

First
World War
Centenary



Projet
Cecil Healy

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(Somme – France)*

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Grateful Thanks

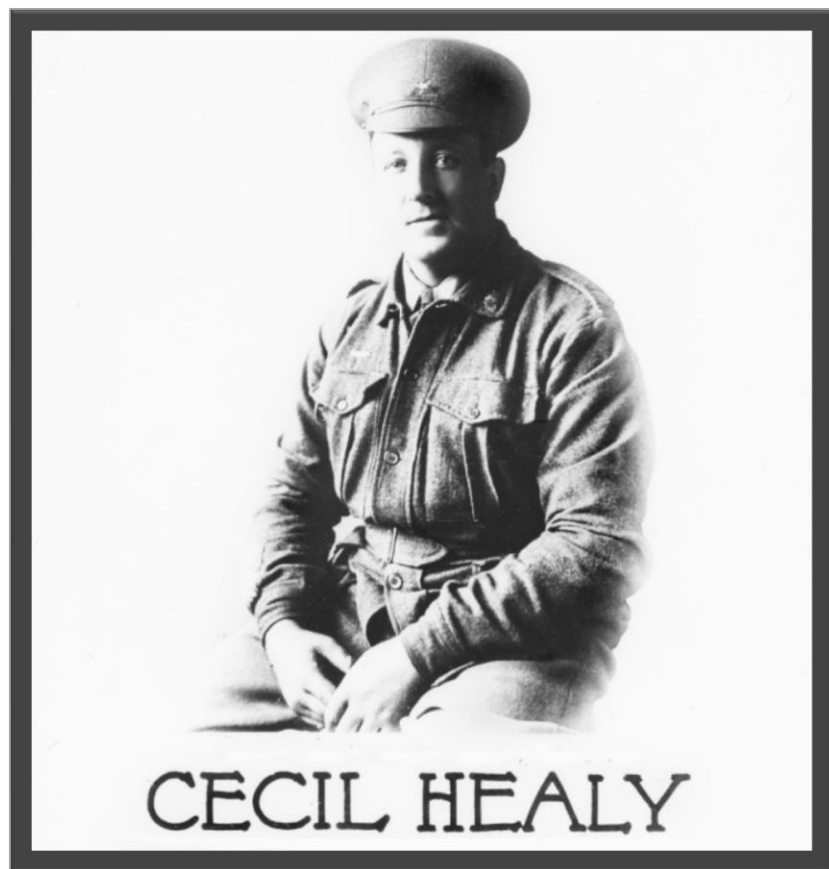
According to our knowledge, no work has been dedicated to Cecil Healy's life since a century. This centenary period will be, without doubt, an opportunity to Australian writers to fill this gap. This document therefore, sounds like attempting to gather information on Cecil Healy's life, so as to retrace his true life, from his birth to his tragic disappearance. Cecil HEALY has got this mournful distinction of being the only Olympic champion Australian man, died through the battle action during the first World War .Great distance separating our two countries clearly sounds to be a drawback in this type of research; this later, initiated in September 2012, would not have been put ahead with this advanced form without the precious help of the Australian War Memorial site and its advisers, who calmly allowed to initiate this project. The website of the National Library of Australia also revealed himself as an inexhaustible source of information. These two sites totally set free at our disposal, a very large number of documents from the era. Grateful acknowledgement to those who have enabled this work . I particularly would like to thank David Wilson, the Australian author of "Fighting Nineteenth' for his higher quality advice and time he had devoted to our project since our meeting in September 2013 but also Jean Joel Raelison for his translation work of certain items. Eventually, I gratefully thank my family who has simply given me a so precious time to enlighten Cecil Patrick Healy's singular existence .

Assevillers
December, 7th 2013
Bertrand Fareneau

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First World War Centenary

Assevillers Community

CENTENARY COMMEMORATION OF THE GREAT WAR

ADDRESS

Historical and Geographical context

By Bertrand FARENEAU

The municipality of Assevillers composed of some 300 inhabitants is a village situated in the Department of the Somme (France). The village hardly is a few kilometers away from the river endowed with the same name, near Péronne. During the first world war, the municipality was very severely affected by conflicts and in particular the battle of the Somme in July 1916. As a result, this battle generated the almost total destruction of the village during the Allied counter-attack. Thus, the Church, the Town Hall, the mill and many other agricultural buildings were devastated during this period. The population has not been spared, as located on the front line during almost of the time of the conflict, it has thus, undergone numerous consequences: forced evacuation, hostage, living under permanent large scale of shelling... So that's why Assevillers is found itself on its West Coast and East one, with the building of

trenches sometimes occupied first by the Germans and then by the French. Following the liberation of the village on August 28th, 1918, by the Australian army, it is almost naturally that the commune, which will receive the « croix de guerre » in 1920, proposes to host on its territory new military cemetery which will gather the remains of many soldiers, died in battle action and whose bodies were then scattered in isolated graves everywhere around the municipality. «Assevillers New British Cemetery» contains much more than eight hundred graves. The buried soldiers are of various nationalities: French, Australian, British, South African... In among these tombs, were four soldiers belonging to the 19th Australian infantry battalion. It's somewhat a bit particular battalion whereas it 's principally constituted of athletes and among those four soldiers, this later one, Cecil HEALY, is resting in our territory for whom the municipality of Assevillers would like today to celebrate the memory.



