

# Herbert Davis - An Original Anzac

*Rosemary Phillis*

When War was declared on 4 August 1914, Herbert Davis was quick to show his support by enlisting three weeks later on 29 August. According to his Army records, at the time of enlistment he was described as being 5 feet 4½ inches tall, 157 lbs, with a chest measurement of 35 inches. He had light brown hair, blue eyes and described his religion as Church of England.

As Herbert was 20 years and 8 months old and not the requisite 21, his father had to give permission for him to go overseas with the expeditionary forces. A copy of his father's letter reads:

*To Major Lucas D.A.S*

*Dear Sir,*

*I Hereby give my Consent for my Son Herbert Davis to go with the expeditionary Force.*

*I Remain*

*Yours Faithfully*

*Joseph Thomas Davis*

*The Windsor & Richmond Gazette 18 September 1914: Herbert Davis, son of Thomas Davis, of Riverstone, has been accepted for active service at the front. A few of his friends tendered him a private send-off.*

His Army service records provide little detail of his first few years of service. He is listed as having embarked from Australia on 13 October 1914 and joined the N.E.F. on 4 April 1915. If he had been badly wounded, suffered severe illness and been evacuated, more information would have been likely to have been listed.

*The Windsor & Richmond Gazette of 21 May 1915 reported: Pte. Herbert Davis, of Riverstone, who went with the first contingent to the front, is among the list of wounded in the Dardenelles engagement.*

This is the first indication that Herbert served at Gallipoli. Later reports in the Gazette confirm that he not only took part in the Gallipoli campaign, he took part in the first landing.

Herbert carried a camera with him for much of the war and took numerous snapshots. Unfortunately no one knows what happened to the photos. His son Harris was not aware of their existence.

*Windsor & Richmond Gazette 16 June 1916: Anyone can spend an interesting time looking over the snapshots Thomas Davis has received from his son, Herb, who has been away at the front since the outbreak of war. He went through the Gallipoli campaign. Amongst the snapshots there is one where Herb and young Paull of Pitt Town, are reading the 'Windsor and Richmond Gazette' newspaper.*

*Windsor & Richmond Gazette 7 July 1916: Mr and Mrs T. Davis of Riverstone have one of the finest collections of photos of war scenes and subjects of any person in the district. It comprises over 800 views, most of them taken by their son, Pte. Herbert Davis, now at the front in France. One of the photos shows Herb and a comrade reading the 'Windsor and Richmond Gazette', which is sent regularly to Herb by his mother. He enlisted when the war broke out in August 1914, went through the Gallipoli campaign and is still going strong. His camera was taken from him for a while, but has been restored to him.*

*Windsor & Richmond Gazette 28 July 1916: Dvr. Herb Davis, son of Mr and Mrs T. Davis, of Riverstone, has been enjoying a fortnight's rest in England. It is certain he requires a rest after nearly two years' of strain through war. He joined the first contingent that left these shores, and went through the Gallipoli campaign.*

*Windsor & Richmond Gazette 9 November 1917: Herb Davis, son of Mr and Mrs Thomas Davis, of Riverstone, is still going strong on the battlefields of France. It is now three years since he left these shores, and with the exception of a slight wound on one occasion, he has gone right through without injury sufficient to put him out of the firing line. If he has the good fortune to return home, he should receive a warm welcome. He has done more than his share on the sodden fields of France and the scorching hills of Gallipoli.*

*Windsor & Richmond Gazette 4 October 1918: Pte. Herb. Davis, son of Mr and Mrs T. Davis of Riverstone, will probably be amongst the large number of Anzacs returning in batches to Australia. He has been on the battlefields in Gallipoli and France. Herb should receive a royal welcome when he lands in Riverstone.*

*Windsor & Richmond Gazette 1 November 1918: One of the original Anzacs, Bombardier Herbert Davis, son of Mr and Mrs Thomas Davis of Riverstone, is coming home in 'L' boat, his parents having received word to that effect last week. Bombardier Davis enlisted in August 1914, three weeks after the war commenced. He went through the famous Gallipoli stunt, from the landing to the evacuation, without injury, but was slightly wounded in the wrist in France.*

*The parents received the following letter from their son a few days ago – written before he was aware that he was coming home among the original Anzacs.*

*'France August 25, 1918. Dear Mother and Father – Just a few lines in hopes of this finding you all well at home. It leaves me well, but very busy. Things are fairly warm here, and we do not mind, because for the first time the whole of the Australians fought together and advanced and captured many prisoners.*

*I guess you see in the papers this happening. There is much water about here, and we need it badly. There is not much news to give now, and we are very busy, so I will have to leave writing alone until I come out. I get a few papers and the "Windsor and Richmond Gazette" newspaper and they are quite readable, I can tell you. I guess there will be no chance for me of a visit home yet a while – too many married men. I have had over four years now, and feel as fit as when I left for the front. Your loving son, Herbert.'*

Herbert returned to Australia on 24 September 1918 and in 1919, he received the 1914/15 Star, the British War medal and the Victory medal.

The final reference to Herb from the time comes in the *Windsor & Richmond Gazette* of 5 September 1919: *Herb Davis, who was away at the front over four years, has had a cottage erected on the land he purchased at Schofields recently. He has already put under cultivation, a portion of the land.*

Herb married and had two children, Harris and Olga, who were featured in our Journal last year.