system. The company was also heavily involved in road and bridge construction and the locating and clearing of enemy mines and booby traps. This continued for the company for some months after the Armistice.

Leaving France on 19 February, he marched in to the A.I.F. Training depot at Parkhouse where he was granted non-military employment leave from 22 February to 30 November 199 to study Metallurgy attending the Royal School of Mines. On 20 September it was noted that he was attending Messrs. East Pool & Agar Ltd at Carn Brea, Cornwall.

On 1 December he was granted further leave until 15 December.

On 16 December 1919 at the Chiswick, Albert married 26-year-old Muriel Alice Webb, daughter of Thomas Henry Webb.



Albert reported to D.A.A.G., London, on 22 December and was attached to the Finance Section for duty. He was granted further leave from 27 January until 15 February 1920.

Albert and his wife Muriel embarked for the voyage to Australia on 17 April 1920 on board *Bahia Castillo*, disembarking on 19 June 1920.

His appointment as an officer in the A.I.F. was terminated on 21 August 1920, entitled to wear the Military Cross, the British War medal and the Victory Medal.

In response to a request from Sydney University, Albert provided details of his service:

“Arrived France May 1916. Proceeded to La Bassee, attached to English Tunnelling Co for three weeks. Proceeded to Laventie & Tunnelling on Fauquissart sector till November 1916. Then proceeded to Loos Salient opposite Lens. Tunnelling on this sector till October 1918. Then advanced into Belgium on recovery of delayed action mines & restoration of roads & bridges.”

He included that he had broken a leg at Loos in January 1917, and that he had been awarded the Military Cross.

He gave his address as C/o Erina Shire Council, Gosford, NSW.

The Sydney University’s website, ‘Beyond 1914’, records:

Albert Colin Morris:-

M.C., B.E. : Captain, 3rd Australian Tunnelling Coy., A.I.F., France. Enlisting in November, 1915, and sailing in February, 1916, was attached to a British coy. for three weeks at La Bassee in May, proceeding to Laventie and tunnelling on Fouquissart sector till November. Served in the Loos salient opposite Lens and, although injured in January, 1917, remained with coy. until October, 1918, when unit advanced as far as Leuze, Belgium. From the Armistice till February, 1919, engaged on recovery of delay action mines and restoration of roads and bridges, returning in June, 1920. Awarded M.C. 1st January, 1919, and Mentioned in Despatches. Early education at East Maitland High School.

Albert had been admitted as an Associate Member of the Australian Institute of Mining Engineers in 1913 and was regularly mentioned in the Proceedings Journals throughout, and after, the war.

Proceedings Institute of Mining Engineers Journal 31 March 1917 No 25 p vi – ix.

The Institute has reason to be proud of the response made by its Members to the call to join the colors. The list on Active Service now includes:

Morris, A.C.

LIST OF MEMBERS
OF THE

(Tunnellers only) Date of election § Author of paper.

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

Morris, A.C., Zinc Corporation Ltd., Broken Hill, NSW 1913

MINUTES

Proceedings Institute of Mining Engineers Journal 31 Mar 1918 No 29 p xv

The following is a list of those Members known to be "On Active Service" and shows how splendid has been the response to the Empire's call to arms:

Morris, A.C.

Proceedings Institute Mining & Metallurgy Journal 31 March 1921 No 41 xxv – xviii

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

Morris, A.C., Zinc Corporation Ltd., Broken Hill NSW 1913

Albert joined the NSW Public Service and was appointed to the Main Roads Board as an Engineer on 15 June 1925 at a salary of £405-4-4 with a £100 allowance whilst acting as Metropolitan Maintenance Engineer.

In January 1929 Alberts' service and medical records were provided to the Repatriation Commission, Sydney.



Muriel's mother, Alice died at Gosford, NSW on 27 September 1929 aged 74 years; mother of Charles and Harold Webb and Muriel Morris.

The Electoral Rolls of 1930 record Albert Colin Morris, Engineer, living at Eulalie Avenue, Gosford, NSW, with Muriel performing home duties.

The Electoral Rolls of 1937 and 1943 record Albert Colin Morris, Engineer, living at White Street, Gosford, NSW, with Muriel performing home duties.

