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Trench talk  
Graeme Hosken.

This issue  
DIGGER 55’s lead article takes an in-depth look at the often overlooked night advance of the 4th Brigade in August, 1915. I hope you enjoy this and the other stories in this issue.

New members  
Peter Byron, Bronwyn Cozens, Carolyn Fairjones, Helen Hosken, Christopher Howitt, Tom Mann, Judy Mynott, Greg O’Reilly and Beverly Savage.

New FFFAIF postal address  
The FFFAIF post office box in Oatley West has been closed. Please address all future correspondence to our new address:

FFFAIF Inc.  
PO Box 4245  
FORSTER NSW 2428.

Mail will be redirected from the old box until around the end of June. Note that any membership application forms you may have at home will feature the old address and should be altered by hand if they are provided to anyone. See above or the back cover for our new address.

Soldier identified  
Member Stephen Brooks writes: “Noted on page 30 story [in DIGGER 54] about WE Young (unidentified). He is actually 1113 Sergeant Ernest Walter [EW] Young, 16th Battalion AIF. Served at the Landing, parents lived in Unley, SA. Young was shot through the left side of the abdomen around 28 April, 1915, and evacuated straight to England where he was admitted to the Graylingwell War Hospital in Chichester on 12 May, 1915. He married in England according to his service file, but the usual marriage certificate is missing from his NAA record. He survived the war, and returned to Australia during September, 1918, with his wife Daisy Gertrude Smith (1891-1935). Ernest passed away in 1946. Daisy and Ernest both ended up living in Port Pirie in South Australia and raised four children.” Thanks, Stephen.

A rare resource  
DIGGER likes to publish original research, previously unseen diaries, memoirs and photographs, and news articles from the past that have not been read since the war years. There is one item in this issue that should resonate with our readers. Imagine that you are a lieutenant of this issue. Truly, a magnificent glimpse into a horrible time and place, and a wonderful primary source for the historian. DIGGER is pleased to be able to bring Bob’s ‘masterpiece’ to you, thanks to Judith Green.

Thank you  
Committee member Paul Simadas would like to thank those members who took the time to send in a response to his survey sent out with DIGGER 53. Your contribution has been helpful in our planning.
Private 2228 Edgar Robards, 13th Battalion, and the 4th Brigade in the August Offensive, 1915
Dean Sherringham, Basel, Switzerland.

On the night of 6 August, 1915, Edgar Robards (2228, 13th Battalion) marched out from Reserve Gully at Anzac with the 4th Brigade on the ‘long night march’. Two days later he was evacuated to Egypt with a gun shot wound to the head. On the voyage back to Australia, Edgar Robards sadly died and was buried at sea.

The fate of the 4th Brigade during the ‘August Offensive’ is overshadowed by the attack of the 1st Australian Division at Lone Pine on 6 August and the terrible slaughter of the Light Horse the following day at The Nek. During the August Offensive the 4th Brigade would become lost in the gullies north of the main Anzac trenches, and fail to reach its objective of the summit of Hill 971, the highest of the Sari Bair range that overlooks the Anzac position. Today, no memorials are dedicated to the men of the 4th Brigade who lost their lives there and whose remains were never recovered.

Edgar Robard’s death occurred just six months after his enlistment, aged 26. He had been at Gallipoli for less than a week and on the front line for less than two days. He was my grandmother Myrtle’s eldest brother, who went to war when his youngest sister was just nine years old.

Remarkably, Edgar Robards [left] survived the initial gun shot wound to his head. On one of the AIF’s ‘blackest days’ at Gallipoli on 8 August 1915, he was stretchered back from ‘Australian Valley’ north of Anzac and evacuated from No. 3 Pier, at a time when many other severely wounded men were either never found or did not survive the journey.

Edgar was evacuated onto a hospital ship and treated at the Australian General Hospital in Cairo, where he spent two months convalescing, before being sent home in October 1915 on the first voyage of the No. 2 Hospital ship Kanowna, from Suez. Then, after three weeks at sea and just a few days out from Fremantle, off the coast of Western Australia near Geraldton, and three months after being wounded, Edgar Robards died.

Sadly, Edgar left behind his mother Mary Ann, four younger siblings and a fiancée back home in Stanmore, Sydney. Edgar Robards is commemorated at the Lone Pine Memorial and at Molong Cemetery (NSW) where his inscription on his sister’s headstone refers, incorrectly as we now know, to his wound being ‘received at Lone Pine’. The confusion is understandable given the incomplete information received by families at the time. It also led in part to my own search to find out more about how and where Edgar Robards was wounded and the fate of the 4th Brigade on 8 August.

Enlistment
Edgar Reuben Robards enlisted in the AIF on 10 May, 1915, in Liverpool, NSW, aged 26. According to the ‘Molong Express’, Edgar had attempted to enlist earlier in the year but had been rejected due to an eye condition. Edgar enlisted at the same time as his cousin Frank Robards [Pte 464, 20th Bn], who lived in Molong and was the adopted son of his aunt Phoebe. Frank also served at Gallipoli, disembarking with the 20th Battalion on 16 August, just days after Edgar had been evacuated. Like Edgar, Frank was wounded at Gallipoli, but recovered and served on the Western Front, where he was wounded at Bullecourt and, tragically, was killed in action in France on 31 August 1918. During his recuperation in England, Frank Robards had married and left behind a wife and infant son.

Edgar Robards’ enlistment in the AIF, and no doubt that of many others at the time, was influenced by the early reports from Gallipoli. Bean described the wave of new recruits following the Gallipoli landing in April 1915:

... since the sailing of the early contingents there had been steadily enrolled a somewhat different class of men from that which had first rushed to the recruiting offices. They were men who perceived that the war was likely to be longer and more difficult than had at first appeared; men who waited to settle their family or business affairs before considering themselves free to enlist; men who had
begun to realise that, if the war was to be won, each individual citizen must put his shoulder to the wheel. A high proportion volunteered not so much from impetuosity of spirit as because of a reasoned patriotism. The newspapers, in the effort to encourage enlistment, pointed out that these men were perhaps more truly representative of Australia.


Other members of his family enlisted in the AIF. Cousin Cecil Smyth [4227, 17th Bn] had claimed to be 18 years old when he enlisted, four months after Edgar, on 14 August, 1915, but in fact was just 16. Edgar’s uncle, 40 year old Sydney tram driver Walter Smyth [4228, 17th Bn], his mother’s brother from Molong, enlisted to keep an eye on son Cecil, and Cecil’s cousin Vincent Joseph Smyth [4226, 17th Bn] also joined up. Walter, Cecil and Vincent were assigned consecutive service numbers in 17th Battalion’s 10th Reinforcements and embarked from Sydney on 8 March 1916 [see DIGGERs 45 & 47].

Left, from l to r: Uncle Walter (age 40) and cousin Cecil Smyth (age 16) who both enlisted in late 1915. The three Smyths in front of The Sphinx.

Edgar’s younger brother, Vic Robards, was 17 when Edgar enlisted in Sydney. Vic joined up later in the war, which ended before he served overseas on active duty.

Many of Edgar’s mates from school in Molong also enlisted. Familiar local names such as Parslow (his first employer), Neville, Starr, Taylor, Farrell, who were either related to Edgar’s family or who he knew, joined the AIF. The ‘Molong Express’ kept a tally of the men with a connection to the district who joined the AIF, which by war’s end numbered 658.

At Edgar’s medical examination, Captain Donovan of the Australian Army Medical Service noted on Edgar’s file under ‘Distinctive Marks’ not a tattoo or a scar, but a ‘birth mark on chest’. This unusual feature is uncommon, but one that is shared by the author. Edgar was assigned to the 13th Infantry Battalion and served in ‘C’ Company. He left his job as an electrician to start his six weeks basic training at 13th Battalion Headquarters in Liverpool.

Early Life

The tradition of military service in Edgar’s family no doubt played a role in his decision to enlist. Edgar’s maternal grandfather, Joseph Smyth, was born in Manchester in 1829 the son of a shoemaker, and from a young age worked in the mills. Aged 17, Joseph enlisted in the East India Company Army and served for 17 years in India where he married 21 year old orphan, Jane Elizabeth.

After returning to England, Joseph Smyth [right] enrolled as a Pensioner Guard on the last convict ship to Western Australia, the Hougoumont. The family sailed from England in 1867 with 279 convicts aboard, bound for Fremantle. Not long afterwards, the family moved to Melbourne, from where Joseph enlisted in a militia force to fight in the Maori wars, only to arrive in New Zealand to find that the war had ended. Edgar’s mother Mary Ann was born whilst the family was in New Zealand in 1871, the fifth of eight children. The family returned to Australia, this time to Bathurst, NSW, following the gold strikes in that area and in 1873 settled in nearby Molong, where Joseph worked as a shepherd for local landowner, Mr Betts.

When Edgar’s parents married in Molong in 1890, it was the second marriage for his father, John Anthony Robards, who had five children from his first marriage. Mary Ann Smyth and John Robards had eight children together, of whom Edgar was the eldest and Myrtle May, the author’s grandmother, the youngest, aged just nine when Edgar enlisted in the AIF.

Born in 1889 in Molong, Edgar Robards [left, provided by J Percy] moved away from home at 17 to work in Lithgow and Cowra, where he was awarded a bravery medal for saving a girl’s life. He later settled in Sydney and worked as an
electrician for the Post Department (Edgar is not listed on the PMG Honour Roll in Sydney) and lived in Stanmore, where he was engaged to Miss Ettie Clarke.

Edgar was described in the ‘Molong Express’ as having a ‘likeable disposition and sterling character’ and as being ‘very popular’. His nickname was ‘Teddy’ and according to a fellow Digger whom he met in hospital, was to have been recommended for promotion to sergeant. The same mate from the hospital remarked that Edgar was ‘a great favourite over there’.

**Reinforcements**

As the war in Gallipoli reached a stalemate, the War Cabinet in London decided to send extra divisions and reinforcements in the hope of breaking the deadlock. A new offensive was being planned but its timing would depend on the arrival of the fresh troops.

As part of the 13th Battalion’s 6th Reinforcements, Edgar Robards embarked from Sydney on HMAT Wandilla A62 [right] on 14 June, 1915. Edgar Robards was appointed acting corporal during the voyage. The 13th Battalion diary recorded that the 6th Reinforcements had just one week training in Egypt before departing for Gallipoli, which did not include rifle practice.

**Reserve Gully, Anzac**

On 2 August, 1915, the 6th Reinforcements landed at North Beach and were taken on strength by 13th Battalion at Reserve Gully, below The Sphinx. The adjutant recorded:

1 Officer & 136 other ranks from 6th Reinforcement. Men of good stamp, 6 weeks training Australia, 1 week Egypt, No field firing.


Reserve Gully [left, AWM C01016] was a relatively ‘safe’ location but it was ‘a frightfully cramped place, 4 000 men being huddled up in an area the size of Martin Place’, according to the 13th Battalion historian, Captain TA White.

The new reinforcements had a short time to accustom themselves to Gallipoli. Their anticipated arrival coincided with the offensive that had been planned for the Gallipoli Peninsula, known as the ‘August Offensive’. The 4th Brigade, comprising the 13th, 14th, 15th and 16th Battalions under the command of Brigadier General John Monash, had been relieved of its front line role at Quinn’s Post in June and bivouacked in Reserve Gully [see sketch below], until the start of the August Offensive.

The men of the 4th Brigade were anticipating the attack and the march out of Anzac:

*As the day of our next big attack approached everyone became in the best of spirits, for all were “fed up” with the two months’ so-called rest in Reserve Gully. The 6th Reinforcements, who had just arrived, were even keener for a fight. All believed that this attack would be a great success, for large forces were co-operating, and the Navy was to give considerable help with guns. The Australian*
Division was to attack at Lone Pine, and the Light Horse at Quinn’s and Walker’s Ridge. The New Zealanders were to assault Chunuk Bair from the direction of Chailak Dere ... The left assaulting column was to include our 4th Brigade ... By this tremendous combined attack it was hoped to capture that great mass of Koja Chemen Tepe, with its highest point, Knoll 305 or “971”, and all its spurs, which mass over towered completely all the Peninsula between Anzac and the Narrows ... Had it succeeded the capture of the entire Peninsula was a foregone conclusion.


On 6th August, the start of the August Offensive, the 4th Brigade gathered for a church service in Reserve Gully conducted by 14th Battalion’s Chaplain Gillison [right, AWM A01808].

August Offensive

Lieutenant General Birdwood, the Anzac commander, developed a plan in May 1915 to break out from the small area of Anzac by attacking, unexpectedly, from the rugged country to its north with the aim of seizing the heights of the Sari Bair range that overlooked Anzac. The plan would take advantage of the new Anzac reinforcements, as well as three divisions of British ‘New Army’ troops that Hamilton had requested from the War Cabinet.

From the northern Anzac outposts, New Zealand scouts had discovered that the ranges north of Anzac were lightly held by the Turks, who did not expect an attack from this direction. The Anzac plan was therefore to take a route through the northern hills up to the heights of the Sari Bair range hills [right] with three main assaults aimed at Hill 971, Hill Q and Chunuk Bair.

The complicated plan included diversionary attacks, to improve the chance of the main attacks succeeding. On the afternoon of 6 August prior to the start of the main northern assault, the 1st Australian Division would attack Lone Pine, to draw attention away from the northern ranges. A further diversion would take place south at Helles. Then, to coincide with the planned capture of the summit of Chunuk Bair, the Light Horse would attack at The Nek early the next morning on 7 August. Finally, whilst the assault through the northern hills was proceeding, the three divisions of British IX Corps with 12 000 new army troops under General Stopford would land further to the north at Suvla Bay, and commence an inland push, to further distract Turkish forces from the main assault on the heights.

The main body of Anzacs had been confined to their perimeters around Anzac, and in poor overall health, would be physically challenged by the long march, as would the newly arrived reinforcements. In order to ensure surprise during the attack, the men were instructed not to load their weapons and to use their bayonets during the night march. They would adhere to strict silence and smoking was also forbidden. For the night march, they relied on the knowledge of scouts to find the route, notably Major Overton of the Canterbury Mounted Rifles.

6 August

The prelude to the main August Offensive was the attack late in the afternoon on 6 August on Lone Pine by the 1st Australian Division’s 1st Brigade. The fighting lasted four days and the main Turkish trenches were captured with a terrible cost of 2 277 Australian casualties. The result was that the Turks brought additional reinforcements to Anzac from Helles in the south.

Later, on the evening of 6 August, the New Zealand Mounted Rifles moved out into the foothills of the Sari Bair range:

At 8.30 [6 Aug], immediately after the fall of darkness, the New Zealand Mounted Rifles Brigade began to move to its task of sweeping the foot-hills north of Anzac. This was the preliminary to the
whole northern advance, which was the crucial movement of the offensive and, indeed, the most important in the whole campaign.

The Long Night March
Brigadier General Monash’s 4th Brigade had been chosen for the attack on Hill 971, the highest summit of the Sari Bair range. More than a third of the brigade’s 3,333 men were reinforcements who had arrived after the Gallipoli landing. At 9.30 pm on 6 August, 1915, Edgar Robards left Reserve Gully to commence the ‘long night march’ north along a newly constructed road which followed the beach and into the hills north of Anzac.

No one who took part in it will ever forget that march ... overhead were stars in a cloudy sky, and on our right were cliffs illuminated by a searchlight from the “Colne” in order to blind the Turks ... the attack had already commenced on our right and behind us ... It was an eerie feeling to be marching in column over ground where by day no one could safely show his head.

Monash described the commencement of the march:

My Brigade was in the lead and at 9.30 pm [6 Aug] ... my column swept out of Reserve Gully into black darkness for its two mile march northwards along the beach into enemy territory. It was like walking out on a stormy winter’s night from a warm cosy home into a hail, thunder, and lightning storm.

At night, and across unfamiliar territory, the 4th Brigade was led up a valley west of the intended route, after taking a short-cut through Taylor’s Gap that slowed the column. Adding to the confusion, none of the commanding officers realised the navigation error.

In the darkness we had turned up into Taylor’s Gap instead of into Aghyl Dere, another 500 yards ahead ... A Turkish colonel was captured in his pyjamas ... Overton was shot dead at the head of the column ... Still the Turks challenged from both sides of the narrow valley through which the column was now advancing in twos ... It would take a book to describe the work of the various Platoons that night, all without exception being led and fighting gallantly ... Tilney took charge of the 14th Btn as well as the remnants of the 13th, and moved up Australia Valley to take up an outpost position facing north from Damakjelik Bair across to Abdel Rahman Bair ... It was now 3.20 am, which meant only an hour of semi-darkness in which to dig-in ... The night-march was over successfully, but the 13th had lost 11 killed and 59 wounded in and near Taylor’s Gap, Aghyl Dere and Australia Valley.

Charles Bean had intended to accompany the column but near No. 2 Outpost [see above] he was wounded in the leg and spent the next three days recovering. Phillip Schuler, the correspondent from ‘The Age’, visited the 4th Brigade on the morning of 7 August and described the terrain through which the brigade had marched as ‘ideal bushranging country’ and remarked ‘I have seen no country that more resembled the Australian bush’.

I have been in the heart of all that mass and tangle of hills and ravines. The country resembled, on a less grand scale ... the Blue Mountains, near Sydney.

Australia Valley had been occupied by a Turkish unit, and included a German officer’s dugout:
... at the edge of a few acres of cropped land, was a German officers’ camp. A well-built hut of branches and mud was concealed ... behind was a hill, on the slope of which were tents and a number of well-made dugouts and tracks, the remains of a considerable Turkish encampment.

On passing by the post [right, AWM A02018], Edgar Robards had souvenired the German officer’s fork that he later sent home to his fiancée back in Sydney!

Accompanying the 4th Brigade was the 4th Field Ambulance at the rear of the column. Its commander, Lt Col Beeston from Newcastle, NSW, describes the conditions at Turkish camp:

... everything was as they had left it. The surprise had been complete, and we had given them very short notice to quit. Clothing, rifles, equipment, copper pans and boilers were in abundance, and it was evident that Abdul makes war with regard to every comfort, for there were visible also sundry articles of wearing apparel only used by the gentler sex. The men had comfortable bivouacs and plenty of bed-clothing of various patterns.

Not far from the Turkish camp was also a gun emplacement for a French 75mm howitzer that had been hidden by the Turks, and which they managed to escape with:

It was soon evident that the opposition here was the screen the Turks had placed to enable them to get away two field guns (they were the ‘75’s’ which had given so much trouble), for the emplacements were soon discovered.

The contact with the enemy in Australia Valley was described by Pte James Baillie [1313, 13th Bn/2nd Rfts], a labourer from Sydney:

We next charged and took a trench with a lot of opposition, following them up and bayoneting all the Turks that stopped to face us and stabbing every bush in case they were hiding in there. We next drove them out of a sap and cut three of their telephone wires. We got strong opposition in the shape of a machine gun when we got past this. We drove them out of this and advanced further across flat country, we could hear the Turks getting their guns away but they were too fast for us and knew the country well. Anyway we got to our position and dug ourselves in before daylight expecting counter-attack but no Turks came.
Baillie, James (1915), diary entry, 7 August.

The battalion met up with the British 5th Wiltshires who were part of the left covering force, who had earlier also marched along the beach before heading inland, and instead of taking the Taylor’s Gap shortcut, had followed the small creek bed of the Aghyl Dere. The Wiltshires had entrenched earlier in the night on the spur of the Damakjelik Bair, and the 13th Battalion were to form a line to their right [refer to previous map].

Meanwhile, the 15th and 16th Battalions had commenced their advance along the eastern spur of Australia Valley, where small parties of Turks resisted the advancing Australians:
The enemy appeared to be in parties of twenty to thirty, and as the country was very broken and very steep, their well-hidden riflemen had clear warning and ample time to train their weapons on the advancing scouts ... What deeds of heroism were performed before the light of day will never be known ... The enemy was hidden here, there and everywhere ... All the time lives were being lost and men were falling wounded.

The 13th Battalion diary records the casualties for 6 August:
2/Lieut Scobie reported for duty, Bde made NIGHT MARCH.
Killed 1 Officer + 11 other ranks. Wounded 2 officers & 57 other ranks.
7 August

The planned attack at The Nek early the next morning on 7 August was intended as a feint to coincide with the capture of the summit of Chunuk Bair by the New Zealanders. Despite the New Zealanders being short of their objective, the charge at The Nek was not delayed. Four waves of Australian light horsemen were ordered to rush across a narrow strip of ground in a futile attack in which 400 of the 600 men who went forward, became casualties.

Dawn on 7 August found the 4th Brigade well short of their intended position from where they were to have attacked and seized Hill 971. The men were exhausted, the summer months spent in the trenches of Gallipoli had left them unfit.

Although Overton had intended to place the 13th and 15th upon spurs leading to the ridge overlooking the Asma Dere, he had actually directed them up ridges nearer to the sea, and the valley into which the brigade was looking was a comparatively short gully of the Damakjelik Bair, known as the “Kaiajik Dere” (“Little Rock Valley”), which was here interposed between those ridges and the Asma Dere.


The 13th Battalion dug in on the ridge above Australia Valley on 7 August, and 4th Brigade headquarters was established below the ridge at the head of the valley.

At dawn on 7 August the 13th Battalion commenced to dig in on the banks of a steeply-banked dry watercourse of the Kaiajik Dere. They dug shallow trenches during the day and prepared to repel counter-attacks. The men rested as best as they could in the hot and cramped depressions, with little water, while being shot at by Turkish snipers. The night was cold and, as the men had left their coats and blankets behind to reduce the weight of their packs, they spent an uncomfortable night in their cramped, shallow trenches.

Wanliss, N (1929), ‘History of the Fourteenth Battalion’.

As the 15th and 16th Battalions began digging in that same morning, they were fired upon by a group of about 100 Turks, who in turn were forced towards the 13th and 14th Battalions with over 40 taken prisoner, except for a small number who remained hidden, sniping during the day at the brigade as it entrenched.

With dawn enemy snipers got busy, but our shallow trenches protected us until they commenced shrapnelling … By 8 o’clock the day was blazing hot and water was scarce … until noon when “13th get ready to move!” came along and soon we were moving north again through a well shrapnelled branch of the Kaiajik Dere … we halted 50 yards behind the rest of the brigade digging-in near Hill 60 … Although we were now constantly under a hot fire from rifles, machine and field-guns from the Turks who had soon filled all the valleys and occupied all the spurs on our new front … That night we took over the Front Line from the 14th Bn to allow them to cooperate with the 15th and 16th Bns in an attack …


Lieutenant Marks, who would later be promoted to lieutenant colonel and lead the battalion as the youngest battalion commander in the AIF, adds that after capturing the prisoners, the Turkish artillery on Hill 971 found the range of the battalion:

As dawn broke we discovered the 15th driving between 50 and 100 Turks on to our position. We took about 40 of these including two captains (youz Baski). We entrenched all morning under shrapnel fire from 971 Ridge. The elder Pullings was hit about mid-day by a piece of shrapnel shell and died soon after. Made a reconnaissance of country in front for a distance of quite a mile and a half without seeing any sign of enemy. Found a number of wells with clear cool water and a farm-house with bees and black-berries. Men robbed the hives with the aid of their gas helmets.

Marks, Lt D (1915), diary, 7 August.

From their position in the hills, the brigade observed the landing of the British IX Corps further north at Suvla Bay, whose advance they eagerly awaited, but who soon disappointed:

… among themselves [the men] had decided that midday would see the Tommies linking up on the left hand flank … [Suvla Bay] was a wonderful sight with its fleet of transports, warships, destroyers, trawlers, pinnaces and barges … it looked a walk-over for them, as the country could not be strongly held … A few shrapnel bursts, with very little other resistance from the enemy, and they dug in. I, like many others, looked upon them with disgust.

The 13th Battalion diary summarises the day’s events:
As dawn broke, 15 & 16th Bns heading up AGHYL DERE drove a force of some 80 to 100 Turks onto our position. 13th Bn took 20 prisoners including 2 officers. Total casualties during the night march – 11 other ranks killed – 2 officers & 57 other ranks wounded.

That night, General Godley issued orders for dawn assaults. General Cox was ordered to proceed with the 4th Brigade advance on Hill 971, the Ghurkhas were to advance on Hill Q, whilst General Johnston’s New Zealanders were to take Hill 971. The original plan to capture the heights of Sari Bair range had effectively been postponed by a day.

The 13th Battalion took over the front line position of the 14th Battalion that night, in preparation for the assault by the 14th, 15th and 16th Battalions before dawn the next morning.

8 August
The planned advance of the 4th Brigade on the morning of 8 August, over open ground, was a rare event at Gallipoli:
There was no action upon Gallipoli Peninsula, excepting, perhaps, the landing itself, which paralleled the attack by the Fourth Brigade upon the heights of Abdel Rahman Bair on the morning of 8th August.
Chataway, Lt TP (1948), ‘History of the 15th Battalion AIF 1915-1918’.

The 13th Battalion held the entire 4th Brigade line at dawn on 8 August, as the remaining battalions advanced on Hill 971. The 13th Battalion was spread thinly along the length of shallow trenches in reserve, supported by a battalion of the King’s Own Royal Lancs. It was around this time, whilst the 13th Battalion held the entire brigade line, that Edgar Robards was severely wounded:
Bullet struck him on the vertex of the skull and emerged over the right parietal region. He was unconscious for 2 hours and invalided to No. 1 ACD.

There were other casualties from the 13th Battalion that day. Private William Parrington [2281, 13th Bn] was shot and killed. Like Edgar Robards, he was part of the 6th Reinforcements and no doubt they knew one another. In the Red Cross report on the death of William Parrington, a witness, Private Harris, recalled that Parrington was in the trench at Australia Valley and was struck by a Turkish sniper as he took aim above the parapet. It is possible that Edgar Robards was shot under similar circumstances, by a sniper as his head emerged above the trench.

Other men from the 13th Battalion killed that day in the trench above Australia Valley included two men from West Maitland, NSW. Private Walter Beatty [1604A] was born in Braidwood and together with his father, worked at Greta Colliery. Private Thomas Jasper [625] aged 28 and born in Tamworth, also lived in West Maitland. Both men are buried at NZ No. 2 Outpost Cemetery.

Left: Map showing the advance on 8 August. Use this source with the narrative on the next page.
The oatfield
Before dawn on 8 August, the 15th Battalion led the brigade’s advance on Hill 971. They crossed the Kaiajik Dere [refer to map, previous page], avoiding that part of the ridge held by the enemy, and began to climb north east until reaching the top of the ridge. The battalion proceeded across an open cultivated field of oats. After 1 000 yards, at about 4.15 am, Colonel Cannan of the 15th Battalion reported the first contact with an enemy patrol ‘near a slope covered with thick thorny undergrowth’, after which a torrent of intense machine-gun fire opened up from both the north east across the Asma Dere and a high bluff on the main ridge directly ahead to the east, called Alai Tepe or ‘Regiment Hill’.

Turkish troops appeared along the easterly spur, accompanied by fierce rifle fire from the left flank across the dere to the north. The 14th Battalion had advanced in the cover of the scrub along the spur [right, AWM C01860] and its leading platoons reached the area near Hill 100.

The 16th Battalion followed along the southern protected slope of eastern spur towards Hill 90, not emerging on the crest until it passed the oatfield, where Cannan temporarily situated his command on the edge of the scrub. The 15th Battalion platoons were exposed on the oatfield on their left flank and on the crest of the ridge, suffering terribly from the enemy machine guns, and shrapnel from Hill 971, they ‘fled back in fragments … as best they could to the ridge from where they were’.

The 15th Battalion History describes the situation:

This retirement of the 4th Brigade probably ranks as its most tragic in its history, excepting that of Bullecourt in France in April 1917. Stunned by the fearful carnage, the men of A and B Companies were loath to leave their mates lying wounded and unattended on the slope beneath them. Many heroic and desperate, but futile attempts were made to rescue a lost pal or answer a pleading voice for help.

Chataway, Lt TP (1948), History of the 15th Battalion, p87.

Around 7 am, Colonel Pope, leading the 16th Battalion, managed to contact Monash, who in turn reported to Cox of the desperate situation, and a withdrawal was ordered. The machine-gun section under Captain Rose, and including Harry Murray and Percy Black who would become two of the most-decorated soldiers in the AIF, were supported by a rearguard to protect the retreating survivors of the brigade, as they made their way back towards the brigade line. Despite desperate attempts, many of the wounded were left as the battalions retreated. The 14th Battalion diary describes the events:

After the 15th Bn on our immediate front had practically withered away the 14th continued to advance, suffering heavily, and the Turks were met in great force on our front and left. As we drove them back they counter-attacked on our left flank several times. The battalion thus got very split up, it is impossible to say exactly what happened ... 16th Battalion successfully drove off a determined counter-attack made by the enemy on our left.

7.30 am Order received from Col Pope commanding 16th Bn to retire. A reply was despatched asking if it was not possible to hold the ridge running from our left down over Knoll 60 towards the sea and stating that we could hold what we had gained.

8.30 am Another order to retire received from Col Pope and stating that the whole brigade was retiring. Orders were immediately issued to collect all wounded, arms and equipment and take same to behind our lines. The 14th Bn then retired by platoons down the Kaiajik Dere in shell formation together with a few details from the 15th and 16th Bns. A rearguard being left under command of Captains Henry and Giles. The 4th Brigade Machine Gun sections under Capt. Rose also protected the retirement and gave good covering fire.

10.00 am Retirement completed and all ‘gettable’ wounded and arms brought back. Battalion then bivouacked in Australia Gully for the remainder of the day and night.

14th Battalion (1915) diary, 8 August.
The Diary of **Private Albert Compton** [1838, 13th Bn] mentions the treatment of 15th Battalion prisoners by the Turks:

... The Turks took some of the 15 Bn prisoners or rather wounded 20 in number. Anyhow they unspeakable [sic] stripped our boys of everything bar trouser & shirt made them sit down & then shot them except one. He lived.

Compton, Albert (1915), diary, 8 August.

The desperate situation of the wounded during the retreat meant not all could be retrieved:

> From forty to fifty severely wounded were got in; some others were carried by comrades; but in the retreat the battalions did not cover the same ground as in the advance, and this involved the abandonment in the scrub of many wounded who might have been picked up.

Butler, Col. AG (1938), Vol 1, Chap 14, The Supreme Effort – Sari Bair, p301.

The 4th Brigade suffered about 750 casualties on 8 August. The 15th Battalion had lost 400 men, 160 of them killed, and the 14th Battalion had 250 casualties, including 101 killed. The bodies of the men who lost their lives advancing from Australia Gully that day were not recovered. When Bean returned in 1919 to account for the events of the offensive, the remains of the men killed were still visible.

August 8th is largely remembered for what Bean called ‘the climax of Gallipoli’, as the Wellington Mounted Rifles briefly held the summit of Chunuk Bair and, for the first time since the 25th April landing, saw The Narrows of the Dardanelles. The New Zealanders dug in just below the summit but later in the day were overwhelmed by Turkish counter-attack and suffered terribly.

**Wounded**

Remarkably, Edgar Robards survived the initial gunshot wound to his head suffered on the morning of 8 August. That he was stretchered to the beach and evacuated was incredibly fortunate under the circumstances. It is likely that he was shot in his own trench which meant that, unlike the hundreds of men wounded from the battalions that advanced that day, and who were scattered across the oatfield and spur being pursued by the enemy, he did not require rescuing. Support at least was at hand for Edgar Robards and his was a priority case.

