

“Carry on, Rigby”

How the Rigby family of Yeronga experienced the First World War

Allan Tonks



William Alfred Rigby

William Alfred Rigby was born in 1855 into a prosperous family at Runcorn in Cheshire, England. In 1880 he accompanied his parents, William Rigby Senior and Elizabeth Huxley, along with three of his brothers and three sisters, when they left England on the migrant ship *Norfolk* and went to New Zealand. The family had been advised to emigrate because the father was in poor health and it was thought that the climate in New Zealand would be beneficial, but just three months after their arrival in Auckland William’s father had died.

William Rigby then joined the South British Insurance Company in New Zealand and became a local inspector. In 1885 he married Julia Mitchell at the home of her father in Kaikohe, a town near the Bay of Islands. The young couple soon moved south to Auckland where their first two children, Julia Lyllis (Lyl) and then Elizabeth Ethel Rigby (Ethel), were born.

At around this time the South British Insurance Co. was establishing a Branch Office at Townsville in Queensland, and in 1887 William was appointed as the Townsville Manager. Two years later he was transferred to Brisbane to take on the role as Queensland Manager. The family lived briefly at Toowong before moving permanently to Yeronga. The Electoral Roll of 1892 shows that they were then living at a residence called *St. Olaves*, which was located at the corner of Hyde and Fairfield Roads. This is where William John Rigby (Jack) was born, at home, on Friday 9 December 1891.

In 1893 the family home was flooded in the great flood. A lengthy article published in the *Brisbane Courier* on 8 February 1893 referred to the Rigby home and stated:

A gentleman who came in from Yeronga and Rocklea reported that things in that district, as was expected, are in a terrible state. The water rose 15 ft. or 16 ft. above the railway bridge, close to the Yeronga railway station ... Rocklea and the surrounding district was on Monday like a vast lake, hardly any house being visible above the water ... People had got away in boats, and had taken refuge in different places on the surrounding hills, in churches, and in the Yeronga State School ... Mr. Rigby, of the South British Insurance Company, and Mr. McNab were flooded out, about 3 ft. of water being in the house of the latter...¹



Julia Rigby nee Mitchell

Carry on, Rigby – Part 1

After this flood the family relocated to a house at 25 Belfast Street, close to the Yeronga Railway Station. It was in this house, *Wyetah*, that the second son George Henry Rigby was born on Wednesday 26 September 1894. William had purchased a plot of land that today is bounded by Days Avenue and Shottery and Kadumba Streets, and the family moved there after a new home was built at the Days Avenue end of the property. This house was named *Rawene* after a town that the couple remembered fondly from New Zealand. It was a spacious home with wide verandahs on three sides, stables out the back and a grass tennis court along the Kadumba Street boundary. It was while living at this new family home that Gordon Alexander Rigby and Hubert Stanley Rigby were born.

Getting an education

The six Rigby children had a good education, with each of them attending the Yeronga State School at the corner of School and Park Roads. Each of the boys then attended Brisbane Grammar School. Sport was encouraged, and all of the Rigby children enjoyed playing tennis. At the Grammar school, Jack was a member of the 3rd Cricket XI, and played in the Interstate Rugby team.

The School Cadets had been established at the Brisbane Grammar School in 1878, and from the 1890s military training was introduced more generally with the formation of the State School Cadet Corps. By 1906 there were approximately 20,000 Junior Cadets at State Schools across Australia, and around 3,000 Senior Cadets for those who had left school or who were aged over sixteen years.

In the years before the First World War, Australia and New Zealand had relied primarily upon militia and volunteer units to meet their military needs, but this approach was increasingly seen to be inadequate. Late in 1909 the New Zealand Parliament introduced compulsory military training, and Australia adopted compulsory military training in 1911. A new Citizen Military Force (CMF) was created in which youths aged between 18 and 26 were expected to serve on a part time basis.²

The Rigby children attended school during this period of military reformation, and so it is not surprising that each of the boys joined the Cadets. On Jack's enlistment papers, it was stated that he had served with the Cadets for three years and had been in the Senior Cadets for a further year. He had then volunteered for army duty with the Australian Garrison Artillery for three years and was later appointed to the rank of Lieutenant in the 9th Battalion of the CMF. As an officer, Jack was able to join the United Service Institution, which survives today as the United Service Club at Wickham Terrace in Spring Hill. Other club members that Jack would have known personally included Sydney Beresford Robertson, Joseph Peter Lalor, and Joseph William Costin, who were all later to land with the first wave of troops at Gallipoli.

