

THE SOLDIERS OF ANZAC HILL at MALDON

Compiling these notes on the first thirty-two soldiers to be commemorated in Anzac Circle, has been a joyless task. Who would believe that from our relatively small community, there would be such a variety of men who served and died in so many different ways?

There were three teachers, a doctor, one prisoner of war who died whilst in German hands, two light horsemen who never took their horses into battle, two soldiers who died after being in the Aegean Sea when their troopship was torpedoed, one who was accidentally shot on board ship en route to Egypt, and many, many other "ordinary" yet extraordinary soldiers who died just doing their best.

By and large, the men from Maldon who died serving their Country in World War One, were mostly young, single and keen to "do their bit".

Anzac Hill is a special place where all of them can be remembered and their sacrifice recognised.

1. PRIVATE HARRY JOHNSON (SERN 932)

Born in Maldon in 1893, son of Amos and Annie Johnson of Chapel Street North. Harry attended Maldon State School and Castlemaine Technical College. He worked at Calder's Ironmongery after leaving school and with his family, was an active member of the Holy Trinity congregation.

Harry enlisted in the AIF two weeks after Australia entered the Great War, in August 1914. He was a keen amateur photographer and took developing equipment and chemicals with him on the troopship with the 7th Battalion, as they approached the Gallipoli Peninsula.

Always one to keep a daily diary, Harry's last few entries detailed the horror of the first Anzac landing. Three days later he was evacuated to Egypt with a severe gunshot wound. There he died age 21 on 2nd May, 1915, the first name on Maldon's Honour Roll. His was the first tree in Anzac Circle.

2. PRIVATE PHILLIP YOUNG (SERN 2231)

Phillip was the son of Alexander and Mary Young of Maldon. Growing up here and attending Maldon State School, he became a bricklayer. He joined the 14th Battalion, AIF in March 1915 and was soon headed for Gallipoli, age 24. Phillip was one of the many Australian soldiers who was killed in action at the Battle of Lone Pine early in August 1915, but never found. His mother wrote to the Army in 1921 "...it is heartbreaking not to know anything of his death, but one consolation I have, my dear boy died for his country and for me."

3. SERGEANT FRANK OLLE (SERN 723)

Frank was another young man who enlisted very early, in August 1914. Although not born in Maldon, his connection to the district was as the

popular head teacher of Porcupine State School. Serving with the 5th Battalion, Frank was wounded in the right knee at Gallipoli at about the time of the first landing. In hospital back in Cairo, his wounds turned septic and he died from infection on 31st May, 1915. The Maldon News reported that "parents and scholars were very grieved when they heard of his death..."

4. PRIVATE ALBERT COOPER (SERN 1812)

Bert Cooper was the son of John and Isabella Cooper of Wattle Gully, North Maldon. He was a former student at Maldon State School and was a 24-year-old labourer when he enlisted in June 1915. Observing over the parapet of his trench at Gallipoli in October 1915, he was hit by Turkish rifle fire and died almost instantly. Some of his mates from Maldon were with him from the 22nd Battalion. He is buried at Shrapnel Gully, nearby.

5. PRIVATE JOHN HUTCHINSON (SERN 238)

John was born in Kyneton, the son of John and Ann Hutchinson. John (snr) died in 1911 leaving Ann with a large family of young children to care for. Young John, a labourer age 20, enlisted in the AIF very soon after Australia became involved. Sent with the 8th Battalion to the Dardanelles, John was killed in action on or about the time of the Gallipoli landing. He is buried at Anzac Cove.

I am unsure of his connection to Maldon. It is possible his parents had family connections here.

6. PRIVATE EDWARD SPENCER (SERN 649)

Edward was another soldier who enlisted very early. He was an 18-year-old packer, the son of Maldon and Annie Spencer of Bendigo. Edward was killed in action in May 1915, about a week after the landing. He is buried at Courtney's Post, where there is now a cemetery at Gallipoli.

Due to "prolonged illness" in 1924, his parents could not afford to pay for the inscription on his headstone. Magnanimously, the Australian Government agreed to waive the fee.

7. SERGEANT SYDNEY O'NEILL (SERN 432)

This soldier was born in Maldon and attended Maldon State School. A 26-year-old commercial traveller, he enlisted in September and found himself in the 8th Light Horse Regiment. With his comrades and their horses, he landed at Cairo. However, like other light horsemen early in the War, he left his horse there and was put on a troopship to Gallipoli as an infantryman.

Many of the 8th Light Horsemen, including Sydney, were killed in the Battle of Lone Pine, in early August 1915. With his other effects the emu feathers for his slouch hat, emblem of the light horsemen, were sent home to his grieving family.