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<http://assevillers.80.free.fr>

PICTURES

**Cecil Healy, swimmer**

winners of the freestyle relay
Olympic Games, 1912
Crédit : nla.gov.au

**Cecil Healy, lifesaver**

Picture at Manly (Sydney) in 1911
Cecil Healy au milieu des sauveteurs de Manly
Crédit : surfresearch.com.au

A FEW NUMBER

09/1915

Date of enrolment

73

It's the number of days between the Healy's Death and Armistice

3

It's the number of Olympic Medals of Cecil Healy

Picture of
Cecil Healy : In Memoriam
(Sydney, 1919)



Biography Express

Registry :

Born :
- 28th Novembre 1882

Place of birth :
- Darlinghurst

Parents :
- Patrick Joseph Healy (barrister)
- Annie Louisa Galott

Children :
- 0

Date of death :
- 29th August 1918

Description :

Height :
- 5 feet 8 ¾ inch (173cm)

weight :
- 198 lbs (90kg)

Chest measurement :
- 43 inch (109cm)

Hair : Brown

Eyes : Brown

Others :

School :
- J. Lee Pullings's school (Bowral)
- St Aloysius' College (Sydney)

Job :
- vendeur

Last adress :
- Darling Point, Sydney

Service record :

Enlisted :
- 15 Septembre 1915

Déploiement :
- Egypte, France, Grande-Bretagne

Place of death :
- KIA, Bois de l'Épée
(FRANCE)

Leisure :

Sport :
- Natation, Surf, Boxe...

Lifesaver :
- Member and Captain of Manly Surf Club

Writing :
- writer, journalist, columnist

Rewards :

- Olympic medals
- Recordman of Australia
- Recordman of Europe
- World Recordman
- Silver medal of Royal Humane Society

Who was really Cecil Healy ?

By Bertrand FARENEAU

Cecil Patrick Healy was born in Darlinghurst on November 28th 1882. Darlinghurst is a neighbourhood of Sydney downtown located in the State of south New Wales in Australia. Cecil Healy is Patrick Joseph Healy's son, exercising the profession of lawyer, and Annie Louisa Galott. . He is the Fourth child of a family of seven brothers and sisters. Very quickly the family moved to Bowral, a small rural town located a hundred kilometres away to the East of Sydney where Cecil Healy will frequent primary school : J Lee Pullings's school. But his father died in September 1895 while Cecil was only 13 years old. So, Cecil Healy returned in the city of Sydney where he continued his studies at St Aloysius' College, a Catholic college. He also joined the swimming club : "East Sydney Swimming Club". It is here that Cecil Healy will fully be training for swimming. Early in 1900's, Healy was already a remarkable swimmer, he was regularly well placed in various competitions, but it is only from 1905 that Cecil Healy will be at the top of his art .

Repeatedly, he will win Australia Championships, will smash records and, will win Olympic medals... He took advantage of his popularity to write numerous articles and chronicles in newspapers, to inform more widely on the new technique of swimming (Crawl)... He is fully invested soon in 1907 in creating a sea rescue association and the popularization of surfing in Australia. Finally, he will engage himself at the army in 1915, will leave for Europe where he will die on the battlefield near Biaches in the 29th of August 1918.

Cecil Patrick Healy is the only Australian Olympic champion man died in combat.

His name is inscribed in the Roll of Honour, at the Hall of Fame and Manly Anzac Memorial since 2007. Even today, the Sydney's St Aloysius college pays tribute each year to Cecil Healy. Indeed, a trophy bearing his name is awarded to the winner of the school swimming competition.

A FEW PLACES



Darlinghurst Courthouse

Built in 1835
Credit : wikipedia



Bowral City Hall (NSW)

Built in 1890.
Cecil Healy lived in Bowral
Credit : highlandnsnsw.com.au

Cecil Healy and the Crawl stroke

By Bertrand FARENEAU

Cecil Healy contributed to spread the crawl technique and to make it evolved too . To achieve this, Cecil Healy had extensively toured in Europe where he showed this new swimming way, therefore considered less elegant as a technique. He allowed many Europeans to see for the first time a swimmer using this technique. He swam in France, in the United Kingdom, in Belgium, in Germany, in the Netherlands, in Italy... During the 1906 season, for example he won the 100 m and 200 m at the "International Scratch Race" of Paris within a time, never observed in our country. He principally contributed to the improvement of the breathing technique. Indeed, one of the main difficulties of this swimming is the synchronization of breathing with the movement of the body. Still nowadays, what surprises more, when looking at a high-level swimmer who runs this swimming is the regularity and the

accuracy of metronome with which the swimmer takes his head off from the water to take a breath. Cecil Healy took part in this evolution of swimming. He very often intervened in the media (written press), wrote a book entitled "The Crawl Stroke" or taught swimming in order to broadcast the latest enhancements of this technique. Similarly, he never hesitated, during his travels in Europe, to transmit his know-how to swimmers of the old continent . His involvement let him earn to win many titles and records. He smashed the utmost names of his era, especially Frank Beaurepaire, the "World Famous Victorian ". In 1904, he realized the best performance of all time on a 100 yards within 58 seconds while world records were not registered yet, officially. In 1905, he realized a time of 58 seconds on 110 yards freestyle at the Australasian Championship which enabled him to win the