Jack and George's journey to war

Jack Rigby started working as a clerk with the South British Insurance Company after he left school, the same company where his father was manager. George was still a student at Brisbane Grammar School from 1909 to 1911, after which he gained employment as a clerk with shipping agents Wills Gilchrist & Co. Ltd. When war was declared in 1914 Jack was among the very first to volunteer for overseas service and he formally enlisted on 15 August, becoming a Lieutenant in B Company of the 9th Battalion a few days later. George enlisted on 18 August and was posted as a Private to C Company in the same battalion. They were among the first recruits of the 9th Infantry Battalion to report to Enoggera Army Camp, and after that the numbers quickly swelled in what became a great rush of volunteers to enlist. The training at Enoggera was elementary, however, with the first priority being to equip the men and then engaging them in elementary drill. On 24 September 1914, just two days before George was to celebrate his twentieth birthday, the 9th Battalion marched to Enoggera train station and at Pinkenba embarked onto the transport ship HMAT A5 *Omrah*.

Carry on, Rigby – Part 1

The *Omrah* then spent around three weeks at Melbourne before sailing for Albany in Western Australia, where it was to join a large convoy of troopships for the voyage to England. While at Melbourne the troops had a few days of battalion training ashore, and Jack and George somehow managed to get a rare opportunity to go out on their own. On a postcard dated 18 October 1914 George wrote the following to his brother Gordon:

"We are off to Albany W.A. tomorrow where we expect to stay about four days. The Victorian troops are embarking this morning ... Jack and I went out to Uncle Tom's place last night and then paid a visit to the Caves. The Caves gave us a big box of bandages, and some mittens and caps and a big box of chocolate for the sick. You can think of us on Tuesday pitching about in the middle of the ocean. Goodbye, George."

At right: On the reverse of this postcard photo of the Queensland troops at the Melbourne dock, dated 13 October 1914, Jack writes: *"Dear Old Mother, I cannot pick George or I out, it was so cold we had to wear our Great Coats."*



The Queensland Contingent of H.M. Australian Expeditionary Force at Church Parade. Port Melbourne, Sunday, October 11th, 1914.

On 1st November the convoy of 36 transports, including 10 ships that were conveying the New Zealand Expeditionary Force, departed Albany under the protection of the Australian warships HMAS *Melbourne* and *Sydney* and the British cruiser HMS *Minotaur*. It must have been a thoroughly novel experience for all the soldiers on board, and just two days later they were joined by another two transports and the Japanese cruiser *Ibuki* that had departed from Fremantle. This first great convoy of 38 transports carried around 30,000 men and nearly 8000 horses.³

During the voyage the men were mostly kept busy with physical training, fatigues, lectures, and rifle drill, but there was also some excitement to be had on 9 November when the *Sydney* was seen departing at speed towards the west. The men later learnt that the *Sydney* had engaged with the German light cruiser *Emden*, which had been caught attacking the British cable and wireless station in the Cocos Islands. This was Australia's first naval engagement and it resulted in victory for the *Sydney*. The damaged *Emden* was forced to beach on North Keeling Island, after which the *Sydney* had gone in pursuit of the German ship's collier, the *Buresk*. On 15 November a number of the ships from the convoy docked at Colombo in Ceylon, now called Sri Lanka, to take on coal and water. The next day forty-four surviving crew members of the German ship *Emden* were brought on board the *Omrah* at Colombo, and the 9th Battalion was detailed to provide a guard of 60 men to secure the prisoners. This was their first encounter with German sailors.⁴

At this point in time the troops still thought that they were going to England, but on 28 November the men were informed that they were now heading for Cairo in Egypt. Two postcards written by George from on board the *Omrah* give us some idea of their reaction to the news:

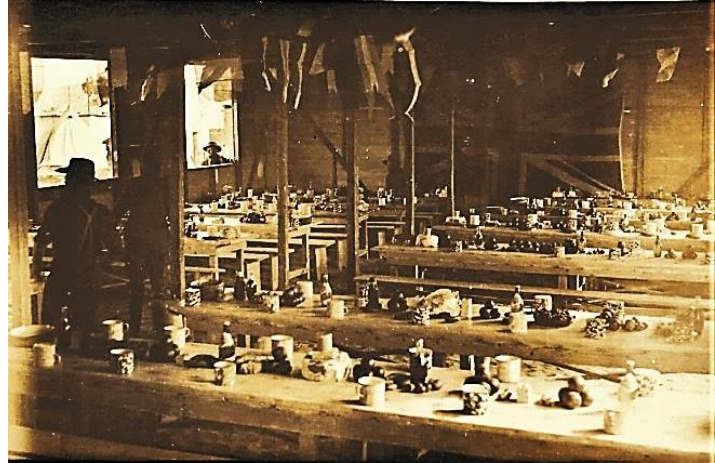
On board ship HMAT A5 *Omrah*:

