

**J**ohann Heinrich Williams was possibly named after his grandfather, Johann Heinrich Wehr, but the only time that this name was recorded was on his birth certificate. On other documentation during his life, his name is anglicized to John Henry, but he was always called Henry.

The second child of Louise and George Williams, he was born on 7 September 1892 near Peterborough in the mid-north of South Australia. He grew up in Renmark on the River Murray where his parents were pioneer orchardists on the newly opened Chaffey Irrigation Scheme.

When the First World War was declared on 1 August 1914, Henry was one of the first of the young men to enlist in the army, as his service number, 567 shows.

He joined the 9<sup>th</sup> Light Horse Reinforcements of the Australian Imperial Forces on 26 October 1914. He was aged twenty two, and his army papers describe him as 5'10" tall, 158 pounds, dark complexion and brown eyes and hair.

On entering the service, Henry took an oath that, in part, says;- "I, John Henry Williams swear that I will well and truly serve our Sovereign Lord the King in the Australian Imperial Force from 26.10.14 until the end of the War, and a further period of four months thereafter". He did that exactly – serving a total of four years and 196 days!

In February 1915, after an initial training period, Henry embarked for Egypt and was soon engaged in very heavy fighting at Gallipoli in Turkey.

The local paper, "The Murray Pioneer" reported on 9 February 1917:-

*"Gunner J.H. Williams, son of Mr George Williams of "Hillview", who was recently reported wounded in the casualty list, enlisted in October 1914. He was present at Gallipoli and went through the memorable action at Lone Pine Ridge, from which only 9 men of his company came out unscathed.*

*He was wounded at Gallipoli, from whence he was invalided home to England where he was undergoing treatment for some time in a London hospital; after which he was transferred back to Egypt, early in 1916.*

*There he was transferred from the 9th. Light Horse to the Artillery and went over to France with the second Australian contingent.*

*Mr George Williams received word from the Authorities announcing that his son was wounded (second time) last Saturday week".*

His medical reports indicate that he had a severe bullet wound in his left arm when he was wounded at Gallipoli, and the second wounding was also a bullet wound, but this time in his right arm.

This time he was hospitalised in France and became a driver when he recovered. His brother Ern, in writing home to his parents, mentioned that he and Henry had met briefly several times whilst they were in France and in a letter home to his parents says wistfully, "I wish he were in the same Brigade as I am; we would then be able to see one another more often."

The War ended on 11 November 1918 when Henry was still serving in France, but he did not return to England until 21 December and in February embarked on the "Delta" for Australia. It was at this time that a pandemic of an extremely severe influenza swept the world. Vaccines had not been developed to immunise people, and because antibiotics were unknown, thousands of people died, usually from bacterial pneumonia complications. Henry was one of the victims of influenza whilst he was aboard the "Delta", but fortunately recovered.

He returned to Australia just in time to be best man at his sister Lottie's marriage, and was finally discharged in May 1919.

In August 1920, Henry married Frances Pearl Jarvis at Port Elliot. Pearl, then aged twenty, was born in Yankalilla in the Inman Valley of South Australia. Henry and Pearl settled in Renmark, and it was here that their five children were born - Murray, Rex, Douglas, Meave and Valerie.

Henry's occupation on all their birth certificates is recorded as horticulturist. Because of the depression, Henry looked for more work and moved his young family firstly to Mildura in Victoria. Here they had the misfortune of their house being burnt out completely with all their possessions. Douglas, their son remembers that all the children were in their pyjamas watching the house burn, and he recalls the only possession that was saved was his mother's sewing machine.

The family went to Adelaide for a short time and then to Kalgoorlie in Western Australia where his father obtained work shearing and working as a timber-man in the Kalgoorlie gold mines. Henry, with a partner, staked a claim at Perkins's Range and together worked their gold mine.

By now Henry and Pearl were separated and later divorced. When Murray, his eldest son, was thirteen and legally old enough to leave school, he joined his father prospecting and later his brother, Rex joined them. The partners had modest success at their mine and at one time followed a good vein of gold, but eventually the show went too deep for them to mine without expensive machinery – which they could not afford.

In 1937 Henry married Lillian Maud Briers in Southern Cross, W.A. Henry worked at other mines at Mt. Palmer, at Norseman in the "Blue Bird Mine"(reputed to have the richest yield of gold for a time), but eventually he and Lillian settled in Busselton in the south-west corner of Western Australia.

Here Henry worked for many years as a travelling salesman for the firm of Watkins – selling herbs, spices, essences and medicinal needs to country people.

When the Second World War was declared, once again Henry, now aged forty nine, volunteered to join the Australian Military Force as W26429. He served in the 5th Garrison Battalion from March 1941 to December 1945 when he was discharged with the rank of Corporal.

In 1955, after eighteen years of marriage, Lillian died in Busselton, and three years later in September 1958, Henry married for the third time, Florence Rose Fairthorn in Melbourne, Victoria.

Henry and Florence retired to live in Mount Lawley, Perth. It was here that Henry died aged 83, in January 1976. He and Florence had also been married for eighteen years. Florence lived in Greenmount, Perth until her death in 1981.