

THE LOST BOYS

The untold stories of the under-age soldiers
who fought in the First World War

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FOREWORD

*They shall not grow old as we that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun, and in the morning
We will remember them.*

'For the Fallen', Laurence Binyon

PRIVATE MILLER MAFFEKING FERGUSSON, from Quorn, South Australia, arrived in France on 9 April 1917 as a reinforcement. Nearly a month later, on 5 May, he received multiple gunshot wounds during the 27th Battalion's attack near Bapaume in the Somme Valley. He was taken back to the 3rd Casualty Clearing Station but died a few hours later. He is buried in the nearby Grevillers British war cemetery. He had claimed to be eighteen years old when he enlisted, but he was really sixteen years and four months old. His two older brothers, Thomas and William, also served; both survived. Miller's distinctive middle name – although misspelled – commemorates a famous siege in the Boer War, which concluded with a British victory six months before he was born. Private Fergusson was one of several thousand under-age boys who served in the Anzac forces in the First World War. Most of their stories have never been told.



In the First World War of 1914–1918, thousands of Australian and New Zealand boys lied about their ages, forged a parent’s signature and went off to fight in a war on the other side of the world. They found they could die as well as any man, but they could never grow old. Like Peter Pan’s lost boys, they have remained forever young.

One hundred years later, they’re all gone, but how well do we remember them? Australian historians have written little about them, perhaps because in a war of such profound horror and loss, this story is just one tragedy among many. Tens of millions died in those four years, many of them civilians. Why should we remember these headstrong lads, many of whom were almost men? No-one forced them to go, after all.

Nor is it surprising that boys as young as twelve wanted to go. Teenage boys have always been in a hurry to prove

their manhood, to escape family authority, to take part in adventures. What’s surprising to us now is that their parents let them go: did they not care about their children? Did they value patriotism and duty above their own offspring? Has the world changed that much? This book is an attempt to understand, rather than condemn, but there is much to understand. Australia in 1914 was almost a different country.



The idea for this book began in Ypres in Belgium in June 2017, almost a century after the first rumblings of the Battle of Passchendaele. I was there to research another project on the Western Front when I came across a list of 170 under-age soldiers who were on the Australian War Memorial’s Roll

BOY 1ST CLASS RONALD ROTHSAW WRIGHT was fourteen when he enlisted in 1915 and served on HMAS *Sydney*. Hailing from Semaphore, South Australia, he died from injuries sustained in heavy seas off Norway in December 1916.



of Honour. I knew what that meant: none of them came back. The Roll of Honour records the Australian dead from all conflicts – more than 100,000 names, of whom 62,000 died in the First World War. Those 170 boys represent a tiny percentage of the 62,000, but the list is a work in progress. The legal age of enlistment in 1914 in Australia was between nineteen and thirty-eight, so the Australian War Memorial initially only included boys under eighteen. When eighteen-

year-olds are included, the list will grow.

Each under-age boy on that list had a short biography, enough to form an idea of each soldier. These fragments were remarkable: heartbreaking, but full of daring, ingenuity and recklessness, random horror and capricious luck. The more I dug, the richer the details became. Jennifer Milward, who put that list together, aided enormously with that task.

A few stories on that list stood out. There was William Arthur Leslie Richards, aged sixteen, who joined a Newcastle battalion in which his former teacher was now his officer. There was fifteen-year-old Jack Harris from Sydney, who died at Lone Pine, eighteen hours after arriving on Gallipoli, because his

officer had a death wish. And there was Leslie Thomas Prior, from Melbourne, who could not stay out of trouble. He died at Bullecourt, a battle that should

They may have been too young, too wild and too full of romantic ideas for their own good, but these boys had grit.

never have happened, three months after his fifteenth birthday. He was the second-youngest Australian to die in the First World War, and the youngest to be killed in action.