From George to his mother, Julia, dated 29 November 1914 – *"My dear Mother, I hope you will excuse me just writing a Post Card but I am reading up a lot of military work. We are sailing with all lights out at nights. We have been ordered to Cairo so we will see a good deal of Egypt. I don't think the war will last long. Kitchener is pushing Indian troops to the front as fast as they can be got across. There are 50,000 troops from India a day's sail behind us. We expect to get to Cairo about Wednesday. I don't think many of the troops will be sorry to get off the ship. Jack and I will be travelled persons by the time we get back to Brisbane ..."*

Carry on, Rigby – Part 1

From George to his sister, Ethel, dated 4 December 1914 – *“We are to camp at the foot of the Pyramids. From what I can gather from the natives it appears that there are 14,000 Egyptians in camp out there also. We just had a concert in our mess. I sang “Love I am lonely” but they did not seem at all taken with it as they simply howled me down. PS. Remember me to any of the Yeronga people you come across.”*

Right: On the reverse of this postcard Jack writes: *“B Company Xmas Dinner in our Mess Room. Each Company has a Room like this. Mena, Cairo 10/1/15.”*



On 1st December the *Omrah* sailed through the Suez Canal, docking at Alexandria on 6 December. The troops boarded a train to Cairo, and from there went to the nearby Mena Camp. The next few days were spent settling in, after which basic training commenced in earnest. Egypt was a completely unexpected adventure for the Australians. The Pyramids overlooked the camp, and at every opportunity the men explored these and the many exotic features of Cairo, including venturing to the suburb of Heliopolis to visit Luna Park, the amusement park that was soon to be commandeered for use by the No. 1 Australian General Hospital.

It is clear from family correspondence that Jack and George managed to stay in contact with each other while they were at Mena Camp, in spite of their difference in rank. Their longer letters home have been lost over time, but a number of short postcards that they sent back to Yeronga have survived and these present something of a snapshot of their lives while in Egypt, as seen in the short excerpts below:

At Mena Camp in Cairo, Egypt:

From Jack to “Mother & all”, dated 10 December 1914 – *“The camp is marvelous and we are enjoying ourselves very much ... we are camped just below the Pyramids and Sphinx”.*

From Jack to his sister, Ethel, dated 28 December 1914 – *“Dear Eckley, I do hope you are not worrying about your little brothers, we are both well and happy and big as elephants. It seems years since we left home, but I don’t think it will be long before we are on our way back. This is a fine experience and training. I am quite sure we have all seen the sights around Cairo, it is such a quaint place”.*



Above: On the reverse of this photographic postcard sent by Jack he writes: *“A portion of the Church Parade of our Brigade. The sermon is now on, Clergyman standing on hill in rear. Mena, Cairo 7/2/15.”*

Carry on, Rigby – Part 1

From Jack to his sister, Lyl, dated 28 December 1914 – *“Egypt is not a bad place, Lyl, plenty of quaint places to see & the customs of the Egyptians and Arabs are quite funny. This place has every nationality in the world ... Don’t worry, war news excellent, likely to stay here until after war. George and I [are] very well”.*

From Jack to his youngest brother, Hubert, dated 31 January 1915 – *“Dear Chub, Don’t forget to write a lot to both of us. George is up near the Pyramids today, having a look round the place ... There are a few desert rabbits about here, Chub, and some Jackalls called the Egyptian Wolf”.*



Above: On the reverse of this postcard sent from Jack to his sister Ethel he writes: *“We are A1. This is a photo of one of our Field Kitchens. Writing to you next week. Lots and lots of fondest love, from Jack. Mena Camp, Cairo 22/2/15.”*



Above: Jack Rigby, Insurance Clerk.

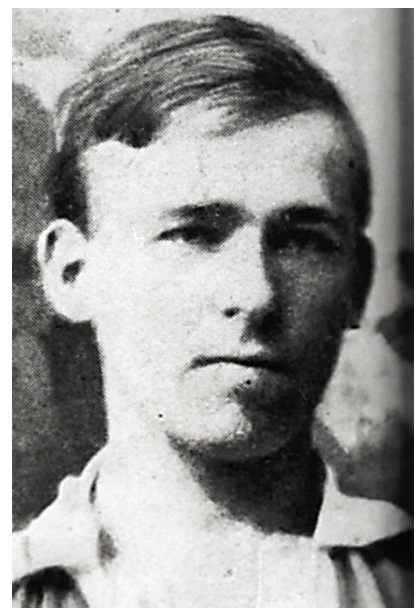
From Jack to his sister, Ethel, dated 31 January 1915 – *“George and I are very well and happy, Ethel. The war news is splendid, the Allies are advancing everywhere and gaining great victories ... Don’t forget to write often and tell us all about the Family and any news ... Cheer up, we are as safe as the Bank of England. Lots and lots of love from Jack”.*