St Aloysius College (Sydney)

Credit : maps.google.com.au

title of champion of Oceania. Apart his performance at the Olympic Games, we can underline his numerous victories on the 110 yards freestyle at the Australia championships in 1905, 1906, 1908, 1909 and 1910. Lack of title in 1907 will be explained further. He won the 220 yards in 1908 on. He finally obtained the record of the world on the 100 m freestyle in 1909 and 1910. A year after his death, Cecil Healy still holds the European record in the 50 m in September 1919.

Healy at the Olympic Games

By Bertrand FARENEAU

Cecil Healy participated twice in the Olympic Games, first, in 1906 in Athens and then in 1912 in Stockholm.

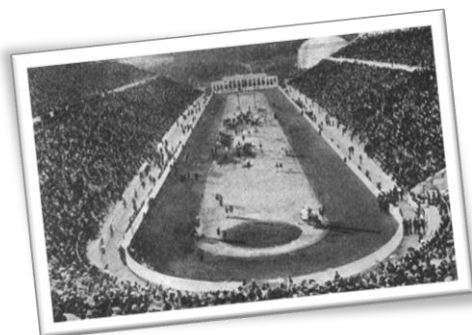
Cecil Healy was therefore part of the tiny delegation of athletes (5 athletes) sent by the Australian federation at the Athens Olympic Games, he was also the only swimmer representing his country. At that time, a very few amounts of fees were allocated to athletes. During this competition, Healy was clearly handicapped by the belated departure of the Australian delegation to Athens. This departure did not allow him to train between arrival in Athens and the competition. Even so, he ended third in the final of the 100 m freestyle behind the United States and the Hungary. So, he won his first medal in his Olympic career. Following the games, Healy toured in Europe and gave the opportunity to many Europeans to see for the first time in their life the Crawl technique (particularly in Hamburg where he won the cup of the

Kaiser, in Belgium, in the Netherlands, in Great Britain...). It is because of this tour that Cecil Healy missed the Championship of Australia in 1907. Similarly, he could not attend the Olympic Games in London in 1908, due to a lack of funds while he had obtained his qualification. These games, initially meant to happen in Rome, took place in London because of the disaster of the Vesuvius. However, he participated in the Olympic Games in Stockholm in 1912 where he could show to the whole world how much he embodied the Olympic spirit

of Coubertin. Among others, he won a silver medal in 100 m freestyle, a fourth place in the final of the 400 m freestyle but also a world record in the qualification on the same distance and a gold medal in relay 4 times 200 m freestyle.

CREDIT :

Opening Day (1912)
Stockholm Olympic Games
Crédit: Library of Congress



*The Stadium, Athens (1906)
(Public Domain. Crédit: Library of Congress)*

Athens Olympic games

By Bertrand FARENEAU

The Olympic Games of Athens 1906 coily called "Intercalated games" are not officially recognized by the International Olympic Committee (IOC). Let's bear in mind that the modern Olympic games have been initiated by the French Pierre de Coubertin. It is further more for this reason that the French is still today one of the official Olympic languages. Whereas previous games were held in St. Louis in 1904, the Greeks take the initiative to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the modern games in organizing again, after 1896, Olympiads on their territory. However, these games do not correspond to the four-year calendar and the

International Olympic committee, presided by the Baron Pierre de Coubertin did not welcome this organization. So, the games of 1906 as well as the medals won by athletes at this event are not recognized by the IOC. The bronze medal obtained by Cecil Healy during this competition is therefore not recorded in his Olympic career. But however, The fact remains that these games of 1906 were crowned with success and 20 countries took part of them, among which we can point out France, the United States, the United Kingdom or the Australia... In reason of the first world war, the IOC headquarters moves to Geneva in order to maintain its principle of neutrality.