Nevertheless, the medical services were under tremendous strain, with field ambulance stretcher-bearers having been given no notice of the 8 August attack. In his history of the medical services, Lt Col Butler describes ‘the lack of medical co-operation in the field at its worst’ and the arrangements as ‘deplorable, and rescue work sadly ineffective’. In the absence of ambulance bearers, Edgar Robards was likely carried by regimental stretcher-bearers, either to an advanced dressing station in Australia Valley, or all the way through to the beach.

Although the total carrying distance was about a mile, the difficulties were extreme:

> The delay was very serious for the severely wounded, who suffered terribly. Only ‘crude’ first-aid was possible up the deres and supplying even modest amounts of water, food and shade during the day, and warmth at night, were extremely difficult. Water was terribly scarce; it is doubtful if at any time during the war a shortage was more severely felt by the fighting men, the bearers, and the wounded.

Butler, Col. AG (1938), Vol 1, Chap 14, The Supreme Effort – Sari Bair, p314.

During the day the wounded came down the deres in large numbers. Since the field ambulance stretcher-bearers were not in place until later on 8 August, the units in the foothills were unable to pass on their stretcher cases. It was not until evening of 8 August, after the 3rd Light Horse Field Ambulance stretcher-bearers had reached the brigade that the wounded from the advanced dressing stations in Australia Valley could be retrieved.

However, since there were also delays in setting up the dressing stations, there was also a backlog of wounded accumulated at the beach. The 4th Australian and 108th Indian Field Ambulances were shelled on 8 August and so the dressing station had to be moved to Walden Point [right, AWM C007001]. Even as the casualties from the 8 August attack reached the beach, there was a blockage in evacuating the wounded from Pier No. 3:
Severely wounded, who were now being removed from the stretchers – which were required for the front – lay around every station in hundreds ... Little could be done for them, and their condition was pitiable in the extreme ... at nightfall of August 8th, 1 000 cases were awaiting evacuation in the dressing stations and clearing stations or in the vicinity of the pier.

Butler, Col. AG (1938), Vol I, Chap 14, The Supreme Effort – Sari Bair, p305.

The pier could be only used only at intervals due to snipers and enemy machine guns 1 200 yards away. Boats were left about the beach riddled with bullets. The pier itself was only accessible to pinnaces and cutters at high tide and no lighters or barges were available. So the wounded were evacuated using ships’ boats, with each boat taking just two stretcher cases or 25 sitting. Lt Col Beeston commanding the 4th Field Ambulance described the situation:

*Our bearers were doing splendid work; it was a long and dangerous carry, and a lot of them were wounded themselves. The miserable part of the affair was that the Casualty Clearing Station on the beach broke down and could not evacuate our wounded. This caused a block, and we had numbers of wounded on our hands ... Many of the cases were desperate, but they uttered not a word of complaint – they all seemed to understand that it was not our fault that they were kept here ...*

Beeston, J (1916), ‘Five Months at Anzac’.

Having been stretchered to the beach by the evening of 8 August with his severe head wound, Edgar Robards would lie overnight, possibly in the casualty clearing station established that night at Walden Point by the 4th Australian Field Ambulance. Many wounded men were confined to stretchers and left in the surrounds of the beach until evacuation from the pier could safely be arranged.

9 August

On 9 August came the counter-attack from the Turks. The Turkish command believed that the 4th Brigade was part of the Suvla landing, and that their objective was Hill 971. Despite the risk posed by the New Zealanders on the summit of Chunuk Bair, a Turkish division was sent to the foothills of Damakjelik Spur near the head of Australia Valley. The 4th Brigade had been reinforced with two battalions from Stopford’s new army: the 4th South Wales Borderers and 6th King’s Own Royal Lancs. The remainder of the three 4th Brigade battalions that had taken part in the 8 August attack were held in reserve until the evening of 9 August.

*All night [8 August] again fresh hordes of Turks massed in Kaiajik Aghala [Hill 60], their patrols and ours scrapping among the bushes in the Dere. Just after midnight great masses of them assembled in battle formation within 50 yards of us. We watched into the gloom with our fingers on our triggers until 2 am when they rose and rushed, several reaching our trench, to die there, however. Within a moment hand-to-hand fights were taking place, those not using their bayonets pouring bullets into the second and third waves rushing up the slope. Men just fired without sighting in the gloom. It was a grim, voiceless struggle – no orders, invitations or callings on Allah from the combatants. Day dawned and still the fighting raged, but with the light the Turks had no chance of sending reinforcements. By 6 it was all over ...*  


Elsewhere, on Chunuk Bair the remains of the New Zealand forces were replaced by the British new army battalions who were unable to hold on to the shallow trenches dug along its summit. The Ghurkhas, who had reached a position just below the summit of Hill Q, between Chunuk Bair and Hill 971, also briefly reached the summit crest, only to be bombarded by the [British] navy and to suffer horribly from the wave of the Turkish counter-attack.

The plans of the August offensive to surprise the Turks by attacking through the northern hills and taking the heights of the Sari Bair range, were now close to failure.

Evacuation

The scheme to evacuate the wounded from the beaches between 6 and 10 August was limited by the shortage of hospital ships, and meant that Imbros was used as a clearing centre. Hospital ships and trawlers waited together in pairs at the ‘roadstead’ off Anzac [see map next page] Small boats transferred serious cases to hospital ships and ‘light cases’ to trawlers, which then ferried the wounded to Imbros.
However on 7 August, hospital ships had accepted less serious cases and so filled up rapidly. Before daylight on 8 August the hospital ships *Delta* and *Dunluce Castle* left the Anzac roadstead for Imbros, but instead of clearing and returning, were sent on to Mudros. So, for most of 8 August, there were no hospital ships available in ‘the roadstead’ to transport the wounded to Imbros and Lemnos.

Edgar Robards was evacuated on 9 August and had therefore probably been caught in the blockage owing to the lack of hospital ships and made to wait overnight on 8 August. Due to the limits on shipping at Pier No. 3, he would have been taken by a smaller lighter to a hospital ship in the roadstead then on to Imbros before being moved onto a so called ‘black ship’, *Esmeraldas*, a hospital transport, on which it was recorded he was transported the 650 miles to Alexandria in Egypt.

From the port at Alexandria there was an overland journey by train to Cairo, where Edgar Robards was admitted to No. 1 Australian General Hospital in the old palace at Heliopolis, outside of Cairo, on 13 August. About five days had elapsed between the time of his wounding at Australia Valley on the morning of 8 August to his admission at the hospital in Heliopolis, Cairo. He was one of about 1 110 casualties from the Sari Bair assault that were embarked from No. 3 pier between 6 and 9 August.

10 August

By midday the Turkish counter-attack led by Colonel Kemal Attaturk had taken back the Chunuk Bair, despite suffering over 9 000 Turkish casualties. For the 4th Brigade, the day was spent digging and defending a further attack from the enemy:

*About 3 o’clock this morning there was an attack, it lasted one hour or so, my rifle was that hot that it blistered my hands, it was hell while it lasted. I and the boys from my platoon held 100 yds of the trenches, had breakfast & were sent back again. One year today since I met Angela O’Nei. We had done 36 hours up till then. The whole Company went in & no sooner we arrived than we got a good reception, it was warm, Turks all over the place. It is simply slaughter here ... Turks are coming, where we are the smell here of the dead is something awful.*

Compton, Albert (1915), diary, 10 August.

With the recapturing of Chunuk Bair by the Turks, and the other objectives not having been achieved, the August Offensive was effectively over. The 4th Brigade would remain in the area of Australia Valley through to the end of August, during which time part of the brigade would take part in the battle for Hill 60.

Failure of the August Offensive

Although the front had been extended several miles north from Anzac, the high ground and route to the Dardanelles remained firmly under the control of the Turks. The men of the 4th Brigade attributed their failure, at least partly, to the shortcomings of the British advance from Suvla Bay:

*The landing at Suvla will be the ‘black page’ in the history of the campaign. We lost what was practically in our hands through their failure to ‘make good’. Stopford will be a name I will not forget.*

Marks, Lieut. D (1915), diary, 8 August (written on 21 Oct, Marks was wounded 7th Aug).

*It was a failure due to the bungle of Suvla Bay. Hence it was that we had to spend the next months fighting stubbornly on the heights overlooking Australia Valley, and being overlooked by the Enemy on Abdel Rahman Bair.*


*MARCH ON ABDEL RAHMAN BAIR. – When the column started it was thought that our line was overlooking the ASMA DERE. An illustration of the fallacy of working too much by the map, and an object lesson on the necessity of personal reconnaissance.*

Marks, Lieut D (1915), diary, 8 August (written on 21 Oct, Marks was wounded 7 Aug).
Bean describes 8 August, 1915, as ‘one of those black days’:

*For the AIF this fight of the 8th of August, 1915, like the Battle of Fromelles a year later, became one of those ‘black days’ which most deeply affect the spirits of soldiers... When viewed after the war, the country in front of the 4th Brigade appeared to be more difficult than any against which Australian infantry was elsewhere sent. So rugged was it that from the supposed starting-point (which the column had barely reached at the end of its calamitous advance) the climbing of Abdel Rahman Bair, even in daylight and in peaceful manoeuvres, would have taken troops, though at the acme of fitness and health, longer than the time allowed for the whole operation.*


There are many ‘what ifs’ that could have made a difference to the outcome of the ‘climax at Gallipoli’. Nevertheless, had the plan succeeded it is by no means certain that it would have brought a swift victory to the Allies.

*Had the 4th Brigade stuck to the planned route, it would have crossed Asma Dere between these machine guns and six others, and a mountain battery, in the saddle between Hills 971 and Q. They were doomed no matter what they did... When Bean visited in 1919 he saw that [Hill 971] was ‘separated from Q by a steep gap bridged by a razor edge’. Chunuk Bair is the key to Sari Bair: Hill 971 is an inaccessible dead end, too far from the Turkish positions on the Second and Third Ridges to have threatened them.*


Recently, Australian Army historian David Cameron in ‘The August Offensive’ concluded that ‘the offensive was far too complex’ and ‘its objectives were impossible’, which even if they had been achieved ‘it is likely that the front line would merely have extended further north along Sari Bair range itself’.

The terrain as it is today is described by Les Carlyon:

*This country is nothing like Anzac: no monuments, no roads, no people... we have seen no clues that for a few days in 1915 this was a battlefield. It is as though we are lost in antiquity, which is pretty much the truth of it.*


**Hospital, Heliopolis**

As Edgar Robards was admitted to No. 1 Australian General Hospital (AGH) on 13 August, on his clinical chart was noted a ‘scalp wound’.

The AGH was a large base hospital located in the Heliopolis Palace Hotel [right, AWM C02428], a grand building to the north-east of Cairo. By June 1915 it held nearly 2 500 patients and had expanded into nearby buildings: the racecourse, the casino, the barracks of the Egyptian Army, and Luna Park, where the ticket office became an operating theatre and the skating rink, bandstand and scenic railway became wards. By August 1915, the number of wounded at Luna Park had reached 3 900.

It wasn’t until a week after his hospitalisation, on 21 August, that Edgar’s family was notified that he had been transferred to hospital in Cairo. A follow-up letter a week later advised that he had been wounded ‘between 5th and 9th August’. An article appeared shortly afterwards in the ‘Sydney Morning Herald’ on 30 August, with short descriptions of 40 men who had been wounded under the heading, ‘Men of the Dardanelles’, with the news that Edgar Robards was in hospital ‘suffering from wounds in the head’. The article was copied in the local ‘Molong Express’ on 4 September, together with a photo of Edgar and titled ‘Wounded Molong Warriors’. Mention was made of Private Chas Taylor from the 2nd Battalion, son of the Mayor of Molong, who was wounded the same day as Edgar, but at Lone Pine.

Edgar met up with Chas Taylor in hospital who, in a letter to his parents published on 25 September (and written on 16 August, just after Edgar had been admitted) made light of the seriousness of Edgar’s wound, which he wrote was ‘nothing to speak of’. In a later letter written by Chas on 26 August to his parents prior to his return to service, and published on 9 October 1915 in the ‘Molong Express’, he referred to the wounded men in hospital as ‘damaged Australian goods from Turkey’, and mentioned that Edgar was still in hospital.
Edgar informed his fiancée that he would undergo an operation in the Heliopolis Hospital, which the ‘Molong Express’ reported took place between about 1 to 3 September, during which the side of his head was cut open and the bone scraped, more than three weeks after having been wounded. The newspaper report continued:

*Unfortunately, the bearer of the letter had left the hospital a few days prior to the date of operation, so he could not say how it had resulted ... Evidently the operation was only partially successful, an abscess subsequently setting in and proving fatal. It is significant, as having some bearing on the soldier’s condition, that he did not write a letter after he was operated upon.*


Nevertheless, according to his service record Edgar was transferred to the 1st Australian Auxiliary Convalescent Depot [left, AWM H18510] at Luna Park for his recovery. In total, Edgar Robards would spend about two months in the hospital.

Following a medical assessment in mid-October, the decision was made for Edgar to be repatriated to Australia. What necessitated the assessment and his repatriation is not clear. Whether it was believed that the recovery was progressing sufficiently to make the return journey home possible, or the pressure on hospital beds, or the availability of the new AIF Hospital Ship *Kanowna* is not clear.

The question remains, had Edgar not been moved from the convalescent ward, would it have posed less of a risk for his recovery and exposure to infection?

**Medical Board**

The hospital Medical Board examined the wounded men and its assessment was reported on ‘Army Form B179’. The examination of Edgar Robards took place on 9 October at No. 1 Auxiliary Convalescent Depot:

*There is some necrosis of the outer table of the Right Parietal Bone. The Sinus still discharges very freely. He had one epileptic fit since being in hospital. He now complains of occasional headache and giddiness, especially after walking any distance. Capt James, Medical Officer.*


The medical report determined that his incapacity for work was ‘total’, the minimum duration of disability was three months, and recommended Edgar be sent home. As the voyage to Australia was a month each way, patients requiring three months ‘rest’ or more were to be sent home. Despite the lengthy duration of his stay in hospital in Cairo, no medical records of his time there remain, except for the final medical report. After the war it is believed that Australian Surgeon General Neville Howse ordered the destruction of 750 000 AIF medical records.

**Hospital Ship**

Edgar Robards was considered a ‘cot case’, which according to Colonel Butler meant that the patient was in need of medical and nursing attention equivalent to that available in a hospital, and would therefore be allocated to a ‘hospital ship’.

Other ‘invalids’ travelled either by better sea transport sections, or cargo ship. The hospital ships formed part of the Australian Commonwealth Mercantile Marine and were administered by the Army Medical Service.

Edgar Robards was transported during the maiden voyage of the No. 2 Australian Hospital Ship *Kanowna* [right, AWM P03968.001] considered ‘a make-shift, and inconvenient to work’.
The Kanowna had left England on 26 September with its new complement of staff and arrived at Alexandria on 8 October. Edgar Robards was transferred to the ship in port at Suez from Cairo on 20 October, more than two months after being wounded, along with 450 other patients. Four men, including Edgar Robards, never made it home.

The Medical Officer reported the condition of Edgar Robards on the voyage:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Condition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>29 October</td>
<td>Wound in skull still discharging freely. Free bone can be felt. Complaining of headache, occasional vomiting. Marked optic neuritis of both eyes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 November</td>
<td>Patient showing signs of cerebral irritation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 November</td>
<td>Patient’s condition apparently improved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 November</td>
<td>Patient’s condition worse: headache, vertigo present. Marked photophobia. Pulse &amp; Temp rising.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 November</td>
<td>Patient had seizure, lasted 5 minutes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 November</td>
<td>Patient died 1.45am. Post mortem revealed large abscess in right parietal lobe.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On 11 November, 1915, off the coast of Geraldton, WA, and just days before the ship was due in Fremantle, Edgar Robards died from a cerebral abscess. A pink telegram was sent to Edgar’s mother, Mary Ann, relaying the terrible news. Edgar was buried at sea [burial report, right] off the coast of Western Australia by Anglican Chaplain Michael Selwyn Bell, in the vicinity of where HMAS Sydney was sunk in 1941.

There were three other fatalities on the voyage. The first death was Pte Gordon Maxwell [730, 12th Bn] suffering from cerebral thrombosis, who died just a day after leaving Suez. Just after leaving Fremantle, Pte James Kerr [218] of the 8th LHR died on 19 November of diphtheria and Canadian-born Pte Victor Reston [2343, 9th Bn] died on 24 November of pulmonary tuberculosis the day before reaching Sydney (all buried at sea).

Memorial
Edgar Robards is remembered on the Lone Pine Memorial in Gallipoli [right, top] and on the Molong Roll of Honour. He is also remembered on a family headstone in Molong Cemetery.

The 13th Battalion flag that was presented to the battalion prior to their departure for Gallipoli, was returned by Lieutenant Colonel Burnage in 1916 after the AIF was evacuated from the Gallipoli Peninsula and hung in Newcastle Cathedral [right], close to Burnage’s home.

In 2001, the flag was restored and a new plaque states:

To the immortal memory of the 15 Officers and 385 Soldiers of the 13th Battalion AIF who gave their lives at Gallipoli. This flag laid up in this cathedral in 1916 has been restored.

The accompanying tablet from Lieutenant Colonel Burnage reads:

To the Glory of God And in Memory of the Officers and Men of the 13th Battalion Australian Imperial Force Who Fell in the Service of King & Country on Gallipoli in 1915. This Tablet is erected by Lt. Col. G.J. Burnage, C.B., O.C. ‘Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.’
Corporal 2604 Athol Kirkland, 34th Battalion AIF
Andrew Pittaway, Fremantle.

Athol Goodwin Kirkland was born in Rylstone, NSW, in 1896, one of nine children to Andrew and Mary Kirkland. He was working as a labourer in the district prior to enlisting in the AIF.

Athol tried to enlist early in the war but was knocked back due to medical reasons. He had an operation to fix the undisclosed rupture and on 25 July, 1916, he enlisted in Narrabri, NSW. Athol was sent to Armidale Camp for training and on 25 August, 1916, he was assigned to the 5th Reinforcement group to the 34th Battalion AIF. He trained in NSW for the next few months and on 17 November, 1916, Athol boarded the HMAT Port Napier and set sail for Europe. He disembarked in Devonport, England, on 29 January, 1917.

With the rest of his reinforcement group, Athol marched into the 9th Training Battalion at Durrington Camp. For over ten weeks Athol trained in England and he then was put in a draft of soldiers heading for France. On 25 April, 1917, Athol boarded a transport ship at Folkestone Harbour. On arrival in Etaples, Athol would only spend a few days at the 3rd Australian Division Base Depot as on 30 April he was taken on strength of the 34th Battalion.

The 34th Battalion had spent their first few months of the war in the Armentieres sector but were soon on the move to the Ploegsteert sector near Messines. On 3 June, 1917, a few days prior to the Messines offensive, Athol wrote the following letter to his sister Min:

Just a few lines to let you see I am still waiting for a letter from you, I haven't got any since I left from you. I have only got one from home since I came to France. I have got several from Fanny. I say, did you get that small parcel which I sent from England? Well I am back out of the trenches for a spell. We are billeted in a small village, but it is very dead, for there is nothing but soldiers. I can hear the people at church, puts me in mind of the old church at home. I expect you are at church today, who is the minister?
The only way to tell Sunday here is when the civil people come out in their Sunday dress, it is amazing to see the way some of them dress. What sort of weather are you having? I expect it is rather cold just now, well it is the opposite here, one would think about three months ago that it would never get warm ... I saw Cecil Maloney [70 Cecil Maloney, 9th MGC] the other day he enlisted the same day as I did the first time and also saw Cos English [2577 Michael Cos English, 35th Bn, KIA 7/6/1917] and his brother [2068 Pte Francis English 35th Bn] they are close to us.

Some of my mates have been killed since we have come here. The (Froggies) that is the people here, seem to have a long church service for they have been there for about two hours already, but I guess if a stray shell falls anywhere near, they will soon bring it to a short end. Well Min I will have to bring this note to a finish. I say you have never sent your photos yet. I am looking forward to them anyway. Trusting this finds you all well at home as this leaves me o.k. from your loving brother Athol.

Don't forget to write or you and I will have a row when I see you again. Our band has just started to play in the streets. AGK.

Athol survived the Messines offensive, but was gassed on 7 June and was evacuated through to the 12th Field Ambulance. Fortunately, it was not a severe gassing and Athol returned to the 34th Battalion nine days later.

On 27 July, 1917, Athol wrote to his sister:

Dear Min, just a few lines to let you know how I am. We have just come out of the trenches after doing a few days in since I last wrote to Mother. We are going to have a spell now for a while. We had some good weather this time in the lines, it rained for about an hour that is all the wet we had. I am looking forward to getting a letter from home tonight as there is a home mail in, we got some yesterday but worse luck I never got any.
I expect by the time you get this you will have heard that George Taylor [2917 Pte George Taylor, 36th Bn, DOW 21/7/17] was seriously [wounded] on the 24th July, it was his first night in the lines. I was talking to him that evening before he went in. He went over in a raiding party, he got wounded in the chest.

Well Min I don’t know there is much to tell you, but just a few lines to let you see that I am alright. What sort of Winter are you having? Well Min, with love to all at home, Yours Athol.

Unfortunately, it seems that Athol’s friend George Taylor was seriously wounded on 21 July, 1917. Red Cross reports mention that George was being taken back by stretcher-bearers when a shell fell nearby, killing him and the bearing party.

Athol continued to serve with the 34th Battalion and on 30 July, 1917, was promoted to lance corporal. On 19 September, Athol was granted a fortnight’s furlough in a rest camp and he returned to the 34th Battalion just prior to 12 October advance for Passchendaele. Fortunately, Athol survived this terrible action unscathed, though there were horrendous casualties for the unit. As a result, Athol was promoted to corporal shortly after.

On 18 November, 1917, Athol was detached to the 9th Brigade School for instruction and returned to the unit on 2 December. In early January 1918, Athol hurt his back and had a spell in hospital.

On 25 January, 1918, Athol wrote to Min:

Well Min, a few lines in answer to your ever looked for letter which I received yesterday. I was just beginning to think that you had forgotten me … I am now in a hospital but it is an advanced dressing station. I am suffering with a bad back, but I may be going back to the battalion next week. I have only been here a week, we get a good looking after. I got two of Matthew’s parcels about a week after Xmas, but I can tell you the cake was the best ever I have had since I was last at home, for the cakes and biscuits they make over this side are up to putty, but don’t be frightened to send any … My pal and myself share our parcels, of course he gets a few more than I do, but I get a few from England. Do you know which month it was that John Dowd [Pte VJ Dowd, 45th Bn, KIA 12/10/17] was killed and where he was killed? I thought I saw him one day going up to take over from us, but that is about two months ago. I have seen several Rylstone boys at different times but never had the opportunity to speak to them …

Well Min you are always wishing that I was home, but I will be home soon perhaps but anyway I ain’t the only one that wants to be home so I expect I shall have to take the good with the bad and do my bit. Well I shall have to ring off as my back is troubling me, it is near tea time, trusting this will find you all in the best of health.

Love to all, Athol.

Three days after writing this letter Athol rejoined the 34th Battalion, but on 12 February he returned to the Brigade School for instruction. He had been appointed gas corporal for his unit and it appears his time at the Brigade and Australian Corps School throughout February and March 1918 was for this purpose.

On 18 March, 1918, Athol returned to the 34th Battalion, but a few days later, as a result of the German offensive, the 3rd Australian Division was sent south to help stop the German breakthrough. The 34th Battalion saw action at Hangard Wood on 30 March and then moved to in front of Villers-Bretonneux. The 9th Brigade helped stop the German advance on 4 April, 1918, and the following day, as Athol was bringing rations and water to his men, he was hit by a bullet and killed instantly. The battalion was relieved shortly after but not before Athol was buried where he fell.

A friend of Athol’s would later write to Min Kirkland:

Dear Miss Kirkland. I must first ask your pardon for not writing direct to you last year from Villers-Bretonneux, France. Athol and I were just all in all and he was the only true pal I ever had, needless to say I feel his loss acutely. I received the letter you wrote me last September only last week – it has been chasing me all over the place.

You have asked me for details of Athol’s death but you will not say anything of it to your Mother I know – if you should think that it would freshen her memory. Please promise me this, Miss Kirkland, as I think I understand just how you all feel his loss. It is not really a loss – a worldly one yes, but what a brave and noble end – to die fighting loved by all who ever came in contact with him.
The battalion was in the line out in front of this town of Villers-Bretonneux. Athol was gas corporal at this time – that is, he had to inspect all gas masks each twenty four hours to see that they were alright and safe. He had been down to us on such an errand – and had also fetched cans of water with him and just returned when he was hit with a sniper’s bullet. Athol was buried there at Villers-Bretonneux. I hope this will not cause you fresh grief Miss Kirkland but I have always wanted to write and tell you – somehow until now I could not. I have decided to return to England in a few months, so if there is anything at all I could do for you your mother or father whilst I am in Australia I would be very pleased indeed. You will think it queer of me to be returning to England but I have been a ‘rolling stone’ for the past five years and cannot settle down to everyday life even now. I was seventeen when I enlisted so therefore had to have my father’s consent and also say I was a year older. My father would not do this and so Miss Kirkland I made the greatest mistake – that is forged his signature and left Australia without his permission. He has never forgiven me and as I have no one depending on me I have decided to travel for a year or two. I must close now thanking you for your letter and also asking you to spare me a photo of Athol if you can as I lost all my things when I was wounded and his photo was amongst them. Yours Sincerely Desmond W Nixon. [2707 Desmond Wallace Nixon, 34th Bn AIF.]

Unfortunately, after Athol was buried the cross his battalion erected over the grave was lost, and due to his possessions and disc being removed from his body, by the time the War Graves party came through in 1919, Athol could only be identified as an ‘Unknown Corporal of the 34th Battalion AIF’.

The unknown 34th Battalion corporal’s body was recorded as being found at map reference 62d.SE.P.25.d.20.80 and he was taken to Crucifix Corner Cemetery and buried in plot II.D.8 amongst Australian and British soldiers who fell defending Villers-Bretonneux against the German attacks.

On the FFFAIF trip to the Western Front in 2010 we visited Crucifix Corner Cemetery and I noticed several graves which named the battalion but the name of the soldier was unknown. I took a photo of a few of these headstones and in 2014 when the Commonwealth War Graves digitised their records, I went and had a look at the Grave Registration and Concentration forms to see if it was possible to name any of these unknown Australian soldiers.

The first step to look for an unknown corporal of the 34th Battalion AIF was to see how many were actually missing in France and named on the Villers-Bretonneux Memorial. As it turned out there was only one, and that was Athol Kirkland. While this was a huge bonus I still had to see if the map reference where his body was retrieved from matched that where the 34th Battalion was located in early April 1918. The map references matched, as did the eye witness reports of Athol’s death and burial.

In October 2014 I wrote a case for Athol Kirkland to be named as the 34th Battalion corporal in Crucifix Corner Cemetery and sent it to Brigadier Appleton at the Office of Australian War Graves. He agreed with the research and sent it on to the London Office of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. A month later Brigadier Appleton sent the good news that the Commonwealth War Graves Commission agreed with the research undertaken and that Corporal Athol Kirkland was indeed the ‘Unknown 34th Battalion Corporal’ in Crucifix Corner Cemetery.

The Office of Australian War Graves found relatives of Athol and a service for the rededication of Athol’s grave/headstone was organised for April 2015 at Crucifix Corner Cemetery.

While I would have loved to have been there for the service in France, I had my book launch of Fremantle Voices of the Great War plus the unveiling of the plaques on Monument Hill, Fremantle, of the World War One dead in the same week, so with much regret I had to miss the ceremony. However, I was able to visit Athol’s grave [right] in September 2015.

Several of Athol’s family were able to get to France for the ceremony, while others had a ceremony for him in Cassilis, NSW. A surprise visitor for the service at Crucifix Corner was the then Prime Minister Tony Abbott. As Geoff Kirkland (Athol’s great nephew) said in his email to me: Athol’s parents, Andrew
and Mary Kirkland, could never have dreamed that one day their son would finally receive the due recognition of his sacrifice from no less than the nation’s Prime Minister.

The headstone in Crucifix Corner Cemetery now reads:

2604 CORPORAL
A.G. KIRKLAND
34th BN. AUSTRALIAN INF.
3rd-5th APRIL 1918 AGE 23

I ONCE WAS LOST
BUT NOW AM FOUND.

Above left: The Official Party and Kirkland relatives at the headstone unveiling. Above right: Wreaths with Athol’s portrait at Crucifix Corner Cemetery, April 2015.

**Membership renewal time**

For the majority of members, it is time to renew your membership of the FFFAIF, which includes your subscription to DIGGER and COBBéR. You will know if your subs are due by the content of the message in the bottom right corner of the mailing sheet. If you have already binned the mail sheet, and can’t remember if your subs are due, please e-mail membership@fffaif.org.au and a committee member will check and advise.

Subs are due by June 30, 2016, and as chasing up overdue subs is a time-consuming chore (that can take up to six months), the committee would appreciate if you could pay promptly. Each year, more members are taking up the option of a two or three year membership, and we encourage you to consider this option.

Below is a concise summary of our membership fees (full details are/were on the reverse of the mail sheet).

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<tr>
<th>Membership Type</th>
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<th>Multi-Year Fee</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual/Corporate</td>
<td>$50</td>
<td>$100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Concession Membership (under 18s, f/t students, 65 and over)</td>
<td>$40</td>
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<td>Family Membership/individuals</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family membership/concession</td>
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<td>$80 for first member; $40 each additional concession member = two DGR</td>
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**Payment by cheque or money order** should be sent to:
Membership Secretary, FFFAIF Inc, PO Box 4245, FORSTER 2428 NSW.

**Online deposits** should be made to:
BSB 012402; Account number: 1101-42368; Account name: Families & Friends First AIF.
Give your deposit a description such as: SMITH – SUBS, your member number, or your phone number.
We must be able to identify who has made the deposit!
It is strongly recommended that you also advise by e-mail that you have just paid your subs by EFT that day. “DON’T DELAY – PAY TODAY!”
Essendon’s ‘Three Musketeers’ at Gallipoli
Ross McMullin, Clifton Hill.

A different version of this article was first published in ‘The Weekend Australian’ Magazine on 25 April, 2015. Thanks to ‘The Weekend Australian’ Magazine for approval to publish it in DIGGER.

Ian Marshall, a Canberra medical researcher, and his wife Kathleen had been married for over three decades when an arresting discovery revealed that they had more in common than they realised.

Almost 30 years ago they decided to visit one of Ian’s cousins, Betty Hamilton, in the Riverina town of Lockhart. Neither visitor had seen Betty’s house before, but when Kathleen entered she suddenly noticed something familiar. It was a photograph on a wall of three young AIF soldiers on camels near the Pyramids, the kind of image featured in many Australian homes during the decades following 1915. But Kathleen was sure she knew this particular photo. She used to see it prominently displayed at her grandmother’s house. What was it doing here, in the home of her husband’s cousin?

“Because that is my uncle,” Betty explained, pointing to one of the soldiers. “And that is my uncle,” Kathleen responded, pointing to one of his comrades. She was stunned to discover that her husband’s uncle and her own uncle had been close friends.