8. PRIVATE THOMAS O'BYRNE (SERN 254)

Thomas was born in Maldon. He was a 27-year-old labourer when he enlisted soon after Christmas in 1914. Travelling with other members of the 21st Battalion from Egypt to Gallipoli on the troopship "Southland", they were struck by a German torpedo from a submarine. Evacuation of the ship was chaotic and although it limped safely into Mudros Harbour on the Island of Lemnos (a base for Allied operations) Private O'Byrne jumped overboard and was not seen again. He is listed as "Drowned at Sea" on 2nd September, 1915. Most of the ship's company survived. Thomas' Commanding officer, Colonel Richard Linton, also died after the ship was torpedoed and he is commemorated with a tree on Anzac Hill. (See No. 19 below.)

9. PRIVATE WILLIAM TIDD (SERN 863)

William was one of 5 sons born to Joshua and Caroline Tidd of Eastville near Laanecoorie. A grocer's assistant, age 21, William went with the 6th Battalion to Gallipoli early in 1915. He was killed in action on 6th June, 1915 and is buried at the Lone Pine Cemetery.

William's younger brother Arthur also served with the AIF, training other soldiers in the UK. He returned home early in 1919.

Their older, married brother George, a farmer, enlisted days after William was killed. George was wounded and missing in France with the 23rd Battalion, in May 1917 and he is remembered at Villers- Bretonneux.

10. LIEUTENANT STANLEY McLAY

Stanley was the son of James and Clara McLay of Joyce's Creek. He went to school at Welshman's Reef. He enlisted in December 1914, age 26 and set off with the 7th Battalion on the troopship "Wiltshire", bound for Egypt and the Dardanelles.

His record states that he "died on 15th April, 1915 of accidental injuries (bullet)" on board ship en route to Egypt. He was buried at sea.

11. PRIVATE GERALD BYRNE (SERN 1117)

Another young man from Maldon, Gerald was a 23-year-old blacksmith. He enlisted very early and with others in the 7th Battalion, met his death at the Battle of Lone Pine early in August 1915.

12. CORPORAL ERNEST FORDHAM (SERN 3816)

This 18-year-old blacksmith who had attended Maldon State School signed up in August 1915, with his parents Tom and Nellie's consent. By the end of 1915, the Allies had withdrawn from the Dardanelles, so Ernest was sent to France with the reinforced 5th Battalion.

He survived only a few months fighting in France. He was killed in action in July 1916 and is buried at Villers-Bretonneux.

13. PRIVATE COLIN BOLITHO (SERN 3019)

Colin was an 18-year-old wheelwright working with his father Charles, a coachbuilder and blacksmith. He was the only child of Charles and Selina Bolitho. He enlisted in July 1915 and was sent to France with the 8th Battalion in March 1916. Four months later he was wounded by machine gunfire and died within hours. He is buried near Pozieres.

14. PRIVATE ALEX PHILLIPS (SERN 6063)

Alex was born at Muckleford, the eldest son of William and Isabella Phillips of "Rocky Bank", Baringhup. He was a 38-year-old farmer when he signed up in March 1916. He was sent to the Western Front with the 7th Battalion and died within 3 weeks, on 16th December, 1916 near Villers-Bretonneux. One of Alex's 5 brothers served as a Vet with the 8th Light Horse and three other brothers enlisted with the New Zealand Expeditionary Force. Another brother was a policeman and they had one sister.

15. PRIVATE THOMAS JENKIN (SERN 3847)

This soldier was born at Baringhup, the son of Thomas and Christina Jenkin of Joyce's Creek. He was a 41-year-old carpenter when he enlisted in July 1915. Weeks after landing in France with the 21st Battalion, he was acting as a stretcher-bearer at Pozieres. While bringing back a wounded man from no-man's land, he was killed instantly by shellfire. His Company Commander described him as "a man any country would be proud of."

16. LIEUTENANT ERROL RODDA (SERN 4581)

Errol was a 26-year-old high school teacher who had attended Maldon State School and gone on to graduate from Melbourne University with a Master of Arts. He, like many other well-educated men, was offered training as an officer. With the 8th Battalion, he landed in France in May 1916 but in August he was killed in action near Pozieres.

Just a month earlier, his younger brother Fred was also serving in France near Fromelles. There, he was severely wounded in the head and invalided back to Australia. Fred's twin sister Violet said her brother was "never the same" after returning home. No wonder their mother Annie, a widow, died in 1919. Errol is remembered on a brass plaque in Holy Trinity Church, Maldon.