In 1949 Albert and Muriel are living at Boolarong Road, Pymble, NSW, with daughter Muriel Catherine Morris, Scientist.

Reunions

Past members of the Australian Electrical & Mechanical Mining & Boring Company and Tunnelling Companies gathered on or about Anzac Day for a reunion luncheon. We have had access to some of their records, which were very well kept and are quite detailed. Albert first appears on the list in 1934 giving his address as Shire Engineer, Gosford.

After each reunion, a newsletter was distributed by John Royle, Albert being mentioned at times:

30th June, 1949:

The following were present:

Colin (Dap) Morris – now with the Housing Commission.

20th June, 1950:

The Tunnellers and Alphabets who attended were:-

Col Morris

1st September, 1963:

COL MORRIS, when last heard of, was at his new address.

A.C. Morris

Collinson Street

Tenambit,

East Maitland, N.S.W

7th June, 1968:

letter from Alex Kennedy,

If you see Ponty, Col. Morris and Bill Anderson, would you remember me to them, also if you write to Bill McBride tell him I'm still above ground.

On 8 November 1951, Albert, Muriel and daughter Muriel Catherine departed London bound for Sydney as 1st Class passengers on board *Strathaird*.

The Electoral Rolls of 1954 and 1958 record Albert Colin Morris, Engineer, living at 32 Boolarong Road, St Ives, NSW, with Muriel performing home duties.

By the 1963 Roll, Albert has retired and is living at Collinson Street, Tenambit, NSW, with Muriel performing home duties.

Muriel Alice Morris died on 10 June 1963, aged 70 years. She was buried at Saint James Church, Morpeth, Maitland City, NSW.

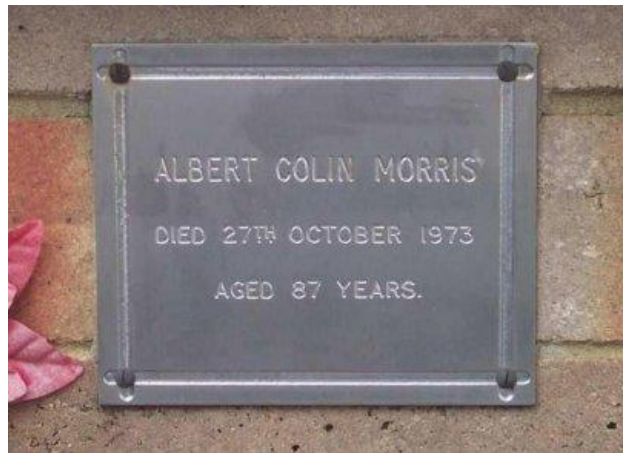
Albert continued living at Collinson Street, Tenambit, but by 1972 had moved to 77 Swan Street, Morpeth, NSW and was living with his daughter Muriel and her family.

Albert Colin Morris died on 27 October 1973m aged 87 years. He was buried at Saint James Church, Morpeth, Maitland City, NSW.

Sydney Morning Herald - Tuesday October 30, 1973:

DEATHS

MORRIS, Albert Colin—October 27, 1973, at Maitland Hospital, late of 77 Swan Street, Morpeth, and formerly of Pymble, beloved father of Pym, father-in-law of John and loved grandfather of Ian, Ross and Jane. Privately cremated Beresfield October 29, 1973.



How Ross remembers his Pop :

He died when I was 16, and he lived with us at Morpeth from when I was about 8 after his wife gangie died, so I had a lot to do with him, probably more so than Ian and Jane. Always well dressed and organized and busy – wanted things done correctly – definitely did not spoil his grandchildren but always bought us relevant presents and looked after us. Before he moved down to live with us he lived about 5 miles away, and on Saturdays I would ride my bike to his house and I would mow his lawn, after mowing he would get me to clean the mower, and take out its spark plug and clean it. He was teaching me about mechanics and looking after things properly. He had a shed and we would go into the shed and make kites from paper, string and sticks.

All the tools had to go back in the right spot, and he would get cranky if you didn't do things properly, he would ruffle my hair and pat me on the back, but he would never give me a hug or kiss me. Sometimes I would stay over and we would always have bacon and eggs for breakfast – he put lots of pepper on his eggs and made French toast.