Cecil HEALY and the Olympic Spirit

By Bertrand FARENEAU

Cecil Healy has not only fought valiantly at the battle of Mont St. Quentin but is also the embodiment of the Olympic as the anecdote occurring at the Stockholm Olympic Games of July 1912 witnessed it. Indeed, during the semi-final of the 100 m freestyle, the legendary Hawaiian Kahanamoku and two other Americans, when missing the start of the race are automatically disqualified. Healy, one of the most greater swimmers of Australian history, qualifies then himself for the final and naturally becomes the favourite of the competition. However, Healy insists upon the official authorities and the Australian federation to give a second chance for the Americans to be qualified for the starting of the final race. A new race is organized through which Kahanamoku and Mc Gillivray get their ticket to the final. This final will be won on the 11th of July

1912 by Kahanamoku, the American within 1 minute 3 seconds and 8 tenths with a difference of 1.2 seconds upon the second. The second is not anyone else but Cecil Healy... Cecil Healy pocketed then, the silver medal in 1 minute and 5 seconds. He will receive after this memorable final a standing ovation at the height of his plume. The legend tells that Kahanamoku when receiving the gold medal, he took one of Cecil Healy's arm and rose it up in the air. Following the Olympics of 1912, Healy is a world-famous competitor.

CREDIT PHOTOGRAPHIE :

100 Meter Swim
Olympic games-Stockholm
Crédit: Library of Congress
Public Domain.

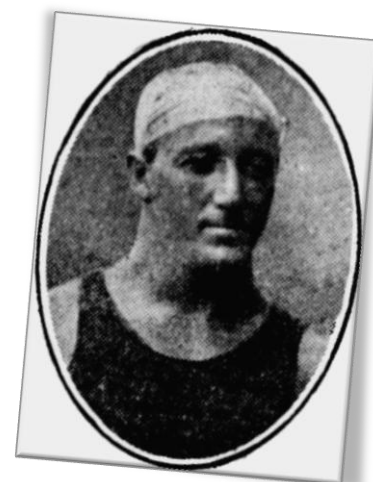


Cecil HEALY, the lifesaver !

By Bertrand FARENEAU

Cecil Healy, not only, is satisfied on his sports performance but will be equally devoted to an association service of Sydney rescuers. When Cecil Healy joined the Manly Surf Club in November 1907, it has only existed since August of the same year. This association, created among others, by Frank Donovan, has a target to settle the necessary conditions in order to preserve life of Manly Beach bathers. Manly Beach is, in fact, one of the most popular beaches of the city of Sydney. The strategy both consists in settling means of prevention (information to the public, installation of water... lines) and in assisting swimmers in distress (the lifeguard equipment), implementation of the actions of first aid.... Cecil Healy, like other recruits, will therefore contribute to the establishment and evolution of the Manly Surf Club. Thus, they will perform numerous demonstrations of first

aid as February 5th, 1908 or pass on their experience to other new clubs. Indeed, swimming are allowed since 1903, this activity and surfing democratized themselves on Sydney's beaches and relief to bathers multiply. Associations are formed and dissolve themselves in anarchic way. The Manly Surf Club will therefore take advantage of Cecil Healy 's leadership and the municipality assistance to impose itself as one of the most influential clubs in Sydney. It is, therefore, quite naturally that Cecil Healy becomes captain of the association and invests himself substantially to make the club progress. Apart the long monitoring days spent on the beach, Cecil Healy is especially remarked this Sunday, on January 29th, 1911 around 5:30 pm. That day, the beach is crowded and nautical currents are important. Also, four adults and a child are carried away beyond the lines of



bathing and call for help. Healy, who is then in water with other rescuers, rushes to their rescue. He goes toward two bathers, the most in difficult position P.A. Hannelly, 26, and W.B. Brady, 13 years old.13 ans. Mr Reynolds, an experienced rescuer, then tries to bring them a rope so as to tow them. Managing with success, he passes the line to Healy and supports the young Brady. However, the

Healy, The Brave

By Bertrand FARENEAU

Sunday, on December 18th 1910, Cecil Healy achieves a performance which will deconcentrate more than one. In order to prove that the sharks are harmless to human beings, Cecil Healy swims about 1 mile (1,6 km) alongside the Manly beach. The distance extends from North Steyne to Fairy Bower. This area is considered as being infested with sharks and it seems that many of these animals have been seen chasing salmon shoals during the week preceding the challenge. Despite the opposition of some of his relatives, Healy starts up on this funny performance, surrounded by many curious that, some of them, highly doubt of his wisdom. A large crowd follows the intrepid sporting exploit from the beach but also through a boat closer to the champion. According to Cecil Healy, this gesture is not unconscious. For him, sharks will always prefer the feast of a shoal of fish than the poor meal of a human body. He takes as an example, the case of a fishing vessel having capsized a few years earlier. Sharks were in a hurry among the survivors not to eat them up but to take care of their cargo. He concludes that as much as the sharks will sufficiently have fish offshore, the danger incurred by a swimmer is slight.