From Jack to his sister, Ethel, dated 6 February 1915 – *“Cairo is the same as ever, nothing startling. We are getting tons of work, 8 hours a day and one day off per week. We had another day of sand storm on Thursday, it was the worst we have yet had ... George and I could not be in better health, we have had very little sickness of any kind over here”.*

From Jack to his sister, Lyl, dated 6 February 1915 – *“We are quite good at soldiering now, Lyl ... A soldier’s life is not half bad, of course we have to be up to scratch in everything we do. I believe we could stand anything now, [we’re] as hard as blazes. The war news is very, very good, I am sure it will not last much longer ...”*

From George to his sister, Lyl, dated 7 February 1915 – *“Dear Lyllis, By Jove Egypt is a great place. I am having the time of my life. You must not worry about us, we are both in perfect health”.*

From George to his sister, Lyl, dated 27 February 1915 – *“My dear Lyllis, We are having a high old time still but the novelty is all beginning to wear off. We hear that there has been a nasty report sent to Australia about us. It is all rot, perhaps there are 500 men out of over 30,000 Australians making fools of themselves. The Turks have given up the idea of attacking the Suez so I am afraid we will not get a chance to have a shot at them but we hope to get a move to France shortly, in which case we will get all the fighting we want. Love to all, George.”*



Right: George Henry Rigby.

Postcards home from Mena Camp in Cairo:



10/12/14.
 My Dear Mother & All,
 We are both well & happy, we are very comfortable in camp here. You will all be very happy to know we are stationed here, it is a very fine place. The camp is marvellous & we are enjoying ourselves very much. I am writing a long letter to you Mum, you will get it in the next mail. We are camped just below the Pyramids & Sphinx. I do hope you are all very well & happy Mum. We tell you all the news in the letter. Well good-bye, Mum. Lots & lots of love to all. from Jack

Mrs W. A. Rigby
 Yeronga
 Brisbane
 Queensland
 Australia

Cairo 28/12/14.
 My dear Lyl,
 I have no idea whether you are at home or at Stanthorpe, we will not receive any letters from Australia until they have decided what they are going to do with the 2nd contingent for some reason or other. George & I are very well & happy. I do hope you are all very well. I hope 1915 will prove a very happy year for all of us Lyl. I tell you all the news in Mother's letters. Well Lyl love to you all, I am at present in charge of a Guard over the Turkish stores, a very good place to be. Love from. Jack

I am sending this post card in an envelope Lyl, so I will write on this note as well. Egypt is not a bad place Lyl, plenty quaint places to see & the customs of the Egyptian & Arab are quite funny. This place has every nationality in the world the majority being Egyptians & French. We are right at the foot of the Pyramids & Sphinx. All these post cards are photos of places & things we have seen. We are it's over here Lyl everybody bows down to the Australian. Well Lyl old girl, I will write often. Lots & lots of fondest love, to all. Don't worry. War news excellent, likely to stay here until after War. George & I very well. Love from. Jack



Mena Camps
 Cairo
 27/12/1915

My dear Lyls,
 I suppose you are home again by now. We are having a high old time still - but the novelty is all beginning to wear off. We hear that there has been a very nasty report sent to Australia about us. It is all not perhaps, there are 500 men out of over 30,000 Australians making fools of themselves. The Turks have given up the idea of attacking the Suez. I am afraid we will not get a chance to have a shot at them but we hope to get a move to France shortly in which case we will get all the fighting we want.
 Love to all
 George

Mena Camps
 Cairo
 31/1/15

UNION POSTALE UNIVERSELLE
 CARTE POSTALE

Cartolina postale - Levezo-lap - Postcard - Postkarte
 Briefkart - Turjeta postal - Омскпосмое нуч.но

W ear Ethel,
 How is Bundaberg, I suppose you are back by this. I do hope it is getting cooler over there. George & I are very well & happy Ethel. The War news is splendid, the Allies are advancing everywhere & gaining great victories. All the news is in Mother's letter Ethel. Don't forget to write often & tell us all about the Family & any news. Well Ethel I will say good-bye. I do hope you are all very well. Lots & Lots of love from Jack
 cheer up we are as safe as the Bank of England.