As appalling as some of their stories are, they are not all tragedies. Some of the boys lived through the war and restarted their lives. The youngest Anzac is a New Zealander, Leslie Shaw, who

enlisted at thirteen and eight months. He survived the battlefields to live an adventurous life after the war.

This book offers just a small selection of these boys' stories, arranged as a chronology, taking the reader through the war from Gallipoli to the Armistice. I have tried to address aspects of history through each story, assuming that some readers will have little knowledge of this war. I have done that partly because I hope young people will read it.

Anzac Day remains an important day in our culture, but the ways and means of commemoration in Australia have long been dominated by militarists, rather than pacifists. We remember our soldiers with sorrow, but not why they went or who sent them. We justify their suffering with words like 'hero' and 'sacrifice'. The stories of these boy soldiers are sometimes heroic, but that was not my purpose in writing about them. If we remember them, we should also remember that they should never have been there. It's right to ask why they went and who allowed them to go, lest it should happen again. In that sense, it was *not* a

different Australia that sent them.

As they prepared for war, some of these boys had splendid photographs taken by professional photographers who worked around the training camps in Australia and behind the lines in France and Belgium. Many families have kept these as cherished records and reminders of their loved ones. I thank those who shared them. They are all acknowledged at the end of the book.

I have tried to find relatives of most of the people in this book, with limited success. I would be pleased to hear from anyone who can add more to these stories.

They may have been too young, too wild and too full of romantic ideas for their own good, but these boys had grit. Their stories are a microcosm of the Australian experience in the First World War: they ate the same food and fought the same fights as the older men, suffered the same privations, indignities and losses, endured or did not as temperament and fate decided. Some of them became men in the process, old before their time. Others never got the chance. 🍷

ALBERT SCOTT,
JOHN LYONS
& HUGHIE
O'DONNELL

OUR THREE SONS

ALBERT SCOTT, a Queensland cane-cutter, was 'thoroughly
anxious to serve' in the First World War when he was seventeen.



When war broke out, Andrew Fisher was about to become prime minister of Australia for the third time in six years. He was a quietly spoken Scot, a miner who had migrated to Australia in 1885. He had led the Australian Labor Party since 1907, guided by firm socialist principles and a high sense of humanity.

The idea of war appalled him but his loyalty to Great Britain was firm, even if his belief in its greatness was qualified.

At the end of July 1914, as the drums beat their loudest in Europe, Fisher pledged Australian support for the Mother Country if war should come. Fisher won the election on 5 September 1914, a month into the war. On 7 September he gave a speech from a hotel balcony in Maryborough, Queensland, in which he repeated his

now famous phrase: Australia would support Britain ‘to the last man and the last shilling’ against its foes. The crowd cheered lustily.

A few kilometres from this hotel balcony, Albert Stanley Scott ‘heard the call’. He was the fifth son of Joseph

and Eliza Scott, who had lived in Gympie in earlier years. They now grew sugar cane in a beautiful valley at Mount Bauple, halfway between Gympie and Maryborough. Before they met and married in Brisbane, Joe Scott had followed the

Older boys could go to war as heroes, with a party and cheers, and crying mothers and sisters waving handkerchiefs and flags. Boys who were under-age had to steal away and be cunning about it.

same path as Andrew Fisher – leaving Britain for a better future. The Scotts almost certainly knew Fisher, who had come to Gympie as a miner in 1887.

After his schooling at Mount Bauple, Albert Scott went cutting cane – back-breaking physical work. The photograph

taken just after he enlisted shows he had the hands to prove it. He looks like he's wearing leather gloves. Even so, at five feet six-and-a-half inches (168 centimetres), he was just tall enough to get into the army. He was a skinny fifty-seven kilograms, with tanned face and ears that look like they could have lifted him off the ground in a high wind. With seven brothers and three sisters, those ears are bound to have attracted comment.