All three soldiers in the photo came from Essendon [Vic], where they were known as ‘The Three Musketeers’. On the right was Kathleen’s uncle, Ellis ‘Teena’ Stones, an amiable, unassuming 19 year old carriage builder with creative instincts who enjoyed sport with his mates, despite his diminutive stature. On the left was her husband’s uncle, Ken Walker, a 21 year old farm-worker with blue-grey eyes and fair hair. Between them in the photo was their friend Will Elliot, a 20 year old clerk who had boarded with the Stones family at Nicholson Street, Essendon, for four years since his mother’s death (and was sometimes known as ‘Bill’). As Kathleen confirmed recently, she knew about Will Elliot boarding with her mother’s family, but was unaware that Ken Walker was a frequent visitor and had never heard of the trio as ‘musketeers’.

The three mates had enlisted during the war’s first weeks. Early volunteers from the Essendon district (including Ascot Vale and Moonee Ponds) were allotted to the 7th Battalion. Its commander, Lieutenant Colonel Harold Elliott, had led many of them before the war in a militia unit known as the Essendon Rifles; he always retained a fond fatherly affiliation with his “Essendon boys”. Colonel Elliott, soon to acquire his enduring nickname of ‘Pompey’ (and no relation to Will), had a brother, George, who was a medical student, champion footballer and the fiancé of Ken Walker’s sister. This connection reinforced Pompey’s regard for Ken, who often featured in the colonel’s letters home.

Pompey trained the 7th Battalion at Broadmeadows and Egypt with vigour, rigour and charisma. “He may be hard, but he knows how to make soldiers”, Will Elliot assured Teena’s mother. Ellis was given specialist training as a sniper, and took photographs of his comrades that underlined his creative potential. Ken’s potential for leadership was recognised, and he was promoted to corporal and then sergeant. On 24 April 1915, as their ship, the Galeka, approached Gallipoli, Ken wrote to Ellis’s father: “we will have a big task before us”, but “Teena and myself are as fit as possible and mean to do our best to get back to tell you all about our thrilling experiences”.

When the Galeka moved into its allotted position, there was no sign of the boats towed by steam pinnaces that were to take the 7th Battalion ashore. While they waited for these tows, the Galeka became a target for Turkish artillery. The ship’s captain, who was in charge, decided that the situation was too dangerous for the Galeka to wait any longer, and directed Pompey Elliott to disembark his men immediately. Instead of being towed in by steam pinnaces as planned, they would have to row themselves to the shore in the ship’s own lifeboats.
Pompey ordered his men to get into the lifeboats. The company containing the Essendon boys went first. They rowed themselves away in the first four boatloads, with Teena Stones and Will Elliot among the rowers in the first boat. Pinnaces then materialised to tow the rest of the battalion close to the small beach that came to be known as Anzac Cove.

The Essendon boys in the Galeka lifeboats, however, rowed themselves all the way unassisted and ended up approaching the shore almost a mile north of Anzac Cove, near a locality known as Fisherman’s Hut. They encountered heavy fire from Turks positioned there.

This part of the Gallipoli landing is not well known. The occupants of the lifeboats, including the Essendon boys, were aware they were nearing a lethal area where enemy bullets were cutting up the water. The rowers felt especially vulnerable, expecting a bullet in the back at any moment. But they kept rowing vigorously. They could not retaliate, they knew they were sitting ducks, but they did not waver.

As they reached the perilous zone, casualties began to accumulate. One by one the rowers were hit, and slumped down. Others immediately seized the oars. Alex McArthur, a young red-headed private who had played for the Essendon Rifles football team with Teena and Will, was shot through an artery while rowing. With blood spurting from his thigh, a sergeant tried to staunch the flow. “It’s no use, sarge, I’m done!” McArthur cried. He was right, he was bleeding to death, but he kept rowing desperately until he collapsed.

Another bullet rebounded from Stones’ oar and scythed its way through the bones and flesh in and around his left knee. He tried to keep rowing, but it was impossible. Will Elliot was the only original rower in the leading boat not to be hit. He scrambled out as it reached the shore, and made for some grass-tufted sand hummocks along the beach. But this sanctuary proved flimsy. The Turkish fire escalated in intensity, and more Essendon boys were hit. When an officer asked those around him how many were still going, only six answered. Will Elliot was among the silent.

Teena Stones, still in the lifeboat, was desperate to staunch the blood pouring from his and others’ wounds, but a dying mate was lying across him and he could not move. The relentless Turkish fire riddled the boat, which began to fill with water of a gruesome crimson hue, compounding the fear and misery of the wounded trapped inside. They endured a grim ordeal in this pitiful state for over an hour.

Eventually the Turkish fire from Fisherman’s Hut ceased, and rescuers were able to reach the lifeboat. Stretcher-bearers carried Stones ashore, and reduced the blood flowing from his wound by wedging his camera into the hole where the back of his knee used to be. After waiting on the beach for hours, he was at last placed on a ship crowded with wounded, who endured an agonising journey to Alexandria. Stones was conveyed to a Cairo hospital, where his leg was about to be amputated until a doctor from Moonee Ponds entered the operating theatre, recognised Teena and intervened.

Right: Will Elliot (on left) with Ellis Stones, 1915.

His leg was saved, but his knee was wrecked. Teena’s soldiering days were over – the trained sniper never fired a shot in action. With official cables delivering dread to Essendon homes, Teena sent a poignant one of his own: “Wounded leg Bill gone Ellis”. His wound became infected, and he remained in hospital in Egypt for three months.

The other musketeer, Ken Walker, was also a casualty on 25 April. Hit on the head by shrapnel, he was “literally bathed in his own blood”, as Pompey Elliott observed, but the wound was superficial and he recovered quickly. Pompey, himself incapacitated at the landing when a bullet struck his foot, cabled home “Walker and I wounded neither seriously”. They returned to Gallipoli together on 4 June and rejoined the battalion. There were “only about half a dozen of all the Essendon boys left”, Pompey noted. “Nearly all my tent mates have gone under”, Walker observed.

Walker, now an officer, distinguished himself at Steele’s Post in July. The Turks shelled Steele’s repeatedly while the 7th Battalion was there, demolishing trenches and burying some of Pompey’s men alive. Lieutenant Walker dug them out – despite the howitzer shells still crashing down – “not once but dozens of times”, according to Pompey, who “often saw him with his face set and pale but never shrinking”. Walker was displaying this selfless bravery once again on 12 July when “a fragment of shell went right through his...
body”, Pompey lamented; it was “a frightful wound and the poor boy bore it without a murmur”. Ken Walker died soon afterwards.

Ellis Stones left Egypt later that month bound for Australia. After arriving home he returned to hospital and had a series of operations. In constant pain and hobbling around on crutches, he had nightmares about the landing and endured headaches, anxiety and loneliness. Teena missed his Essendon mates, who were away with the AIF or dead. He rejoined the AIF in April 1917 for home service in a postal unit.

The solitary blessing was his growing closeness to Olive Doyle, who had been Will Elliot’s sweetheart. He and Olive married in 1922. Teena resumed her pre-war occupation as a carpenter-builder, but his shattered leg was not up to it and he eventually collapsed. He suffered a complete breakdown, compounded by the death from meningitis of his young son. Limping about despondently, Stones was a shadow of his normal genial, gregarious self.

For too many Australian families, the war’s aftermath was like an unending funeral. Teena’s parents were not only terribly worried about him; Will Elliot had been like a son to them. Similarly, for the Walkers, Ken’s death at Gallipoli was an enduring sadness, and his brother Eric had suffered severely while serving under Pompey Elliott during the worst winter in France for decades. Eric’s wartime illnesses included pleurisy and tuberculosis, and he found the post-war years very difficult.

Lyn Walker, a sister of Ken and Eric, had married Pompey’s brother George, who had enlisted after completing his medical degree. Lyn was pregnant when George departed, and he never saw his daughter because he was killed in September 1917 while serving as a battalion doctor. Lyn was resentful about George’s fate – and her own. Her bitterness often surfaced if she noticed a returned soldier with his offspring while she was strolling with little Jacqueelyn: “See, their father didn’t get killed at the war like yours did,” she would say. Pompey Elliott supported Lyn and Jacqueelyn generously after the war, but George’s daughter had a troubled life.

Another of the Walker sisters, Doris, married Bob Marshall, who had served in Pompey’s brigade on the Western Front. Bob, who was also from Essendon, did not inform his brigadier of his connection to the Walkers, because he did not want to seem to be seeking preferential treatment (not that Pompey would have provided it). He did well in France all the same: he was promoted to lieutenant and awarded the Military Medal for distinguished leadership in the AIF’s biggest battle in 1918. Bob Marshall and Doris Walker had three children, and their second son, Ian, became a medical researcher.

Teena Stones had sisters too. The youngest, Eva, married and her daughter Kathleen was born in 1931, a few days after the suicide of Pompey Elliott, who had returned home as Australia’s most famous fighting general but battled his own inner demons from the war years. Kathleen ended up moving to Canberra, where she married Ian Marshall in 1953. The three musketeers were reconnected, then, when a niece of Teena Stones married a nephew of Ken Walker.

Only one musketeer survived Gallipoli, and that survivor’s prospects looked bleak after his breakdown in 1923, but Ellis Stones managed to transform his life. The key was the discovery that he had an intuitive knack for arranging stones in gardens with an attractively natural look. As his rare flair gradually came to be recognised, more and more landscape design commissions came his way. He became remarkably successful, a genius with rockwork, though still hampered by his chronic knee pain that was a perpetual reminder of Gallipoli. Now known as ‘Rocky’ Stones, he was busier in his seventies than ever, with television appearances, a regular column in ‘Australian Home Beautiful’ and even a best-selling book, ‘Australian Garden Design’. His endearing personality remained unchanged while he was achieving all this; he was gentle and genuine, engaging and humorous, and enthusiastic though modest about his special talent. **Above left:** Ellis Stones, from ‘The Australian Natural Garden’, Ford and Ford (1999). Source: [http://empirecall.pbworks.com/w/page/29894691/Stones-E-A-Pte-437](http://empirecall.pbworks.com/w/page/29894691/Stones-E-A-Pte-437). **Right:** A photo of Ellis Stones in his favourite landscape. Source: [http://annelatreille.com/the-natural-garden](http://annelatreille.com/the-natural-garden).

Meanwhile Will Elliot’s half-brother Doug was even more famous as a politician and media personality. He was a Labor MP in the Victorian parliament and prominent in the iconic television
phenomenon ‘World of Sport’. Doug Elliot also served as mayor of Essendon.

It remains intriguing that Ian and Kathleen Marshall had no inkling of the previous bond between their families until they unexpectedly came across a photograph when they had been married for 33 years. These days, as Kathleen has confirmed, that photo is widely treasured by relatives of Essendon’s three musketeers.

**Endnotes:** (1) Ellis Stone passed away in 1975 – Ed. (2) Ross McMullin’s biography ‘Pompey Elliott’ won awards for biography and literature. His latest book, ‘Farewell, Dear People: Biographies of Australia’s Lost Generation’, was awarded the Prime Minister’s Prize for Australian History and the National Cultural Award. (3) When Ellis Stones re-enlisted in April 1917, he gave his occupation as salesman. He was discharged from the Base Postal Unit at his own request on 3 March, 1919. The next day (4 March, 1919), Stones applied for Home Service and was employed as a passport guide. He was discharged after 505 days service when the Passport Guide was demobilised on 20 July, 1920 – Ed.

**The men:** Private 437 Ellis Andrew Stones, 7th Bn, RTA 29.7.15. 2nd Lieutenant Kenneth Leigh Walker, 7th Bn. DOW 12.7.15. Private 422 William Walter Elliot, 7th Bn, DOW 26.4.15. Private 457 Alexander James McArthur, 7th Bn, KIA 25.4.15. [Nominal roll shows date of death as being between 25 April and 2 May, such was the confusion after the Landing.] Lieutenant Eric Walford Walker, 60th Bn, RTA 18.10.17. Captain George Stephenson Elliott, AAMC, KIA 25.9.17.

**Left:** The grave of Captain George Stephenson Elliott, Australian Army Medical Corps. A medical practitioner from Elwood, Vic, prior to enlistment, Capt Elliott embarked from Melbourne on HMAT *Orsova* on 1 August, 1916. Whilst attached to the 56th Battalion he was awarded the Military Cross for ‘his work and splendid devotion to duty’ between 13 and 17 May, 1917. Capt Elliott was killed in action on 25 September, 1917 and was buried in The Huts Cemetery, Belgium. He was a brother of Brigadier General Harold Edward Elliott CB, CMG, DSO, DCM, BA, LLM. AWM J06136.

**DIGGER Quiz No. 55: Campbell’s challenge: Postal history of the AIF**


1. When and where was the first Australian Base Post Office established during the war?
2. What was conveniently located on ‘Anzac Beach’ to handle the outgoing mail for the troops onshore at Gallipoli?
3. What type of post cards were sent from France in the mail but not openly franked?
4. Why were ‘field service post cards’ useful to the soldier?
5. The Corps’ Headquarters at Shepheard’s Hotel, Cairo, issued a rubber stamp for correspondence with what initials?

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Memoirs of Private 4393 Alexander Wallace, 29th Battalion (Part 3)
Contributed by Stephanie Smyth, Adelong. Edited by Graeme Hosken, Dubbo.
Alex Wallace’s 29th Battalion has not long come out of the fighting at Polygon Wood when Alex [below] rejoins it after secondment to a tramway company near Ypres.

Poperinge
We lost a lot of men there [Polygon Wood]. Some of us were sent back for a stand [rest], but I was lucky to be there [at this time Alex was detached to the 9th Tramway Company]. After a couple of days they sent for us and we went up on fatigues at the back of Ypres. It was simply Hell. We were bombed at night and shelled at day. There was a constant stream of wounded coming into Poperinge. The guns were roaring night and day like one continuing roar of thunder. On the nights of 1st, 2nd and 3rd of October, he bombed us with planes. When he did we used to let go at him with ‘Archies’ [anti-aircraft guns], machine guns and rifles, but he would come in relays and drop bombs. On 4 October there was a terrific artillery duel, followed by an attack and we got a lot of prisoners; some of them badly wounded [the Battle of Broodseinde]. There was a trainload of them. On 7 October, 1917, we went back to Poperinge, joined the battalion and on the 8th we went back to some tents and moved into the line. On the 9th we went in.

In the Salient
It seemed to be quiet; the ground covered with dead men: Tommies, Canadians, Aussies and Germans. We arrived in the supports without any mishap; we were satisfied. We had had bad reports of the place; we said it would do us, but I had noticed the ground had been torn apart a lot.

We made ourselves comfortable and some of them even lit a fire in the trench. The officer told them to put it out and the men were strolling about the top. In the evening Fritz sent over a few shells and one chap stood on the bank watching it. Over came a shrapnel burst and he got some of the pellets in his arm. Well, he did not know what to do; he shook his arm and looked around and he held it down and the warm blood ran down it. Out he went, our casualty.

That was the start of a small hell. He rained shells on our trench, thick and heavy. Men ran for safety to an old pill box. It was full of men and a sergeant got knocked over [by a shell]. A big Irishman came along and sang out, Stretcher-bearers wanted here, a man knocked. I was a stretcher-bearer but I could not find my mate. He made himself scarce and we called him and got no answer. I don’t wonder, for the shells were raining down.

Jack [unidentified] and I rushed out over the top and grabbed him and half-carried, half-dragged him to the pill box. How we did it I don’t know. We got him inside and dressed his wound, and an officer said, Get this man away. Jack had gone back to look for my mate and he would not come. The officer got wild and said, What sort of man is he? I said, I am ready, get me a mate. So at last I got a mate and away we went with our burden.

It was now as dark as pitch. Over trenches and broken [ground], we were up and down shell holes. The perspiration streamed from us. The shells fell thick and heavy, but we got through and almost collapsed with exhaustion. The medic was in a pill box and it was full of wounded men. We got back to the trench and he shelled us all night and many a good man went down.

The pill box had a full complement and I found my mate. We stayed in the trench and sat it out, expecting to go up any minute. Another chap was sitting it out on his own. He asked me if he could come in with us and we let him in – he was trembling with fear and being on his own made it worse. He calmed a little after, with company.

It calmed before morning and the boys had come back to their positions and were having breakfast. Bill (of the narrow escape before), was with his mates, when a shell fell on the bank [parapet]. They remembered Bill being an unlucky one. They offered and left Bill. He said, I won’t shift, I will sit it out. The next shell fell fair and square on top of poor Bill and killed him. I went over and had a look; he was torn in pieces. We constructed a cross out of old pieces of wood and what remained of Bill was buried. It was a big blow to us to lose Bill, but we remembered we were at war.

Things calmed after the planes came in contact with Fritzzy. They had a fight in the air, with the result Fritzzy’s plane caught on fire and was thousands of feet up and he [the pilot] jumped. At first he was a
little black object, but as he came nearer, you could see the shape. His arms were extended above his head, his legs apart. He fairly flew through space. The plane was turning around and twisting and at last Fritzy landed. He sent the water and mud flying, like a shell, with the force of the impact. Some of the boys said every bone in his body was broken. The plane was practically burnt when it hit the ground.

On 13 October, 1917, we marched to Ypres. The next day, we were getting timber for a duckboard track and Fritzy started to shell and pieces of brick and rafters flew all over the place. We took shelter in an old cellar. He fired at the Cloth Hall and killed four of our men. One chap was picked up and thrown about 20 yards. Another's head was split into two – helmet and all. One had a piece of steel in the temple about four inches long, and the other I did not look at. They lay there for some time. At last a cart came and took them away.

Our sergeant came to us and he said, Keep clear of them shells or you won't want your deferred pay. He said, Come around here, I want to show you something. He said, See that shell hole? A man was sitting there. Pointing, he said, And here's where he landed, about fifteen yard the other way. He said, Lost his hand, that's all. As we were leaving we met a Tommy carrying something on a stick. We said, What have you got, chum? He said, That chap's hand. It would do me, no more war for him. It was all chewed up, like it had been through a sausage machine.

In the evening he [the Hun] came over in a plane and downed one of our battalion and dropped seven bombs in rapid succession. He sent a few shells around our camp as we were getting paid. There was a mob of mules tied to some trees and it just missed them. It put the wind up the mules.

On 17 October, 1917, we again faced the line [Westhoek Ridge]. This time in reserve; we did not like the idea. We had seen a bit of fun going in, on another road from where we went in. A lot of horsemen were coming out and Fritzy got a shot right on the road amongst them, and talk about scatter! They went as fast as they could and all, and him shooting at it. Then Fritzy’s plane came over and our plane sent it crashing to the earth, and he gave it a touch up. After we got along a bit further, he started to shell the road with a tremendous big shell. The boys started to look anxious. We would duck down low when they would burst and one chap got hit in the thigh. We placed him on the stretcher and started to a dressing station about a hundred yards away.

A chap came down the road on an old mule and he had it loaded with empty petrol tins. One of his chargers got away and it came down the road as fast as a mule can go. He said, Stop the mule, stop the mule! We said, Darn mule. He rode straight at us with his bundle of tins; reminded me of Santa Claus. He never thought we carried a wounded man and we would not let us pass. The tin hit me on the shoulder as he passed.

We arrived with our patient and had him attended to. The dressing station was only a piece of bow iron cut in the bank. We got to our position without any further mishap and passed a quiet night – no shelling, very good!

**Relieved**

We were relieved the next day and went to a place called Chateau Segard [18 October]. Fritz visited us that night with aircraft and bombed the camp. He buried four Tommies in a dug out and their mates never missed them until 9 o’clock in the morning, and when they got them out they were dead. They carried them off in blankets. One had just died, the doctor said.

That day, 21 October, 1917, we left for that terrible front line [east of Molenaarelsthoek].

**Passchendaele**

We passed to the right of Ypres and when we got a couple of miles the other side we could see Fritzy had a barrage on the rise in front of us. We could see some men coming through it and we had to try and get through. Well, we got up fairly close and got hung up, and then we got orders to keep to a left track. I was in the rear, carrying a stretcher. We went on a little, and heard a big shell coming at us. It passed just over us and landed in some mud. All hands said a dud and the officer said, Just as well, as it would have wiped half of us out.

It then got dark, and talk about a march! Into shell holes, smothered with mud, and we had to pass through a terrible barrage. We met some men coming out, who said, It’s simply Hell on Earth. There were a lot of men going in and coming out. We must have lost a lot of men in that fire. We could hear the shrapnel fairly ringing again, all around us. At last, we halted for a short space. The officer said, Keep to the bank of the road, boys and where I was, there was a dead man on a stretcher and a chap sat on his head. My mate said, Sit on the man. He said, I did not know he was dead.

We then passed on the road. It was all blown in holes; wounded were going back in dozens. At last we came to a place where Fritzy seemed to be dropping shells in the same spot, thick and heavy. A chap told
us, Look out where them shells are falling, they are pounding the place to pieces. We went up to the spot and down they came, and down went one of our men. I got bogged up to the knees in a shell hole. We had to carry him two and a half miles. He said, If I get out of this I won’t forget you. I’ve got 50 francs in my pack you can have. He said, You must be tired.

We picked up two more [stretcher-bearers] with a wounded man and the wounded man says, Look, boys. Do me a turn, blow my brains out. I can’t live! The groans were awful and he kept saying, I’m suffocating. We got to the dressing station and the chap we carried had a piece of shrapnel that went right through him and I saw his liver.

We had a spell and started heading back. The doctor said to a man there: You go back with these men, you’re all right. He said he was shell-shocked. We started and he went about 20 yards, a shell came over and he fled. He went back to the doctor and shivered like a blancmange. With that, the Doc sent him out. On the way back we picked up our chap’s pack, as I had put mine down and lost it. The piece of shrapnel was in the pack. It went right through a lot of his clothes, broke his razor to pieces and stopped in a note book, half way through it. All the leaves that it did not go through were burnt. It had blood on it.

We arrived in the line as the shelling had ceased. Darkness had set in in earnest. We sat down in the trench, awaiting developments. We had not long to wait, for I think Fritz turned every gun on us. We crouched low expecting to go up any minute. I smoked cigarette after cigarette, and then we would get a call to take a wounded man. Then we would have a time, smothered in mud and under fire. We used to take them to an old pill box and it was always full of wounded. The doctor had a busy time. Dr Maudsley was his name [Captain Henry Fitzgerald Maudsley MC, AAMC, 14th FAmb/29th Bn RMO]. He had a peculiar lip and was hard to understand. He was surrounded with legs and arms, where they had almost been blown off and he cut the last strands with a jack knife.

Here ends Alex Wallace’s diary. Whether a second diary has been lost, or Alex stopped keeping a record, is not known to his family.

Postscript: (1) Alex Wallace continued to serve in the field until 29 July, 1918, when he was admitted to the 14th Field Ambulance with gun shot wounds to the face, neck and arm. He was sent to the 3rd General Hospital at Le Treport the next day. On 7 August, Alex was transferred to the Beaufort War Hospital in Bristol, England, arriving there on the 9th. On 16 August he was transferred to the 3rd Auxiliary Hospital at Dartford. After recuperating from his wounds, Alex had leave from 10 September till 24 September, after which he reported to No. 4 Command Depot at Hurdcott. On 1 November, 1918, Alex was moved to the Overseas Training Brigade and was there reallocated to the 58th Battalion (15th Brigade, 5th Division). The Armistice meant that Alex did not return to France. On 27 November he was awarded two days of Field Punishment No. 2 and docked two days pay for failing to appear at the appointed place of parade at 9 am that morning. Private Alex Wallace returned to Australia on the Orsava on 3 March, 1919, and was discharged from the AIF, medically unfit, on 13 April, 1919. (2) After the war Alex returned to his home in Adelong about two miles up the Batlow Road. He married Clara May Cheetham (always called ‘May’) on 6 August, 1928, at Lewisham in Sydney. They had six children: June; Ken (who died of pneumonia aged seven or eight years of age); Josie; Joyce; Brian and Bruce. Of the six children, only June and Bruce are still alive. After the war, Alex worked on various properties in the district eradicating rabbits, and doing other farm work. In later years he worked for the Tumut Shire Council as a labourer doing road and bridge maintenance until his retirement. He died after suffering a heart attack on 16 June, 1971, aged 83 years. He is buried in the Adelong Cemetery (NSW), along with his wife May. [Information from Alex’s son, Bruce.]

Right: Alexander Wallace’s headstone. The small brass plaque in the top left corner acknowledges his service in the AIF with the 29th Battalion.

We hope you have enjoyed reading Private Wallace’s diary. To continue DIGGER’s tradition of bringing you previously unpublished memoirs, we will soon begin the diary of WOI Alexander Falconer, 5th Field Artillery Brigade. Alexander was the father of Jack Falconer, 18th Bn and 5th FAB, whose diary has been previously serialised in DIGGER.
**Private 4432 Victor John Backhouse, 54th Battalion**

*Greg Swinden, Evatt.*

**July, 1916.** The 5th Australian Division goes into action at Fromelles in a misconceived and ill-prepared attack on German trenches, as part of the overall British plan to draw German forces away from the main Allied attack along the Somme River. Forty-eight hours later over 5 100 men from the 5th Division were dead, wounded or missing and another 400 were taken prisoner. Nearly 1 300 are listed as missing in action, including Braidwood soldier **Victor John Backhouse** of the 54th Battalion.

Victor John Backhouse was born at Braidwood, NSW, in April 1896 and was the third of nine children born to John (‘Jack’) and Mary Maud Backhouse (nee Isley) of Currowan Creek (often spelt Currawang Creek), Clyde Road via Braidwood. He was a 19 year old sawmill worker when he applied to enlist in the AIF on 9 August, 1915. Victor was formally attested in the AIF, at Holsworthy, on 23 August 1915 and completed his initial training at Casula Camp near Liverpool.

Victor was described on enlisting as 5 foot 6 inches tall with brown hair, blue eyes and a fair complexion. He was originally allocated as a reinforcement to the 13th Battalion and embarked at Sydney in the troopship HMAT **Ballarat** on 16 February, 1916. [Right: Private Victor Backhouse. AWM H05650.]

On arrival in Egypt on 22 March, 1916, Victor underwent more training and was transferred to the newly formed 54th Battalion of the 5th Division on 1 April, 1916. In late June 1916 his unit arrived at the southern French port of Marseilles and shortly after they were sent by train to the Western Front. The 5th Division was sent to the relatively quiet section of the frontline near Armentieres in Northern France.

Although the 5th Division had a number of Gallipoli veterans allocated to it, the unit was untried in battle. However, it was not long before they were in action. On 19 July, 1916, the 5th Australian Division and the British 61st Division were committed to action near Fromelles as part of a diversion to keep German reinforcements away from the fighting to the south near the Somme River. The attack commenced late on the afternoon of the 19th following a seven hour artillery barrage. This later became known as the Battle of Fromelles and was the first major action conducted by the AIF on the Western Front.

Despite the artillery barrage the German defences were relatively undamaged, and as the Australian and British forces attacked they were met with heavy and accurate machine-gun fire. Groups of Australian soldiers managed to reach the German trenches and seized these around dusk but were soon under counter-attack from the 6th Bavarian Division (which had amongst its ranks a young Corporal Adolf Hitler). After fierce fighting the Australians were forced to abandon the captured ground (by around 4 am), and conducted a six-hour fighting retreat back across No-man’s land on the morning of the 20th. Many of their wounded and dead were left behind.

Victor Backhouse was last seen by his comrades in the German trenches; he had been wounded and a British stretcher-bearer was bandaging his wounds. Many wounded Australian and British soldiers crawled back to the Allied lines, or were rescued by their mates, over the next few days. But Victor Backhouse was not amongst them. He was subsequently listed as missing in action and a court of inquiry, held in August 1917, deemed that he had been killed in action on the night of 19/20 July 1916 and that the location of his remains were unknown.

After the failed assault the German forces recovered hundreds of Australian and British dead and buried them in mass graves behind their front line. These included some wounded men who were captured and later died from their wounds. Two hundred and fifty of these men were buried in six pits near Pheasant Wood, which were discovered in 2008 and the bodies exhumed in 2009. Although DNA testing was conducted, none of the bodies found were proven to be that of Victor Backhouse.
Victor’s mother wrote to the army on several occasions for news of her son, holding out a vain hope that he was a prisoner of war. After the war she also requested information on his final resting place but his body was never located, or identified, and his name is now commemorated at VC Corner Australian Cemetery and Memorial, Fromelles. His remains may lie in this cemetery, which includes 410 unknown Australian soldiers killed at Fromelles, or his body may rest at Pheasant Wood Cemetery which has over 100 unknown soldiers interred.

Victor’s name is also recorded on the Roll of Honour at the Australian War Memorial and the war memorial at Nelligen, on the NSW south coast, not far from Currowan Creek where he grew up.

The war was, however, not over for the Backhouse family. Victor’s younger brother, Leslie James Backhouse (born 1897) enlisted in the AIF on 31 May, 1916, as Private 2859, 55th Battalion. He embarked for overseas service on 25 October, 1916, and was wounded in action on 3 May, 1917 [Second Bullecourt]. Upon his return from hospital, Leslie was transferred to the 17th Battalion and was wounded again on 3 October, 1918. Leslie Backhouse returned to Australia in early March 1919 and was discharged on 10 April, 1919.

Victor’s cousin, Robert Joseph Backhouse (born 1894) was not so lucky. He enlisted in the AIF on 6 November, 1916, and joined the 45th Battalion as Private 3109. He was badly wounded on 5 April, 1918, and died the next day. Robert was buried at Gezaincourt Communal Cemetery Extension, Somme, France.

Right: Victor Backhouse’s name is the first on the Nelligen list of ‘The Illustrious Dead’ (arrowed).

Endnote: Greg’s wife’s grandmother (Rita Backhouse) was a cousin of Victor Backhouse.

John Hamilton VC statue for Orange
Contributed by Richard Castine, Orange RSL.

The City of Orange in the Central West of NSW is engaged in fundraising to erect a memorial to John Hamilton VC (3rd Battalion AIF) in the form of a statue of this soldier who was awarded the Victoria Cross for his actions at Lone Pine on 9 August, 1915.

Over the years there has been some confusion regarding John’s parents and birthplace, and research by a number of people in Orange has been able to clear up any confusion by referring to his birth certificate and from establishing contact with relatives of Hamilton.

John Hamilton was born in Orange on 24 January, 1896. His father was William Hamilton and his mother Catherine Hamilton. His parents had married on 11 April, 1893, in St Joseph’s Roman Catholic Church in Orange. Catherine was the daughter of Ambrose and Ann Elizabeth Fox (nee Frost).

John and his family were living in Lithgow in 1910 when his mother died. John, age 14, was the eldest of the six surviving children. By 1914, John was working as a butcher in his father’s shop at Penshurst in Sydney. He enlisted in the AIF on 15 September, 1914, at the age of 19 years.

Acknowledgements: Jim Shepherd, Brisbane (grandson of Catherine Hamer, who was a cousin of John Hamilton); Michael Histon (direct descendant of Ambrose Fox); the Orange Family History Group; Reg Kidd; www.theorangewiki.orange.nsw.gov.au.
Monday 21st June, 1915

Ships and guns to south heavily bombarded enemy all night. We had about dozen wounded to fix up during night. Early this morning French troops to the south of us drove enemy back a considerable distance, repulsing all counter-attacks; latest news we received French troops were still advancing. Our heavy guns continued shelling Achi Baba all morning. Just after noon our monitor and two destroyers opened their guns on the point of Gaba Tepe, shelled trenches close on beach and gradually worked their fire inland, raking trench after trench with explosives and shrapnel. No reply from enemy. On duty 7.30 pm. Had splendid swim this afternoon, lovely day.