Of an evening, he would put on good clothes and often a tie and coat and sit out on his verandah or the verandah at Morpeth and have a whisky with gangie and gangie – he never drank too much. Loved the horses and looked after them, made sure we kept the saddles and bridles well oiled.

I sat in the car with him one day when I was about 14 waiting for gangie in Maitland and we were looking at the bridge over the hunter and he asked me if I had thought about being an engineer, he explained how the bridge worked and what engineers did – I think that is why I am an engineer. As he got old he stayed at home and gangie looked after him, he loved to go out on car trips with her as a little old man, he was like a toby – he never



complained. He wasn't a typical Australian bloke at all, he didn't follow sport. Old friends would come and visit him from the war or from England and you could tell they had a great respect for this little man. Once a week he would catch the bus from Morpeth into Maitland carrying a little leather suitcase with an empty bottle of Johnny Walker whisky – he would go into O'Briens store in Maitland and get a new bottle and then he would go down the street and meet up with old Mr Johnston who owned a shoe store – they had gone to school together at Maitland High, where pop was a boarded and the two of them would sit down and have a chat – and maybe a whisky. He loved gardening and all animals – very much so the horses. He built a little rowing boat for Ian and me out of timber which we took on holidays. He was very close to his wife, and also to gangie (my mum) – he called her 'babe' – in fact he adored her and she adored him – I never saw them argue. She was really very similar to him – loved to go out on trips and be doing things, never sat still.

That is how I remember the little wizard from wales who was my grandfather.

Ross Clarke

Two of Muriels' brothers also served in WW1:

2nd LIEUTENANT CYRIL FRANCIS WEBB
2nd Battalion - Yorkshire Regiment (Green Howards)

Cyril was the son of Thomas Henry Webb, Bank Manager, and the brother of Muriel Alice Webb who married Albert Colin Morris on 16 December 1919.

He was reported missing, presumed dead, on 25 September 1915 during the First Battle of Ypres. He has no known grave and is commemorated on the Loos Memorial.

2nd Battalion, Yorkshire Regiment (Green Howards)

The 2nd Battalion, Yorkshire Regiment (Green Howards) was in Guernsey in August 1914 when war broke out. They were ordered to return to England and landed at Southampton on the 28th of August and joined 21st Brigade, 7th Division.

They Proceeded to Belgium to join the BEF on the 6th of October 1914 landing at Zeebrugge. They suffered very heavy losses in the First Battle of Ypres and did not regain full strength until February 1915. They took part in the major battles of 1915 including Neuve Chapelle, Aubers Ridge, Festubert, the second action at Givenchy and The Battle of Loos. On 20 December 1915 21st Brigade transferred to 30th Division. They saw action in the Battle of the Somme in 1916, the pursuit of the German retreat to the Hindenburg Line, the Arras offensive and the Third Battle of Ypres in 1917. In early 1918 they saw action on the Somme and at the Battle of the Lys, following which the army was reorganised, the 2nd Battalion absorbed the 6th Battalion on the 11th of May 1918 and transferred to 32nd Brigade, 11th (Northern) Division. The saw action in the Battles of the Hindenburg Line and at the Armistice the Division was on the ground east of Havay.

Source: <http://www.wartimememoriesproject.com/greatwar/allied/battalion.php?pid=6212>

Rawlinson wrote to the King's adviser Stamfordham (28 September 1915)

From what I can ascertain, some of the divisions did actually reach the enemy's trenches, for their bodies can now be seen on the barbed wire.

— Rawlinson

Major-General Richard Hilton, at that time a Forward Observation Officer, said of the battle:

A great deal of nonsense has been written about Loos. The real tragedy of that battle was its nearness to complete success. Most of us who reached the crest of Hill 70, and survived, were firmly convinced that we had broken through on that Sunday, 25th September 1915. There seemed to be nothing ahead of us, but an unoccupied and incomplete trench system.



The only two things that prevented our advancing into the suburbs of Lens were, firstly, the exhaustion of the "Jocks" themselves (for they had undergone a bellyfull of marching and fighting that day) and, secondly, the flanking fire of numerous German machine-guns, which swept that bare hill from some factory buildings in Cite St. Auguste to the south of us. All that we needed was more artillery ammunition to blast those clearly-located machine-guns, plus some fresh infantry to take over from the weary and depleted "Jocks." But, alas, neither ammunition nor reinforcements were immediately available, and the great opportunity passed.

