

William was born in Hull, Yorkshire in 1876, the son of William and Jane. On 11th August 1914 he enlisted as a signaller/private in the AN&MEF. On his attestation papers he stated that he was a cook, single and gave his next of kin as his Mother of 96 Portland St, Hull. He also stated that he had 12 years previous service with the Garrison Artillery.

In the publication, *Australians In Action*, by Signaller L C Reeves, the author, who was part of the AN&MEF, recalled an incident when the men were called to action and – “ A young Australian lad- a trainee – got a little excited in his haste to get his 'fighting kit' together, and in the dark walked not too kindly on the stomach of this old Imperial soldier, who had a great service record and was number 13. His language was quite expressive of his feelings, and very decisive. No. 13 had had other misfortunes. He fell down the hatch of the *Berrima*: fell over a cliff on Mount Mother, and only saved himself from certain destruction by grasping a rock; he was hauled up with a rope and was quite exhausted; he banged his head against a tree on Palm Island, which left a nasty scar. He confidentially informed me he did not expect to return from this expedition, but that it didn't matter. He got home alright though.”

William returned to Australia and was discharged, end of period of enlistment, on 4th March 1915 having served 206 days with the AN&MEF.

On 19th Jan 1916 he enlisted in the newly formed 34th Battalion which was encamped at the Maitland Showground. On 3rd March 1916 he was listed as a deserter and a Warrant was issued for his arrest.

A year later, on 15th Jan 1917, he again enlisted in the AIF, this time into the 53rd Battalion reinforcements, and this time under the name William Starkey. He set sail from Sydney aboard the *ANCHISES* and arrived in Cape Town on 25th Feb 1917. He went AWOL and missed the ships departure for the UK, having to catch the *BALLARAT* on 23rd March for his continued passage to Devonport, arriving on 25th April 1917.

By mid-September he was in France and transferred to the 38th Battalion just in time for the Battle of Passchendaele, during which the Battalion suffered 62% casualties.

William returned to England in October 1918 and went AWOL and was sentenced to 28 Days detention.

He returned to Australia aboard the *CERAMIC* in January 1919.