Tuesday 22nd June, 1915

Extremely quiet night, very little rifle fire, could not hear any big guns going at all. No wounded brought in at all. Off duty 7.30 am. About 8 am Turks opened fire on us with a gun on our left flank, shells passed over us and dropped about 200 yards away on beach and edge of water. Were shelling us for fully an hour, firing fairly rapidly, shells screech as they pass over. Received orders at 10 am to move our kits and make a new dug-out. Found position for our new home, two of us together, and started digging. Made very comfortable dug-out. While digging enemy were shelling us, several shells came very close, one struck about 15 yards from us, but failed to explode, the earth ploughed up by it covered us. Shelling all day. On duty 7.30 pm. Very hot day.

Wednesday 23rd June, 1915

Had eight wounded to fix up during night. Very little firing going on. Off duty 7.30 am. Did a little more to our new home this morning. Late last night my pal who is with me in the dug-out took sick and was sent to a hospital ship. Turks shelling the beach again this morning. Turned in about 11 am and slept till 5 pm. Enjoyed my sleep as was thoroughly tired out. Received news that French troops had captured an important redoubt this morning down south. A young fellow from the clearing hospital next door to us had his left arm blown off by a shell while on the beach going for a swim. On duty 7.30 pm, very busy till 9 pm, lot of chaps getting sick. Enjoyed a lovely swim about 10 pm.

Thursday 24th June, 1915

Had nothing at all to do during night, very hot all night, went for swim at 6 am. Off duty 7.30 am. After breakfast spent morning writing letters. Very hot day, weather getting extremely hot. After dinner went down for swim which I thoroughly enjoyed. Came out of water about 3.30 pm and while I was on beach enemy started shelling it. Made for cover at once, but one shell burst before all could get clear and caught eighteen: two were killed outright and 16 wounded, some very severely and some only slightly. Shells fell on beach for about half an hour then stopped, no further damage done. On duty 7.30 pm. Very little doing, mostly sick troops.

Friday 25th June, 1915

Quiet night, two wounded brought in. A battery of RFA landed during night with four 5” Howitzers. They are from Glasgow. Also 300 reinforcements landed early this morning. Went for swim 6 am. Off duty 7.30 am. Put in a couple of hours this morning fixing my dug-out. Turks shelled us on beach again for about an hour. Slept from 10 am till 2 pm. Went for swim at 3 pm. HMS Lord Nelson came up coast about 3 pm and heavily shelled Moidos, a town on other side of Peninsula from us. It is situated on The Narrows and is being used as concentration camp. On duty at 7.30 pm. Sent a lot of sick away this evening.

Saturday 26th June, 1915

Nothing doing all night so got few hours sleep. Awakened at 5 am by one of our destroyers shelling the enemy on our left flank over ‘Anzac Cove’. Went for swim 6.30 am, water lovely. Off duty 7.30 am. Received couple of letters and a paper from Australia this morning then had a sleep till dinner time. Made some porridge for breakfast with meal biscuits crushed up and sugar on it, not bad at all. About 3.30 pm boiled some potatoes, mashed them with dripping, ready for tea, left it to keep warm and went for another swim. My potatoes along with some bacon from the cooks made good tea. Turks shelled us heavily from 5 pm to 6 pm. Shrapnel falling all round us; a shrapnel bullet has just come through roof of my dug-out. On duty 7.30 pm.
**Sunday 27th June, 1915**

Very quiet all night till 5 am this morning, when Turks made an attack on our left flank. Shrapnel fell all over us and the rifle fire was very heavy for about an hour when enemy was beaten off. About 6 am a couple of dozen wounded were brought in and we were kept busy for a little while. Off duty 7.30 am. Our destroyers keep putting a few shells into the Turks all morning. The destroyers are wonderful, just like little watchdogs noting every move of the enemy’s and blocking it. Turks shelled beach again this afternoon, one shell killed two men, blew them to pieces and very seriously wounded several others. Had swim this afternoon and went on duty at dressing station at 7.30 pm.

**Monday 28th June, 1915**

Hardly a shot fired all night so we had no wounded brought in. Went for swim 6.30 am. Off duty 7.30 am. About 9 am about 40 to 50 ships, transports, battleships, destroyers, sweepers, etc came in sight, apparently from Lemnos. They made to the south of us between Gaba Tepe and Cape Helles. The warships among them at once opened a terrific fire on the enemy, bombarding them pitilessly. Our monitor and destroyers joined in, also field batteries, kept bombardment up all day. The heavy shells look as though they are blowing the hills to pieces. Our troops charged and captured some trenches on right flank. On duty 7.30 pm. Very busy, lots of wounded.

**Tuesday 29th June, 1915**

About 11 pm last night had to go out to Hospital Ship SS *Sicilia* with patient who had bullet wound in shoulder with the subclavian artery severed. Had a real good dinner on board and a look round the wards. A lovely ship with splendid fittings, everything on board seemed absolutely perfect. Got back ashore at 3 am. Things had quietened off considerably by this time. A destroyer put half dozen shells in wheat field which was affording cover to enemy and set it on fire, burning it right out. Our ships still heavily bombarding enemy to south of us. I hear 30 000 troops landed yesterday between us at Gaba Tepe and Achi Baba. On duty 7.30 pm. Wind blowing hard tonight.

**Wednesday 30th June, 1915**

Turks made attack on Walker’s Ridge late last night; broke through but were completely wiped out. Loaded all the wounded in boats to be towed out by pinnace to hospital ship. We were about half mile out when tow rope parted, succeeded in getting 2½” wire hawser, but also parted; sea very rough now. Sprang up in 10 minutes. Boats drifted down coast and came ashore about 200 yards inside our lines on right flank. Had rough job getting wounded out of boats again in such rough sea. Boats were lifted up on the waves and dashed down again, continually making it hard to get patients on stretchers out. Spray flew all over, up to waist in water, eventually got all out safely, took off their wet clothes, gave blankets, hot drink, comfortable for night. [Right: Stretcher-bearers, probably with the 4th Field Ambulance, carry a wounded Australian soldier along the beach towards a long boat upon which he will be embarked for evacuation from Gallipoli. The long boat will transfer the Australian wounded to a hospital ship waiting in deeper waters. AWM P01815.005.]

**Thursday 1st July, 1915**

Sea very rough all night, had difficulty in loading wounded to be taken to hospital ship. Managed to load them on a water barge about 1 am and they were towed out by steam pinnace. Pouring rain all the time, tremendous downpour. Off duty 7.30 am. Sea has calmed down and it turned out a lovely morning. Wrote some letters after breakfast and at 11 am turned in and slept till 3 pm, when I got up and went down for a swim. Sea pretty rough again this afternoon, very strong breeze. Not been much firing today, can hear battleships doing a little down at Cape Helles. On duty again at 7.30 pm. Sent about 60 men, wounded and sick, away tonight; mostly sick. Got them away about 9.30 pm.

**Friday 2nd July, 1915**

Only four wounded, all slight, during night, since sent last lot away at 9.30 last night. Strong breeze and sea still very rough this morning, but pretty warm. Off duty 7.30 am. Spent morning reading some English papers I picked up in hospital, enjoyed them quite a treat. Had couple of hours sleep this afternoon. Our battleships are continuously bombarding to the south of us, can see their shells bursting over the enemy quite plainly. The Allied troops coming up from Sedd-el-Bahr have advanced considerably this week. On duty.
7.30 pm. Had about 90 patients to get off onto boats tonight, most of them are sick, managed it by about 10 pm.

Saturday 3rd July, 1915
No patients brought in during night. About 11 pm last night I was taken with violent pains in stomach, also with vomiting and retching. Was like this all night in great agony. About 5 am saw one of our doctors, gave me some medicine and sent me to my dug-out. Pain continued till about 10.30 am when I dozed off to sleep till 12 noon. Felt better when I woke, but awfully shaky. Kept quiet all day, never had anything to eat as it was a touch of ptomainic poisoning I had got. Sat in sun for about an hour this afternoon and saw one of our battleships come out of harbour from Island of Imbros (which we can see plainly) and shell Turks on our left flank.

Sunday 4th July, 1915
Did not go on duty last night as I was too weak and shaking. Went to sleep about 9 pm and had good night’s sleep as I was thoroughly worn out. Woke up this morning feeling much better, just a little shaky. Had a very little oatmeal porridge and condensed milk and cup of tea for breakfast. Sat in sun all morning reading a book I borrowed. This afternoon a French transport was torpedoed by enemy submarine off Cape Helles. Fortunately, troops had all disembarked. Hear transport did not sink but was run aground and will be saved. Two battleships of our squadron came up late this evening and heavily shelled the enemy’s trenches on our right flank. Did not go on duty tonight.

Monday 5th July, 1915
Had good night sleep and woke the better for it, feeling a bit weak and shaky naturally as I have had practically no food for two days. Had a little dry biscuit for breakfast and then spent morning reading and looking out over sea, where our ships and destroyers are moving about with unceasing vigil. Turks opened up fire with an 11” gun; must have brought it up during the night, opened fire about 8 am. Fired about dozen huge shells, about eight of them burst in water, sending up a column of water about 50 feet high. The others struck top of hill on our right, doing no damage but covering us with dirt. Gun was spotted after second shell and our destroyer soon silenced it. Had a little stew for dinner, felt new man after having a little substantial food. Went on duty at 7.30 pm. [Above right: A group of unidentified soldiers waiting to have their mess tins filled at the 4th Field Ambulance cookhouse in the central, largest gully off Anzac Cove, Gallipoli Peninsula. AWM C00734.]

Tuesday 6th July, 1915
Sent about 90 patients on to hospital ships about midnight last night, after which things were very quiet. A lot of the patients were sick; these men had been accumulating all day. Destroyers were shelling at intervals during night. Off duty at 7.30 am. Having breakfast outside my dug-out when enemy sent a few shells rather close. One burst in a dug-out about 20 yards from me; a chap was sleeping inside. The shell burst all the earth away, filling in the dug-out and burying the man. Started at once to dig him out, expected him to be dead when got him out, but he had not got a scratch. Very quiet during rest of day, went on duty at 7.30 pm.

Wednesday 7th July, 1915
Got our patients away on boats last night about 11 pm, after that only had five cases come in during night. Turks burst four shrapnel shells over us at dressing station about 6.30 am. Off duty about 7.30 am. Spent morning in writing as the mail goes from here tomorrow. After dinner did little more writing, then went for swim. Very hot day. Went on duty at 7.30 pm. About 8 pm Turks heavily shelled with high explosives a portion of our line known as Courtney’s Hill. Killed number of our men and badly wounded a lot more; also buried some on the place where they blew the trenches in. Got all our wounded away about 9 pm.

Thursday 8th July, 1915
Had a very quiet night after the shelling on Courtney’s Hill last night. Turks fired a single shell about 5.30 am – landed in bag of flour on beach close to our dressing station. Off duty 7.30 am. Spent morning writing letters in dug-out. Enemy shelled us from 9 am till 10 am fairly heavily. Most passed over my dug-out, but one or two landed unpleasantly close; one bursting not more than six yards away. Had swim just before dinner. Improved and cleaned my dug-out this afternoon, then had quiet read for an hour after which had
another swim. About 5 pm Turks heavily shelled the beach and water round about a small pier that the engineers built. Hit steam pinnace, put hole in but did not sink it. On duty 7.30 pm.

Friday 9th July, 1915

Three wounded men brought in during night to our dressing station, so was not much doing. Came off duty 7.30 am. Fairly quiet this morning, enemy only putting an occasional shell over. Heard this morning we are to be inoculated against cholera as it has already broken out amongst the Turks. Slept from 11 am till 1.30 pm, then had dinner and lay down again till 4 pm, when I went down for swim. Weather is keeping very hot and water is lovely. Few shells came over us for about half an hour after tea. Went on duty at 7.30 pm. Got what patients we had in away to ships about 9 pm. Nothing doing afterwards so slept all night.

Saturday 10th July, 1915

Had to sleep fully dressed as we were on duty if needed. Woke about 5 am, tidied dressing station up. Few early morning shells came as usual. Off duty 7.30 am. Loamed the morning up till 11 am away in the sun, then went for swim. This afternoon received my first inoculation against cholera. The warship Agamemnon came up this afternoon and heavily bombarded a hill just inland and to the south a little of Gaba Tepe. Went away about 5 pm and HMS Chatham took her place, firing very heavily. Was in for swim about 4.30 pm. Observation balloon and aeroplane reconnoitred this evening. On duty at 7.30 pm at dressing station.

Sunday 11th July, 1915

About midnight Turks exploded a mine under one of our trenches. About 20 wounded were brought in from this part, mostly slight. All night beach parties were busy landing more reinforcements and stores, also a large 4.7 naval gun landed, ready-mounted for field work. Came off duty at 7.30 am. Turks shelled beach this morning, wounding about a dozen of our troops. Had sleep for couple of hours before dinner. After dinner had rest and then went for swim, an awful hot day. About 6.30 pm HMS Doris came out of harbour at Imbros and took up position in Anzac Cove. Observation balloon was up giving range, like sheet of flame, broadside after broadside at enemy on left flank. On duty 7.30 pm.

Monday 12th July, 1915

Sent patients away to hospital ship at 9 pm last night, no more wounded brought in during night. Off duty at 7.30 am. About 9 am could hear fierce firing for about half an hour. Shortly afterwards about 30 wounded were brought in and they told us that a party of our troops had charged the enemy at one point and captured a trench, also inflicting severe casualties on the enemy. During morning enemy tried some long shots, with long-range guns, at the mine sweepers, but without the slightest success. Our ships heavily bombarded enemy to the south of us and I believe our troops from Sed-el-Bahr have made an advance. On duty at 7.30 pm. Getting awfully hot.

Tuesday 13th July, 1915

Seven wounded brought in during night. Our troops here kept up a sham attack all night to keep enemy busy here so they could not send reinforcements against the Allied troops who were making an advance from the south. Star shells and searchlight going all night made things look like fire-works show. Off duty 7.30 am. Slept from 9 am till 1.30 pm then went for swim. A bit of an artillery duel taking place tonight. Enemy have shelled our trenches about 6 pm, causing us a few casualties. On duty 7.30 pm. More casualties about 8 pm; some severe. Kept busy till about 10 pm.

Wednesday 14th July, 1915

Quiet all night after 10 pm last night, so managed to sleep most of night. Received six letters to-day. Took up new duties today and am now acting as orderly to Captain Dawson. My new job has been quite satisfactory today. Heard good news from south today: the Allied troops there are reported to be almost in command of Achi Baba, a fortified hill which has caused much trouble and is the cause of our delay. Had swim this afternoon. Enemy put shell on beach this evening, wounding four men, two severely. One, Captain Campbell, Registered Medical Officer, 8th LHR, both legs blown off at knees, not dead. Other, foot blown off. Turned in at 9 pm.

[Above right: Studio portrait of Captain Sydney James Campbell, 8th LHR, from Portland, Victoria. A 27 year old medical practitioner prior to receiving a commission in the AIF, he embarked for overseas with the Headquarters staff from Melbourne on 25 February 1915 aboard HMAT Star of Victoria. Capt Campbell was wounded in action while working as a medical officer on the beach at Anzac Cove on 14 July, 1915, and was

DIGGER 34 Issue 55
evacuated to Hospital Ship *Sicilia*. Although undergoing an operation onboard the ship, he died that same day. Capt Campbell was buried at sea between Gallipoli and Malta and is commemorated on the Lone Pine Memorial at Gallipoli, Turkey. AWM P10059.001.

**Thursday 15th July, 1915**

Up at 5.30 am, beautiful morning. Did my round of duties during day. Duties consist of drawing rations for Captain Dawson, airing his blankets and sleeping bag and any little thing he wants done. Will also have to look after his horse when it is with him. Only two shells came on beach today, one man hit slightly. Aeroplane up this morning, enemy fired over 30 shells at it, did not hit it. Large cruiser appeared this afternoon and shelled over by Achi Baba very heavily for about an hour. Observation balloon was also up. Went for swim this afternoon; has been a very hot day. Saw *W Hill* and *A Milne* this evening. Turned in about 9.30 pm.

**Friday 16th July, 1915**

Up at 5.30 am. Turks shelled beach very heavily nearly all morning but very few of our troops were injured. Had nothing to do today as Captain Dawson has gone on board hospital ship. We have heard heavy gun firing all day down Achi Baba way. This afternoon our monitor came on the scene and at intervals put some heavy shells inland at the enemy. Another four gun battery of 5” Howitzers was landed here during last night. Had swim this afternoon, also one this evening, both interrupted by shrapnel from the enemy. Turned in about 9.30 pm.

**Saturday 17th July, 1915**

Yesterday afternoon the Admiral’s motor came ashore with Admiral De Roebuck and staff. General Birdwood met them on the pier. Up at 5.30 am this morning. About 5.45 am an enemy aeroplane flew over and dropped two bombs. One exploded in the water and the other did not burst so no damage was done. This morning a French General and his staff came ashore and were met by General Birdwood, who escorted them off to see the trenches. Our aeroplane was up this afternoon. Enemy put a few shells on the beach today; did no damage. Things been fairly quiet, am getting excellent tucker now. Turned in 9.30 pm.

**Sunday 18th July, 1915**

The twelfth Sunday and exactly twelve weeks since we arrived off this coast. Up at 5.30 am and commenced my duties. All day long the enemy have been shelling the beach with shrapnel and high explosive shells. Our casualties on the beach must have been not less than 30, of whom at least four were killed outright and others seriously wounded. Our guns have also been busy shelling the enemy. Had narrow escape myself sitting on sand bag watching shells burst. One burst very close and I moved about a yard away into cover. As I moved a bullet from a shrapnel shell struck the bag I had been sitting on not 10 seconds before. Heavy firing all day to the south of us. The heat is getting awful and the flies terrible.

**Monday 19th July, 1915**

Very hot all night, up at 5.30 am started my duties. A lot of work going on on beach: two more piers being erected, supplies coming in in barges and being unloaded by fatigue parties. Batteries of British howitzers and men have been landing these last three nights, 20 Howitzers (5”) altogether, I believe. Bathing has been prohibited after 7 pm and before 7 am. The sea has been a blessing to our boys and has no doubt been a great help against sickness and disease. Heavy artillery fire both from our guns and from Allies to south, also from warships. New monitor came today, 2 x 14 inch guns mounted, only fired one shot. Our other monitor put a good few shells into the enemy. Not many casualties today. Turned in about 9.30 pm.

**Tuesday 20th July, 1915**

Up at 5.30 am, commenced my duties. Piece of shell went through colonel’s dug-out and through his water bottle. Also piece went through our adjutant’s (Captain Finn) dug-out, Fortunately both were out at the time. More artillery and men coming ashore each night. Aeroplane made long survey over enemy’s trenches. Great sight to see aeroplane flying along with little puffs of smoke appearing all round it, which are the shells fired by enemy to try and bring it down. Greek parliament should meet today. Was provided with a respirator for use against poisonous gases. It is like a bag, fits over the head with a piece of gelatine to see through, bag is soaked with a chemical. Turned in about 9.30 pm.

**Wednesday 21st July, 1915**

Up at 5.30, started my days work. Heavy gun fire was going on to the south. Evidently our warships and field artillery, also enemy’s. Had second dose of inoculation against cholera. Sounds of firing died down about 10 am, very quiet since then. Reported that Turks have received 100 000 reinforcements this last day or two and it is expected that they will make an attack on our position. A cruiser and our monitor have been keeping within sight all day and about 6 pm the monitor let go with her guns. Shortly afterwards the cruiser which was lying four or five miles south let go her guns and for a short while poured in salvo after salvo. Our destroyers also opened out this evening.

**DIGGER** 35  **Issue 55**
Thursday 22nd July, 1915
Up at 5.30 am, beautiful morning, hardly a shot could be heard. After breakfast I put in the morning writing letters. Special orders issued today that every man must carry his smoke helmet and respirator with him all the time. Must be expecting enemy to use poisonous gases any time. Went in for swim this afternoon. After being in about 10 minutes I came out in a hurry, enemy started shelling beach and one shell burst in water before I could get out, not more than 20 yards from me. Shells burst all round our dressing station and hospital but did not injure anyone. Expecting attack by Turks any time now.

Friday 23rd July, 1915
Woken about 1.30 am by sound of heavy rifle fire and our destroyers shelling enemy; lasted about half an hour. Turks did not attack as expected. Up at 5.30 am, started work. Pretty quiet up till dinner time. After dinner two of our monitors came out from Imbros and shelled the enemy somewhere inland for a couple of hours. Also a small cruiser put some shots in. Four large monitors and the small one that has been here some time now are in the harbour at the island of Imbros, which is right opposite to our position and which we can see plainly. Also saw large French battleship go in this afternoon. Had a short swim before tea and turned in about 9 pm.

Saturday 24th July, 1915
Was up at 5 am this morning, everything quiet. About 10 am enemy put shell on beach at water’s edge, burst among about 60 men, a lot bathing, only one man slightly wounded. At 12 noon another shell fell about same place, followed by a second. These two shells wounded between 20 and 30 men, some seriously. The first of the two shells wounded most, the second only hitting a couple. Assisted to carry these men in on stretchers. Turks continued shelling beach all afternoon. Saw Neville Anderson [Sapper 152 Neville Otho Cockburn Anderson, 3rd FCE] killed by shell. He died instantly. Was standing about 20 yards from him, shell burst in front of him, did not hit him but concussion fractured base of skull. Five men killed outright and about 50 injured on beach today.

Sunday 25th July, 1915
Three calendar months since we came to these shores (13 weeks). Up at 5.30 am, lovely morning, everything quiet. Turks shelled our trenches fairly heavily on left flank this morning. After dinner they turned their attention again to the beach. Every part of our position here is dangerous as shells land all over it and the pellets from shrapnel fly all round you as you do your work and one marvels that he is not hit. One burst just ahead of me this evening and the bullets kicked up the dust all round me, yet not a soul was hit. A shell burst in the gully where we are camped at 7 pm this evening and killed one of our sergeants (Sergeant Gordon of South Australia) and wounding Sergeant Nixon [unidentified] of NSW in the thigh. Pellets went right through.

[*Staff Sergeant 1057 James Leslie Gordon, 4th FAm. ROH shows date of death as 24 July, but mother states on ROH circular that James died at Anzac Beach on 25 July. Sadly, another of Mrs Gordon’s sons, Kenneth Douglas Gordon, 10th Bn, died on Anzac Beach, 25 April, 1915. A third son, 2nd Lieut Alan Forbes Gordon served with the 43rd Bn and returned to Australia, 7.2.19.]

Left: Portrait of Staff Sergeant 1057 James Leslie Gordon, 4th Australia Field Ambulance, from Glenelg, South Australia, seated at a desk in his tent at Gallipoli. A 30 year old solicitor prior to enlisting in the AIF on 12 September, 1914, he embarked for overseas as a sergeant from Melbourne on 22 December, 1914, aboard HMAT Berrima. He was killed in action on 24 July, 1915, and is buried in Beach Cemetery at the southern end of Anzac Cove, Gallipoli. AWM P01116.037.

Continued in the next issue of DIGGER.
The Jones brothers: Llew, Reg and Ray, 14th Battalion
Faye Threlfall, Bacchus Marsh, with Graeme Hosken, Dubbo.

Three of the five Jones children born to Arthur Jones (1858-1910) and Salome [nee Thwaites] (1859-1938), who married in 1889, enlisted in the AIF. The family lived in the Melbourne suburb of Essendon at the time, although their father Arthur had died in 1910. The family was one of the earliest pioneer families of Melbourne, particularly their mother’s family, the Thwaites; Salome was my great, great aunt, and her brother, John Thwaites, was my great, great grandfather.

The first brother to enlist was 19 year old Llewellyn Rowland Jones (usually referred to as ‘Llew’) on 18 August, 1914, who gave his occupation as bushman. Llew had two years service in the 58th Infantry as a senior cadet. Assigned as No. 141, driver, of the 2nd Field Ambulance, Llew embarked for overseas service aboard HMAT A18 Wiltshire on 19 October, 1914.

Both Reginald Walter and Raymond Leslie Jones enlisted on the same day, 26 September, 1914. Reginald, an electrician, was almost 23 years of age and Raymond, a salesman, was 21 years. Reg and Ray had previous military experience in the militia: Reg with the 6th Infantry, and Ray with the 49th Infantry.

The brothers were both assigned to the 14th Battalion, with Reg given regimental number 80 and Ray number 79. The 14th Battalion embarked for overseas service aboard the HMAT A38 Ulysses on 22 December, 1914.

During training in Egypt the three brothers met up on several occasions, as evident from photographs and copies of letters to the family in Australia, held by Reg’s granddaughter, Brenda Noonan.

During the Gallipoli campaign, Reg was wounded three times*, which saw him hospitalised for some time on each occasion and ended his role as a successful sniper, reportedly with 50 kills. [* On 7/5/15 admitted for three days with gunshot wound, shoulder. On 12/8/15, he received bullet wound to the left hand and foreign matter in one eye. On 13/12/15, admitted to hospital with bullet wound left arm.]

Reg was awarded the Military Medal as well as being Mentioned in Despatches (MID) for his bravery on 25 May [no citation exists]. By June 1915, he was promoted to sergeant. On his return to Anzac Cove from hospital in November, Reg was placed in charge of the ‘bomb throwers’.

Ray’s record states embarked for MEF, 12/4/15, but has no further details until his embarkation for Malta, sick (with ‘general debility’), on 28 July. On 9 September, Ray was admitted to the Lewisham Military Hospital, UK.

In a letter home to his mother, Reg mentioned Ray being in Malta and that Llew was ‘with his horses at Alexandria’. Lew had left to join the MEF on 5 April but seems to have remained in Alexandria rather than proceed to the Peninsula, given that the Field Ambulance did not need its horses on Gallipoli.

After the evacuation of Gallipoli, Reg and Llew were reunited back in Egypt, while Ray was still in England recuperating. Reg spent a little time in hospital in January with inflammation of connective tissue (septic hand). In England, Ray was reduced in rank to corporal and docked 31 days pay for using a non-genuine leave pass in London on 19 February, 1916.
During the expansion of the AIF to four* divisions in Egypt in 1916, Ray and Reg would remain with the 14th Battalion while Llew was transferred to the 12th Field Ambulance on 18 March. Ray did not rejoin his unit until 21 July, 1916. [*The 3rd Division was being formed back in Australia – Ed.]

In Egypt during the defence of the Suez Canal, Reg was promoted again, this time to company sergeant major then to regimental sergeant major. (Ray would be appointed as a sergeant on 30/10/16, temporary CSM (31/10/16), before reverting to corporal on 14/12/16.)

By mid June 1916, the 14th Battalion was in France along with the majority of the AIF Divisions (the 3rd Division was still being formed in Australia). Llew transferred to the 14th Battalion on 13 April, 1916, bringing together the three brothers.

In June 1916, Reg was once again wounded which saw him admitted to an English hospital (gunshot wound, right cheek and neck, loss of voice, 30/6/16). Around the same time, he received his commission, returning to the battalion as a lieutenant. All three brothers continued with exemplary service on the Western Front with the AIF.

On 6 February, 1917, Lieutenant Reg Jones was nominated for the Italian Silver Medal for Military Bravery (for various actions) by Lieut Col JH Peck. However, no record exists of the nominations being approved. His recommendation reads:

At Bois-Grenier in July 1916 he commanded a flank patrol during a raid by this battalion on enemy trenches, was badly wounded during this raid. As Battalion Intelligence Officer at ‘The Bluff’ in October/November patrolled No-man’s land each night, making personal reconnaissance of the enemy wire and works, and on any enemy sniper’s post being reported to exist, personally and alone scoured No-man’s land for it. At Guedecourt, December 1916, under most unfavourable conditions made a thorough and comprehensive reconnaissance of our own front and No-man’s land, enabling the first reliable and authentic information re enemy position and works to be compiled. On one occasion in this sector when a working party was caught and temporarily demoralised by an enemy barrage, this officer was instrumental in guiding them to their destination, which was to have been done by an engineer officer, and in restoring their morale.

Reg was promoted to captain on 13 March, 1917.

After being wounded several times in France and surviving a near miss on Gallipoli*, Ray was reported missing at Bullecourt on 11 April, 1917, and was subsequently listed as killed in action. He had only returned to his unit nine days before, following medical treatment in Etaples. [*There were some marvellous escapes; Sgt. Raymond Jones (No. 1 Platoon) had his haversack shot to pieces on his back but escaped unhurt. ‘History of the 14th Battalion, AIF’, Newton Wanliss, 1929: The Baptism of Blood, 1915 – April 25 to April 30, p2.]

The Red Cross files contain some conflicting information on Ray’s death:

He was killed in the main street of Bullecourt by a shell and his body was not recovered. I did not see him killed myself but Jack Phillips, No. 110, ‘A’ Coy, lost a leg by the same shell and reported the death of Sgt Jones.

Pte 1663 William Jeffrey, 14th Bn

I was CSM of ‘A’ Coy on April 11th and on that day saw Sgt Jones wounded in stomach by a bullet at Bullecourt 40 yards from German line. About 11 am. We had to carry on and could not attend to him. I believe his body has recently been found and buried by a 2nd Division man ...

2nd Lieut Sydney John Garton DCM, 14th Bn

No. 79 Sgt RL Jones was killed on 11.4.17 and his body was discovered and buried in front of the Hindenburg Line near Noreuil by the 56th Battn AIF, his personal effects being forwarded to us and handed to his brother Capt RW Jones of this battalion.

The Adjutant [unidentified], 14th Battalion

Corporal 79 Raymond Leslie Jones is commemorated on the Australian National Memorial at Villers-Bretonneux, France, as one of the missing. His mother was granted a pension of 53s 9d per fortnight from 6 July, 1917.

Reg and Llew continued to serve King, Country and Empire with the 14th Battalion, participating in many of the now famous battles of the Western Front.

On 17 August, 1917, Reg Jones was awarded the Military Cross for most conspicuous bravery near Messines. His recommendation by Lieutenant Colonel Eliazar Lazar Margolin states:

On the afternoon of 12th June 1917, Capt RW Jones went out alone to reconnoiter Gapaard Farm. He had to cross over 800 yards of ground which was being swept by bursts of machine-gun fire and...
snipers from our left flank. Regardless of the great danger he advanced to the farm which consisted of a mass of concrete gun emplacements, well wired, knowing that he might at any moment have met with certain death. He thoroughly examined the ruins and then returned across the open ground. At once he organised a small bombing party, led them forward and established a position in the farm. From there by means of machine-gun fire he dislodged several snipers from the trees in front and seized three enemy 77mm guns, two of which were intact, and a large quantity of ammunition. After seeing his party well consolidated in their advanced post, he returned alone to his headquarters in the Green Line and sent back a most complete and lucid report on the country occupied. This operation resulted in an advance of about 800 yards into hostile territory. He also most considerably improved and reorganised his main line though only 2½ hours in occupation. Throughout the whole of the operation Capt Jones displayed the greatest tactical skills and judgment and I feel I cannot too highly recommend him. He has the Military Medal for services on the Gallipoli Peninsula.

[Interestingly, the handwritten recommendation below Jones’ is for Albert Jacka, who at that time already had the VC, MC and Bar.]

Reg was appointed acting brigade major (a trainee position) of the 12th Brigade on 30 July, 1917, indicating the esteem in which he was held. He suffered an accidental wound in late September, 1917:

Accidentally wounded, flare wound thumb, forefinger, right hand, severe – 30/9/17. On 30/9/17 Capt RW Jones attached 12th Brigade Headquarters was visiting 45th Bn Headquarters in the line in front of Westhoek. A German flarethrower, with flare attached, was being inspected by Capt RW Jones when the spring with striker attached slipped, fired the flare, which hit Capt RW Jones on the right hand leaving the muzzle, severing the thumb and first finger. The wound was purely and absolutely accidental and Capt RW Jones was in no way to blame.