Carry on, Rigby – Part 1

The troops were getting restless and were feeling excluded from the wider war that was raging in France, and so there was much enthusiasm when word came that they were to leave Egypt. The 3rd Brigade was to be the first to sail, and on 28 February the 9th Battalion marched away from Mena Camp with the military band playing, first to Cairo, and then by train to Alexandria where they boarded the troopship *Ionion* on 1st March. The troops were disappointed to find that the ship was just a 'filthy old tub' and they quickly dubbed it the "One-onion".⁵

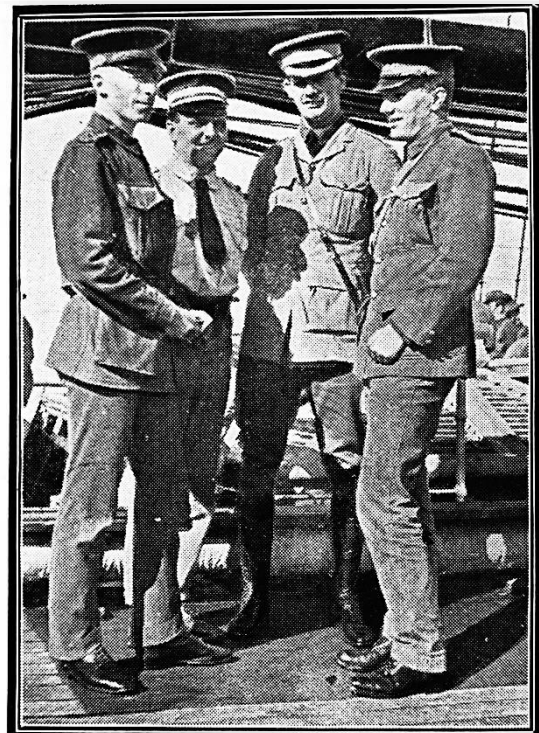
The 9th Battalion was not alone on the *Ionion*, as Colonel Sinclair-MacLagan and his brigade headquarters staff were quartered on board. Companies of the 10th, 11th, and 12th Battalions may also have been on board this ship and on other transports that included the *Suffolk* and the *Nizam*. Their destination was kept secret until after sailing, which was then found to be the Greek island of Lemnos in the Aegean Sea. The Anzac troops finally understood that they were not going to France, but were instead destined to fight the Turks at the Dardanelles.

Mudros was just a tiny Greek fishing village on Lemnos, but Mudros Harbour was a good anchorage that was already the base for British naval operations against the Dardanelles. The Australian troops encountered problems on arrival, however, in that water supplies were limited and there were insufficient tents for more than one battalion to be landed. The decision of who was to camp ashore was made by the toss of a coin, and it was won by Jack and George's 9th Battalion. They pitched tents on shore, but nonetheless had a miserable time of it sleeping in the rain that fell on their first night.⁶ Things were hardly better for the troops who had remained on board. Waste from the horses and mules that were quartered above leaked to where men ate below, and to conserve water the men were denied showers or baths. Many soldiers became angry at the deplorable conditions on board.

Lemnos Island was nonetheless regarded by the Aussies as "not a bad little place", and everything seemed to be green and fresh after the sands of Egypt. It was agricultural land, with old-fashioned windmills for grinding corn.⁷ Preparations for the Gallipoli assault continued apace and disembarkation procedures were repeatedly practiced. While the repetitive training may have been exasperating for the troops, the experience of being at Lemnos at this time must have been extraordinary. Warships and troopships were arriving daily, with English, French, and Indian troops sharing the harbour with the Anzacs. There was a vast gathering of all types of vessels in the harbour, from huge Cunard liners and great battleships, torpedo boats and submarines, including the Australian submarine *AE2*, and smaller craft such as trawlers, tugs, and pinnaces. The world's first aircraft carrier *Ark Royal* was there, as was the super-dreadnought *Queen Elizabeth*, the largest warship then afloat with eight main guns that fired 15-inch shells. The harbour must have been an awe-inspiring sight for the troops that were there.⁸

The day finally came when training ceased. On 24 April the troops of the 9th Battalion, with Lieutenant Jack Rigby in B Company and with Corporal George Rigby now in A Company, disembarked from the transport *Malda* where they had been training for disembarkation and landing since 8 April. They moved on to the destroyer HMS *Scourge* before being ferried to the British battleship HMS *Queen*. That afternoon many of the men attended their last church service on board, and a concert by the ship's crew and a hot dinner followed.⁹

Right: This classic photograph and caption comes from the *Roll of Honour* pages that were printed in *The Queenslander* on 15 May, 1915. Lieutenant Jack Rigby can be seen standing at the left. It is likely that this picture was taken on board the transport ship *Malda*, where the 9th Battalion was quartered between 8 April and 24 April.



AN INTERESTING PHOTO.

This interesting snapshot was taken on board a transport. It is rather remarkable that the three officers on the left (Lieutenant Rigby, Lieutenant Haymen, and Major Robertson) should have been killed, and the officer on the right (Lieutenant Jones) wounded.