Recruiting began in Melbourne on 5 August and in Sydney six days later. Men had to be between nineteen and thirty-eight, at least five feet six inches tall (168 centimetres) with a chest measurement of at least thirty-four inches (eighty-six centimetres). If under twenty-one, they had to have the written consent of a parent. Albert set off for the recruiting station with a letter signed by both parents. 'We trust you will endeavour to pass him as he is thoroughly anxious to serve in some capacity.'

Enlisting at Maryborough on 23 September, he was one month past his seventeenth birthday, although he claimed

to be eighteen. The recruiters sent him to Enoggera Camp in Brisbane – where the 15th Battalion was being raised.



In central Victoria, John Thomas Lyons also 'heard the call'. This was a popular patriotic phrase at the time. It's probably fair to say that each man and boy heard a different call, whatever it was – for some it was the Empire, for others it was duty or God or adventure. For some it was an escape from poverty or misery.

John Lyons was the eldest in a large Catholic family that would eventually number eleven children – same as the Scotts. They lived in South Murchison, where John Thomas senior was a 'channel overseer', working on the Goulburn Weir.

John Thomas junior was sixteen and a few months old. Older boys could go to war as heroes, with a party and cheers, and crying mothers and sisters waving handkerchiefs and flags. Boys who were under-age had to steal away and be cunning about it. John had a friend who wanted to go too. They knew the train

to Melbourne would be the first place people would look, so they hopped on their bicycles in August 1914 and took the road north towards Shepparton. So began a very long ride to Sydney, more than 700 kilometres away. That they chose this path, rather than ride 170 kilometres to Melbourne, tells us something about how determined they were.

John knew it would take at least a week, maybe more. They would have to avoid the towns in daylight, in case a policeman was looking for them. They would have to sleep rough or in farm sheds, but the farmers might give them food and water, if they explained what they were doing. They would not be the only ones on this road: many men who didn't have the money for the train were walking to Sydney to join up. There were no country enlistment centres yet.

John made it to Sydney by early September. On 3 September, the Australian government offered Britain a second contingent of 6000 men, on top of the 20,000 already promised. This was the day that John Lyons signed his papers. He listed his occupation

as labourer and was assigned to A Company, 3rd Battalion.

He claimed he was nineteen years and two months – adding about thirty-two months. He gave his correct birthplace – Murchison, Victoria – but put down the name of his second brother Victor as next of kin. Curiously, he did not bother to change his name. The examining doctor described John as five feet six inches tall (168 centimetres) and 149 pounds (sixty-eight kilograms), complexion fair, eyes blue, hair brown. That doctor was Captain JWB Bean, brother of the Australian journalist, Charles Bean, who was preparing to depart as Australia's first and only war correspondent of this new war.

Captain Bean had qualified in medicine at Cambridge and specialised in anaesthetics and dentistry. It tells us something about the leniency of recruiting in 1914 that a man as experienced as Bean would allow a boy of sixteen to join the battalion, but he was hardly alone. Medical officers all over the country turned a blind eye to those under nineteen. In the case of John Lyons, they even took him

when there were many older men trying to find a place in the new forces.

John's plan worked. He spent the next six weeks hiding in plain sight, as the unit received equipment and stores in dribs and drabs. They were camped at Kensington Racecourse, a pony track now long gone, where the training was as primitive as the facilities. The men of the first contingent could march in step, but few knew one end of a rifle from the other, and discipline was sometimes optional. Colonel Henry MacLaurin, commander of the 1st Brigade, complained that the hurried recruitment had drawn 'all the wastrels of the city'. The September arrivals from the country, like John, were considered much more suitable. They were bigger, stronger, fitter and most of them already knew how to shoot.

John left Sydney on the *Euripides*, on 20 October 1914. He hit the jackpot in terms of vessel: *Euripides* was the largest passenger and cargo ship in the Aberdeen White Star Line, built to carry 1200 paying passengers. After a lightning refit in Brisbane, she could

now carry twenty-nine officers, 2202 other ranks (and fifteen horses). The great danger on these ships, with so many men packed in, was infectious disease. Steaming away from Sydney, the *Euripides* already had eight men in the sick bay with gonorrhoea, and one case of measles.