At the end of his treatment in England, Reg told the medical board that he can do anything he could before with his right hand and that it does not interfere with his military duties.

On 19 March, 1918, Captain Reg Jones departed the 14th Battalion for return to Australia, having been granted a six-month leave of absence. Reg requested leave with the following explanation:

Sir [CO, 14th Bn]

I hereby make application for leave to return to Australia for a short period; my reasons for doing so are as follows:

I, with two brothers ... left Australia for service abroad in 1914, and since that time none of us have been home. One younger brother, Sgt RL, was killed in action at Bullecourt on April 11th, 1917, after extensive service with the unit on both Gallipoli and in France. The other brother is still with the unit.

My Mother, who is a widow and who is partly dependent on me, also my sister, are now in ill health owing to the long continued strain occasioned by our long absence and the death of my brother and I desire, if possible, to see them again in the hope that it will help restore them to health.

I am married, my wife is solely dependent upon me, and I wish to have her settled down in Australia before I again leave for abroad.

In reference to my service with the AIF I enlisted on Sept 22nd, 1914, and since this date my records will prove a long and extensive service both on Gallipoli and in France.

Major CM Johnston, temporary commander, 14th Battalion, recommended Reg’s request, noting that he has been awarded the Military Cross and the Military Medal and has been wounded four times.

[Above right: Studio portrait of four 14th Battalion officers. Identified left to right: Lieutenant George McKay Williamson; Lt Harold Boyd Wanliss DSO (seated left); Lt Reginald Walter (‘Reg’) Jones MC MM and Lt Joseph (‘Joe’) McKay, 14th Battalion (seated right). c.August, 1916. AWM P05859.008.]

DIGGER 39

Issue 55
Reg’s request was approved and he was on half pay during the voyage and then no pay (until he left Australia to rejoin his unit). He sailed from the UK (via America) aboard the *Borda* on 6 April and was placed onto the ship’s staff as adjutant for the journey. He would not return to the war in Europe, but though his appointment was terminated on 1 August, 1918, his service to his country was not yet over.

Llew Jones was wounded in the upper right arm on 8 July, 1916 [shell fire, near Bois Grenier] and sent to England for treatment. For a brief period, he was reallocated to the 65th Battalion of the proposed 6th Division while in England. He rejoined the 14th Battalion on 3 May, 1917, where he held the rank of driver until 17 January, 1918.

In July, 1917, Llew was sent to England to be treated for influenza, bronchitis and trench fever. He rejoined his unit in France on 31 December, 1917.

Llew was promoted to lance corporal on 18 January, 1918, and to corporal on 1 May, 1918. He was now serving as an infantryman, having moved out of the transport section.

Llew was recommended for a DCM, but awarded the MM, for:

*Conspicuous bravery on the occasion of a raid against the Bois-de-Vaire, east of Corbie, on 15 June 1918. This non-commissioned officer in charge of a small party had completed the mopping-up of two small posts when he was fired on by an enemy post of seven men with a machine gun. Immediately switching three men across, he opened rapid fire and then rushed the post, bayoneting three men and capturing the gun. The remainder were shot running away. By his prompt action and initiative he saved heavy casualties being inflicted on the main party. He was conspicuous throughout for his cool leadership combined with complete disregard for his own personal safety.*

[Right: Pre-enlistment studio portrait of 141 Driver Llewellyn Rowland Jones. His service record noted his ‘brown curly’ hair. AWM P10843.008.]

As a ‘1914 man’, Llew was short-listed for furlough in Australia after four years overseas service, but he didn’t live to receive it. Corporal Llewlyn Rowland Jones, aged 23, became the second of the three Jones brothers to pay the supreme sacrifice: he was killed in action at the Battle of the Hindenburg Outpost Line, east of Mont St Quentin, on 18 September, 1918. He is buried in the Bellicourt British Cemetery.

Reginald survived the war, and came back in 1918 as a married man, as on 31 December, 1917, he had married an English Volunteer Aid Detachment (VAD) nurse, Kathleen (‘Kitty’) Kenny, whom he must have met while being treated for his hand injury.

Kathleen sent this photo to her sister in Canada, writing on the back of it: *Photo of Kitty and Reg taken outside the Palace after he had been decorated by King George in 1918, the presentation of his medal was on 16 January 1918.* [Photo courtesy Brenda Noonan.]

After Reg returned to Australia with his bride, he served as a staff captain with the 3rd Battalion, Australian Naval & Military Expedition Force (AN&MEF), also known as Tropical Force, in the New Guinea area of operations (viz. Rabaul), from 11 September, 1918, but his appointment was terminated when he came down with malaria. He was finally discharged on 20 May, 1919, but served at Victoria Barracks (Melbourne) as provost marshal until May, 1920.

It would be nice to say Reg and Kitty lived ‘happily ever after’, but unfortunately Kathleen died in 1920, whilst giving birth to surviving twin boys. Reg did go on to remarry (to Sylvia) and fathered several more children. He is believed to have returned to his pre-war occupation as an electrician and died of a heart attack at Rosebud, Victoria, in 1969.
Postscript: ‘The wrong RW Jones’

Contained in Reg Jones’ service record is a letter from a Mrs RW Jones:

20/11/15

The Officer in Charge
Base Records
Victoria Barracks
Melbourne

Sir

On making enquiries at Victoria Barracks, Sydney, I have been advised to write and ask if you could possibly give me any information concerning a Corporal RW Jones, 14th Battalion, whose name appeared in the list of Victorian wounded on the 22nd July, in the SM Herald – again on the 17th September as Sgt RW Jones (second occasion) then later still, as Gnr RW Jones on the 29th October in the list of those ill.

I have grave occasion to think it must be one and the same man, and that it might possibly be my husband whom I have not heard from for six years.

Two years ago I believe he was in Queensland and went from there to Melbourne.

My husband’s one great fault was drink, and since we parted six years ago I have not heard from him.

If this man should prove to be Robert Warren Jones or if you should have a man that name on record, will you kindly endeavour to do your best to help me? I am very anxious to trace him since this sad and terrible war, and would like to correspond with him at once. Will you kindly send me full particulars (and if any next of kin) at your earliest convenience. Any news whatever will be very gratefully received and thank you in anticipation for any trouble I may cause you.

I remain

Yours truly

Amy Jones

Mrs RW Jones
C/o Mrs Hogg
‘Glenayr’
Frenchmans Road
Randwick, Sydney.

Base Records replied on 3 December, stating that no Robert Warren Jones had embarked and that Reg did not match the description [name, age, marital status, etc] of her husband.

_______________________________________________________________

Letter from the Front, 1916

Found on Trove by the Editor.

Private CS Cowley, son of Mr W Cowley, of Colac, writing to his parents from France, says:-

We drew into Marseilles during the afternoon and landed that night. We were at once entrained. The scenery was just lovely and it was quite a treat to see the green fields again and be away from the sands. About dinner time the next day the train was within 30 miles of Paris, but it turned off.

Soon we had a stop for half an hour at a large town where the population consisted mostly of women and old men. We were off again and after 66 hours in the train we arrived at our destination. People were to be seen all along the line waving their hands at us and apparently very pleased to see us. We are billeted in huts and barns and well within the sound of the guns. All the men felt the cold a lot after coming from the heat of Egypt.

We passed a lot of Tommies during our march from the train and I heard one of them say “They are not such wild looking chaps after all. They walk just like we do.”

We have had some snow. Several fights between aeroplanes had been witnessed. The people hereabouts have got their crops in and they are looking well. The soil is worked far more than it is in Australia and there is no doubt the crops show the benefit of it. One of the things that struck me most is the fact that the farms are not fenced. You can go for miles and not see a fence.

I am on a reserve Maxim gun section. We can see the shells bursting from our billets.

Endnote: The writer was Private 2600 Charles Seymour Cowley, 7th Bn. Enl. 13/7/15, RTA 28/3/19.

During a recent visit to Melbourne, and a tour of the Melbourne Cricket Ground, I noticed the name of 4th Class Naval Staff Clerk, Royal Aloysius Patrick (‘Roy’) Mungovan, on the Roll of Honour for members of the Melbourne Cricket Club who died on active service during the First World War.

Noting the other names listed were all of soldiers (except for Commander William Henry Farrington Warren DSO, RAN, who commanded the RAN destroyer flotilla in the Mediterranean in 1917-18), it seemed odd for a naval staff clerk to be listed as having lost his life during the war.

A quick piece of research established that Royal ‘Roy’ Mungovan was a member of the small Australian delegation to the Imperial War Conference in 1918 and the Paris Peace Conference in 1919. Roy Mungovan, who normally worked in the Navy Office in Melbourne, was appointed as the private secretary to Sir Joseph Cook (Minister of State for Navy) during the period 17 February, 1917 to 28 July, 1920; the period of the delegation’s activities at the Imperial War Conference and then leading up to the signing of the Treaty of Versailles on 28 June, 1919, which ultimately brought the war to an end.

The delegation then returned to Australia and embarked in the troopship HMAT Friedrichsruh at Devonport, England, on 9 July, 1919. Unfortunately, Roy Mungovan died on 13 July, 1919, most likely from pneumatic influenza then sweeping Western Europe, and was buried at sea near the Canary Islands.

As a civilian member of the RAN he is not entitled to have his name recorded on the Roll of Honour at the Australian War Memorial, nor on the Commonwealth War Graves Commission Naval Memorial to the Missing at Plymouth. But the Melbourne Cricket Club (MCC) has not forgotten him.
Endnotes: (1) Royal Aloysius Patrick Mungovan was born at Sandhurst (Bendigo), Victoria, on 22 February, 1888, the son of Patrick and Annie Mungovan (nee Craig). (2) The Australian delegation to the Imperial War Conference departed Australia in April 1918. The delegation then remained to take part in the Paris Peace Conference which started on 18 January, 1919. The conference finished in January 1920 but the Australian delegation did not stay beyond the signing of the Treaty of Versailles.

‘Little Willie’
Lieutenant Colonel M Purser, 30th Battalion.

One of the most outstanding characters in the 30th Battalion was Sergeant-Cook McDuff, who later became battalion transport officer.

From the time of the battalion’s arrival at the Showground camp until its departure in the Beltana, ‘Mac’ and the camp medical officer did not seem to get on well. Every soldier knows how seriously (and quite rightly) MO’s regard the presence of flies, and, when the camp MO saw the butcher’s block in the 30th Battalion’s cookhouse literally covered with them he roared: “What are those flies doing there?” McDuff did not reply, but walked slowly towards the block. As he approached, the flies gradually flew off until only one remained. Shaking his finger at it, ‘Mac’ said: “Willie, you naughty boy – what are you doing there? You know you have no right to be there.” The MO exploded and threatened ‘Mac’ with arrest, but the latter managed to talk himself out of it, as he usually did.

After that there was a peace, or at least a truce, between the two for a time, but on the day before embarkation ‘Mac’ went to the MO, and, after referring to the friction which had occurred between them, asked in a humble voice and without the flicker of an eyelid whether, on the eve of his departure for the front, the MO would do him a favour. On the latter’s replying that he would do so if it was within his power, ‘Mac’ handed him a matchbox with the request that he would “take care of Little Willie”. On opening the box and finding that it contained but a solitary fly, the MO was apparently unable to find words for the occasion and could only say, “It’s a good job for you, McDuff, that you are leaving tomorrow.”


Left: Lieutenant James McDuff is seated, third from the left in the second row (arrowed) in this photo of 30th Battalion officers taken in Oisement, Somme, in December 1917. Also of relevance to DIGGER is Lieutenant Edwin Haviland, fourth from the left in the back row (dashed arrow), who was mentioned in the filler, ‘Steak and onions for six’, on page 52 of DIGGER 54. AWM P04014.001.

Private 2163 Robert Hazelton, 54th Battalion, speaking at his welcome home to Byrock, NSW, in 1918:
Private Hazelton was wounded in the right leg, which had to be amputated and he is at present walking on crutches. In spite of the loss of a limb he is quite jolly and casually remarks that his “leg is at the blacksmiths”.
‘Valiant and true in life and death’:
Lancelot Fox Clarke DSO, VD, Commanding Officer, 12th Battalion
Andrea Gerrard, New Town, Tas.

The precipitous spurs and gullies of the Gallipoli Peninsula would claim the lives of many Australians on 25 April and in the days that followed as the men endeavoured to push inland through the terrible terrain of steep cliffs and deep gullies and meet their objectives. In those first few days as the men tried to get a foothold, at least 860 died, most either killed in action, dying from their wounds whilst waiting to reach a hospital ship or hospital, and with a small number dying from disease.

Over 8,000 Australian soldiers would perish as part of the Gallipoli Campaign. Many more would in time succumb to their wounds, while others would wear the scars of their service in the Australian Imperial Force for the remainder of their lives, however long or short that would be.¹

At the northern end of the sector in which the Australians landed on that fateful morning were landmarks such as The Sphinx, Walker’s Ridge, Russell’s Top and Baby 700. The latter landmark would be won and lost after much severe fighting and many casualties on both sides in the first few days. Among those to fall on that fateful day was Lieutenant Colonel Lancelot Clarke, commanding officer of the 12th Battalion.

While undoubtedly Major General Sir William Bridges was the highest-ranked officer to either be killed in action at Gallipoli or to die of their wounds or illness, Clarke would in fact be the highest-ranked officer to be killed in action at the Landing: a great loss to his men. The following day the 4th Battalion suffered a similar fate with the loss of their commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel Astley Onslow-Thompson, who was killed in action on 400 Plateau.² On 27 April, two days after the landing, Colonel (Temporary Brigadier General) Henry Norman MacLaurin, General Officer Commanding the 1st Brigade, was also killed in action.³

Clarke was struggling as he was making his way up from Russell’s Top towards The Nek when the enemy were spotted retiring up the slopes, some 600 or 700 yards to their right. Clarke and his party paused for a moment as he got out his message book and commenced compiling a report for Brigade Headquarters. The report would never be finished by Clarke, who was killed instantly when shot through the heart by a Turkish sniper.⁴ His batman, who rushed to Clarke’s side, would be the sniper’s next victim. The sniper soon had a third victim in Major Charles Elliott, who was wounded as he moved forward to take command.⁵ Elliott’s command of the battalion would have to be put on hold until February, 1916.⁶

Very little is known about Lancelot Clarke’s upbringing or education; even the circular for the Australian War Memorial’s Roll of Honour contains very little information. It appears his wife (of just three weeks standing on his enlistment) knew very little about her husband’s background and was unable to complete the form, as well as providing other information required by those handling his estate after his death.

From various sources it has been possible to establish some facts about Lancelot Fox Clarke and his background. He was the second son born to Joseph Johnstone Clarke and his wife Charlotte Elizabeth, nee Kelly, and was born at Emerald Hill, Victoria, on 15 June, 1858.⁷ The parent’s joy at the birth of a second son was tempered though by the loss of the couple’s first born son, William Henry Clarke. Further sorrow

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¹ The official number given by the Australian War Memorial is 8,709 Australian deaths. www.awm.gov.au/encyclopedia/gallipoli/fatalities/ (accessed 20/12/2015).
³ Holloway, DC Combat Colonels, p29.
⁵ Later Lieutenant Colonel Charles Elliott. He would have a distinguished career during the First World War as commander of the 12th Battalion; a much loved and respected officer.
⁶ Major Ernest Hilmer-Smith acted as Commanding Officer from 25 April to 16 June & from 22 June to 4 August, 1915. when Lieutenant Colonel John JT Gellibrand took command. See Holloway, Combat Colonels, p86.
would be visited on the family in April 1859 with the death of Joseph, aged 39 years, leaving Charlotte to raise her son on her own.8

Given the fact that Lancelot rose to a managerial position by the time he volunteered for active service in 1914, it would be safe to say that he had been given a good education; one that allowed him to take up work as an accountant and rise through the ranks of the militia.

While there are gaps in what is known about his early life, Lancelot Clarke would go on to have a distinguished and well-documented military career, spanning some thirty-six years by the time he saw active service again in 1914, having served in the Boer War with distinction. Commencing in 1878 as a twenty year old, Clarke spent six years in the ranks with the Victorian Voluntary Field Artillery. In 1884 he received his first commission, being appointed a lieutenant with the Victorian Field Artillery (East Melbourne Battery), serving alongside Walter Clark, later Commandant of Tasmania.9 Four years later he obtained his captaincy and served for a further five years before being appointed major in the Field Artillery Brigade (Victoria) on 10 March, 1893.

According to Andrew Kilsby’s chapter on the Victorian rifle clubs in ‘Before the Anzac Dawn’, ‘from 1870 to mid-1885, an increased concern and effort was being expended on defence matters. Forced in large part by the withdrawal of the British garrisons, permanent and volunteer officers, and their masters in colonial parliaments began to consider how best to defend their individual colonies’.10 As a result, a series of reviews by imperial experts were undertaken and these eventually led to changes to the defence postures of the colonies. The Victorian parliament went as far as the creation of a Defence Department with its own minister in 1883. While defence budgets continued to be relatively small, more was being spent on defence than ever before.

As part of the revamping of Victoria’s defence systems, the permanent artillery units, such as the East Melbourne Battery to which Clarke belonged, were disbanded starting in around 1880. These were later reformed in 1882 as the Victorian Garrison Artillery Corps. Around the same time the volunteer system was replaced with a permanent (paid, full-time soldiers) and militia (paid, part-time soldiers) system commencing in 1884.11

In 1900, Lancelot Clarke left Melbourne as second in command of the Fourth Victorian Contingent to South Africa; Colonel Nicholas William Kelly being in charge.12 General Order 16 (Victoria), 1900, was issued, notifying that applications would be received from officers of the Forces, particularly those who had previous military experience as officers, for appointment to the 4th Victorian Contingent.13 Their period of service was to be limited to twelve months or the duration of the war. It was made known that the Imperial Government needed a corps of ‘seasoned bushmen, bold riders, and sharpshooters’, who would need to be capable of successfully contending with a guerrilla enemy.14 The successful candidates would be required to be ‘capable horsemen and to have a certain amount of bush experience’.15 How or where Lancelot Clarke might have gained these

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8 Joseph Clarke, merchant, died on 21 April, 1859, at Queen Street, Emerald Hill, after a long and painful illness. According to the death notice he was late of Maghera, Londonderry. The Age, 23 April 1859, p4.
9 Daily Telegraph, 6 May 1915, p5. The East Melbourne Battery was formed in 1863 and existed as such until 1883.
13 Ibid. p252.
14 Ibid. p252.
15 Ibid. p252.

DIGGER 45 Issue 55
skills is unclear, but it appears he did have them and was appointed to the rank of major, the same rank he held in the Victorian Voluntary Field Artillery.

The contingent departed from Melbourne on 1 May, 1900, per the transport *Victorian*. The contingent consisted of 31 officers (and two supernumeraries), 598 other ranks as well as 778 horses and 11 wagons. After a voyage lasting 22 days the contingent landed at Beira, Portuguese East Africa, with the intention of assisting in the relief of Mafeking. On arrival they soon learned that this had, in fact, already been accomplished. Having entrained to Umtali, the men were then marched to Marandellas, Rhodesia, reaching there on 11 July. Colonel Kelly, with ‘A’ and ‘B’ Squadrons, were sent to Bulawayo, then by rail to Mafeking. From there they were then despatched to Otoshoop, where they formed part of Brigadier General Lord Erroll’s Brigade, under Lieutenant General Sir Frederick Carrington.

The three remaining squadrons, ‘C’, ‘D’ and ‘E’ under Major Lancelot Clarke, remained at Marandellas (Fort Charter, Fort Victoria, Tuli and Bulawayo), being engaged in garrison duties and working on the lines of communication. At the end of the year, having completed several months of garrison duty where he was the officer commanding the North Western Districts, Clarke and the three squadrons under his control were ordered to the Cape Colony. Here they were engaged at Matjesfontein, collecting stock and removing undesirables until early February, when they entrained for De Aar, being attached to Colonel Hon. AH Henikar’s column. Clarke also acted as Administrator for the No. 13 Martial Law area of Cape Colony.

Following the wounding of Colonel Nicholas Kelly on 16 February, 1901, at Hartebeestfontein, Clarke took over command of the contingent until June 1901 and was promoted to the rank of lieutenant colonel. Clarke opted to stay on in South Africa in July 1901 and was posted to the 5th Victorian Mounted Rifles for administration, a Martial Law Administrator in district 13 from July 1901 to July 1902, as well as OC Troops North Western Districts, Cape Colony, from July to October 1901.

Clarke would return from the Boer War as a decorated soldier, having been awarded the Distinguished Service Order for his ‘able command in operations against de Wet’. He was also mentioned in despatches twice – the first one gazetted on 23 April and the second on 9 July, 1901 – for his excellent execution of orders at Zumberg. He was later awarded the Queen’s Medal with four claps and the King’s Medal with two claps.

On returning to Australia, with the federal government taking over control of the military from the states, Clarke transferred to the Commonwealth Military Forces. He received the appointment of lieutenant colonel of the Victorian Field Artillery on 26 April, 1907. Six years later he attained the rank of colonel. Clarke was working as the shipping manager for the Melbourne Steamship Company at its Tasmanian base at Devonport on Tasmania’s north-west coast, when he enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force. Clarke had moved to Tasmania in 1910 with at least one daughter (Mabel), where they took up residence on Victoria Parade, Devonport. In mid 1913 he was attached to the 91st Infantry Tasmanian Rangers, which he commanded having been transferred from the unattached list to be colonel, supernumerary to the establishment, with the pay of a lieutenant colonel. He still held this position when appointed to the newly raised Australian Imperial Force in August 1914.

Within days of the announcement that Australia would be sending an expeditionary force to assist Great Britain in her fight against the might of the German Army, the Tasmanian District Commandant, Colonel Walter J Clark, met with the Acting Premier, the Hon. James E Ogden. A whole battalion was now to be sent rather than half a battalion as had previously been agreed. An appeal for additional men was drawn up, with a message sent to every municipal council, post office and police office in the state, ‘with a request that the fullest and immediate publicity be given throughout the respective districts’. The recipients were informed that an additional 500 men were needed for military service ‘to assist the Mother Country in her hour of need’, and that this was Tasmania’s ‘opportunity to show that in this distant outpost of the Union our loyalty to the Throne is no less fervent than that which permeates the length and breadth of our far-flung Empire’.

While Colonel Walter Clark as Commandant of the 6th Military District [Tasmania] might have been keen to lead this new contingent, senior officers on administration staff, such as himself, who could not be replaced were not being considered. It was decided that Colonel Lancelot Clarke would be appointed as

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16 Ibid, p257.
20 *The Mercury* 17 August 1914, p8.
lieutenant colonel to command the 12th Battalion, 3rd Brigade, under Brigadier General Ewen Sinclair-MacLagan.21

In the initial stages of the formation of the Tasmanian contingent it was hoped that the 12th Battalion would be a purely Tasmanian unit. New South Wales and Victoria were both allocated four battalions each initially, but with a smaller population base it was decided that half the men for the 12th Battalion would be drawn from this state with a quarter from South Australia and a quarter from Western Australia.

Lancelot Clarke was in fact receding one step in rank when he accepted the appointment to command the 12th Battalion. According to one newspaper report, both he and Colonel Sidney Hawley, who would be second in command, had both receded one step in rank, seeing it as their patriotic duty to do so.22 While this might have been one explanation, another might well have been the opportunity to see action again, particularly for Lancelot Clarke, who at age 56 was coming to the end of his military service. Clarke, who had last seen action in the Boer War, was now being offered the opportunity to see active service once more.

A ‘concentration camp’, as it was referred to by ‘The Mercury’ newspaper, was set up at Pontville, north of Hobart, on a site adjacent to the main road running between Hobart and Launceston, with Major RP Smith as camp commandant. Despite the fact the site lacked any real facilities such as buildings, water and electricity, and was very much exposed to the elements, it was easily accessed by road, with rail facilities a mere two miles away. This site would be used as a camp and training ground for the first Tasmanian contingent only, which also included one squadron of light horse, one battery of artillery, one field company of engineers, one section of field ambulance and one company of Army Service Corps.23 The windswept site would be abandoned after the departure of the first contingent for a more congenial site at Claremont, which was more easily accessed by rail.

By 15 August, 1914, the ordnance and supply depots had been established at Pontville and the first draft of the Tasmanian quota was due to arrive shortly thereafter. Medical examinations were proceeding apace at Hobart, Launceston and other centres around the state as men came forward for enlistment. With a high standard expected, many men were doomed to go away rejected for not being able to fulfil the physical requirements. A number of men would be rejected on account of having poor teeth. According to Newton’s battalion history, on arriving at the camp, he, along with others, were interrogated briefly by Major Smith, and those with previous experience were allotted to that branch of the service in which they had been trained, whilst others with experience in handling horses were drafted either to the light horse or the artillery. The remainder were sent off to the section of the camp for ‘gravel crunchers’.24 The work of turning the raw recruits into soldiers ready to take on the might of the German Army began now – turning men, who prior to volunteering came from every walk of life, into a military machine.

This work later continued on arrival in Egypt at the beginning of December, where brigade training would now commence alongside company and battalion drills. The various sections within each battalion, such as the signallers, machine-gun section, scouts and stretcher-bearers, were all given additional training in their area of specialty. Leslie Newton, in his official history of the battalion, was of the opinion that brigade training was more for the officers than the rank and file but was still necessary to shape the men into a fighting force.25

The duties of a battalion commander are many. While much of it involves planning, discipline and training his battalion, more importantly the CO was responsible for the welfare and well-being of his

21 Later Major General Ewen George Sinclair-MacLagan, CB, CMG, DSO (1868-1948), British Army, served in Boer War where he was wounded and awarded DSO.Posted to Royal Military College Duntroon as major on instructional staff. Appointed to AIF 15 August 1914 as lieutenant colonel (temporary colonel). Led 3rd Brigade at landing at Gallipoli. Later promoted to GOC 4th Division. Retired in 1925. DC Holloway, Combat Colonels, pp27 & 34.
22 Major (Hon. Lieutenant Colonel) Sidney Hawley (1870-1950), a farmer from Ridgeside, Evandale, Tasmania, on appointment in August 1914. DC Holloway, Combat Colonels, p87.
24 Ibid, p17.
officers and other ranks. Colonel Lancelot Clarke was also known to lead the battalion training once the men had mastered the basics within the section and company settings. In the early phase this often involved long route marches and carrying out attack practice in the local countryside here in Tasmania. These would then be followed up by some battalion drill movements.

Clarke would also do a similar thing in Egypt, leading the men out of camp towards the Tiger’s Tooth which was about five or six miles from camp. Similarly on Lemnos on the battalion’s first day ashore, a three mile route march was held round the harbour, with Colonel Clarke and the battalion band leading the way. Before they had got very far, numerous children from the neighbouring villages joined in the march, along with one youngster who carried a large Greek flag on a pole at the head of the column for the best part of two miles.26 A sketch of the column drawn by Lieutenant John Booth from Western Australia was later published in the London ‘Graphic’ and was reproduced in the battalion history.27

As the date of the landing at Gallipoli drew closer, Colonel Clarke took the opportunity of not only taking his men up a high hill with a sheer slope for fitness training, but once they had reached the summit in one go, addressed the men. In the distance, some 40 miles away could be seen Gallipoli and The Narrows, with battleships patrolling the entrance. It was also possible for the men to hear the muted roar of the naval guns. In concluding, he wished the men the ‘best of good luck’ and reminded them that the ‘honour and fair name of the battalion’ was in their hands.28

It was decided that the 3rd Brigade would be the covering force for the landing at Gallipoli. The 12th Battalion would be the third wave, as the brigade reserve for the landing. Three of the companies were then distributed to different vessels and attached to other battalions e.g. ‘D’ Company would board the Suffolk and be attached to the 11th Battalion. Battalion headquarters and ‘A’ Company would remain on board the Devanha.

The days preceding the landing were spent in a fairly leisurely manner, giving the men a chance to rest up. Daily platoon inspections were held to ensure that every man’s equipment and gear were complete with particular attention being paid to field dressings, filled water bottles and 120 rounds of ammunition.

The plan for the landing entailed the men coming ashore in three waves on a 1 500 metre frontage. The first wave of men (two companies each from the 9th, 10th & 11th Battalions) were detailed to seize Bolton’s Ridge and McCay’s Hill. The second wave would comprise the remaining two companies of these battalions and would support the first wave. Once the beach defences had been overcome, the plan was that the leading battalions would then push inland to the covering position. The 12th Battalion, as the reserve battalion, was to rendezvous in Victoria Gully near the head of Bolton’s Ridge and from there would act on the orders of Brigadier General Sinclair-MacLagan once he was ashore.29 The reality was that the men of the 12th Battalion were spread across seven destroyers in half-companies with Colonel Clarke and ‘A’ Company aboard the HMS Ribble.

At the given hour the men climbed down the ship’s ladders and took up their positions in the boats that would later be towed ashore by the Navy steam pinnaces. As soon as the captains of the destroyers received word to go in and land their troops, they went in close to land, as close as around 500 yards. Very quickly the first tows came under fire, which to the men sounded like a faint knocking, such as of a wagon’s axle box: at first, single knocks, which rapidly turned into a continuous sound like the boiling of water in a cauldron. It took a few minutes for the men to realise what the sound was and where it was coming from. The forecastles of the destroyers shielded the decks and the men from the bullets that began to fly over.

Just like with the battleships, the destroyers, according to Bean, landed their men north of the intended spot. The 12th Battalion was however, set down in the proper order, with a part to the north, the middle and the south. Headquarters and ‘A’ Company personnel came ashore at

26 Ibid, p34
27 Ibid, pp35 & 52. John Lionel Calvert Booth gave his occupation as farmer on enlistment in September 1914, but had previously worked for many years on Punch Magazine and was a correspondent for the Graphic in the Near East, having worked in Bulgaria and Turkey. He had also been an artist-correspondent during the Boer War. Booth died of wounds on 1 May, 1915, and was buried at sea. His name appears on the Lone Pine Memorial. See AIF Project.
28 Ibid, p38.
Among the second wave of the 11th Battalion and landed on the semicircle of shore north of Ari Burnu, a few hundred yards further north than any of the battleship tows.

Looming up in front of them was:

\textbf{a small area of rough ground … shut in by bare yellow precipices rising at 300 yards from the beach. The central cliffs, their gravel worn and fluted by runnels, stood sheer to 400 feet, a few tufts of scrub catching a precarious foothold on their face. The ridge led down to the beach only in two places – at either end of the semicircle – by the steep slopes of Plugge’s on the right, and by a rugged tortuous spur (afterwards known as Walker’s Ridge) on the left. Between the two, exactly in the middle of the semicircle of cliffs, there had once been a third spur, but the weather had eaten it away. Its bare gravel face stood out, for all the work like that of a Sphinx, sheer above the middle of the valley. Its feet rested on the scrubby knolls below, and the two semicircles of cliff swept round on either side of it like wings.}\(^3^0\)

The men in the second wave to come ashore fared worse than the first, now that the Turks were aware of their presence and fully prepared to defend their country from the invading forces. The rowing boats carrying headquarters and part of ‘A’ Company, 12th Battalion, came under heavy fire all the way to the shore, with rifle fire from the direction of Fisherman’s Hut and trenches near the edge of the cliffs by the Sphinx.