Jack Rigby



Both A and B Companies of the 9th Battalion were among the very first to land on the Gallipoli shoreline, arriving in darkness just before 4.30 am on 25 April. This was about one hour later than was originally intended, and the men were also surprised to find themselves a little further north than was expected. This caused some initial confusion and led to some mixing of men from different units, but they nonetheless quickly began moving up the cliffs and inland towards their objectives. These men formed part of the covering force for the assault; their job was to provide an advance guard and move inland quickly so as to allow the main body of the Anzac force to disembark safely behind them. Critical to the success of the invasion was for our troops to occupy the high ground of the Sari Bair Range, including the heights of Baby 700, Battleship Hill, and the peaks beyond Chunuk Bair, and also to secure the high country along Third Ridge that ran between the Sari Bair Range and Gaba Tepe on the coast.¹⁰

Major Sydney Beresford Robertson, commanding B Company, led his men including Jack Rigby's platoon up to what became known as Plugge's Plateau, and by 5.00 am most of the first wave of troops had reached that point. Major Alfred Salisbury of the 9th was at this time the most senior officer at the front line. He set off with most of the 9th Battalion towards Bolton's Ridge and the 400 Plateau, while Robertson took his men up Monash Valley and headed left towards the high point of Baby 700. Robertson encountered Captain Joseph Peter Lalor of the 12th Battalion there, and it was agreed that the combined party should occupy Baby 700, just beyond a feature called The Nek. Captain Lalor

was a grandson of the Peter Lalor who had famously led the 1854 rebellion at the Eureka Stockade and was later elected to the Victorian Legislative Assembly. Captain Lalor, Major Robertson, and Lieutenant Jack Rigby, all members of the United Service Institution in Brisbane, now found themselves in close proximity to each other at this strategic point of Baby 700.

By 9 am a small party of the 11th Battalion under Captain Eric Tulloch had managed to move further ahead and had occupied a critical site at Battleship Hill, and later reinforcements increased his strength to around 180 men in total. Other small forward parties under Lieutenants Loutit, Plant, and Haig had reached their own objective further south on Third Ridge. At around this time, however, things started to unravel for the Anzacs. Men were now ordered to dig in instead of proceeding forward, and newly arriving reinforcements were increasingly sent towards the right flank at Bolton's Ridge and along Second Ridge rather than left to take control of the Sari Bair Range, or forward to bolster Loutit's small party on Third Ridge.

Turkish units soon arrived to occupy those important heights. Lieutenant Colonel Mehmet Sefik, the able commander of the Turkish 27th Regiment, had established his command post at Hill 165 by 8 am and had fully positioned his troops on Third Ridge, opposite Lone Pine, by 10.30 am. The Turkish 57th Regiment, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Mustafa Kemal, was now moving to take control of the Sari Bair heights. The first combined counter attack by these Turkish regiments was launched at 12.30 pm, with savage fighting in front of Lone Pine and against Tulloch's meagre force on Battleship Hill. Tulloch finally ordered a withdrawal from Battleship Hill sometime after 1 pm, falling back with his surviving men to Baby 700. This now became the focus of the battle on the northern flank, and the fighting everywhere was brutal. Sergeant Fred Coe of the 9th Battalion Scouts, a British-born banana farmer from North Queensland, was later to write home that:

"It was at 2 o'clock when we got it heavy. We were on the extreme left flank and at 2.30 the Turks put six battalions on us. We, on the left, got a goodly share of them, as it was the key of the position, for if they beat us back they could have infiladed the centre and the right, so there was no retiring where we were."¹¹

Carry on, Rigby – Part 1

Another soldier later wrote that:

*"The Turks had come back with reinforcements, and a howitzer battery ... it was hardly possible for a rabbit to live in the fire we were under. Put your head up, and whiz went past half-a-dozen bullets. Our chaps, and the officers especially, were going down by the dozens. I had some awfully narrow escapes."*¹²

The first of the New Zealand troops from the Auckland Battalion arrived to reinforce the Baby 700 position at around 2.30 pm, but it was sadly a case of too little, too late. On the right flank of the hill they found that the Australian line had ceased to exist:

*"Every man there had been killed or wounded. They had fought on unsupported, rather than retire."*¹³

On the seaward slope of Baby 700, where Robertson, Rigby, and Lalor were fighting with their men, the situation was just as grim. Turkish soldiers had managed to move around the ridge and the defenders were now suffering casualties from both their front and from the seaward flank.

The Official History as written by Charles Bean states the following:

*"Officers and men lying in the scrub were caught, one after another, by the scattered bullets. Major S. B. Robertson, thrice wounded, raised himself to look forward and was shot. "Carry on, Rigby," he said to a junior beside him, and died. Lieutenant W. J. Rigby "carried on" until he too was killed."*¹⁴

We cannot know if the words "Carry on, Rigby" were ever actually said by Major Robertson, but this phrase was most likely an embellishment by Bean. Sergeant Fred Coe, in the letter he wrote later from his hospital bed, suggested a slightly different version of events:

*"Major Robertson told me to hold a trench with 32 men and went away to get reinforcements for us. He was bowled over by a burst of shrapnel, and died a brave gentleman. Lieutenant Rigby got a bullet soon afterwards, and shrapnel completed his short career as a soldier – a very short one, but he died, another good example to all, in the very first line of fire, where he had been all day. At half-past five, out of the 33 we had in the trench, only two were left, and we were forced to retire ... Of our original 70, under Major Robertson, I think only 6 are left."*¹⁵



Above and previous page: Two portrait photographs of Lieutenant Jack Rigby.