crowd, gathering on the beach pulls too hard on the rope and it breaks. Cecil Healy found himself again alone with Hannely who is unable to swim and visibly in a great state of tiredness. Healy then, should maintain Hannely's body off the water. Incredible as it may seem, a new lifeguard attempts to bring a line to Healy but the crowd, once again pulls on it and the rescuer loses the rope, even before reaching the level of Healy. It's only 20 minutes after that Mr Mc Kelvey eventually succeeds in providing a rope to the swimming champion. Rescuers finally achieve to tow the two shipwrecked people. Cecil Healy returns back to the beach, exhausted but safe and sound. The boy, who has lost consciousness, is rescued after long minutes of resuscitation thanks to Dr. Bennetts. This Act of bravery

entitles him to receive a distinction from the Royal Humane Society, on June 14th, 1911. He thus received the silver medal and a certificate of merit for gallantry. As to Mr Reynolds, he receives a bronze medal. On September 1911, the municipality of Manly would wish to put order in the various clubs in present lifeguards on the beach. They consider that associations contain too many surfers and not enough real lifeguards. This regulation, that aims to gather together the rescuers in a same club, settles itself in stormy way and Cecil Healy, despite his necessary qualifications to join Manly Surf Living Club, doesn't wish to take part in these changes. Manly rescuers will therefore join the Manly Life Saving Club and surfers will continue to belong to the private club Manly Surf Club.

CREDIT :

The Sydney Morning Herald
1st February 1912

Manly : maps.google.com.au



From the pool to the battlefield...

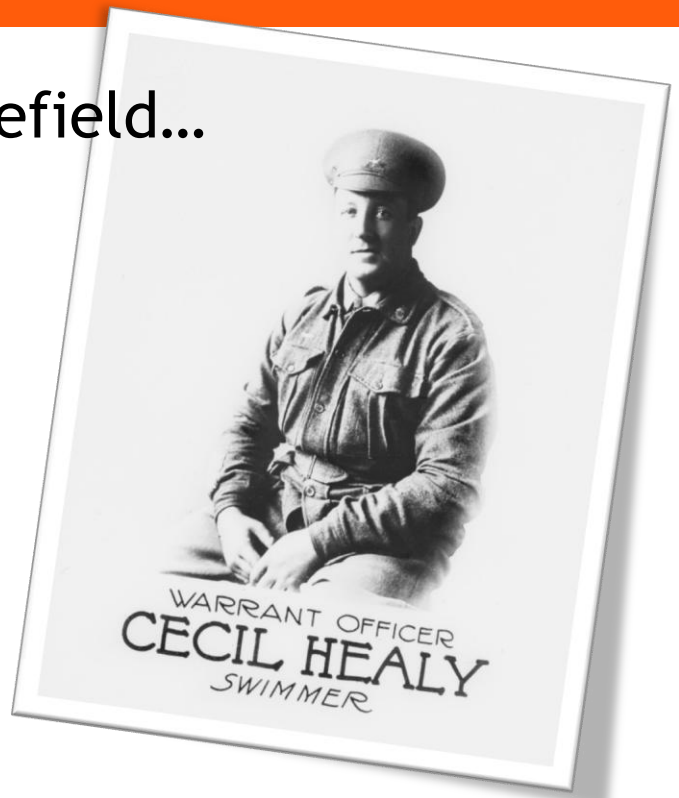
By Bertrand FARENEAU

It could perhaps be difficult to understand why a man, having Cecil Healy's stature, joined the Australian Imperial Forces. Whereas his reputation is made, as his future sounds like well-planned in Australia, he made the choice to enter the army on September 15th, 1915. If it seems obvious, according to views of the various anecdotes peppering his short life, Cecil Healy has got a very high sense of justice and bravery, an article he wrote and published in the Sunday Times 'The peace of Europe' allows to approach more closely the mind state of the athlete.

First of all, we should note that Healy has got a good knowledge of the European continent, resulting from his two long stayings there, after Olympics of 1906 and 1912. He travels through Europe, thanks to the competitions that take place there. So he was given a visit in Germany as well as in France or Great Britain and ties relationships with the inhabitants of those countries. Thus, he could see and understand particular evolutions in these countries during the transition period 1906-1913. Being back in his country, he published on February 1913 this famous Chronicle entitled 'The Peace of Europe' in which he displays his feelings concerning the situation of the old continent. So, he gets inspired through his experiences, speeches and anecdotes and through which he has built a thought process and ends up at a terrible conclusion: war in Europe seemed unavoidable to him. As a citizen of a Commonwealth country, he draws up a very critical check up both toward Germany highly militarized during this period, coupled with the material issue, change on behaviour and awareness, but toward the British side too where the missing of standing back on the situation, added with the dilapidated state of the society appear to be

extremely worrying to him. It's therefore with his sportive point of view, he made us visit and understand Europe of the year 1912. He thus brought us to athletes dinner which happened in the stadium of Stockholm, through which the Prince of Sweden delivered a heavy speech, emphasizing the function of games. He makes us share a little singular ending competition in Germany at the Kaiser Cup where the Kaiser exalts the crowd and made it clear to his people that their future lies on waters. Finally, he brought us in the German shipyards or in the English bars too... This article is not a call to war, he does not attempt anymore to accuse one of the future belligerents but in impressing with his foresight he tries to explain why the outcome seems unfortunately unavoidable. Finally, he wishes to point out that it's his duty to prevent his country from the imminence of conflict in Europe: "I think that it is the duty of everyone dependant on the Union Jack for liberty, [...]» "to help a little towards an awakening of the fact". Cecil Healy seems then moulded of