On reaching the shore the men rushed across the beach, taking refuge either under a bank which bordered the beach or in a small creek embankment just south of The Sphinx (later known as Reserve Gully). The troops were also coming under sharp fire from a Turkish post further along the beach and from Turks looking down from the semicircle of almost sheer cliffs above what was later known as North Beach.

The bank of North Beach provided little or no real shelter from the flanking fire. Clarke initially waited for the rest of his battalion to come ashore in the third wave. He soon realised that this was taking too long, and, with the men pinned down by the heavy sniper fire from above, Clarke, according to Bean’s account, ordered the men to ‘strip packs, leave them under the bank, open cut-offs, load ten rounds, and pull back safety catches’.

Striking out, Clarke soon found himself standing on top of a small knoll below The Sphinx. Here he paused for a breather and waited with the intention of collecting his northern companies, which were coming ashore in relays. But it had become evident that the transfer from the destroyers was slow, the light was growing fast, and with his men equally dispersed amongst the other battalions which had landed some considerable distance away, Clarke soon realised that he had no chance of assembling his battalion.

Instead, he waited long enough to collect as many of the companies that had landed in his area before moving off. Clarke decided that there was only one thing to do, and that was to push on up the cliffs in front and leave the rest to follow.

Among the men who joined him were \textbf{Lieutenants Ivor Margetts} and \textbf{Penistan Patterson},\(^3^2\) two men from Clarke’s 12th Battalion whom he knew he could rely on. Margetts was reported to have taken out his binoculars but could see nothing, as the lenses were smeared with water.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{image.png}
\caption{Discarded packs on the beach at Gallipoli. AWM J03302.}
\end{figure}

\(^3^0\) CEW Bean, \textit{Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918, Vol 1.}, p267.


\(^3^2\) Penistan James Patterson, a 20 year old graduate of the Royal Military College Duntroon from Victoria. Patterson was posted to the 12th Battalion and was later allotted for duty as assistant adjutant. He was appointed to ‘C’ Company as senior subaltern under Captain Denis Lane. On the reorganisation of the battalion with the creation of the double companies (‘A’ & ‘C’ Company merged), Lieutenant Patterson was appointed platoon commander of No. 1 Platoon. He was also responsible for the training of the battalion scouts. Lieutenant Patterson was killed in action on the afternoon of 25 April as he and others tried to move forward. He has no known grave and his name appears on The Lone Pine Memorial. www.aif.adfa.edu.au (accessed 8/1/2016); Ivor Stephen Margetts, a sportsmaster at Hutchins School, Hobart earned himself the distinction of being one of a very select group of officers who was there at the landing and at the evacuation of Gallipoli. Margetts was considered by many to have had the potential to rise through the ranks, before being killed by a sniper on 26 July 1916 at Pozieres. He was buried on the battlefield but his grave was later lost. He too has no known grave and his name appears on the Villers-Bretonneux Memorial.

\textbf{DIGGER} 49

\textit{Issue 55}
and sand: a situation that could not be remedied easily as they had no dry clothing with which to wipe them clean.

Clarke sent Margetts, Patterson and their men up the gravelly slopes of Reserve Gully (just south of The Sphinx), while looking for an easier path leading up to Russell’s Top. With daylight fast approaching, Clarke felt he could wait no longer and ‘proceeded up the cliffs and left the rest to follow’, at times hauling themselves up on their hands and knees. 33

Despite being remarkably fit for his age, Colonel Clarke soon started to struggle, scrambling and clawing his way up the precipitous spurs towards Russell’s Top, carrying his heavy pack. Corporal Elmer Laing, an 18 year farmer from Western Australia, came across ‘The Old Man’ and suggested to the colonel that he should ditch his pack. 34 This he refused to do, so Laing grabbed the pack and with Clarke made it onto Russell’s Top, arriving before his two young lieutenants, Margetts and Patterson, who were both astonished to see their commander having a well-earned breather while he waited for them to arrive.

Ahead of them were some members of Suleyman’s 3rd Platoon [Turks] whom Clarke ordered Margetts and his men to charge. The Turks, soon realising that their only line of retreat was likely to be cut, managed to bolt back along Russell’s Top towards The Nek and beyond, making their way towards Baby 700 and Battleship Hill. As the Turks retreated Clarke yelled out to his men, ordering them to ‘get into some sort of formation and clear the bush as you go’. 35 As a result the men stretched out in a skirmish line about three paces apart and started to move forward slowly along the plateau towards The Nek, a feature that would later have its own place in history.

Coming across a track which came up Monash Valley, crossed the plateau and then disappeared down the seaward side of Russell’s Top, Clarke called a halt for a breather, with the men sitting on the goat track keeping an eye out for the Turks who now occupied parts of Baby 700 to the north of their current position. Clarke remained standing whilst he proceeded to write a note to Sinclair-MacLagan. Exposed, he provided an easy target for a Turkish sniper dug in along Second Ridge, about 350 metres away, killing him instantly by a shot to the heart.

Accounts differ as to whether it was Clarke’s batman or his runner who was the next victim of the Turkish sniper. 36 Bean in a later account suggests that Clarke’s batman was also acting as his runner when he said that he was ‘ready to take the message’. Whether the soldier was his batman or the company runner, what is certain is that the sniper was on a ‘hat trick’. 37 Major Charles Elliott, who had been commanding ‘A’ Company, and was advancing to take command was the next victim, but he didn’t sustain life threatening injuries, receiving a fractured arm. (Major Sidney Hawley was second in command of the 12th Battalion at the landing but was badly wounded as the tow he was in came ashore. According to one account Hawley stood up in the tow with an oar, trying to prevent the boat from drifting away from the beach as the troops jumped ashore, making himself a target for the Turkish troops on shore firing at the tows. 38 Incapacitated, Hawley took no further part in the landing and was later transferred to Egypt for treatment and eventually returned to Australia.) 39

33 DW Cameron, 25 April 1915, pp61-62.
34 LM Newtown, The Story of the Twelfth, p43, DW Cameron, 25 April 1915, p83. Elmer Wilfred Drake Laing enlisted on 10 September, 1914. He was later commissioned in the field and awarded the Military Cross. He was killed in action on 8 May, 1918, and buried at Borre British Cemetery.
35 DW Cameron, 25 April 1915, p83.
36 The name of the soldier is still to be located.
37 CEW Bean, Anzac to Amiens, p100.
38 LM Newton, The Story of the Twelfth p42. Major Ernest Hilmer Smith took over command on a temporary basis.
39 Major (Honorary Lieutenant Colonel) Sidney Hawley, a 44 year old farmer from Evandale, Tasmania. He enlisted on 19 August, 1914, and appointed Second in Command at the formation of the battalion.
Private Leonard Moggridge, described as an old South African campaigner, yelled out a warning, which apparently Elliott did not hear. [40] Margetts, the next most senior officer was called for, but was warned off before he could approach, with his friend Elliott shouting to him not to come near as it was too hot. A stretcher party from ‘B’ Section of the 3rd Field Ambulance arrived later and attended to Elliott, after which he most likely made his own way to the beach and was later transported back to Egypt for treatment.

Lieutenant Colonel Lancelot Fox Clarke DSO, VD, the highest ranking officer to be killed on Gallipoli in the hours following the landing, was later buried in Beach Cemetery, Anzac. What happened to his batman is not known. The soldier’s name does not appear in the battalion history or in the unit diary. David Cameron, in his account of the landing, names him only as Private Davis, with no further information being found so far that identifies the soldier or where he is buried.

Major Charles Elliott would recover from his wounds and return to the 12th Battalion in September 1915. On the promotion of Lieutenant Colonel (later Major General) John Gellibrand to command the 6th Brigade, Charles Elliott was promoted to the rank of lieutenant colonel and commanded the 12th Battalion for the remainder of the war.

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Despite the many duties of a battalion commander preparing for deployment, Lancelot Clarke had found time to remarry in 1914. Just weeks before the departure of the first Tasmanian contingent, Lancelot married Beatrice Susan Moffatt of Adelaide, SA, at St Mark’s Church of England, Pontville. [41] Beatrice came from a military background, being a granddaughter of Surgeon Major Henry B Hinton, late Bengal and Indian Army. [42] His first wife, Marion Jane Gilbert (nee Young), had died in 1906, aged 45 years, leaving him with three children to raise. It was unfortunate that the details of his marriage to Beatrice Moffatt were not conveyed further up the line and his wife had to read of his death in the newspapers rather than through the normal channels. [43]

Lancelot Fox Clarke was survived by his daughter, Mabel Florence (1892-1985), son, Lancelot (‘Bill’) Gordon Clarke (1897-1952), and stepdaughter, Marion Margaret Elizabeth Gilbert (1884-1968). [44] Lancelot Clarke jnr., on reaching his 18th birthday, would enlist as a second lieutenant in January 1916. He was later wounded in action in France but survived his period of service. [45] During the Second World War he volunteered again and served as a lieutenant attached to the VDC. [46] Lancelot Gordon Clarke died at the Repatriation General Hospital on 11 January, 1952, aged 54 years.

An obituary published in the ‘Daily Post’ [1915], spoke of Lancelot Clarke’s contribution to the local community after arriving there to take charge of the Devonport branch of the Melbourne Steamship Company several years earlier. [47] He relinquished his position when he was appointed to command the 12th Battalion. Clarke’s interests outside of business and the military were wide and varied, and included the Tourist Association, St George’s Society (a patriotic society), the Mersey Regatta Association and the Devonport Public Library committee (1912-1914).

Ten years after the landing at Gallipoli, on 12 April, 1925, a tablet to perpetuate the memory of Lieutenant Colonel Lancelot Fox Clarke was unveiled by Captain LM Newton MC at the Devonport Presbyterian Church, where Clarke and Mabel had worshipped during their time there. Newton, as a long serving adjutant of the 12th Battalion, spoke about his memories of the gallant lieutenant colonel. The service was also attended by a number of former members of the 12th Battalion, along with members of the militia

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[40] LM Newton, The Story of the Twelfth, p43; # 411 Private Leonard Ernest Moggridge, a 44 year old ship’s steward who enlisted in August 1914. Moggridge returned to Australia in July 1917.
[42] The Register, 8 March 1913, p18.
[44] Marion was the daughter of Arthur F Gilbert and Marion Jane Young, later Clarke. She married Everard Henry Betts on 20 April, 1916, at Malvern Presbyterian Church. The Argus, 2 May 1916, p1; Mabel Florence married William Jonathan Nicol, Moranding Park, Moranding, Victoria.
and cadets in uniform who paraded prior to the commencement of proceedings in honour of their fallen leader.  

The death of a commanding officer who was there when his battalion was first raised, is a significant loss to the men, none more so than the loss of Lieutenant Colonel Lancelot Clarke, whom the men looked up to as their leader. Clarke’s contribution to Tasmania was the military leadership that he provided with vigour and skill after arriving in the state in 1910. On moving to Tasmania he brought with him a wealth of knowledge about all things military, including active service, which he was prepared to use and share with the men of the 91st Regiment and later with the 12th Battalion. Though known to be rather stern and even reserved, Clarke had earned the friendship and affection of many of his men. Several of his senior officers from ‘A’ Company were happy to share a cup of cocoa with him in quiet companionship in the Ribble’s tiny wardroom while they waited for zero hour on 25 April, 1915, contemplating on what was to come, once they hit the shore at Gallipoli.

The last words on Lieutenant Colonel Lancelot Fox Clarke should be left up to someone who knew him personally, Leslie Newton:

We realised that it was only during the last few weeks of training at Lemnos that we had begun to know and understand Col. Clarke, and, incidentally, to value him. Although he was stern and somewhat reserved, we knew him to be full of grit and a soldier to his finger-tips and on this memorable morning he had proved himself to be a brave and gallant gentleman, who did not know the meaning of fear. The wonderful achievements of the Battalion at Anzac and in the later years of the campaign constituted the finest monuments which any unit could erect to a commanding officer, who had laid such a splendid foundation.

Letter from the Front, 1915

Found on Trove by the Editor.

Writing to Mr WH Bridle on 14th Oct, under address 14th Battery, 5th Field Artillery Brigade, National Park [Sydney], Gunner RG Donaldson (eldest son of our late respected member, Mr RT Donaldson) says:-

For the past two months I have been in active service — in camp, of course — going through the usual hard training to enable me to do my bit in fighting the cause of Liberty against Barbarism. I would like to be there, and wish there were 100,000 more of us there; for the business looks bad at the Dardanelles, unless I am unduly pessimistic.

Indeed, I would be there if the doctors had chosen to take me when I first volunteered. But, no; they judged me one of the ‘flatfooted’ tribe of biped. A second effort, however, some months after, proved more successful. I spent the meantime pretty actively as a member of the Moss Vale Recruiting Association. I was CPS there. In addressing meetings, I felt like a well seasoned politician.

I had a month in the Infantry, then got transferred to the Artillery. The latter is very interesting work, more technical and more difficult. There are 500 or 600 of us here. We are a happy family, plenty of hard work, good tucker and no worries. It is nice to feel free of the worldly responsibilities. We have heard on very good authority that we will be leaving here for across the seas, whether for Egypt or Aldershot, for the usual six months training, we don’t know. My brother Alf is in Egypt – perhaps you already know – with the Light Horse.

I hope Tumut is keeping up its end satisfactorily in every way. I would like very much to spend one day of my final leave amongst you if we get the usual final leave – that is not certain in the Artillery, as there is so much transport, such as guns, horses, &c., to be shipped. I often cast longing, lingering looks behind on you all, and never gave up hope of spending part of a holiday there. Here, in the Artillery, I came across some Tumut folk, young Neill Brown, Charles Smiles, Eurell and Costello. With all good wishes and kind remembrance.

Endnotes: (1) The writer was Staff Sgt. 7652 Robert Gotthard Donaldson, 5th FAB. Enl. 23/8/15. (2) His brother was Private 3282 Alfred Donaldson, 3/55th BN, RTA 25/1/19.

SOLDIERS' LETTERS.
AT POZIERES.
THE UNBEATEN BRIGADE.
In a letter to a member of his family from France, Pte HG Hartnett, whose parents reside at Tumblong, and who enlisted at Adelong, writes as follows:-

Just a few lines to let you know that I am getting on well, as I know you will be anxious re my welfare. However, I have been wounded through the left arm, at the shoulder, and have a painful wound that is going to put me out of action for a couple of months.

I am not sorry to be away from the scourge of battles, as my nerves are in a pretty bad state, and I am very thin and weak. A walk for half an hour knocks me clean up and I am settled for the rest of the day. But I have lost an awful lot of blood and weakness must be expected.

Now, I must try and give you a faint idea of what it was like. We had been in the trenches near Armentieres for about two months and then, about July 3, we were sent back, and after a couple of days marching we reached Bailleul and took a train southwards. We arrived at Candas, which lies behind Arras, and then started on the march.

For days and days we marched and carried our heavy 90 lbs of pack and equipment. We passed through lovely hilly country and many old French towns. We were having a rough time and used to march about ten miles every day and were nearly all sore-footed and had blistered feet. One day we did about 15 miles, and that is no joke with a pack on and blistered feet.

Well, at last we reached Warloy, a village behind Albert. There we rested for a couple of days. We had been marching in a great circle and it was work to get us in good form for what we had to face soon afterwards. On July 16 we left Warloy about 4 am and started off for the trenches, about eight or nine miles distant.

We passed through Albert, and it has been a nice town, but is now wrecked by shell fire. The cathedral is a mass of ruins and the statue of brass of the Virgin and Child on top of the spire has been struck by a shell and bent right to one side. It is hanging by a few steel bands and the French people about there say that when this statue falls the war will end.

Well, we had a very welcome cup of tea just past Albert, and then set off again and the country was now rough and we had to cross it in the open under shell fire. We reached the trenches about one o’clock that night and were tired out. Early next morning we were able to look around and see where we were. Contalmaison lay behind us on the right and the wood and village of Pozieres lay right in front of us.

The British had attacked this village three times and had to retire each time. Now the 1st Australian Infantry Brigade was put in and we were to see if we could take it. Each and every man resolved to do his utmost, and we would put up a good fight. We had to uphold the honour of the 1st Brigade, which has never been beaten, and never will be either.

Well, on July 22 we knew that we were to go over that night and try our luck. The attack was to take place half an hour after midnight on the 23rd. Would you believe that Sunday is always the worst day along the front and the worst fighting generally takes place on Sunday?

Here the artillery was hard at work all day on the 22nd and a terrific fire was kept up and it was awful. The British on our right were also attacking and 90 000 British troops were that night operating against the Germans. You can imagine what a fearful battle it was, and English soldiers told us afterwards that it was the worst of the war up to that date. They had been at the battles of Loos and Neuve Chapelle and said that they were not to be compared with this one.

I never wish to take part in another fight like it, and it was something awful, and I shall never forget it as long as I live. We had to wait about until midnight and you can imagine how the hours dragged on. Sleep had been out of the question for a couple of days and we had to put in the time the best way we could.

At last we filed up the trenches and took up our position, ready to jump over the parapet and charge the Germans when we got the order. Those minutes seemed like hours to us all and at last it came and over we went into the showers of lead.
We had to get through barbed wire and the ground was cut and torn to pieces from shell fire and we met with practically no opposition in the first line of German trenches. They were nearly all killed by our artillery. About here I got three cuts and bruises from pieces of flying shells, but none of any consequence.

A few minutes later a high explosive shell landed amongst us. The earth was torn up and great clods were sent up nearly 50 yards into the air. One of these, in falling, struck me on the top of my head. I had my steel helmet strapped on tightly and it saved my life, as it took the force of the blow. As it was I was knocked senseless to the ground and when I came to, my mates were well ahead of me and I had to go after them, but I was half dazed for a good while.

Now we had to get into the wood in front of the village, and when we had got to a certain position we had to dig ourselves in and stay there. We had not got all the Germans out and they were sniping at us, and one of these got me from behind. He must have been in a dug-out that we had overlooked.

Well, I was digging myself in with four mates, and we were all hit in a few minutes. I was hit by a bullet which entered just under my armpit and came out on the top of the shoulder. I felt an awful whack in the shoulder and then a sharp stinging pain. It was bleeding awfully, but life and death to us all depended on digging in as fast as we could, so I worked until I could do no more.

Then one of my mates bound the wound roughly and sent me back to our old line. This was the cruel part of it all. The German artillery was shelling us frightfully and shells were flying everywhere. The ground was covered with wounded, dead and dying men, and we realised what an awful price we had paid for the ground we had won.

I had not gone far when I was again hit, this time by flying shell splinters. One went into my top lip just below the nostrils, one through my clothes and into the muscles of my right arm, and one just against the knee in my right leg. But they were of no consequence and I had them taken out later and the wounds are all right now.

How ever I got across that shell-swept area, God alone knows, I don’t, but I got back to our old trenches, which were being partially buried by shells. The wounded were pouring in and all who could walk were sent back to other dressing stations. I had been wounded about 2 am and it was now about 4.

I was sent on from place to place and could not get my wound dressed on account of bad cases coming in and the scarcity of doctors. We were picked up in a motor lorry and taken back a good many miles and after ten hours I got my wound dressed. It was bleeding and I was very weak, and they ripped the bandages off. The doctor told me I had a nasty wound and my shoulder was all black and bruised. My clothes were cut and torn and I was covered with blood from head to foot.

Above: ‘Rough Sketch of Position, 22nd July 16, Before the Charge. Pozieres, from our Fire Bay’ – Lieutenant Bob Harris, 2nd Battalion [profiled in DIGGER 51]. Courtesy of Judith Green & NSW SL. Note the Pozieres Windmill in the middle distance. This would be a unique piece of history, as it was sketched by Bob Harris on the battlefield only hours before the 1st Brigade ‘hopped the bags’.
All the wounded were in an awful state, and I met Ern Whiting [Pte 3941, 3rd Bn, RTA 10.1.18] here. He was walking about, but was pretty badly wounded in the legs and will be out of action for some time, I think. Well, I was put on a train with a lot of others and taken away and early next morning we arrived at Rouen. We were to go into hospital there.

A lot of German prisoners are there and you should have seen them laughing as the long trainloads of wounded came in. How I would have loved to have had my good old rifle and a bandolier of cartridges. I would have made them grin, the square-headed cows.

Here I was taken with my mate to No. 69 Hospital and the first thing the nurse said when she saw me was: “Well, you look as if you have been to the war, at any rate”. We got into a nice hot bath and then into bed, after having our wounds dressed. Talk about sleep! I was dead to the world, as we had had no sleep for 80 hours and you can imagine how tired out we were.

We stayed there two days and then we were sent with others to Le Havre, then on to a hospital ship and across to Southampton and then straight on to Birmingham. We arrived here at midnight on July 27 and we are now in the university, which is being used as a hospital. The nurses are awfully good to us and we have much to be thankful for.

My wound seemed to be doing well, but today the doctor came and looked at it. He said that it was not too good and he ran a long probe right through my arm, and opened the wound right up again. It made me shut my teeth together tightly, too. Well, when Sister came to dress it, she got a probe like a bodkin and threaded it with a piece of lint gauze and poked it right through my arm and pulled the gauze through. This is rather painful, too. The gauze has to be taken out and a fresh piece put in again in place of it. I have just had one taken out and it is a painful operation, too. I don’t know how long this is going to last, but they told me until all the badness is drawn from the wound.

My arm and hand are pretty useless and particularly the thumb and first finger. But the doctor says they will be alright when I have had a real good rest, as the nerves are affected a good deal. Anyway, I am not likely to see the firing line again before six weeks or two months, and then I shall be feeling very fit again.

I don’t think that I will ever be the same when under fire again, and it generally makes you very nervous. The Germans are brutes; they used gas shells and they acted very dirty with us. Then when we got on top of them they squealed, “Mercy, camarade,” but they did not get it. One fellow worked a machine gun on us right up to the parapet and then squealed for mercy. He got a bullet instead. We found them tied to their machine guns, so they could not get away, and we found whips that the German officers had been using and saw plenty to show us that they are forced into it by their officers. They would surrender as fast as sheep if the officers were all gone.

Our brigade has suffered enormous losses and so did the others who supported us afterwards. I am much afraid that the old much-liked 2nd Brigade is nearly wiped out. We were proud of our company (‘A’) and went out nearly full strength – over 200 men. On Monday night only about 25 were left in the trenches.

If you have once seen a battlefield you would never forget it. It is a cruel sight to witness, but we have upheld the honour of Australia and the ground we hold which was captured at such a cost. Later in the night the 3rd and 4th Battalions went past us and captured nearly the whole of the village of Pozieres at the point of the bayonet. They did great work, I believe.

We are proud of our victory, although we mourn the loss of many a brave comrade, but they died for their country, and who could die a nobler death?

Left: Harry Hartnett is fourth from the left in the back row. AWM P08549.004.

Endnote: Harry Hartnett’s memoirs have been published as ‘Over the Top’, compiled by FFFAIF member Chris Bryett [Allen & Unwin, 2009].

As the Editor is participating in the 2016 FFFAIF Western Front tour, there will be reduced time to compile DIGGER 56. As a result, we are planning a special edition containing the full memoirs of Captain Tom Mann of the 2nd Battalion. Stay tuned for this exciting issue of DIGGER, out in September.
For Valour: Anzac Victoria Cross recipients
The Western Front 1916 (Part 1)

Geoff Lewis, Raglan.

Last year, to commemorate the centenary of the Gallipoli Campaign, three editions of DIGGER contained pen pictures of the ten Anzacs who were awarded the Victoria Cross in 1915. This year, the centenary of the initial participation by the Anzacs on the Western Front, we will introduce (or re-introduce) the seven Anzacs – six Australian and one New Zealander – who were also rewarded for their “most conspicuous bravery”. All Victoria Crosses were awarded in the Somme Offensive of July–November 1916, and were a consequence of the Anzacs fighting in the Battles of Pozieres/Mouquet Farm and Flers-Courcelette between 23 July and 1 October.

Private 588 John William Alexander Jackson, ‘B’ Coy, 17th Battalion

“I didn’t like the idea of leaving any wounded men out there.”

William Jackson was 18 years old when he became the youngest Australian to be awarded the Victoria Cross. His was the first VC to be awarded to a member of the AIF on the Western Front; and the only one awarded to a member of the 17th Battalion.

Travellers driving the Golden Highway in the Upper Hunter area of NSW, towards Merriwa, may stop for a break at the Jackson VC Park, south of the hamlet of Gungal. There they will discover a memorial to William Jackson, who, although not born in the area, lived for quite some time at Merriwa.

William, or ‘Bill’ as he was always known, was born in the Far Western NSW settlement of Gunbar, between Hay and Goolgowi, on 13 December, 1897. He was the fourth of five children of John and Adelaide [McFarlane] Jackson. Jackson’s parents were working on ‘Glengower Station’ when he was born. However, he was raised at ‘Seaton Park’ and educated at Gunbar School, one of four buildings existing there at the time. After leaving school at the minimum age, he worked as a farm labourer in the area until enlisting at Liverpool on 15 February, 1915, where he was posted to the 17th Battalion.

Following basic training, Bill embarked from Sydney on 12 May, 1915, on the Themistocles. He landed at Gallipoli on 20 August and fought in the attack on Hill 60 on 28 August. On 3 October, Bill was admitted to hospital on Gallipoli with enteric and then transported to Malta for treatment. He returned to Egypt in January, 1916, and rejoined his battalion at Moascar on 8 March. By the end of March, he found himself in French Flanders in the ‘Nursery Sector’ near Bois-Grenier.

The lines here, just to the north of Fromelles, were considered to be a ‘quiet’ part of the Western Front, where newly arrived soldiers could become acclimatised to trench warfare before facing the ‘real thing’. By the time the 17th Battalion arrived, it had become a far more dangerous place than it had been at first. Indeed, the main skill that the men learned was trench raiding against German trenches. It was believed by the brass that such raids would “maintain the offensive spirit and keep the Germans off balance”. More realistically, Haig commented that “the Australians are keen to kill Germans and [have] started doing it at once”. They very quickly learned that the enemy would retaliate if a trench raid had taken place, at least by flares and machine-gun fire across No-man’s-land. It was worse if shelling and mortar fire were included.

On 25 June, a group of forty Australians carried out a raid against the 231st Prussian Reserve Infantry Regiment, south-east of Bois-Grenier at Petite Manqué Farm. Bill volunteered to be the scout. One of the parties was driven back by bombs, but Bill’s party took its two objectives which, initially, resulted in them blowing up two ammunition stores, killing about thirty of the enemy and taking four prisoners. At about 1.35 am, they began to return across No-man’s land, which was about 400 yards wide at that point, when the Germans lit up the night sky with flares, and opened fire with machine guns and artillery firing shrapnel and HE. Jackson escorted a prisoner back to the AIF lines. At about 2.30 am, hearing that there were some wounded men in No-man’s land, he set off to try and find them.
It was in this context that William was awarded his VC. The citation reads:

*For his gallantry on the night of 25-26 June 1916 in rescuing wounded men under fire. While returning from a successful raid on the German trenches South of Armentieres several members of the raiding party were seriously wounded in No-man’s land by shell fire. Private Jackson returned to our lines through the most intense barrage of shell fire, shrapnel and HE and crossed machine-gun fire, escorting a prisoner. Hearing that some of his party had been hit, Private Jackson handed his prisoner over and immediately returned to No-man’s land into the enemy’s barrage and assisted in bringing in a wounded man. Then, he went out again notwithstanding the fact that the bombardment was more intense than ever and with Sergeant Camden* [Sergeant 503 Hugh Alison Camden, 19th Bn] was bringing in Private Robinson’ [Private 2633 Alfred Edward Robinson 14th Bn] who was seriously wounded, when a shell exploded nearby. Private Jackson’s right arm was blown off above the elbow. Robinson was wounded again and Sergeant Camden knocked unconscious. As Private Jackson could not do anything for himself, he returned to our trenches, obtained assistance* and then went out again to search for his two comrades. They were, however, met just outside our trenches. Private Jackson’s condition was serious but throughout he showed wonderful fortitude. His work with the Raiding Party as a Scout and also with his battalion in the same capacity has always been of the highest order marked with the coolest dash and bravery.*

[*London Gazette*, 22 September, 1916.]

* Sergeant Camden was awarded a DCM for his actions on the night.
† Private Robinson died of wounds about a week later.
* Jackson used a length of string and a stick to make a tourniquet for his arm.

Jackson was sent to a Canadian Stationary Hospital and later transported by boat to Queen Mary’s General Hospital on 29 June. A day later, the stump of his arm was amputated. Bill was formally presented with his VC by the King at Buckingham Place on 18 November. He returned to Australia on 4 May, 1917, and was formally discharged on 15 September. This was not the end of William Jackson’s story.

As many Great War veterans experienced, Bill failed to ‘settle’ back into civilian life. In the inter-war period, he held a wide range of jobs and was almost continually on the move. He married in 1932. The marriage was dissolved in 1955, with a daughter being the only child.

This period also saw him being the centre of one of the most extraordinary episodes that could befall a returned man. It was while he was serving as an Acting Sergeant in Eastern Command Provost Coy as a clerk in 1941 that a discovery was made by military authorities in his file. Back in 1916, Lieutenant Colonel KM Mackenzie (17th Battalion) recommended that Private 588 John Jackson [sic] be awarded a Distinguished Conduct Medal for his work in a trench raid on the enemy at Bois-Grenier on 25-26 June. The award was gazetted on 22 September 1916 [*London Gazette*, number 29670].

On the orders of General William Birdwood, the DCM was cancelled and Private 588 William Jackson [sic] was awarded the Victoria Cross [MO/288/06/19] on 18 September, 1916. Due to some bureaucratic mistake the VC was gazetted in the London Gazette number 29740. ‘John’ and ‘William’ were one-and-the-same man.

Apparently, a letter was sent to Jackson’s father, John Jackson, who was still living in the Gunbar area on 4 January, 1919, confirming the VC, but asking for the return of the DCM and ribbon. It is not known when his son actually received the DCM. Mr Jackson claimed that he never received the letter. For the rest of his life, William kept both medals and wore them on appropriate occasions. Above: A portrait of Pte William Jackson VC, circa 1919. AWM P01383.006.

In early December 1941, while checking William’s service record, a clerk uncovered the original error and wrote to father and son, who both strenuously maintained that they had no knowledge of the cancellation of the DCM and its upgrading to a VC. There must have been some estrangement between the two men as the older man wrote that he did not know where to contact his son. In his reply, William threatened to resign from his position and take legal action against the Military. On 9 December, 1941 Captain RL Rhodes, Recruiting Officer Eastern Command noted in a letter that: “It would appear that he
[William] is justly entitled to wear the DCM ribbon and that some very serious mistake has occurred”. Correspondence continued back and forth for a time, with the military authorities continuing to only use ‘VC’ when addressing or referring to Jackson.

William Jackson’s behaviour seems to exhibit some of the personal traits and actions of many VC recipients. There is courage in action combined with an ability to make quick decisions under extreme pressure. These men were sometimes loners, but whose first concern in battle was for the welfare of their mates. Along with this individualism, there appears to be a streak of disliking authority (but not necessarily figures of authority, that is, Australian officers for whom there was personal respect). Bill Jackson was, what would have been called at the time, a ‘larrikin’.

John William Alexander Jackson died on 4 August, 1959, of heart disease at the Austin Hospital in Melbourne. His Victoria Cross is privately held.

Endnotes: (1) Harry Willey wrote a detailed biography of Bill Jackson in DIGGER 17. (2) Readers are also referred to the story featuring Jackson and Camden returning to Gunbar in 1916 in DIGGER 39, pp47-50.