Sergeant Coe was presumably the wounded sergeant who later, at the Australian Hospital in Cairo, let it be known that he had been "only a yard or so from Rigby when he was killed."¹⁶

It is now clear that Jack Rigby was killed at around 2.30 pm on that first day at Gallipoli, about 10 hours after landing upon the beach, and close to where Lalor and Robertson were also killed. Those first days of the campaign inflicted a cruel casualty rate on the troops from both sides. The 9th Battalion, for example, managed to gather behind the front lines for a parade and roll call on 30 April. Of 1023 soldiers who had fought, only 419 remained to answer the call. The rest of the battalion were either dead, wounded, or missing.¹⁷

Jack Rigby is remembered on the Australian War Memorial Roll of Honour and at both the Beach Cemetery and the Lone Pine Memorial at Anzac Cove, Gallipoli. His name appears locally on the Cenotaph at the Yeronga Memorial Park and he also has the first plaque at the Park Road end of Honour Avenue, just inside the entry gates. In addition, he is now also remembered at Rigby Place in Yeronga.

Carry on, Rigby – Part 1

In Memory of

Lieutenant W. J. “Jack” Rigby – Killed at Gallipoli 25 April 1915.



Above: The unveiling of the Rigby Place sign at Heritage Close at Yeronga happened on Monday 26 August 2019. From left are: Ray Steele, Kevin Smith, Cr Nicole Johnston, Noelene Blatch, Margaret Thomas, Bob Steele, and the President of the Yeronga-Dutton Park RSL, Ross Wiseman. Ray, Kevin, Noelene, Margaret and Bob all descend from George Henry Rigby.



Above: Three local tribute sites that acknowledge Lieutenant W. J. Rigby, from left, are:

1. The Cenotaph at Yeronga Memorial Park, which features a marble tablet that is inscribed with the names of the 96 soldiers from Stephens Shire who died in the First World War, and W. J. Rigby is among these;
2. The Honour Plaque pictured here was the original memorial post for Jack Rigby in Honour Avenue, which was located beside the first memorial tree just inside the entry gates from Park Road at Yeronga. Sadly, most or all of these posts were either stolen or damaged over the years, and so new ones have since replaced the original markers; and
3. The beautifully carved Honour Roll at the United Services Club in Wickham Terrace, Spring Hill, which can be viewed at the entry foyer. Jack Rigby's name is listed fourth up from the bottom.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to acknowledge the invaluable assistance and support given by the late Judith Smith, who was a daughter of George Henry Rigby. I met Judith a couple of times during the 1990s to discuss our common Mitchell family history. She was a dedicated family historian who collected, collated and preserved much of the Rigby history and memorabilia, and she was most generous with the help that she gave to me. Much of Judith's material was later bequeathed to her daughter, Noelene Blatch, who has been similarly generous in allowing fresh access to Judith's records. I sincerely thank Noelene for allowing her photographs, postcards and other material to be presented in this article, and for her assistance in preparing this material.

I would like to acknowledge the work of Keith McPhee, who has provided background information about many of the returned veterans on the *Discovering Anzacs* website. This material has been of great benefit to me, especially his entry for Gordon Rigby, who left us with little personal information in the way of postcards and letters.

I would also like to acknowledge members of the Yeronga-Dutton Park RSL Sub Branch who have been supportive both in telling the story of Jack Rigby and in helping to secure the naming of Rigby Place at Heritage Close in Yeronga. In particular I offer my thanks to Ruby Luder, who as a former secretary of the RSL gave early support to promoting Jack's story; to Brenda Christiansen; and to Ross Wiseman, who as President also attended the unveiling of Rigby Place.