17. PRIVATE ERNEST JENKIN (SERN 171)

Born at Joyce's Creek, Ernest was a 23-year-old labourer, the son of Mark and Jane Jenkin. Sent to Gallipoli in 1915, he survived apart from a spell in hospital in Malta with "shock". His Unit was evacuated from the Dardanelles and reinforced in Egypt before being sent to the Western Front. Ernest was killed at the Battle of Fromelles, in July 1916.

Described as "the worst 24 hours in Australia's entire history", the AIF suffered over 4000 casualties in this battle. Ernest's family were sent various contradictory messages from the Army, as to his fate. At one point

he was reported to have "died of wounds while a prisoner of war in German hands". This was later amended to "Killed in Action".

18. PRIVATE HARRY ROBINSON (SERN 2184)

A former student of Maldon State School, Harry enlisted as a 25-year-old married hairdresser in March 1915. With the 7th Battalion at Gallipoli in the following August, he was wounded at the Battle of Lone Pine and is remembered at the Cemetery there.

19. COLONEL "BRIGADIER-GENERAL" RICHARD LINTON

This soldier was inadvertently promoted when his name was put forward for Anzac Hill. His Service Record states that he was in fact Colonel Linton, the 54-year-old Commanding Officer of the AIF 6th Infantry Brigade. They were on board the Troopship "Southland" heading for the Dardanelles in September 1915, when it became the 1st troopship to be torpedoed by a German submarine. Colonel Linton got off the ship in a lifeboat, which then capsized. Being a strong swimmer, he chose to stay in the water, giving his place in a boat to others. When finally rescued "his heart gave out" and he died from "shock and exposure to water". His 23-year-old son, Captain Richard Linton was also on board and was rescued.

It is unclear why Colonel Linton should be remembered in Maldon, except that Pte. Thomas O'Byrne, a Maldon soldier under his command in the 21st Battalion, was also drowned in the disaster. Both these soldiers have Anzac Hill trees planted in their memory.

20. LIEUT. COLONEL ROBERT GARTSIDE

Having been a decorated and high-ranking veteran of the Boer War, Robert Gartside was one of the first to enlist in the AIF, in August 1914. Gartside was then a 53-year-old orchardist from a pioneering family at Harcourt.

He was killed in action leading the 7th Battalion in an advance towards Turkish lines at Cape Helles, Dardanelles, a fortnight after the Gallipoli landing.

21. SERGEANT RUPERT GREEN (SERN 2152)

Rupert came to Maldon as a teenager when his father was appointed postmaster. He went to Castlemaine High School where he excelled academically and on the sports field. He was a ruckman in the Maldon Junior Football Team, being best on field in the 1914 grand final premiership team. After completing High School, Rupert was appointed as a Junior Teacher at the Maldon State School. Putting his age up, he enlisted in April 1915 just before his 18th birthday.

Soon he was at Gallipoli, surviving the Battle of Lone Pine. After a spell in hospital in the UK to have his appendix removed, he was sent to the horrors of the Somme battlefield in France. Within a few months of arriving there, Rupert Green was killed instantly from a shrapnel head wound, age 19. He is remembered with a special plaque in Holy Trinity Church.

22. SERGEANT RICHARD BOWMAN (SERN 1081)

Born in Maldon, Richard was the son of John and Dorothy Bowman. He went to Maldon State School and was apprenticed as a draper to J.J. McFarlane. He enlisted in October 1915 and was assigned to the 3rd Pioneer Battalion. This was an infantry and light engineering unit of men who dug trenches, cleared battlefields and could fight as infantrymen if required.

In Belgium in 1916, Richard was rapidly promoted from Private to Sergeant. He was killed in action in July 1917 and is buried at the Kandahar Farm Cemetery.

23. PRIVATE WILLIAM CAUDRY (SERN 5447)

Another Maldon State School boy who was born in Maldon, William was the son of George and Eva Caudry. Age 22, William enlisted in April 1916, giving up his job as a railway employee. With the 22nd Battalion, he served for several months in France before being listed as Missing in early May, 1917. Much later, a special Court of Inquiry determined that William was Killed in Action. Worried families often were not told for months, the fate of their relative, particularly if their bodies had not been found.

William is remembered with a special plaque in Holy Trinity Church and at the Villers-Bretonneux Cemetery.

24. PRIVATE BERTRAND GIBBS. (SERN 1171)

After attending Maldon State School, Bert became a Clerk in the Lands Department in Melbourne. He enlisted in March 1915 and went with the 23rd Battalion to Gallipoli. After spending some time in hospital in Malta, he rejoined his Unit in Egypt, from where they were deployed to France. Listed as Missing in July 1916, it was later discovered that he had died while a Prisoner of War, in German hands and had been buried in France by his captors.