principles on duty, freedom, justice or courage. It is the series of his principles that will lead him to engage himself under the banner of the Union Jack. Being also guided by his convictions and his sense of duty, he will put into advantage his image in the conception of a display calling for conscription. On this poster, we could see a young man, standing with smile, strong and in a cool appearance. He is slightly aside, sit down, with spread legs and crossed hands. The jacket is not totally closed, the kepi badly adjusted. He is wearing a military uniform and poses on a white background, totally with refinement. A slight overexposure creates a blur, a halo of light around the soldier. This soldier, that everyone knows in Australia, tainted of loyalty, courage and well-respected, seems to be at hand. He is staring at us, sounds like calling. Wouldn't he be trying to encourage us to join him?



Crédit : awm,



HT Oriana

A FEW PLACES



Suffolk (1916)

Canal de Suez - Crédit : awm



Australians soldiers (Egypt)

1916 - Crédit : awm



Marseille Harbour (France)

1916 - Crédit : awm



Train Marseille-Le Havre

1916 - Crédit : awm

Cecil Healy came in France

By Bertrand FARENEAU

Cecil Healy took his decision in September the 15th, 1915. He went to the "Victoria Barracks", an Australian military base in Sydney, and engaged himself in the army to participate in the war effort. He is integrated in the 'Head - Quarters Infantry Base Depot, Australian Service Corps' ranked as a warrant officer class 2. Soon on November 27th, 1915, he embarked on HMAT A23 Suffolk and left his native homeland of Sydney Harbour. At this beginning of year 1916, Cecil Healy is therefore part of the 107 members of the Manly club engaged in the Australian army. He reached Egypt on February 1916. During transport towards Africa, Cecil Healy enjoys a great popularity with the other soldiers. He participated notably in boxing matches. But at the most great regret of his friends, he only plays the role of 'third man', a referee. They dream to compete with the great champion. Healy is, indeed, a lover of boxing and he is also known for his articles in the press. He was chosen too, by the crew to play the role of Neptune in the line crossing ceremony. During this ceremony, still practiced nowadays, Neptune and his court perform the baptism of passengers never having passed the equator line.

Neptune, God of the waters, obviously plays really a central role. This ceremony is above all, an opportunity for the crew to relax and spend a pleasant moment. A companion in arms of Cecil Healy will tell that during the trip, the whole crew was frightened when it believed to have seen a torpedo melting in the direction of the ship. However "this fear was all imagined" because the torpedo was not other than a great fish. Arriving in Egypt, Cecil Healy is led to Gezireh, a British training camp located in the desert. It is here the soldiers are subjected to a first military training. The British people formed there the new recruits then selected before deploying them on the ground. Therefore, Cecil Healy was assigned to the British Expeditionary Force (the British army in France). He went then on March 21st 1916 on board of HT Oriana in order to reach Marseille on March 27th, 1916. From there, he took the train to le Havre. He joined the 2nd ADBD (Australian Base Depot Division), regrouping spot of Australian forces on French soil.

The school officer

By Bertrand FARENEAU

The 2nd ADBD, also called "line of communication", is aimed to organize the proper conduct of the war. It has got a target as to secure the resupplying on the front, in equipment, food and weapons but also to centralize information in order to structure and to plan the advance of the troops on the front or even to ensure the soldiers training before dispatching them in the field. During his staying in le Havre, Cecil Healy has primarily administrative functions. However, Cecil Healy has the desire to take responsibility on the battlefield. He fitted himself as a volunteer to have a military background in a school officer. The British army harshly lacks of officers and non-commissioned officers during the first world

war and therefore puts into place in the beginning of 1916, a system allowing a soldier to become officer or non-commissioned officer subjected to fulfil certain conditions. Through this way, twenty schools are created across the British territory (Oxford, Bristol, Newmarket...). During these courses, midshipman officer learned the background on military techniques, new technologies used on the front, on the toxic gases, the weapons, the management of men... On December 7th, 1917, Cecil Healy was sent to the n° 5 Cadet battalion' school located at Trinity College in Cambridge.

He follows the training and became, on June the 1st 1918, the Australian Army NCO by obtaining the rank of second lieutenant. During his training at Trinity College, the sport is still at the heart of his activities, for better or for worse... So, he tells the story of one of the boxing competitions held at the end of April - or early on May 1918 at Cambridge. He reaches the final level of the competition but should meet, as he writes, a "hard, tall, strong, wiry, up-country looking specimen of an Australian. Hardly, he won his semi-final that the crowd complained already about him .