— Richard Hilton

The twelve attacking battalions suffered 8,000 casualties out of 10,000 men in four hours. French had already been criticised before the battle and lost his remaining support in the government and army, because of the British failure and that he was responsible for poor handling of the reserve divisions. French was replaced by Haig as Commander-in-Chief (C-in-C) of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) in December 1915.

British casualties in the main attack were 48,367 and they suffered 10,880 more in the subsidiary attack, a total of 59,247 losses of the 285,107 British casualties on the Western Front in 1915. J. E. Edmonds, the British Official Historian, gave German losses in the period 21 September – 10 October as c. 26,000 of c. 141,000 casualties on the Western Front during the autumn offensives in Artois and Champagne. In *Der Weltkrieg*, the German official account, losses of the German 6th Army are given as 29,657 to 21 September; by the end of October losses had risen to 51,100 men and total German casualties for the autumn battle (*Herbstschlacht*) in Artois and Champagne, were given as 150,000 men.

25 September

In many places British artillery had failed to cut the German wire in advance of the attack. Advancing over open fields, within range of German machine guns and artillery, British losses were devastating. The British were able to break through the weaker German defences and capture the town of Loos-en-Gohelle, mainly due to numerical superiority. Supply and communications problems, combined with the late arrival of reserves, meant that the breakthrough could not be exploited. Haig did not hear until 10:00 a.m. that the divisions were moving up to the front. French visited Haig from 11:00 to 11:30 a.m. and agreed that Haig could have the reserve but rather than using the telephone he drove to Haking's headquarters and gave the order at 12:10 p.m. Haig then heard from Haking at 1:20 p.m. that the reserves were moving forward.

Source: <http://www.longlongtrail.co.uk/battles/battles-of-the-western-front-in-france-and-flanders/the-battle-of-loos/>

CAPTAIN CHARLES HENRY SHORNEY WEBB **Royal Army Medical Corps**

Charles Henry Shortney was the son of Thomas Henry Webb, Bank Manager, and the brother of Muriel Alice Webb who married Albert Colin Morris on 16 December 1919.

London Gazette 20 August 1914:

Granted Lieutenant rank as from 10 August 1914 – Charles Henry Shorney Webb, M.B., F.R.C.S.

Occupation –

General surgeon / Casualty Surgical Officer

Details:

Born on 22 January 1886 at Balham, the eldest son of Thomas Henry Webb, bank manager, and Alice Mills, his wife. He entered Merchant Taylors' School, then situated in Charterhouse Square, in 1895 and left in 1902.

He received his medical education at Middlesex Hospital where he had a brilliant career; exhibitioner in 1905, Broderip scholar and Lyell gold medallist in 1908, house surgeon in 1909, casualty officer 1910-12, surgical registrar 1912-14, assistant surgeon 1917-1930. He was also for a time surgeon to St Saviour's Hospital in Osnaurgh Street, NW1.



During the Balkan war of 1912-13 he served with a Red Cross unit, and on the outbreak of the first world war he received a commission as lieutenant, RAMC on 10 August 1914 (captain, 10 August 1915, acting major, January 1918), and proceeded at once to France with the British Expeditionary Force. He was posted to the 4th casualty clearing station and remained with it until 1918, when he was placed in charge of a surgical division of the 24th General Hospital at Staples. During his service in France and in absentia, he was elected in 1917 assistant surgeon to the Middlesex Hospital, but did not take up the duties until he was demobilized in 1919. He resigned in 1930 and was subsequently appointed consulting surgeon to the Middlesex County Council. During the latter years of his life he was attached to the West Middlesex County Hospital at Isleworth, where he died of infective endocarditis on 1 June 1937. He married Norah Pearson on 14 September 1935. She survived him but without children. Webb's gifts were many. He was a fine linguist, a great lover of music, and a good organist and pianist. He was captain of the University of London Chess Club in 1910-11 and gained his half-blue for chess. His operative experience was very great, he was an excellent teacher and a friend to his students.

Died

1 June 1937, Isleworth

Source: <https://livesonline.rcseng.ac.uk/BIOGS/E004752B.HTM>

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