Euripides arrived in King George's Sound, off Albany in Western Australia, on 26 October, joining thirty-six other transport ships in the first Anzac convoy. They sailed on 1 November – 30,000 men and 8000 horses, on twenty-six Australian and ten New Zealand ships, guarded by three escorts: HMS *Minotaur*, HMAS *Melbourne* and HMAS *Sydney*. The Japanese armoured cruiser *Ibuki* joined them two days later with two more transport ships out of Fremantle. This convoy, twenty-four kilometres long and nineteen kilometres wide, was the largest ever to leave Australia.

None of the soldiers on board knew where they were going, but they all knew it was going to be big – the most wonderful and terrible adventure. The



terrible started immediately: thousands were seasick. The smell of vomit and horse shit must have been overpowering.



Ten days after John Lyons sailed, Hugh Brian O'Donnell presented himself for medical examination at the Kalgoorlie recruiting office. Dr Samuel Mathews looked him over and saw a splendid lad, five feet eleven inches (180 centimetres) tall, weighing 126 pounds (fifty-seven kilograms), with blue eyes and fair hair. Hughie said he was a miner from nearby Kanowna, where his parents ran a pub. He claimed to be nineteen years old, and Mathews did not argue. Hundreds of miners from Kalgoorlie, Kanowna and Boulder were already on their way to war in the first convoy. Hughie arrived at Blackboy Hill in Perth two days later and was allocated to C Company, 11th Battalion. Hughie had not lied about anything

except his age on his forms, which suggests he had his parents' blessing. He put his mother Lily as next of kin. His real age was sixteen and two months.

After basic training at Blackboy Hill, he shipped out in late February on the transport ship *Itonus* from Fremantle, bound for Egypt.



While John Lyons was on a ship heading north, cane-cutter Albert Scott was on a train heading south for Melbourne. The 15th Battalion was comprised mostly of Queenslanders but a quarter were from Tasmania. The two groups were about to meet at Broadmeadows Camp.

They were now part of the 4th Brigade, a dinkum coalition of men from every state, under John Monash, a portly and ambitious civil engineer from Melbourne. The 13th Battalion was from New South Wales, the 14th

PRIVATE HUGHIE O'DONNELL, from Kanowna, Western Australia, is likely to have had his parents' permission when he enlisted at sixteen years and two months old.

from Victoria and the 16th from South Australia and Western Australia. This was the first fully national brigade in the AIF. Some were meeting men from other states for the first time. Rumours were rife. Indeed, there were so many untruths in the air they soon attracted a nickname – ‘furphies’. A Shepparton firm called Furphy provided the wagons that hauled away the human waste from the Broadmeadows latrines.

