Harvey Ennis Gale MBE., OBE.

It may be a fitting tribute to Harvey Ennis Gale that the buildings he designed the North Beach Bathers Pavilion and Kiosk when he was Chief Health & Building Inspector at Wollongong Municipal Council, are now listed on the NSW State Heritage Register.

Harvey Ennis Gale was born on 19 November, 1896 at Maclean NSW, the son of Arthur Gale and May Ennis. On 13 October, 1915 at the age of 18 years and 11 months he enlisted in the first AIF at Lismore NSW, and posted to the 49th Battalion with the rank of Private. He was described as being 5ft 4½in tall, of dark complexion, brown eyes, brown hair and weighing 8 stone 13 pounds, his religion was recorded as Methodist.

By 16 February 1916 he was promoted to the rank of Corporal and to the rank of Sergeant on 16 March 1916. He embarked for active service on 31 March 1916, and disembarked at Port Said on 5 May. On 7 June he joined the forces in Alexandria, seven days later on 14 June he disembarked for active service at Marseille France. Whilst at the front he suffered a severe wound and shell contusion to his back and thigh on 1 September 1916, and 2 days later was admitted to the casualty station with shell shock. His wounds were so bad that he was transferred to a vessel and shipped to England on 12 September and admitted the following day to London General Hospital, Wandsworth.

The following is an account he wrote in a letter to a Grafton newspaper while recuperating from his injuries.

I have been through a most thrilling experience—one I shall never forget all my life. We had been strafing the enemy for some days, our artillery pounding them all along the line. Suddenly, at 4.53 o'clock on Sunday morning last the order came to charge.

We went over the parapet - the whole brigade, save one battalion.

Our artillery fire lifted, and our boys calmly walked over to the opposing trenches, a barrage of fire being put behind the lines. A and B Companies of each battalion took the first trench and...
C and D Companies crossed over the advanced to the second line and took it!

Some 3,000 of us were in this memorable charge and, for the first ten minutes the scene baffles description. The Germans showed plenty of fight. They met us with bombs and tried all manner of tricks, but our bombs and bayonets were too good for them.

We each carried 220 rounds of ammunition and two bombs, and made good use of them. The Germans suffered very severely, and we cleared them out in short order. We no sooner had the trenches in our possession than they counter-attacked, twice within the hour, but the Australians are a tough nut to crack and we hurled them back with heavy losses.

Finding they could not shift us, their artillery opened fire, shot and shell dropping like hail. The ground around us was strewn with corpses, the vast majority being Germans.

The din was terrific, and the sight one of the most awe-inspiring imaginable.

One felt one was holding his life in his hand all the time. Our gallant fellows hung on through it all, and passed back one hundred prisoners, all men of the Prussian Guard. These were all that were left alive.

The Prussians fairly hate the Australians, and say they have no time for us, and that we are only murderers.

Once we got rid of our prisoners we started to collect our wounded, but the German snipers - they are good shots - kept up a steady stream of lead on the stretcher-bearers, many of whom fell under the attack. Ultimately we had to alter our tactics, move the wounded from shell-hole to shell-hole, back to the dressing stations. While this was going on the rest of us were consolidating the conquered trenches, for they had been smashed to pieces by our artillery.

The work was in progress when I heard a big shell coming. Four others and myself bobbed down in the trench. This was 6.30am and remember nothing more till 2pm. It appears the shell burst on the parapet and buried the five of us.

There we lay till a party came along and were digging the trench when at 10.30am they discovered us! I was unconscious and
my few brave mates had answered the Final Call.

How I survived I do not know. I was all bruised around the thigh and had two of my ribs broken. The rescuers called the stretcher-bearers who carried me to a first-aid post, thence to the ambulance and, finally, to the hospital where I now lie.

I recovered consciousness there and am now improving wonderfully, I hope to get back at Fritz again in a couple of months, and get some of my own back.

This was the biggest charge lying to the credit of the Australians up to that time, and the first ever done by our brigade in daylight.

Our losses were heavy, but the Germans suffered more severely. At least three Coroki lads were in the wonderful charge - Privates Bert Pursey, L and B Smith, but I do not know how they got on.

Once we cleared the parapet it was a case of every man for himself and the lot against the Huns, so I did not see them again...

(The Daily Examiner, Grafton 11-11-1916)

When he was discharged from Hospital he was posted to the 61st Battalion.

No more is recorded about him until 1917 when he went AWL from 13 till 17 August for which he received 120 hours detention and forfeited 27 days pay.

He was then posted from the 61st back
49th Battalion and set sail for France on 2 November 1917.

Wounded in action again, this time in the forearm on 25 April 1918, he was transferred from the field ambulance to the General Hospital on 26 April, embarked for England on 30 April and admitted to the Military Hospital at Frenchman Hill the following day. On the 13 May 1918 he was transferred to the 3rd Auxiliary Hospital Dartford. With only one week in the hospital he was discharged and by 24 July 1918 set sail again for France rejoining 49th Battalion on 31 July. This stint was short-lived. He was admitted to hospital on 7 September 1918 with a septic leg and on 12 September was invalided to England and admitted next day to Bath War Hospital where he stayed until discharged on 3 October 1918. His remaining days were spent at No 4 Com Depot. He returned to Australia on 10 May 1919, and was discharged from the Army on the same day.

He returned home to Maclean where he lived for some time. His citation for his efforts in WW I were Star, British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

In 1923, at the age of 27 years, he took a position with the Wollongong Municipal Council as a Health Inspector. He accepted this position with pride and his intentions were to please his employer and to serve the public of Wollongong. He was regarded as a courteous, trustworthy and efficient officer of the Council. It was during his time as Chief Health Inspector that he was responsible for improvements carried out to Wollongong Rest Park (Globe Lane & Burelli Street), works that were undertaken by the Engineer Mr Harrison, and the removal of unsightly awnings and balconies over the footpaths in the business district. He helped with ideas and suggestions for the beautification of Wollongong and was untiring in his efforts to make the City a better and brighter place to live. He particularly designed new gardens, but also improved existing ones and their surroundings.