Private 2053 John Leak, 9th Battalion
“I don’t believe in war.”

Readers would be aware that no Victoria Crosses were awarded to soldiers who fought in the Battle of Fromelles, the first battle in which the AIF fought on the Western Front on 19/20 July, 1916. Within four days, divisions of the AIF began fighting down on the Somme, some eighty kilometres south. This was the Battle of Pozieres/Mouquet Farm, 23 July-3 September, costing some 23 000 casualties. The first Victoria Cross awarded to a member of the AIF in this battle, was to Private John Leak on 23 July.

Trying to find information on John Leak – if, indeed, that was his real name – was difficult, especially on his early life, which is shrouded in mystery and contradiction. His year of birth is usually given as 1892 or 1895. Likewise, his place of birth is usually given as Portsmouth in Hampshire, but has also been given as Rockhampton or Clermont (Qld), or even Peak Hill in Canada. It appears that his family moved to Queensland when he was very young. Specimens of his handwriting indicate that he received only a very basic education. His enlistment form, signed in Rockhampton on 28 January, 1915, gave his age as 22 years and 11 months and his occupation as ‘teamster’, working on Lagon Downs. He embarked for Gallipoli on 16 April aboard HMAT A55 Kyarra.

Leak probably never saw action on the Peninsula due to recurring bouts of dysentery and gastrointestinalitis which required frequent spells in hospital. Later, gassings and wounds would not have helped his disposition. Given he was quite a small man, 5 feet 6 inches in height and weighing nine and a half stone, with a sallow complexion, poor health probably followed him, at least until he was toughened up in the Infantry. Upon returning to his unit, he was taken on the strength of the 9th Battalion.

An important part of General Douglas Haig’s plan for the Somme Offensive was that the high ground in the north, at Thiepval village, should be taken as a matter of urgency. To accomplish this, British forces were to first capture the village of Pozieres, and then the ridge to Thiepval via Mouquet Farm. Within a couple of weeks the Offensive had become bogged down into a war of attrition, where neither side was making much headway. Four attempts, the last on 20 July, had failed and another attack was called for. High Command decided that the untried Anzac Corps (part of General Hubert Gough’s Reserve Army) should be given the task of forcing the Pozieres Ridge.

However, the Germans had been in occupation of the sector since September 1914 and with their usual thoroughness and notable engineering skill, they had tunnelled beneath their trenches and dug out networks of reinforced galleries and shelters. By the summer of 1916, every hilltop was a redoubt, every wood an arsenal, every farm a stronghold, every village a fortress. [Lyn Macdonald: Somme]. This is what faced the Australians and British in July-September at Pozieres and Mouquet Farm.

It was believed that head-on attacks on Pozieres would be the only way to take the ridge and then move quickly towards the key – Thiepval. However, General Cyril Brudenell White believed that success would be achieved if the attack was made, not front-on, but from the south-east. Reluctantly this was agreed to, and following the ‘usual’ artillery barrage, men of the BEF 48th Division (on the left flank); the four battalions of the AIF 1st Brigade (in the centre); and the 3rd Brigade (on the right flank) attacked the village at 12.30 am on 23 July.

Leak’s 9th Battalion were the attacking battalion on the extreme right and made an initial assault to take Pozieres Trench, the first defensive line on the southern side of the village. After initial success, they were forced back by an accurate counter-attack by German artillery hidden at Courcelette. Despite the gun
fire, the 9th and 10th Battalions continued on towards the village, until reaching the strong point at the intersection of Munster Alley and the OG1 Line. By 1.00 am they were again bogged down and taking significant casualties. It was here that Leak earned his VC.

In addition to heavy machine-gun fire, the main problem for the men of the 9th was that the enemy’s ‘egg’ bombs had a longer range than their own and could out-distance the Australians. Leak was one of a party that was ordered to capture the strong point which was holding up the advance. At about 1.00 am, Jack jumped from the trench, dashed for cover, and then ran towards the German post, hurling three of his own Mills bombs. He then jumped into the trench and bayoneted the remaining three defenders. His citation reads:

For most conspicuous bravery. He was one of a party that captured an enemy strong point. At one assault, when the enemy’s bombs were outranging ours, Private Leak jumped out of the trench, ran forward under heavy machine-gun fire at close range, and threw three bombs into the enemy’s bombing post and bayoneted three unwounded enemy bombers.

Later, when the enemy, in overwhelming numbers was driving his party back, he was always the last to withdraw at each stage, and kept throwing bombs. His courage and energy had such an effect on the enemy that, on the arrival of reinforcements, the whole trench was recaptured.

[‘London Gazette’, 9 September, 1916.]

Leak was presented with his medal by the King at Buckingham Palace on 4 November 1916.

Other descriptions of what had occurred refer to Leak wiping the blood from his bayonet with his felt hat and that they had to endure dead bodies, which had to be thrown out [and] were used in building up the parapet. [Sgt 1170 Harry Preston.]

John Leak’s are the actions of an individual who had little regard for his own safety and survival, and who put the survival of his comrades above his own. The taking of Pozieres as far as their objective, the old railway track on the north of the village – where the (what were) shops and houses ended – was relatively quickly achieved, but at tremendous loss of life. For the first time, ‘shell shock’ is noted in unit records. The men of the 1st and 48th Divisions were relieved on the 25th. They were exhausted and had suffered too many casualties. But still the slaughter continued. Eventually, the Australians handed over to the Canadians on 3 September. Ironically, the Allies captured Thiepval before taking Mouquet Farm later in the month. Right: Studio portrait of Pte John Leak VC, circa 1916. AWM P02939.009.

Leak was gassed on 21 August, 1916, and then wounded in the back and right shoulder on 9 September while his unit, on the extreme left flank, was trying to take Constanz Trench at Mouquet Farm. He did not return to the 9th until 17 September, 1917. He was more severely gassed at Zonnebeke on 7 March, 1918. While recovering, he somehow fractured his right ulna. The two gassings meant that he suffered from bronchitis for the rest of his life. Not long before he died, he developed emphysema.

John Leak’s luck in the AIF was starting to run out. He did not return to the 9th Battalion until 15 October, 1917. His record then revealed a catalogue of military misdemeanours and crimes, culminating in his facing a Field Court Martial on 25 November, 1917. All charges were for being absent without leave or defiance of officers. Examples included: “Entering the Sgts’ Mess at Wareham and demanding drink and refusing to leave when ordered” [3 January 1917: 14 days detention]; “Insolence to an NCO” [3 June 1918: 7 days’ FP]; AWL 3 March; 20 June; 29-30 July; 26 April 1918.

Leak was charged with: When on Active Service deserting His Majesty’s Service in that he absented himself from the line from 1st November 1917 till 1900 hrs on 6th November 1917. This was when the 9th Battalion were handing the line over to the Canadian 102nd Battalion at midnight at Anzac (Broodsdeinde) Ridge. Beforehand, the Australians had endured persistent and heavy enemy bombardment. It seems that John simply “walked away”. He was nevertheless convicted of desertion, as the court found that his action was not the result of his nerves breaking. His long record was produced in court. Had he been in the BEF, John would have been executed. Instead, he was sentenced to ‘penal servitude for 25 years’.
Some opinion suggests that there was no intention of him having to complete the sentence. In fact, he served less than a month, returning to the 9th on 23 December, fresh from prison. This suggests that the court martial was ‘to give him a fright’ and get him to mend his wayward ways and reform himself. Others believe that the army ‘cut him some rope’ as a result of his Victoria Cross.

Left: Private John Leak VC, of the 9th Bn surrounded by friends and well-wishers outside Buckingham Palace on the occasion of being awarded the Victoria Cross. Pte Leak is holding the hand of most likely Beatrice May Chapman, whom he later married in December 1918. AWM A03589.

John Leak returned to Australia on 9 February, 1919, aboard the Ascantius, arriving in Port Melbourne on 26 March to take up a soldier settlement block in Allora, Queensland. He was discharged on 31 May. On 30 December, 1918, he had married Beatrice May Chapman, with whom he had been living, in Cardiff (UK). Strangely, there is no record of his wife migrating to Australia. Instead, she lived with her parents in Wales. There is no trace of her after 1935.

On 19 January 1927, he married (bigamously?) Ada Victoria Bood-Smith. After the failure of his farming enterprise, Jack seems never to have really settled down. The only State/Territory he did not live in was the Northern Territory.

There are a couple of incidents in Jack’s life that are worthy of comment and, perhaps, explain his state of mind after the war. The ‘Morning Bulletin’, the daily paper of Rockhampton, reported a ‘Welcome Home’ function for Leak on 11 April, 1919. He accepted the mayoral invitation very reluctantly, stating that he would not be speaking, preferring to remain silent on his deeds. He left Rockhampton on the mail train that evening. He claimed that Taking one look at that party, I jumped the first train south and never returned! [Interview in ‘Melbourne Herald’, 19 July, 1971.] In the same interview, he stated that he never participated in Anzac Day nor joined the RSL. He finished with the comment noted above.

In February 1957, his VC was stolen but turned up in a second-hand shop in Melbourne. Two men were charged and convicted of theft. Finally, there is a note (1951) in his service record seeking payment of a war gratuity which he had never claimed. He did not include his address and the application is marked, “No address supplied”. No effort was made to track him down and pay him his well-deserved gratuity.

John Leak VC died on 20 October, 1972, and is buried with his second wife in Stirling State Cemetery, SA. His Victoria Cross is privately held.

In 2012, a mosaic memorial to John Leak in Victoria Park, Rockhampton, was officially unveiled.

Lieutenant 31 Arthur Seaforth Blackburn, ‘A’ Coy, 10th Battalion

“Arguably Australia’s most notable ‘citizen soldier’ serving his nation in two World Wars and in public life.”

On the same day and almost at the same place as Private Leak, Lieutenant Arthur Blackburn also earned his Victoria Cross. He was the first South Australian to do so. In personality, Blackburn was completely different to Leak, doing his duty in an unobtrusive, if not ‘proper’ way. He was later to serve his country with distinction in the Second World War.

Arthur Blackburn was born in Woodville, now a suburb of Adelaide’s north-west, in 1892. He was the son of Thomas and Margaret [nee Stewart]. His father was the rector of St Margaret’s Church, Woodville. Arthur was educated at Pulteney Grammar School and St Peter’s College in Adelaide. He completed his law degree in 1913 and was admitted to the SA Bar as a solicitor later that year. He was a
member of the ‘Adelaide Rifles’ and enlisted in the AIF in August 1914, completing his basic training at Morphettville.

Blackburn was allocated to the 10th Battalion and departed Port Adelaide on 20 October, 1914, aboard HMAT Ascianus, and landed at Gallipoli in the first wave. He was to remain on the Peninsula for almost the entire campaign. It is believed that he, along with school-mate, Lance Corporal Phil Robin [L/C 638 Philip Robin, ‘A’ Coy, 10th Bn, KIA 2 May, 1915] penetrated the furthest inland by any Australian on 25 April, 1915, when they passed well beyond Scrubby Ridge. In August, Arthur was commissioned as a 2nd lieutenant.

Following the reorganisation of the AIF in Egypt, the 1st Division travelled to Northern France via the ‘Nursery Sector’ at Bois-Grenier (See Bill Jackson’s story above). The war diaries of the 3rd Brigade and the 10th Battalion are missing for most of this period, but it is possible to trace Arthur and his battalion’s movements until they reappear on 20 July, south of Pozieres village at Sausage Valley. They remained there for a couple of days, knowing that they were going to be part of the attack to seize Pozieres. On 22 July, they proceeded up the valley via Black Watch Alley to the starting line for their attack next morning.

The attack had been planned by General Brudenell White, and saw the 1st Division attacking from the south east of the village. The initial objective – which was achieved quite quickly – was to take Pozieres Trench which protected this southern side of Pozieres and ran from ‘K’ Trench to the enemy’s OG1 line on the extreme right, in support of the 9th Battalion. Both battalions faced heavy German shelling with HE and gas, and consequently suffered many casualties as they attempted to take the OG lines – a much tougher task. In particular, the 9th lost so many men that they asked for assistance from the 10th. Early in the morning of the 23rd, Blackburn and his ‘A’ Company, under the command of Captain William McCann [Lt Colonel (405) William Francis James McCann MID, MC, DSO, 10th Bn] was sent forward under heavy bomb and mortar attack. McCann was hit in the head by a machine-gun bullet and forced to retire. He later recovered, and in fact, joined Blackburn as a partner in their legal practice post-war.

Blackburn received orders to move up OG1 in the assault to drive the enemy out. However, a German barricade had to be removed before they could proceed any further. Blackburn and a handful of men rushed the barrier, broke it down and began bombing the enemy back. Beyond, they found that an earlier bombardment had virtually obliterated the trench, and for some distance all that remained were a series of shell holes, which slowed the Australian advance. The Germans held their position using heavy machine-gun fire to pin down Blackburn and his men. Blackburn then decided to take four men forward to try to discover exactly where the deadly fire was coming from. Arthur was the only one of the party to return. He and his right-hand man, Sergeant Bob Inwood [Sgt 1533 RW Inwood DCM, 10th Bn; buried at Serre Road No. 2 CWGC Cemetery] took three other men forward about 30 yards before they were subject to a bomb attack and, yet again, Blackburn was the only one to return.

The third time, Blackburn asked for a light trench mortar counter-attack and under this cover, ascertained where the machine-gun fire and bombs were coming from: a German post at right angles to OG1 along Munster Alley, a few yards past the intersection of Pozieres Trench and OG1. Blackburn then decided to clear this obstacle. He tried four times, and on his last attempt took the post and decided to hold it. [See maps, left.]

Arthur Blackburn’s citation reads:

For most conspicuous bravery. He was directed with fifty men to drive the enemy from a strong point. By dogged determination he eventually captured their trench after personally leading four separate parties of bombers.
against it, many of whom became casualties. In the face of severe opposition he captured 250 yards of trench. Then, after crawling forward with a sergeant to reconnoitre, he returned to the attack and seized another 120 yards of trench, establishing a communication with the battalion on his left.

[‘London Gazette’, 9 September, 1916.]

Arthur Blackburn consolidated the trench until 4.00 am, when he was relieved. Altogether, the capture of the post cost the lives of 26 men. He was not to know that his action had inadvertently opened a 500 yard gap along the O&G lines that took many more lives before it was captured by the end of July. The 10th Battalion alone took 350 casualties on the night of 22-23 July.

Due to the gassing that Arthur took at Pozieres, he was admitted to hospital suffering pleurisy and returned to Australia, medically unfit, and was discharged in April 1917. On 22 March, he had married Rose Ada Kelly and the couple would have four children.

Now promoted to captain, he took an active role in Hughes’ conscription campaign. He became a founding member of Legacy and the RSS&AILA in the 1920s. He served one term as the Nationalist MP for Sturt from 1918-1921. In 1933 he became South Australia’s State Coroner. Arthur joined the militia in 1940 where he raised and commanded the 2/3rd Machine Gun Battalion, as a brigadier, with distinction in the Middle East against the Vichy French.

In February 1942, in a hastily conceived plan, his battalion was sent to Java. This so-called ‘Black Force’ was supposed to assist the Dutch against the Japanese advance, but after three weeks of fruitless activity, he and his unit were captured and became POWs in Changi, Taiwan and Manchuria. At the end of the war, he returned home with diminished health, but served as a conciliation commissioner in the Court of Conciliation and Arbitration (1947-1955), and remained active in a range of other public and charitable organisations.

Arthur Blackburn VC died suddenly at Crafers in the Adelaide Hills, the result of a heart attack, on 24 November, 1960. He was buried in the Military Section of West Adelaide Terrace Cemetery. His Victoria Cross is displayed in the Australian War Memorial.

Private 3055 Thomas Cooke, 8th Battalion

“Born a Kiwi and serving as an Aussie. Both countries can feel proud of this soldier.”

**Thomas (‘Tom’) Cooke** is another of our ‘unknown’ Victoria Cross recipients from the Great War. Even the date of the work for which he was awarded the VC is confused. Sources give the date as somewhere between 23 and 28 July, 1916, at Pozieres; even though, for example, the 1st Division had been relieved by the 2nd before the 28th and were no longer at Pozieres. Probably, the former is the date Tom was recommended for the VC. In addition, the sources refer to Thomas as ‘Private’ when all the portraits of him distinctly show the two chevrons of a corporal on his sleeve. Two chevrons were included in his meagre personal effects which were sent home. He was a courageous man who deserves to be better known. **Right**: Thomas Cooke VC. AWM A02649.

Thomas Cooke was born on 5 July, 1881, at Kai Koura near Wellington in New Zealand. He qualified as a carpenter, but plied his trade as a builder. He married Maude Elizabeth Elliott and the couple had three children. His military career before enlistment was spent in the Wellington Garrison, especially as a member in the Garrison Band, where he excelled as a cornet player.

The family migrated to Melbourne in 1912, where he continued to be a local builder in Richmond. A stocky man with dark complexion and hair, he enlisted in the AIF on 16 February, 1916, and was allocated to the reinforcements to the 24th Battalion but was later transferred (on 24 March) to the 8th Battalion. At 33 years and seven
months of age, he was older than most others who volunteered at the same time. Along with his battalion, Tom arrived in Marseilles on 31 March, disembarking from HMAT Commonwealth.

By the time he arrived on the Western Front, Tom had undertaken training as a Lewis gunner. The Lewis gun, a light, air-cooled machine gun, had been invented by Americans Samuel McClean and Colonel Isaac Lewis in 1911. It was offered to the US Army, but the military was not impressed. The inventors took the weapon to Britain where they met with a better reception; the army brass seeing it as a defensive or anti-aircraft weapon. The Birmingham Small Arms Company [BSA] manufactured thousands of Lewis guns which exceeded initial expectations. It was light [13 kg], 1280 mm in length and could be fired by one man if necessary, although it was normal to have a two-man team – one to fire and the other to replace the 47 round drum magazine. For close fire it had an effective range of about 800 metres, with a maximum of 3 200 metres and was much more manoeuvrable than the heavier water-cooled Vickers with its four-man crew. To the Germans, the Lewis was known as ‘The Belgium rattle snake’. This was the weapon with which Thomas Cooke gained his VC on the northern outskirts of Pozieres.

The Battle of Fromelles had taken place on 19/20 July, 1916, in French Flanders. Two days later, about 80 kilometres to the south at the village of Pozieres in the Somme Sector, the men of the 1st Division were resting in Sausage Valley after arriving from Albert, knowing that the next day they were going into battle. By this time, the General Haig’s Somme Offensive had slowed to a war of attrition. He was looking for a breakthrough and one of the high points in the Sector – Thiepval – seemed an obvious objective. Already several BEF Units had unsuccessfully attacked this fortified village. He now believed that to take Thiepval, Pozieres and Mouquet Farm, further down the ridge must first be captured. This was task given to the men of the 1st Division AIF, many of them Gallipoli veterans. Brigadier Cyril Brudenell White who had proved himself to be a first class tactician and planner was ordered to come up with a plan of assault. White decided that an oblique attack from the south-east would have a better chance of success.

The plan was quite simple: four battalions of the 1st Division were assigned to take the centre of the village; another four were on the right and were to capture the OG1 trench line as far as Pozieres Trench which formed the defensive barrier south of Pozieres; and the 7th and 8th Battalions were in reserve. The BEF 48th Division was on the left flank with K Trench as its objective. The attack went in at 12.30 am on the 23rd. Almost immediately, the Australians and British were subjected to a massive artillery bombardment, supported by ferocious machine-gun fire, to the extent that trenches and other land marks were obliterated, to be replaced by series of shell craters. The previous accounts of Leak and Blackburn’s actions fill the background to Cooke’s award.

Now allocated to the 1st Brigade, Thomas’ battalion was brought up from reserve and General Hubert Gough ordered them to push ahead towards Mouquet Farm along Pozieres Ridge, hoping to cut Thiepval off. The assault via the centre was part of a two-pronged attack (the other was on the OG lines). The attacks were set down for 25/26th July. Entering the village at about 11.30 pm, the 8th moved forward at 3.55 am, a little behind time due to problems consolidating trenches. In pitch darkness and without any visible landmarks or buildings to guide them, they found their way for a couple of hundred yards along the (now) D929. In single file, they then turned north towards the beginning of the Pozieres Ridge. They pushed well past their line to a position just south of the Orchard, about half way to the cemetery, about 300 yards from the D929.

The usual massive machine-gun and artillery resistance prevented further movement towards the windmill and along the OG Lines, so Cooke and his mates helped a party of 1st Pioneers dig a series of small crescent-shaped posts, about four feet deep. As a result, their new line could be compared to a long finger pointing towards Mouquet Farm in the distance. More importantly, it became an extremely dangerous and isolated place to be, as there was little cover and they were attacked from three sides, especially from the OG lines on the right which still had not been subdued.

It was in this action that Thomas Cooke was awarded the Victoria Cross. All sources report that one of the Lewis guns was out-of-order and could not be fired, so Tom was ordered to take a team to replace the one in trouble.

His citation describes what took place that night:

*For most conspicuous bravery. After a Lewis gun had been disabled, he was ordered to take his gun and gun team to a dangerous place in the line. Here he did fine work, but came under heavy fire, with the result that he was the only man left. He stuck to his post and continued to fire his gun. When assistance was sent he was found dead beside his gun. He set a splendid example of determination and devotion to duty.*

[‘London Gazette’, 9 September, 1916.]
Such was the ferocity of the German counter-attack and the distance the 8th had advanced from the 1st Division line, that it took some time before any contact could be made with the 8th’s posts. As the citation indicates, Tom was the ‘last man standing’ as all the others were either killed or badly wounded. Suddenly, all German movement in the area ceased, to be replaced by the occasional shell shot into the village. As dawn rose on the 25th, the remainder of the 8th Battalion advanced to the cemetery without much opposition and dug in, exhausted.

Later, it became apparent that the 1st Division was not only exhausted, but many were suffering shell shock. So bad was their condition that they were quickly relieved by the 2nd Division on 26 July. As they returned back down Sausage Valley they were described as “if they were sleep walking … mere shadows of their former selves”.

Tom’s body was removed from the post where he was killed and buried somewhere in the region of the intersection of the D929 and the D73: [Cooke] was buried in vicinity of Pozieres Naulier(?) Albert-Bapaume Road Sheet 57, probably not far from the grave of Captain Ivor Margetts, 12th Battalion (KIA 24 July, 1916). Later shelling of the village obliterated their resting places and thus neither has a known grave.

There were some problems. His wife, Maude, had moved back home to New Zealand with the children not long after he left for the war. There is a letter in his file from her – justly complaining that she only found out about his death and VC in the press. Nevertheless, the Governor-General of New Zealand presented the medal to Maude and her children at a ceremony in Wellington on 1 February 1917. She remarried and passed away in the 1950s.

Thomas Cooke is memorialised in the naming of a barracks at Linton Military Camp near Palmerston North. His medal is on display at the QEII Army Memorial Museum at Waiouru, New Zealand.

Letter from the Front, 1915

Found on Trove by the Editor.

Corporal Charles Scott, formerly of the reporting staff of the ‘Queensland Times’, writes as follows from the Dardanelles to a member of the staff of this journal:-

I am writing in rather a cramped position. I have only a stub of a pencil and deuced little paper, and, moreover, I have the baleful eye of the censor staring over my shoulder. It’s hard lines that when a chap has so many fine things to write about he is so short of means, and is so severely restricted.

Thanks for your welcome letter of March 21; I hope to have the pleasure of receiving many more such. Private O’Neill was sick in hospital when we left Cairo, and I have not heard of him since, but when I see him I will give him your message.

… Washes here are counted at per month, and total generally just as many as times one gets down to the sea, for fresh water is precious. We are plentifully and well fed and well looked after; we have no drill, and for lack of water shave and wash at rather long intervals.

It is a lazy, vagrant sort of life in the trenches, and comfortable except for the confined limits of movement, and the almost ceaseless night watching. You will have read long ago the accounts of the early fighting here. One or two English newspaper accounts that we have seen give the boys great credit for a fine feat, dashingly and bravely performed. No account, however glowing, I think, could give you a true conception of the fine work the Australians and New Zealanders and the Queenslanders did. We who came along later were amazed when we looked over the country they swept and are holding. You know the Cabbage Tree country? Well, this in many respects is similar to it with its steepest parts, except that the timber here is low, bushy, and prickly.

I have met quite a number of Ipswich chaps of other corps here, among them Sergt. ‘Billy’ Gunn (AMC), Len Morgan (Purga), Charlie King (Engineers), Bill Thomas and Fred Perrett (9th Battalion), and Corpl. ‘Taffy’ Nicholls (15th). Jack Merrell was in hospital in Cairo. He wrote me a card from hospital, which reached me here. We are on this to stick it to the end, but we are all satisfied about war, especially the devilish warfare that science enables civilised nations to make, and there is not one of us who will not be glad the day we get back to dear old Australia.

Give my regards to Mr W- and other friends on the staff. Tell Mr W- I am reserving that space in my knapsack he desired me to reserve for a marshal’s baton, VC, or something of the sort, for carrying my return ticket to Ipswich.

Endnote: The writer was 108 (later Lieutenant) Charles Douglas Scott MC, 2nd LHR/47th Bn, reporter of Ipswich, enlisted 22 August, 1914. KIA 7 June, 1917 (Messines).

Source: ‘Queensland Times’ (Ipswich), 11 August, 1915.
Three in a row? The ‘GW Lloyds’ in the AIF
Graeme Hosken, Dubbo.

Three men with the same surname – Lloyd – and same initials – GW – volunteered for the AIF. All had the same first name – George. Two of these men shared the same middle name – William. All three Lloyds enlisted in 1915 and all returned to Australia. Their names appear consecutively on the nominal roll. The three men served in different branches of the AIF but all had one thing in common – according to the nominal roll [extract below] they were all awarded the Military Medal.

Bombardier 21245 George Walter Lloyd served with the 11th Field Artillery Brigade. He enlisted as a 24 year old station overseer from Cloncurry, Qld, on 23 December, 1915, and embarked on 11 May, 1916, as a gunner in the 9th Field Artillery Brigade. After several bouts of VD in England, Lloyd embarked for France and service with the 4th Divisional Artillery in April, 1917. On 26 June he was transferred to the 11th FAB, 42nd Battery.

Lloyd was gassed on 16 October, 1917, and hospitalised in Rouen. He rejoined his unit on 10 December, 1917. Lloyd was promoted to temporary bombardier on 23 September, 1918, and to bombardier on 23 December, 1918, after the Armistice. He survived a bout of influenza in April-May, 1919, and embarked for Australia on 2 July.

Bombardier George Lloyd was awarded the Military Medal for consistent good service and devotion to duty throughout the period 16/17 September, 1918, to 11 November, 1918. Throughout the above period and including the operation about Ronsoy, this NCO was in charge of the signallers of his battery and rendered splendid work in maintaining communications. On numerous occasions under shell fire, by his display of personal courage and devotion to duty, Bombardier Lloyd has set a fine example.

Lloyd was living at Birtley Station, Springsure, Qld, in 1940, when he applied for a duplicate copy of his discharge papers.

Lance Corporal 3219 George William Lloyd enlisted on 17 March, 1915, and served with the 6th and 12th Field Ambulances. [Note: His service record appears on the National Archives website under the erroneous service number of 2319.] George was a 23 year old boot salesman when he enlisted at Victoria Barracks, Melbourne.

George Lloyd embarked on 4 June, 1915, and reached Gallipoli on 30 August as part of the 6th Field Ambulance. He returned to Alexandria on 7 January, 1916, and moved to France on 2 June, now in the 12th Field Ambulance. He was promoted to lance corporal on 8 December, 1916. On 4 July, 1918, George was wounded in the foot and right hand by shrapnel, necessitating treatment in the UK. He boarded a ship for Australia in November and worked on the nursing staff on the journey home. He was discharged from the AIF on 31 March, 1919.

George’s Military Medal was awarded for his gallantry during the Battle of Broodseinde on 4 October, 1917. His citation reads ... when in charge of a stretcher party in the neighbourhood of Zonnebeke [he] exhibited marked gallantry. On two occasions he had to pass through [a] heavy barrage, but by his coolness and courage managed on both occasions to get his patient safely to the next relay post.

Left: 3219 Corporal George Lloyd MM (right) and two other unidentified stretcher-bearers, one believed to be 3373 Private Norman Henry Sadler MM (position unknown), of the 12th Field Ambulance carrying a wounded man. AWM P10330.006.
Private 4437 George William Lloyd enlisted on 10 September, 1915, and was allocated to the 14th Reinforcements to the 9th Battalion (Qld). George was born in London and was aged 32 years and 10 months when he decided to join the AIF. He was a farmer in the Kaimkillenbun area of Queensland and stated he had six years experience in the navy.

George Lloyd embarked on 31 January, 1916, and arrived in Alexandria on 5 March. He was taken on strength of the Anzac Provost Corps on 3 April, 1916, and given the rank of sergeant. On 9 July he reverted to the rank of private at his own request, and rejoined the 9th Battalion six days later. On 9 August, George was taken on strength of the 3rd Training Battalion at Perham Downs. He married Ethel Wright at Shepherds Bush on 29 August, 1916.

On 8 February, 1917, Lloyd was admitted to the 2nd Auxiliary Hospital with a hernia, remaining there until 11 June. The same day he was attached to duty from the 9th Battalion to the 2nd Australian Auxiliary Hospital at Southall. This transfer to the AAMC became permanent on 2 August, 1917.

On 30 March, 1918, George marched out to No. 2 Command Depot at Weymouth to await return to Australia. A medical report mentions that George had a heart condition (sounds muffled and irregular) and gets dyspepsia on little exertion. His hernia had healed but cannot bear any heavy strain on abdominal muscles. (In 1917 a medical board noted that he appears much older than age.)

George left for home on 21 April, 1918, carrying out nursing duties aboard the Suevic. On 13 August, 1918, Lloyd was brought to the notice of the Section of State for War for valuable services rendered in connection with the war. There is no hint in his file as to what these ‘valuable services’ were.

Despite what the nominal roll shows, this George Lloyd did not receive the Military Medal – in fact, he never saw front line service. It seems as though the clerk typing up the nominal roll was confused by the presence of two George William Lloyds and gave both of them the MM.

What caught my eye, and led me to research the GW Lloyds – three MMs in a row – turned out to be two out of three. It was a reminder that, as researchers, we need to verify the accuracy of the nominal roll, which we often utilise in our studies of the men and women of the AIF.

Letters from the Front, 1916

Found on Trove by the Editor.

Sergeant Jack Booth [Sgt 1887 John Henry Booth, 17th Bn] writes to his father, Mr Clarence Booth, of ‘Rosevale’, from France, 3rd July, in which he states that the Australians had made many raids on the enemy trenches, and always came back with prisoners. The first raid was a huge success, and all the Australians who were in it got two weeks leave to visit England. “And what a time they had!” But they were a fine lot; no-one was picked for the raid who was under six feet. He was not one of the fortunate ones, but he hoped to get leave to visit England soon.

The crops in France were something lovely and as level as a billiard table, but the heads did not compare with the Australian crops. Everything, including vegetables, grew without artificial watering. He had met Jimmy Jacobs [Pte 3152 James Stanley Jacobs, 20th Bn, KIA 29/7/16], from Carrathool, who had had some narrow squeaks. His last was when a sniper got him peeping over the parapet, and let go at him. Luckily he was wearing a steel helmet, which turned the bullet, or it would have been, “goodbye, Jim Jacobs, and he is such a fine lad”.

