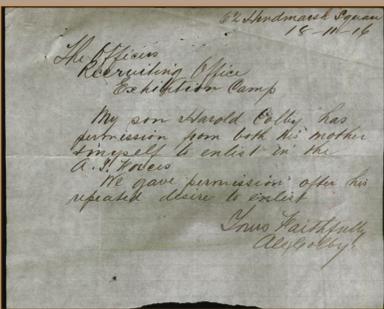


# HAROLD COLBY



**INITIATION CEREMONY AT GLOSSOP.**

An impressive initiation ceremony in connection with the Buffaloes Lodge was carried out at Glossop on Friday evening, November 10. The Lodge opened with a link of 4 brethren, Bro. Medlow (W.P.) occupying the chair. After the routine business had been disposed of Friend Colby was conducted through the Buffalo ceremony by Bros. Spender (K.O.M.) and Clarke (C.P.), Bro. Medlow carrying out the service in a most impressive manner. Later Bro. Colby was presented with his Buffalo emblem by Bro. J. S. Turnbull (K.O.M.). There was a large attendance of visiting brethren including Bros. Turnbull and W. Loxton (Renmark), A. H. Brown (Berri) Music, song and story were contributed by the city secretary and Bros. Sydney and Roden. The Remark visitors were greatly impressed with the lodge decorum while the state of the finances showed that an excellent set of officials were in charge. This lodge (the youngest on the river) has made rapid progress and reflects the highest credit on its founders, Knight Spender and Primo Medlow.



Harold Colbey (Colby) was born in Broken Hill, NSW to Alexander Colbey and Mary Morris in September 1900. He was the fourth child of seven although sadly the first three, two girls and one boy died as small children. When Harold was eight, the family moved to Adelaide where Alexander worked in the Postal and Telegraph services at the GPO. Harold left school in 1914 and worked as a messenger boy at the Overseas Telecommunication Company. When Harold turned 16 in September 1916 he wanted to enlist and so put his age up to 18 years and 2 months to make sure he was accepted. On enlistment the “e” was somehow dropped from his name on the paperwork and he was forever known thereafter as Harold Colby, his surname differing from the rest of the family. In future years he always joked and said he lost the “e” in WWI. His service number was 3388, his unit the 50th Infantry Battalion 2/9 Reinforcements.



Harold trained as a gunner and fought on the Western Front near Amiens on the Somme. In October 1918 Harold was admitted to the Bescombe Military Hospital with a gunshot wound to the abdomen, was wounded by a bullet that had hit his canvas belt, the belt saved his life. Harold explained years later to family that he was put in a primitive motorised truck with steel wheels, serving as an ambulance and transported with two other “dead men”, driven to a Field Hospital where he was eventually found to be alive. His wounds treated, he continued the fighting and finally in January 1919 left England for Australia on the hospital ship “City of Exeter”.

On the voyage home the men were told about the Government’s plans to develop Soldier Settlement Schemes so that the “Diggers” could become fruit growers and farmers. Discharged 20th March 1919 with a total time served of 2 years and 19 days, finishing his service as a Private, Harold arrived home from war at the actual age he enlisted as. Harold had relatives along the River Murray so with the newly formed Soldier Settlement Scheme on his mind, he applied for and was granted Block 358, a 17¼ acre block on uncleared scrubland at Winkie along Katarapko Crescent in the Berri Irrigation Area late in 1919.

The property consisted of two blocks, 17¼ acres of irrigable land and 6¼ acres of dry land over the road. He lived on the property firstly in a canvas tent, then a small timber cubicle and then in 1921 a stone, wood and iron house was built for him under the Government Scheme. Harold’s mother Mary, a widow came to live with him on the property and stayed until he married some years later, when she returned to Adelaide to live. His younger brothers Jack and Harry also lived with him at Winkie for some time.



The soil on Harold’s property was a red sandy loam, perfect for growing fruit trees and vineyards. Further over to the west the allocated property owners were not so lucky with much of the land too salty to allow for good growing, the rising salt slowly killed many of the vines and trees forcing the settlers to leave their land.

By 1921 the property was doing well, the Inspector of Soldier Settlement, Mr Partridge reported “this settler has made good progress”. As well as the three roomed stone and concrete house, there was 22½ chains of concrete channelling, a brush roof stable and a 10,000 gallon 19x19x9’ concrete underground water tank. Vines on the block consisted 14 acres of sultana, gordo and currents along with 150 apricot trees, 1 acre of lucerne and the 6¼ acres of dry land. To irrigate the vines, furrows needed to be forged between each of rows of vines to allow the water to run between the rows watering each vine as it slowly absorbed into the red soil. A plough was dragged behind the horse to create the furrow for the water to be diverted from the channel gate down the vine rows and the horse made the job much easier for the blocker. Intermittently the water supervisor for the district (known as the “water joey”) would contact the owner of the block to advise he would be “getting the water”. This would involve the water being directed to the block via concrete channelling from the Berri pumping station out to Winkie. From the channel a sluice gate would be opened and water would run into the furrows in the soil. This watering usually occurred about four times a year and was a big part of management of the property.

In 1926 Harold married Sylvia Pay. They had five children from 1927 to 1942. Eunice, Frank, Morris, Lance and Julie. Harold was a keen rower for the Berri Rowing Club, Secretary of the local Lodge, member of Winkie RSL and a founding member of the Berri Winery in 1922 and a member of the Berri Co-operative Packing Union (BCPU).

In 1948 when Harold’s son Lance left school, he worked with Harold and Sylvia on the block. This was to be his beginning of Lance’s lifetime on the land.

In 1964 Harold and Sylvia retired to Barmera. Every ANZAC Day Harold marched with his old unit to respect and remember all those who had made the ultimate sacrifice. Harold died aged 70 of a heart attack in 1971 and is buried in the Upper Murray Garden of Memory with other local servicemen.