During the years of residence in Wollongong, 1923 to 1939, the Gale family, consisting of wife Lily and one daughter, Vesta Elaine, resided at 30 Corrimal Street, Wollongong.
For his service and organisational skills in Wollongong for the Sesqui-centenary celebrations in 1938, he was awarded the MBE on 31 July, 1942.

Although Harvey Gale was discharged from the service in 1919, his records show that in July 1931 he carried the rank of Lieutenant (Prov), which was terminated on 16 June 1938. However, next day he was reinstated at his previous rank as Assistant Adjutant 34th Battalion. His service records show that on 12 November 1939 he enlisted for service in WWII with the Service No NX201 and rank of Prov. Lieutenant.

One of his most important posting was during January 1940 when he was sent to the Middle East and attached to the 2/3 Battalion. Some of his other postings were in Gaza, Jerusalem and Mt Scopus, as part of the transport division and second in charge to the Camp Commandant.

During his life he was an active Freemason. He was photographed in King Solomons Quarries with Arab and Australian masons. He returned to Australia on 15 May, 1942 disembarking from the HMS Duntroon at Fremantle WA. He remained in Western Australia, attached to the transport division, for 5 weeks when he was transhipped three times until the HMS Duntroon finally landed him in Bombay India.

He was promoted to the position on Major on 23 March, 1944. His most outstanding effort came when he sailed on the HMS Duntroon from Cairns for Lae on 12 May, 1944 and was appointed Camp Commandant of the HQ 2nd Australian Corp NG Forces on 16 November of that year. He left Bougainville on 16 February, 1945 and returned to Brisbane on 12 March. He flew to Lae on 18 April, 1945 landing at Nadzab, from where he was transferred to Torokina, Bougainville, on 8 May 1945.

The citation for the award of an OBE to Harvey Ennis Gale MBE reads as follows:

The work of Major Gale as Camp Comdt, 1 Aust Corps and later 2 Aust Corps and HQ NGF has been outstanding. In this period, in addition to successive reorganisations which occurred, he has been faced with the movement and establishment of a new HQ in difficult conditions in virgin area in Lae. His grasp of detail, and
ability to handle men under much onerous circumstances, have been exceptional. His cheerfulness, drive, and untiring energy, have been inspiring to staff, Officers and all ranks. He has especially catered for the well-being of the men in an imaginative and enthusiastic provision of a community centre for the HQ, and continual fostering of amenities, vocational and recreational facilities.

King George VI approved his award for the OBE on 18 July 1945.

The above citation was reported in the local newspaper. By 1 August 1946 he was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel. His appointment to the Headquarters of the British Commonwealth Occupation Forces (BCOF) took place on 29 August 1946.

Lily Gale remained in the family home at 30 Corrimal Street, Wollongong until late 1944. Her next address was 433 Victoria Road, Chatswood in 1945.

Lieut-Colonel Harvey Gale MBE, OBE left Australia for Kure in March 1947 and returned to Sydney in November for leave. His posting in Japan was as administrator for the families and dependents of Australian members of the 36 units and services in Ita Jima under Lt Gen. H C H Robertson, Commander BCOF. He returned to Japan on 21 January 1948, accompanied by his wife Lily and daughter Vesta, whose husband was in the American Forces and also stationed in Japan.

During a recreational outing of duck shooting, in the company of Brigadier Ron Irving, on Sunday 29 February 1948 at 9-15 am, a 12 bore shotgun accidentally discharged and Lieut-Col. Harvey Ennis Gale died. Harvey Ennis Gale was given a military funeral at the Garrison Church, Ita Jima, on 2 March, 1948 and he was laid to rest in the Post War section of Yokohama War Cemetery, Japan.

A Court of Inquiry held at Ita Jima Japan on 29 April, 1948 into his death resulted in the following findings:

Cause of death was a gunshot wound fired at close range from a 12 bore shotgun. The deceased was not on duty, but engaged in
authorised recreation. There is no evidence to suggest that Lt.-Col Gale met his death other than by accident. There is no evidence of negligence by any person.

His widow ceased to be rationed and quartered after 9 March, 1948 at Ita Jima, Japan. Lily Gale then returned to Australia and took up residence in Sydney. On 31 March, 1950 Lily Gale applied for his war service medals. They had been sent to his old address at Chatswood where his sister Mrs Lavinia Laverly replied to the defence services that Mrs Gale no longer lived at that address and to forward them to her new address 27 Little Street, Lane Cove. After some 5 years had passed Lily Gale again applied for his medals, and by this time she was residing at 22 Northwood Road, Northwood. Lily Gale finally received Harvey Ennis Gale's medals which consisted of the 1939-45 Africa and Pacific Stars, Defence, War and Australia Service Medals. Lily Gale survived her husband by 12 years and passed away on 3 August, 1960 aged 62 years.

Shortly after his death former Wollongong City Town Clerk Mr R B Bell paid tribute to Lieut-Col. Harvey Gale by saying that as Wollongong City Council's Chief Health Inspector in 1938 he designed and supervised the building of North Beach Kiosk and Bathers Pavilion which "The authorities place amongst the most artistic and the best from a service point of view in existence in the Commonwealth".

Mr L W Lee, former Alderman and Mayor of Wollongong City Council, said of the late Lieut-Col. Harvey Gale "He was a most capable officer and made a fine job of organising Wollongong's Sesquicentenary Celebrations in 1938. He was untiring in his efforts to serve the public".

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