In the final, he faces his opponent, trying to deliver him blows, but he will end the match, in losing his balance, his face swollen, without having really understood what happened to him... He ended up at the hospital and checked out, one arm in a sling and two black eyes. He concluded "a pretty picture". He definitely left the "Trinity College" on June 11th, 1918. This is the last time he will see Great Britain. On June 13th, 1918, Cecil Healy returned to France at his appointment of origin, the 2nd ADBD located in le Havre, a trip during which he will pass through Southampton.



26 Juin 1918 - Rivery
Photo de groupe des
officiers du 19^{ème} bataillon
Credit : awm

He was then posted on June the 16th, 1918, within the 5th brigade, 19th infantry battalion. In August 16th, he joined his battalion.

Healy, the false death

By Bertrand FARENEAU

NATATION

Healy trouve cela drôle d'apprendre son décès dans la rubrique nécrologique

Londres, le 23 octobre 1917

Des journaux sportifs aussi bien français qu'anglais ont annoncé la semaine dernière que Cecil Healy, le nageur, a été tué à Messines. Healy a écrit de France selon le « Saturday's date », en relatant que lui et son frère Reginald sont tous les deux en bonne santé. Il s'est beaucoup amusé en lisant les nécrologies.

Cecil Healy is still in le Havre when he learns his own death. Two newspapers, one French and the other British, mistakenly announced his death during the battle of Messines. The English newspaper the "London sportsman" will justify itself later

assuring that a soldier under the name of Healy has been really injured and evacuated during the battle of Messines on October 1917, but that was obviously not Cecil Healy, rather than worrying about, reassured relatives and corrected the information in

noting that he really enjoyed himself when learning his death in the newspaper. Healy is not an isolated case. Number of soldiers were announced dead by mistake during this conflict.



The Champion's death

By Bertrand FARENEAU

Here's the story of a man, the story of a drama, the paroxysm of horror occurred in both sides of the front line. It's the story of a soldier characterized by his sense of duty, courage, patriotism, heroism, but also by his innocence face to the war and all this endless wave of violence. Whereas it was a must that this conflict found out an issue, these men have made the ultimate sacrifice. Here is then Cecil Healy's life ending the heroic athlete, narrated by one of his brothers in arms :

« At dawn, in the day of August 29th 1918, the troops were ordered to move forward and make the crossing of the Somme in order to reach this famous Mont Saint-Quentin. All of our attack was more or less held in respect by intense fires of the machine guns from the opposing villages, coming from the front and the left flank. Now, everything was confused. A large number of wounded was regrettable. That is why Cecil Healy and another officer decided to move their troops ahead and clean the coppice holding them in front. They reached it safely, cleared it. They began to run along the ground on top, back behind this one. It is there that he met the death then. He accurately

died in front his troupe, while searching for the machine guns, and his fearlessness gave the opportunity to the enemy to reach him as a target. A machine-gun bullet reached the back side of his neck, he collapsed. Lying on the ground, while being wounded, a piece of shrapnel reached him at the chest. A stretcher bearer who rushed to him and put a bandage, was himself seriously wounded at his turn . Healy was breathing with a great difficulty and it is now for his life that he was fighting. But an hour later, he died. He died between 7 and 8 :00 am, in the morning of the 29th of August 1918. This was his first and his last feat. Actually, he represented a big loss for his battalion and he promised to be a very good young officer. For the first time, under an atmosphere of fire thunder, he demonstrated an extraordinary calm and a total courage. Most of his men talked about him since then, focusing on his coolness and courage under fire. He



Crédit : awm

Crédit : B.Fareneau

died as a true soldier, in leading his men and facing the enemies. He handed down to the battalion a name that will be cherished by all those who knew him, such as his record in the athletic world that can always be recalled back with feelings of admiration and respect »

He was buried in the fringe of "the woods of the sword", near Biaches at a 3/4 of a mile in the north of Biaches and 1 ¼ mile in the west of Péronne. His body was later transferred to Assevillers New British Cemetery.