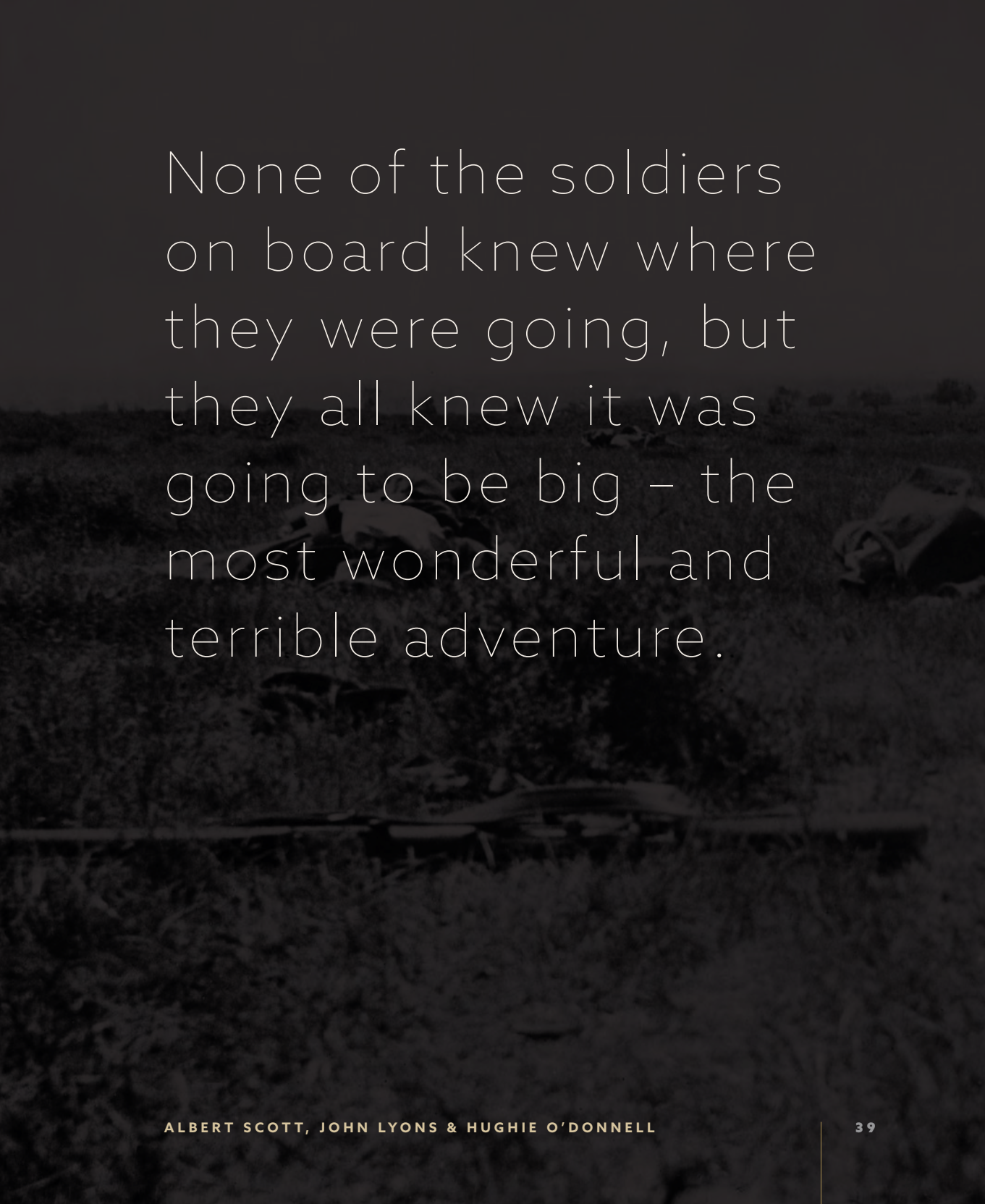
Albert was not perhaps the most natural soldier. On 18 December, he was absent from a roll call. Two days later, he was found in bed after the buglers sounded ‘Reveille’. He may have decided, like hundreds of other men, to have a night on the town before departure. He was fined a day’s pay and admonished. Three days later, Albert’s unit embarked on the White Star Line’s SS *Ceramic*. They too were bound for Egypt. By early February, they were at Zeitoun Camp outside Cairo, wondering what was next.

The only person who could have told them was Winston Churchill, First Lord of the Admiralty. The British and French armies were deadlocked on the Western

Front in France and Belgium, mired in trench warfare after seven months of attrition. Churchill wanted to take the pressure off the Russian army, so that they might break through against the German forces in the east. Turkey had entered the war on the German side at the end of October. Churchill was determined to force the Dardanelles by sea and knock the Ottoman Empire out of the war.

When the British navy failed to do so in March, Churchill convinced the War Cabinet to mount an amphibious landing on the Turkish Aegean coast. They would rout the Turkish guns that protected the straits, then storm on to Constantinople. The Australians and New Zealanders in Egypt were keen to fight. The British, French and Indians would join them for a landing in late April.