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Endnotes

1. From the Trove website. Refer to page 3 of the *Brisbane Courier* on 8 February 1893. This section also appeared in a long story about the flood that appeared on Saturday 11 February 1893 in the *Warwick Examiner and Times* (Qld.: 1867 – 1919) Page 5 – The Brisbane Flood.
2. Chris Roberts in the second edition of *The Landing at Anzac 1915*, of the Australian Army Campaigns Series, gives a brief but clear account in Chapter 3 of the changes that took place in military training at this time.
3. These details of the first troop convoy that departed from Western Australia were taken from the Australian Navy website at: <https://www.navy.gov.au/history/feature-histories/australian-sea-transport-1914>.
4. Kirsty Adams, *Red Reflections on the Sea: Australian Army Nurses serving at Sea in World War 1*, as published in the *Journal of Australian Naval History Vol.6 No.2*, 2009; page 54. In this article it is stated that 36 sailors and 14 officers from the *Emden* were taken aboard the *Sydney*.
The quoted figure of 44 German survivors being brought on board the *Omrah* has been taken from Adam Holloway's book, *Duty Nobly Done*, Big Sky Publishing Pty Ltd., 2018. Chapter 2: Farewell Australia, p16.
In the AIF war diaries for the 9th Infantry Battalion, dated 16 November 1914 at Colombo, it states that 2 officers, 2 warrant officers, and 40 ratings from the *Emden* were received on *Omrah* from HMS *Hampshire*, and were put under guard.
5. Adam Holloway, *Duty Nobly Done*, Big Sky Publishing Pty Ltd., 2018. Chapter 3: A Slight Change of Plan, p20.
6. Hugh Dolan, *36 Days – The Untold Story Behind the Gallipoli Landings*, Pan Macmillan Australia Pty Ltd., 2010. Chapter 3: 18 - 20 March 1915: The failure of the naval bombardment, p20.
7. Philip Owen Ayton, *Hell of a Time – An Australian Soldier's Diary of the Great War*, Text Publishing Company, 2019. Part 1: August 1914 – June 1915, pp 21 – 23.
8. For a comprehensive description of the island of Lemnos, as written in a diary by a New Zealand infantryman who arrived in mid-campaign with reinforcements, readers are recommended *Gallipoli to the Somme – Recollections of a New Zealand Infantryman* by Alexander Aitken, published by Auckland University Press in 2018. Aitken offers

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a unique perspective of the island, and he gives a particularly touching account of the moment when his group joined with the main body of NZ troops who had been evacuated for rest after the August offensive on Gallipoli. Given the importance of Lemnos to our Anzac soldiers before and during the campaign, including the repatriation of many of our wounded soldiers to and from there, it is surprising that Lemnos is not more often visited as a part of what has become an annual Gallipoli pilgrimage.

9. Adam Holloway, *Duty Nobly Done*, Big Sky Publishing Pty Ltd., 2018. Chapter 3: A Slight Change of Plan, pp24–25.
10. Chris Roberts, *The Landing at Anzac 1915*, of the Australian Army Campaigns Series from the Army History Unit, Second Edition, published in 2015 by Big Sky Publishing, Sydney. Refer to Chapter 5: An Amphibious Operation, pp 81 – 86.
11. This quote from Scout Sergeant Fred Coe's letter has been copied from an entry on the *Discovering Anzacs* website, co-hosted by the National Archives of Australia and Archives NZ. This entry was posted by "peteb480" on 24 April 2017 and was sourced from Coe's original letter that appeared on page 7 of the *Brisbane Courier* on 18 August 1915. This website entry for Scout Sergeant Frederick Charles Coe can be found with his file at: [https://discoveringanzacs.naa.gov.au/browse/person/122375#\\$story-8588](https://discoveringanzacs.naa.gov.au/browse/person/122375#$story-8588)
12. This unidentified quote has been taken from the entry for Major Sydney Beresford Robertson, written by Lieutenant Colonel Christopher Akeroyd (Retired), that appears on the website of the United Service Club at the "Honour Roll Great War: History & Heritage Notes" section.
13. Chris Roberts, *The Landing at Anzac 1915*, of the Australian Army Campaigns Series from the Army History Unit, Second Edition, published in 2015 by Big Sky Publishing, Sydney. Refer to Chapter 10: Counter-Attack, p 156, with the quote from Second Lieutenant Spencer Westmacott of the Auckland Battalion.
14. Bean, C. E. W., *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918*, Vol. I, *The Story of Anzac*, first published by Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1921. The edition reviewed here was published by the University of Queensland Press in 1981. Refer to page 298 in Chapter XIII: *BABY 700*.
15. This quote from Scout Sergeant Fred Coe's letter has been copied from an entry on the *Discovering Anzacs* website, co-hosted by the National Archives of Australia and Archives NZ. This was sourced from Coe's original letter that appeared on page 7 of the *Brisbane Courier* on 18 August 1915.
16. *Brisbane Grammar School Magazine*; Vol. XVII, August 1915, No. 50; in the section titled *How Some Of Our Old Boys Died* on page 17, supplied by Brisbane Grammar School.
17. Adam Holloway, *Duty Nobly Done*, Big Sky Publishing Pty Ltd., 2018. Chapter 5: Triumph to Tragedy, p47. Not all of those soldiers who presented at the 30th April parade were still fit enough for a quick return to battle. The 9th Battalion war diary states that on the same day the battalion was detailed to "*occupy the right flank of the position*", and that their effective strength was just 9 officers and 280 men.