Assevillers New British Cemetery

Credit : B.Fareneau



The place of the tragedy

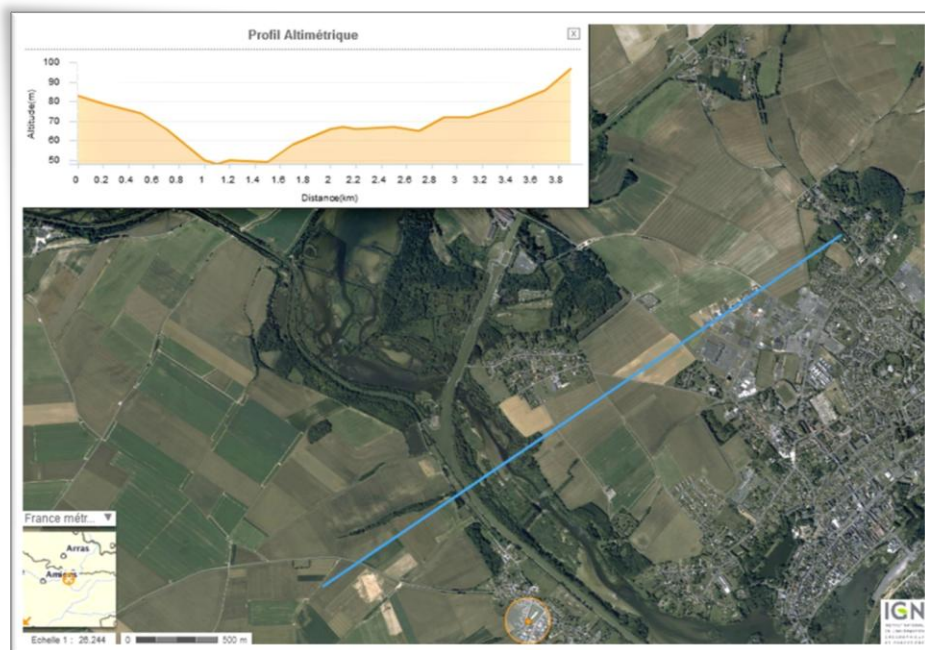
By Bertrand FARENEAU



At the background, right in the middle, lies Mont Saint-Quentin, theatre of the clashes at the end of the month of August 1918. The days preceding this violent battle, Germans methodically retreated around this place, particularly in the communes of Les Halles, Omiecourt-les-Cléry and Cléry-sur-Somme much more in the left. Obviously, the place was not chosen at random. From Mont Saint-Quentin, the German army had unobstructed views of all the southern shore of the Somme. You have to imagine that at the level of the trees located in the centre of the photograph, a steeply slope goes down to the river Samarien. The river is thus well below of this place at about 700 m. The place is dotted with wood of unequal sizes including the wood of the sword, the wood of the city... Inside of these woods, German soldiers took position. They have machine guns and heavy weapons with which they will carry out a real massacre among the Australian troops. Well below, all alongside "the Somme" edged with an adjacent alignment of very impressive trees, a thick vegetation spreads out. These trees are, moreover, still present today, some dead and heavily damaged, and could be perhaps the remains and the only survivors of what was the battle of Mont St. Quentin, a century earlier. On the other side of the Somme, in the villages of Cléry and halls, the Germans

installed an impressive amount of guns. They are patiently waiting and will shell blind everything which could be located on the opposite bank. The Australian troops will therefore come from Assevillers, Flaucourt, Herbécourt, recently released, walking on this long cleared tray and having to rush in this immense battlefield, steep and exposed. They are going to be slowed down first by the troops taking position in the Woods. It will be therefore, necessary to clean these woods even before planning to cross the Somme. At the same time, the artillery settled in different spots around the Somme will take advantage

of the while to show its fire power. So, it is under this fire downpour from all parts that Cecil Healy and his troops will have mission to dislodge the opposing troops out of these woods. According to a Healy's companions testimony, it's when ending to clean one of those places, that Cecil Healy by climbing the base of this wood, in order to clean another one, will be once hit by a burst of machine-gun fire, before being deadly wounded by a piece of shrapnel which will touch his chest. During an hour, Cecil Healy will fight to keep his life but he will eventually lose what will be his last challenge.



Healy, un soldat parmi des millions

By Bertrand FARENEAU

L'annonce de la mort de Cecil Healy en 1918 a constitué un choc immense dans la société Australienne. Un homme, que toute l'Australie avait suivi, supporté et approuvé, venait de perdre la vie à des milliers de kilomètres de chez lui, dans un pays qui n'était pas le sien mais pour une cause qu'il avait choisi. Lors de la messe de Requiem donnée en sa mémoire, de nombreuses personnalités de la société civile et du sport se sont déplacées. Il devenait ainsi l'incarnation même de la souffrance des peuples car de chaque côté de la ligne de front tout un chacun aura perdu un père, un fils, un frère, un oncle au combat. Il est également le symbole de ces familles laissées dans le doute ou l'ignorance des circonstances exactes du décès parfois sans corps ni sépulture. Un siècle plus tard, le temps estompe les souvenirs.



Pourtant des millions de nos aïeux sont morts au combat. Certains sont champions olympiques comme lui :

- **GOßLER Carl** (Allemagne) :
Médaille d'or en aviron aux JO de Paris 1900
- **KELLY Frédérick** (Grande Bretagne) :
Médaille d'or en aviron aux JO de Londres 1908
- **ALIBERT Gaston** (France) :
Double médaillé d'or d'escrime aux JO de Londres 1908
- **DEVENDEVILLE Charles** (France) :
Médaille d'or en natation aux JO de Paris 1900
- **FLAMENG Léon** (France) :
Médaille d'or en cyclisme aux JO d'Athènes 1896

D'autres, moins connus, ont servi leur pays au même titre que ces champions (*noms inscrits sur le monument aux morts d'Assevillers*) :

- DOUAY Georges
- DOUAY Eugène
- DOUAY Amédée
- DUCLERC Etienne
- ENNUYER Albert
- MARCHANDISE Jean
- SENEZ Gaetan
- SENEZ Gaston
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