25. SERGEANT ALEC BUGBIRD (SERN 374)

This Light Horseman was born in Baringhup and was 25 when he enlisted in September, 1914. He had been working at the stone-crushing plant at Baringhup. Like Sergeant Syd O'Neill, Alec went with his Regiment and their horses, the 9th Light Horse, first to Egypt to acclimatise. Diverted to Gallipoli without their horses, they became infantrymen, fighting often hand-to-hand with the Turks in the trenches. Alec was Killed in Action in August 1915 and is buried at Lone Pine.

26. PRIVATE JOSEPH TATT (SERN 4326)

Joe Tatt was one of thirteen children born to George and Eliza Tatt, of Maldon. About the time their father died in mid-1915, the six eldest boys, including Joe who had worked as a miner, enlisted for service with the AIF. This left their mother with 4 children under 16, still at home. With the

5th Battalion in the first battle of the Somme in August 1916, Joe was a stretcher-bearer. He was killed while attending to a wounded comrade.

Joe's five soldier brothers, all survived World War 1. The Maldon Fraternal Society presented Eliza with an illuminated plaque: " In appreciation for service to King and Empire."

27. PRIVATE PERCIVAL CRAYFORD (SERN 3101)

Percy Crayford was a student of Maldon State School, the son of Nicholas and Eleanor Crayford. Percy was an accountant who enlisted in September 1916 in the 58th Battalion. They were fighting near Passchendaele at Polygon Wood, when Percy was Killed in Action in September 1917.

28. CORPORAL RUPERT GODENZI (SERN 1517)

Rupert was the son of Ben and Sarah Godenzi of Long Gully, Maldon. He was a student at Maldon State School and after that worked with his father as a wood carter. When he enlisted in March 1915, he was 20 years old. His departure left his father with no help and a debt of over 500 pounds. With the 23rd Battalion Rupert went to Gallipoli in August 1915. After the withdrawal from the Dardanelles in December 1915, Rupert served in France. He then spent a few months in England recovering from a septic toe. Back in the Field, he was Killed in Action in November 1917 at Broodseinde, Belgium. His father wrote in a letter to the AIF "... when we got word that he was killed the wife took it to heart and died in 3 weeks, never rallied...". Ben Godenzi went on to recover from debt and raise his four youngest children alone.

29. CAPTAIN MELVILLE RULE HUGHES.

This officer was a 24-year-old doctor when he enlisted with the Australian Army Medical Corps, on 1st May, 1916. He was part of the 15th Field ambulance in France in October 1916 and was attached to the 59th Battalion, where his medical skill would have been constantly required. This Battalion was decimated at Fromelles in July 1916 and continued fighting at or close to the Front Line.

Captain Hughes was wounded in action in March 1917 and subsequently died of his wounds in France.

His name is remembered on a group plaque in Holy Trinity Church. His grandfather James Henry Rule was the mine manager of the South German Mine, some years earlier.

30. CORPORAL THOMAS ARTHUR (SERN 4457)

This 41-year-old engine driver was born in Castlemaine. By the time the War broke out, he was married to Eva, with one daughter Grace. They were living in W.A.

He enlisted in March 1916, arriving at Plymouth. U.K in November. There he was admitted to hospital with jaundice, where he died on 2nd

December without ever seeing enemy action. Eva returned from W.A. to Eaglehawk, Bendigo after her husband's death, to be close to her extended family.

Thomas' brother John was married to Lily Dabb, fourth daughter of Samuel and Catherine Dabb, of "Mt Hawke", Maldon. John had been the first Federal Labor Member for Bendigo and a Minister in the Fisher Government, but had died of a kidney complaint, 3 years before his brother Thomas died in England.

31. SAPPER CHARLES JORDAN (SERN 3054)

Charles had attended Maldon State School and gave his occupation as Carpenter when he enlisted in July 1915, age 40. He was married to Florence and had three young daughters under eleven. Their 4th daughter, baby Eunice died the year Charles enlisted. He was a member of the 5th Field Company Australian Engineers. He died of his wounds in France in October 1917.

32. PRIVATE ARNOLD RALPH (SERN 7040)

Born in Maldon and attending Maldon State School, Arnold was a fireman from Spotswood when he enlisted in November 1916, age 26. He was the son of Richard and Frances Ralph, of South Chapel Street, Maldon; a champion footballer and fireman. Arriving in France with the 8th Battalion in May 1917, he fought with his unit until being hospitalised in September with "Pyrexia of Unknown Origin". Later, the Allied Forces discovered that this mystery fever that debilitated so many of their troops, was caused by body lice. Arnold rejoined his Unit and survived until October when he died of a shrapnel wound to his leg.

List compiled by Marie Bell,
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