Writing to his father, the Mayor of Hay, from France on the 14th July after his return to the trenches, Private Denis McMahon [unidentified] devotes more attention apparently to the annoyance caused by the French fleas than to the German shells. Private McMahon, like many another Australian soldier, has another grievance – the bad mail service. Many letters that have been written to him have failed to reach their destination.

He mentions having met Private Morris [unidentified], who in civilian life followed the calling of a draper, and was for a time a member of the Ringer Store staff. Private William McMahon [2179, 1st Bn, RTA 21/11/16], the Mayor’s other soldier son, who lost his arm in Gallipoli, and has since undergone several operations in England with the view of having an artificial limb fitted, is still waiting to have the ‘arm’ manufactured, and has been paying Ireland a visit in the meanwhile. He is particularly struck by the openness with which the supporters of the Sinn Fein movement move about Dublin and he will not be a surprised man if more is heard of them in the near future.

‘The Memorial Tree’: Richard, Harold and Walter Smith

Barry Abley, Newtown, Vic.

A Norfolk pine stands as a sentinel guarding the memory of a Geelong engineer and his two brothers, who made the supreme sacrifice in the Great War. Barry recounts their tragic tale.

The Western Front

Hussars, Dragoons and a myriad of cavalry regiments exercised and watered their steeds 20 miles behind the front lines. Horse-drawn artillery limbers, ridden postilion fashion, galloped to and fro.

Field Marshal Haig, Commander in Chief of British forces on the Western Front, had little time for new military ideas and industrial warfare. He was very much steeped in the ways he knew – infantry and horses. The AIF would lead one mighty push in the valley of the Somme, enabling the cavalry to break out, as they have always done in the past. Pozieres Heights would be the fulcrum.

This distorted vision, lacking in appreciation of the new mechanised war, led to the loss of 400 000 Allied troops. Twelve days of fighting on the Somme cost Australia’s 2nd Division 6 848 men, almost a third of its strength.

Among those killed in the futile onslaught was a Geelong engineer and his two brothers.

The Smith family

Sergeant Richard Christopher Hailes Smith had been a policeman for more than 30 years. As a young mounted trooper he saw the end of the bushranging era and had cause to apprehend a number of cattle duffers, claim jumpers and other assorted felons.

He married Maria Louisa Godfrey in 1882 and over the next 12 years, while stationed at Maryborough, Victoria, the family grew as Maria gave birth to three sons and a daughter. The boys were Richard (‘Dick’) Godfrey born in 1883, Harold Ernest in 1891 and Walter Leslie in 1896.

Shortly after Walter’s birth, Richard snr was promoted to the rank of sergeant and officer in charge of the Camp Hill Police Station in Bendigo. The three boys grew up in a family which attended the Methodist Church each Sunday and supported the community in which they lived.

In later years the boys exhibited leadership qualities while members of the local Bendigo Citizen’s Militia Company.

From an early age Harold idolised his older brother, and marked his progress towards adolescence by achieving many of the milestones that Dick had set himself.

Dick had attended the Maryborough State School, followed by two and a half years at Queen’s College, Maryborough. He left school to begin an apprenticeship as a coach-builder, and served in the local militia unit for seven years, reaching the rank of 2nd lieutenant.

Richard married Ellen Ruby Freeman in 1910. Shortly after, they moved to Murtoa where he built a house which they named ‘Kia Ora’ and set up a coach building business.

Harold was considered to be the ‘brainy’ one of the family. He completed his merit certificate at Maryborough, and after a period moved to reside with family friends in Geelong to enable him to study mechanical engineering and mechanical drawing at the Gordon Technical College.

He was appointed Engineer in Charge of Geelong’s Corio Quay Power Station at 22 and that year he completed the required examination for appointment as a 2nd lieutenant in the Geelong Citizen’s Military Forces.

With the drums of war beating, Dick and Harold made a pact that they would join the same unit of the Australian Imperial Force together and both would apply to retain their militia rank as 2nd lieutenants.

Above right: The Smith boys: Harold and Richard seated, Walter standing, with (inset) their father.

Their ‘scheme’ fell apart when Harold fell in love with Elsie Honey, the daughter of a prominent Geelong family, and they were married in the Newtown Methodist Church in January 1915, after which they took up residence in ‘Homewood’, the home Elsie had inherited from her parents, at 180 Autumn Street, Geelong West.
Elsie was a passionate gardener and had a flourishing vegetable garden. Later in life, Elsie indicated that she and Harold planted an established Norfolk Island pine.

Three months after their marriage, Harold enlisted at Geelong and on 31 March, 1915, because of his previous military experience, was commissioned as a 2nd lieutenant in the 21st Infantry Battalion, the same unit that Dick had joined when he enlisted at Murtoa on 15 January at the age of 32, also maintaining his militia rank.

**Gallipoli**

After training at Broadmeadows, the 21st Battalion of the 6th Brigade embarked from Melbourne on His Majesty’s Australian Transport *Ulysses*, and arrived in Egypt in June 1915.

During the voyage Dick learnt of his promotion to lieutenant, and acting platoon commander in ‘C’ Company. While training in Egypt, Harold was also informed of his promotion to lieutenant.

The undoubted leadership potential of both brothers was evident, and just prior to the departure of the battalion to Gallipoli, Dick was again promoted, this time to the rank of captain and second in command of ‘C’ Company. Harold was a platoon commander in ‘D’ Company.

On 29 August the battalion became part of the newly raised Australian 2nd Division within the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force and both brothers embarked on HMT *Southland* for Gallipoli.

It was an eventful journey when at 9.45 am, on 2 September, the ship was torpedoes by German submarine *UB-14*, 30 nautical miles (56 km) from Lemnos in the Aegean Sea.

A later report stated: “The troops all went to their stations and lowered the boats in an orderly manner. The subalterns searched the interior of the ship for wounded and finally came on deck to find only the general staff on board. They helped to lower the last boats and got into a half-swamped one themselves. Fourteen persons were killed by the explosion and 22 were drowned, including Colonel Richard Linton, commander of the 6th Brigade.

The battalion finally landed at Anzac Cove on 7 September. It had a relatively quiet introduction to Gallipoli, as the last major Allied offensive during August had been defeated.

Dick and Harold and their companies managed to keep clear of the harassing artillery of the Turks, however from 23 to 28 October, Dick was evacuated with severe tonsillitis, which at that time was a life-threatening malaise.

In one of the most audacious deceptions in military history, from 19 to 20 December, 1915, 40 000 men were surreptitiously evacuated under the cover of darkness. The 21st Battalion returned to Mudros Island, and two weeks later boarded HMT *Ascanius* for Alexandria, arriving on 7 January, 1916.

Meanwhile, back home, Walter, the youngest of the Smith brothers, had completed his education and commenced work as a clerk with the English, Scottish and Australian Bank in Bendigo.

He enlisted at Maryborough on 14 July, 1915, aged 19 years and one month, having spent a year in the militia, where he attained the rank of corporal. Following training at Broadmeadows as part of the 11th Reinforcements/7th Battalion, he embarked on HMAT *Nestor* on 11 October, 1915, bound for Alexandria.

Walter was taken on strength of the 7th Battalion [as Private 3486A], which had been raised in Victoria in August 1914 and commanded by Lieutenant Colonel HE ‘Pompey’ Elliott. The battalion had returned from Gallipoli with four Victoria Crosses, having lost more than half its strength dead and wounded. Walter successfully applied for a transfer to the 21st Battalion, then stationed at Serapeum in Egypt, to be with his two older brothers.

**The Somme**

In March 1916 the 2nd Division, commanded by Major General James Legge, left Alexandria to join the British Expeditionary Force in France, and arrived in Marseilles on the 26th.

Dick was the Training Officer of the 21st Battalion. In order to bring the 22nd Battalion up to strength, General Legge had Harold transferred and promoted to the rank of captain and a company commander.

The Germans had engaged in months of intensive construction on this relatively quiet battlefront (the Somme Valley) during 1915. Carefully-sighted strongpoints and machine-gun positions on deliberately chosen points of high ground were strategically positioned and fortified. Second and third lines of defences provided the German Second Army with a very strong defence in depth.

The Allied spring offensive along the valley of the Somme in 1916 was designed to penetrate the enemy’s positions and break out to the open areas beyond. The British and Dominion forces would be attacking across open ground against well-fortified defences supported by artillery and machine-gun fire.
The Australian 1st Division had taken Pozieres in July 1916, sustaining horrific casualties and was relieved on 27 July by the 2nd Division, including the 21st and 22nd Battalions.

The attack to break out of Pozieres towards the Windmill, Munster Alley and Mouquet Farm, on 29 July was unsuccessful, principally due to overwhelmingly superior German artillery fire.

On the night of 29 July the 2nd Division lost over 2,000 killed and wounded. Having dug in, the battalions were subjected to a merciless artillery barrage, and on 31 July, Private Walter Leslie Smith, aged 20, sustained serious shrapnel wounds, and died later that day at No. 3 Casualty Clearing Station.

A month later, at 4.45 am on 26 August, the 2nd Division was tasked to break out of Pozieres to take Mouquet Farm. The 21st Battalion reached their objectives but became disoriented in the smoke, as landmarks were virtually non-existent. Several companies continued to move forward and ended up under their own barrage.

In the midst of this carnage, while assisting bodies of men to withdraw to their own trenches, Captain Richard Smith was killed by shellfire. This courageous officer had been twice mentioned in despatches (MID). Right: Captain Richard Smith, 21st Bn, taken c. May 1915. KIA 26 August, 1916. AWM DAOF010.

About the same time, approximately 500 metres distant, on the left flank, the 22nd Battalion had reached a point where Mouquet Farm met the Thiepval road. While leading the attack against sustained enemy fire, Captain Harold Smith was killed.

In recommending him for a posthumous Military Cross, Brigadier General John Gellibrand said in part: “… for gallant and skilful leading of his Company in the attack on Mouquet Farm, this Officer carried out the difficult task of securing the left flank against enemy approaches, in a most satisfactory manner, before he fell at the head of his men. Captain Smith had distinguished himself by his coolness and gallantry in action, on each occasion that his battalion was engaged, and his death is a very severe loss to the 22nd Battalion.”

He received a posthumous Mention in Despatches.

Lest We Forget.

**Postscript**

1. Walter Smith died at No. 3 CCS and is buried at Puchevillers British Cemetery, 15 km from Amiens.
2. Richard Smith was buried in a shell crater close to where he fell and was later reinterred at the British Cemetery at Pozieres.
3. Harold Smith was buried “100 yards south of the Albert-Bapaume road, Pozieres” in an area subjected to heavy fighting in subsequent years. His body was never recovered (or identified if found) and his name appears on the Australian National Memorial at Villers-Bretonneux.
5. Elsie Smith married Alfred Madill in 1928 and died in Geelong in 1979, aged 88.
6. Still standing, the Norfolk pine planted by Harold and Elsie has been designated a historically significant tree with a heritage overlay.

**Left:** The Norfolk pine today at 180 Autumn St. [Screen capture: Google Maps.]

**Endnote:** Barry’s article was first published in ‘geelongCOAST’ magazine, 2015.
Samuel ('Sam') Bolitho was born in Sandhurst, an area of the Bendigo goldfields, on 10 July, 1882, the oldest child of William Bolitho and Ellen Bolitho (nee Shard). He was baptised on 25 August, 1882, at All Saints Church, Bendigo. Along with his many siblings, Sam grew up in the decades when Bendigo was the richest goldfield in the world, and his father and uncles were working to mine the riches. He became a blacksmith, no doubt learning his trade at one of the mine workings, and in the 1905 Electoral Roll was listed as living at Gladstone Street, Quarry Hill, with his parents.

On 13 February, 1907, Sam married Ann May Rose, a spinster from the little town of Lauriston, in St Paul’s Church, Bendigo. Over the next two years their two sons were born: William Lindsay, in November 1907, and my father Samuel Jeffrie (Jeff) in September, 1909.

Early in 1912, Sam and his wife made the decision to move to the outback town of Port Augusta in South Australia. Port Augusta is situated at the top of Spencer Gulf and was established around 1852 as a port to service the surrounding rural areas. The clipper ships would have moored in its natural harbour and loaded wheat and other cargo from its jetties.

By 1912 the Commonwealth Railways was establishing a terminus with workshops and a maintenance depot to service the trains heading north to Alice Springs. In 1913 the building of the east-west rail link to Kalgoorlie and Perth (the Transcontinental Railway) was commenced and Sam’s trade as a blacksmith would have been in demand over the next four years as it was being built.

This is where Sam Bolitho [left] was living when war broke out in 1914, and for the next 19 months he continued to work there, no doubt in a reserved occupation but also, as a family man of over 30 years of age, he was not required or expected to enlist.

However, on 15 March, 1916, Sam’s patriotism and, perhaps the desire for some excitement and adventure, got the better of him and he enlisted in Port Augusta to serve with the AIF. By this time he was 33 years and eight months old and had progressed in the railways to being a locomotive driver. Sam was 5 feet 7 and half inches tall and weighed 148 pounds, so was short and wiry, as were most of his Cornish ancestors. He had grey eyes and brown hair and listed his religion as Church of England. He named his wife, Ann May Bolitho, as his next of kin.

Sam was sent down to Adelaide and went to Mitcham Camp where he spent three months training with the 6th Reinforcements for the 8th Machine Gun Company. The Mitcham camp is shown below.

After doing his initial training at Mitcham, the machine-gunners were sent to Seymour in Victoria for more specialised training prior to embarking overseas.

On 20 October, 1916, Sam Bolitho embarked from Melbourne on HMAT Port Lincoln [shown next page] on his way to the war, which was by now firmly bogged down on the Western Front in France and Belgium.
Also on board was Sam’s younger brother, Leonard, as a reinforcement for the 46th Battalion [Pte 2626]. The pair arrived in England in December 1916, and Sam was taken on strength at the 5th Division Machine Gun Company’s training depot at Perham Downs in the south of England. (Leonard was sent to the 12th Training Battalion at Codford.)

In April 1917, Sam proceeded to France to join the 4th MG Company at their base camp near Camiers. He remained there until August 1917, when he proceeded back to England to the Training Depot at Codford. Here, over the next four months, he seems to have trained as a sapper before proceeding back to France in January 1918, where he joined the 16th Light Railway Operating Company. Once again, his experience in his trade as a blacksmith and loco driver would have been in demand.

The sappers of the light railway companies built and maintained the track systems which were used by small (‘light’) locomotives to supply the forward troops with ammunition and supplies. These were crucial in supplying the troops, freeing up horse-drawn wagons which were likely to fail in the badly rutted and shell-damaged tracks up to the battlefield areas from the supply depots. Between January and April 1918, Sam moved between the 16th, 17th and 14th Light Rail Companies, until on 21 April he was admitted to hospital in Boulogne with an injury to his left hand.

In September 1918, Sam’s fitness to serve was assessed after he complained of pain in his legs when marching. It was discovered that an old pre-war injury was causing his legs to bow and that he was now unfit for army service. However, as this was a pre-existing condition he was not eligible for any army pension. He was awarded all three Service Medals.

Sam Bolitho returned to Australia on board the Somalia, arriving in December 1918. He was discharged at Keswick Barracks in Adelaide on 6 March, 1919. Sam returned to his family and job in the railways in Port Augusta, three years after his enlistment to serve his country on the other side of the world.

Above and left: Photos showing men and equipment of the Light Rail Operating Companies.

By 25 April, Sam was back in England in Eastern General Hospital in Cambridge [below], receiving treatment on his hand. His treatment continued over the next three months and by June 1918 he was able to go on furlough to London, where he no doubt had a wonderful time after the rigours of life in the field in France.
Sam and Annie raised their two sons and subsequently a daughter, Betty, was added to the family. He continued to work in the railway workshops as a fitter until 1941. Over those years he also continued his record of community service and was actively associated with many civic, social and sporting bodies, serving on the local town council and holding a number of executive commissions with distinction.

Samuel Henry Bolitho died suddenly on 10 September, 1946, from a cerebral thrombosis, leaving his wife and three children and his many friends and colleagues in the wider Port Augusta community to mourn his passing. He was buried on 12 September at the Carlton Parade Cemetery, with his war service recognised on the simple white cross placed on his grave.

**Endnote:** My father Samuel Jeffrie (‘Jeff’) Bolitho [right] enlisted on 10 June, 1941, to serve in World War II. He was posted to the 2/48th Battalion and served in North Africa, Palestine and Borneo. Following the end of the war he relocated to the BCOF and served in Japan, finally returning home to be discharged as a sergeant on 4 January, 1949.

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**Letter from Sergeant Roy Warwick, 34th Battalion**

*Found on Trove by the Editor.*

Sergeant Roy Warwick, writing to a friend at Rawdon Island, from France on June 6th [1917], says:

We are getting beautiful weather here at present. It is glorious being at the war now, but it was terrible at the beginning. No-one knows what we suffered during the winter. The French people said it was the worst winter they ever had, so you can form a slight idea of what we had to put up with. I don’t want to experience another winter like it. I don’t care how long the war lasts so long as the weather is warm.

The war itself is nothing compared with the hardships we have to put up with at times; and is it any wonder when one thinks of the millions of soldiers that have to be looked after! We are always getting comforts from the splendid people in Australia. It makes one feel proud of them; they are second to none in the world. There are always a great many comforts waiting for us when we go out of the trenches.

Where we are at present situated things are pretty lively, with thousands of shells flying about. The ground is always shaking with the concussion of the guns firing. We brought down a German aeroplane yesterday. It landed almost a hundred yards from me, and I was over to it in no time. I grabbed my rifle, but one of the Huns was killed, and the other threw up his hands. They were only young chaps, and were dressed lovely. It was a beautiful machine, only the propeller was broken off, otherwise it was as good as gold. It had two machine guns on it. I got a few souvenirs from them.

I will draw this to a close, hoping it finds you in the best of health, as it leaves us all OK.

The next day, the 34th Battalion entered its first major offensive on the Western Front when they attacked at Messines Ridge. The photograph below shows the area known as Grey Farm, looking north, with Bethlehem Farm and Messines in the background (Messines is on the ridge in the extreme left hand corner). This area was captured during the Battle of Messines by the 9th Brigade. When this photograph was taken the 40th Battalion occupied the trenches south of the River Douve and the battalion headquarters was in an enemy pillbox about 150 yards north of Grey Farm. The 34th Battalion, 3rd Division, AIF, captured this immediate area on 7 June, 1917. AWM E01362.

**Source of letter:** ‘The Port Macquarie News and Hastings River Advocate’, 1 September, 1917.

**Endnotes:** (1) The author was CQMS 1260 Harold Roy Warwick, 34th Battalion, who enlisted 6/1/16 and RTA 16/3/18. He was a 20 year old horse driver when he joined up. (2) Rawdon Island is around 10 km west of Port Macquarie. The ‘island’ is formed by the channels of the Hastings River.
Who pays the Ferryman?
Lance Corporal 4371 Walter Thomas Bray, 18th Battalion
Greg Swinden, Evatt.

As a kid growing up on the NSW Central Coast in the 1970s I would collect aluminium cans to earn extra pocket money. On one occasion while cashing in the cans at the local scrap metal dealer, I was offered the opportunity to purchase a brass disc for the then princely sum of $10; I recall my father chipping in a few dollars to make up the shortfall! I soon discovered that I had purchased a World War I Memorial Plaque often known as a ‘Dead Man’s Penny’. On it was the name ‘Walter Thomas Bray’ and what then followed were several years of on again/off again research to find out who he was. So who was Walter Thomas Bray?

Walter Thomas Bray was born at Parramatta in 1893 and was the second child of Thomas Bray and Elizabeth Ann Bray (nee Kirby). Walter had an older sister, Ellen Ann (born 1892), who was called ‘Nellie’ and a younger brother, Keith Arthur, who was born in 1896. His father was a master painter and decorator and operated his business from a shop in Macquarie Street, Parramatta, until his death in 1912. The family lived in Church Street, Parramatta, and Walter, known as ‘Wallie’, attended the Parramatta South Superior Public School in Smith Street. On completion of his schooling he followed his father into the painting and decorating business.

Above right: The Bray children, left to right: Keith, Nellie and Wallie. Keith is advertising his father’s glazier trade, while Nellie’s sash says ‘Tom Bray’s Wallpapers’. Wallie’s shirt seems to say ‘Bom Tray’, a spoonerism of his dad’s name. With thanks to Parramatta Historic Houses Trust.

On 22 November, 1915, Walter applied to join the AIF and was attested at Casula on 6 December, 1915. On joining he was described as a 22 year old painter, 5’4¾” tall, with a dark complexion, grey eyes and black hair. His next of kin was his mother Elizabeth who resided at 98 Church Street, Parramatta, and he was of the Church of England faith.

Walter was initially allocated as a reinforcement to the 17th Battalion but on 22 December, 1915, was transferred to the 18th Battalion (5th Brigade, 2nd Division) and allocated service number 4371.

Left: Studio portrait of 4371 Private Walter Thomas Bray, 18th Battalion. AWM P08624.015.

After his initial training at the Liverpool military camp, Walter embarked in the troopship A71 Nestor at Sydney, on 9 April, 1916. Shortly after arriving in England he was admitted to Tidworth Military Hospital, on 22 June, suffering from pneumonia and was not fit to commence training until mid August. He then joined the 5th Training Battalion, and after four months intensive training was dispatched to France on 11 November, 1916. Walter arrived at the 2nd Australian Divisional Base Depot at Etaples on 13 November, and after more training joined the 18th Battalion on 24 November, 1916.

The 18th Battalion had been involved in the fighting at Pozieres in July-August 1916, Mouquet Farm in August, and Gueudecourt in early November, and was now in a rest area recovering and rebuilding after the hard fighting of 1916. By
December the 18th Battalion was back in the front line and suffering one of the worst winters in France for several decades. On 4 January, 1917, Walter was sent to the 36th Casualty Clearing Station suffering from Trench Feet and by the 6th was in hospital at Rouen. He returned to his unit on 11 February.

Walter served with the 18th Battalion throughout the heavy fighting of 1917 and took part in the battles of Second Bullecourt (3-4 May), Menin Road (20-22 September) and Poelcappalle (9-10 October). After a year in the trenches he was sent on leave to England and returned to the battalion in late January, 1918. In March 1918 the Germans launched their Spring offensive and there was soon more hard fighting for the 18th Battalion in the vicinity of Messines and Amiens.

In July 1918, Walter, now a lance corporal, was given another break from front-line duties with leave in England but was back with the battalion for its next major battle at Amiens, on 8 August, and Lihons during 9-11 August. So far he had been a lucky soldier, having avoided serious wounds and illness but his luck was soon to run out.

Early on the morning of 31 August, 1918, the 5th Brigade of the 2nd Division (consisting of the 17th, 18th, 19th and 20th Battalions) moved into position to storm the heights of Mont St Quentin, which overlooked the town of Peronne. The four battalions, which were all under strength, commenced their attack at 5 am, yelling wildly to disguise their lack of numbers. The defending Germans were bewildered and many surrendered, while others fled and the summit was captured. The Germans, however, regaining their composure, counter-attacked and pushed the Australians off the summit. However, the 5th Brigade doggedly held onto positions just below the summit. The fighting continued until 2 September and eventually Mont St Quentin was captured by the Australians. The Australian official war historian, CEW Bean, later described the attack as the ‘crowning achievement of the AIF’.

It was during the initial attack on the 31st that Lance Corporal Walter Thomas Bray was hit by enemy fire and killed outright. He was originally buried in a field grave at Park Wood, near Halles, but his remains were later moved to the Peronne Communal Cemetery Extension, which now contains 1,376 war graves.

His mother was subsequently issued his service medals (British War Medal and Victory Medal) as well as a Memorial Scroll to accompany the Memorial Plaque. Walter’s name is recorded on the Roll of Honour at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, and also on the Parramatta City War Memorial (although his details are listed as ‘TW Bray’).

An estimated 1.3 million memorial plaques were produced between 1918 and the mid 1920s for the families of sailors, soldiers, airmen and nurses of the British Empire who lost their lives in the war. Many adorn family graves as a reminder of a family member lost at sea, buried overseas or missing in action with no known grave. Others are on display in museums or family homes – but regrettably many were sold for their scrap brass value and melted down. The Memorial Plaque for Walter Thomas Bray is currently mounted on a wooden shield and is on display in my study.

The ferryman has been paid.

Endnotes:
1 Thomas Bray (1867-1912) and Elizabeth Ann Kirby were married at Parramatta in 1891.
3 Walter was also a soldier with an unblemished record. He was never in hospital for VD or charged with any crimes at all (such as AWOL, shirking duty, drunkenness or fighting).
4 His birth certificate also lists him as Thomas Walter Bray but all other records state his name as Walter Thomas Bray.

COBBeR 3 was sent to members (on e-mail) on April 28. Some emails bounced back. If you did not receive the issue, your e-mail address in our database is probably an old one. Please e-mail the Editor your latest e-mail address and a copy of COBBeR 3 will be sent and our records updated. COBBeR 4 will be out soon. Articles for DIGGERs 57 and 58 are now being called for. Keep any eye out on television for FFFAIF 2016 Western Front tour members attending the Fromelles (19 July) and Pozieres (23 July) centenary commemorations.
ETCHED IN STONE
(Edited by Russell Curley with additional detail sourced from CWGC by Jim Corkery.)

This is the fifty-fourth in a series of extracts, from John Laffin’s “We Will Remember Them – AIF Epitaphs of World War 1”, which will appear in successive issues of ‘DIGGER’.

Place names in bold type are cemetery names

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GREATER LOVE HATH NO MAN: DADDY’S AT REST</th>
<th>Pte A. Corkett, M-G Corps, 2-10-17 Lijssenthoek Military, Belgium</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

It might have been Sunday afternoon, with the children ordered not to make a noise because daddy was having a nap. Many families for years maintained the fiction that the man of the house was merely ‘absent’ and would return from the war in due course. Albert Corkett, a native of Orange, New South Wales, and his wife, had four children.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A LOVING MEMORY OF A DEAR SON AND BROTHER WHO GAVE HIS LIFE FOR US</th>
<th>Pte W. Porteus, 24th Bn, 9-10-17 (25) Dochy Farm New British, Belgium</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A DEVOTED HUSBAND AND LOVING FATHER PEACE PERFECT PEACE</th>
<th>Maj W. A. Adams DSO, 3rd Pnr Bn, 15-10-17 (48) Ypres Reservoir, Belgium</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Major Adams was awarded the DSO on 6 March 1917 ‘for all round conspicuously useful services since the battalion was formed. By conspicuous devotion to duty he has been an example to all.’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AT REST INSERTED BY HIS WIFE AND SONS</th>
<th>Pte G. R. Choat, 4th Pnr Bn, 28-9-17 (38) Lijssenthoek Military, Belgium</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BELOVED HUSBAND OF MARY MACKENZIE GREATER LOVE HATH NO MAN THAN THIS</th>
<th>Cpl J. K. Mackenzie, 14th Bn, 25-9-17 (43) Lijssenthoek Military, Belgium</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HE GAVE HIS LIFE HIS ALL HE LIKE A SOLDIER FELL OUR DEAR DADDY</th>
<th>CSM W. Love, 24th Bn, 31-8-18 (43) Peronne Communal Cemetery Extension, France</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

William Love was the husband of Margaret Love of Bendigo, Victoria. They had five children, hence the ‘Our Dear Daddy’.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BELOVED HUSBAND OF THERESA FATHER OF OLLIE AMO, ROWLEY, EDNA SWAN HILL</th>
<th>Pte A. E. McConnell, 58th Bn, 30-9-18 (38) Doingt Communal Cemetery Extension, France</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DEARLY BELOVED HUSBAND OF DAISY AND DEVOTED FATHER OF LITTLE NELLIE</th>
<th>Sgt H. E. Sullivan, M-G Corps, 31-8-18 (28) Hem Farm Military, France</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DEEPLY MOURNED BY LES, NORM, HARRY EDITH &amp; CONSTANCE</th>
<th>Pte H. H. Rippon, 2nd Pnr Bn, 16-1-17 (42) Heilly Station, France</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A LOVING HUSBAND HE LEFT HIS FAMILY TIE LATER TO BE JOINED ON HIGH</th>
<th>Cpl H. Butterworth, 42nd Bn, 17-4-18 (28) Bonnay Communal Cemetery Extension, France</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HE WAS ONE OF THE BEST OF SONS A LOVING BROTHER A FAITHFUL FRIEND</th>
<th>Pte W. A. Brown, 25th Bn, 6-10-17 (26) Lijssenthoek Military, Belgium</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Continued next issue.
‘Dedicated to Digger Heritage’
The purpose of the FFFAIF is to commemorate the service, sacrifice, courage and suffering of the First Australian Imperial Force of the Great War 1914-1918 and of their families and friends.

**DIGGER 55 Contents**

**Articles**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Article</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pte 2228 Edgar Robards, 13th Bn, &amp; the 4th Brigade in August 1915, Dean Sherringham</td>
<td>3-17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cpl 2604 Athol Kirkland, 34th Bn, Andrew Pittaway</td>
<td>18-21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membership reminder for 2016/17: summary of renewal information</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essendon’s ‘Three Musketeers’: Stones, Walker and Elliot, Ross McMullin</td>
<td>22-25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diary of Pte 4393 Alexander Wallace, 29th Bn (Part 3, final), courtesy Stephanie Smyth</td>
<td>26-28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pte 4432 Victor Backhouse, 54th Bn, Greg Swinden</td>
<td>29-30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Hamilton VC statue for Orange; Hamilton genealogy, contrib. by Richard Castine</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diaries of L/Cpl William Lycett, 4th F Amb/15th LROC, Part 6, contributed by Tim Lycett</td>
<td>31-36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Llew, Reg and Ray Jones, brothers in the 14th Bn, Faye Threlfall and Graeme Hosken</td>
<td>37-41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter from the Front, 1916, Pte 2600 Charles Cowley, 7th Bn</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th Class Naval Staff Clerk Royal Mungovan, Greg Swinden</td>
<td>42-43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Little Willie’ and Sgt McDuff, Lieut Col M Purser, 30th Bn</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lieutenant Colonel Lancelot Fox Clarke DSO, VF, 12th Bn, Andrea Gerrard</td>
<td>44-52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter from the Front, Sgt 7652 Robert Donaldson, 5th FAB</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter after Pozieres, Pte 4359 HG ‘Harry’ Hartnett, 2nd Bn</td>
<td>53-55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For Valour: Anzac VC Recipients on the Western Front, 1916, Part 1, Geoff Lewis</td>
<td>56-64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter from the Front, 1916, Cpl 108 Charles Scott, 2nd LHR</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three GW Lloyds in the AIF, Graeme Hosken</td>
<td>65-66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letters from the Front, 1916: Sgt 1887 John Booth; Pte Denis McMahon</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Memorial Tree: the Smiths brothers of Geelong, Barry Abley</td>
<td>67-69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spr 411 Samuel Bolitho, 4th MG Coy, Jenny Chapman and Trevor Munro</td>
<td>70-72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter from the Front, 1917, Sgt Roy Warwick, 34th Bn</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L/Cpl 4371 Walter Bray, 18th Bn, Greg Swinden</td>
<td>73-74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Regular features**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trench Talk and Contact/Membership details</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIGGER Quiz No. 55: The Army Postal Service, Maurice Campbell</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answers to DIGGER Quiz</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Etched in Stone, Russell Curley and Jim Corkery</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

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