The fate of Albert Scott – and that of every Australian and New Zealand soldier then in Egypt – was now set. The Australians would join this European war at the point where Europe begins – the Bosphorus. None of them knew the plan yet, and very few would have known the name of the Gallipoli peninsula.



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In Egypt in December, as Albert was still on the high seas, the NZ Expeditionary Force (NZEF) and the first three brigades of the AIF were combined to become the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps, which clerks quickly shortened to 'ANZAC'. This crew was motley: it also included the Indian Mounted Artillery and the 29th Indian Brigade, the Ceylon Planters Rifle Corps, two British divisions and the Zion Mule Corps, consisting of 650 Jews recruited in Egypt.

Hundreds of ships had gathered for the assault.

The Turks knew they were coming, just not quite where or when. They had reinforced defences all along the peninsula, digging in on the high ridges to wait. They were commanded by experienced officers, both Turkish and German.

The British commander Sir Ian Hamilton decided to confuse them by seeming to land everywhere at once. Ships lined up all around the peninsula and feigned landing preparations. The real landings were to be on several beaches at Cape Helles, on the tip of the peninsula, by British forces, while French forces

landed on the Asian side as a diversion. The Australians and New Zealanders would go in to the north of Cape Helles, on a five kilometre stretch of the Aegean coast largely guarded by harsh cliffs and ravines. They were to come ashore at the lowest part, between the Gaba Tepe headland and an old fisherman's hut.

Historians still argue about why the 30,000 Australian and New Zealand forces landed in the wrong place, 1.6 kilometres north of where they intended. The terrain here was much steeper and rougher, making the advance inland much harder. Blame has been laid variously on the currents and the inexperience of the British sailors commanding the landing boats, but this rougher spot was also less heavily guarded. The mistake may have reduced the casualties.

In truth, the campaign was a debacle: badly planned, badly resourced and badly led. The British, from a firm sense of superiority, assumed the Turkish troops to be inferior and demoralised: they would dissolve and run. Some did, but most fought like lions for a

cause they believed in: defence of their country. The Turks thought they were fighting ‘the British’. When they realised they were also fighting Australians and New Zealanders, they were as confused as some of their opponents. God is great, but where is New Zealand?



Albert Scott’s 15th Battalion came ashore at what we now call Anzac Cove in the evening of 25 April 1915, twelve hours after the initial landing. Its companies were sent up the ridges to plug gaps in a patchy Australian line. Like everyone else, they became hopelessly fragmented. The Turks, by now reinforced, counter-attacked in several places. The Anzacs clung to a series of outposts and ridges on the heights, short of their objectives and in danger of being over-run.

Albert would not have slept much in the first seventy-two hours. The 15th were concentrated on Pope’s Hill, Courtney’s Post and Quinn’s Post – high ridges above the beach. The

Turkish trenches were just a few metres away, which meant that bombs could be thrown by hand. The Turks were masters at this and they had plentiful supplies of what the Australians called ‘cricket ball bombs’. The Anzacs had to make their own. They set up a factory on the beach, filling jam tins with nails and explosives.

We know the names of at least twenty under-age boys who fought on Gallipoli, but the real number is much higher – almost certainly in the hundreds. No-one has compiled a list of those who lived through it, only those who did not. Albert Scott, the smiling cane-cutter, has the sad distinction of being the first Anzac boy soldier to die on Gallipoli.

There is no record of where he died, simply a date, 28 April. That means he experienced at most three days of fighting, but those three days were merciless. The continual sniping made the rudimentary trenches of Quinn’s Post ridiculously dangerous; it was little better at Courtney’s Post and Pope’s Hill.

Albert was buried at Pope’s Hill Cemetery, so we know he died nearby.

His parents were notified of his death by telegram. In the early years of the war, these were usually delivered by a local clergyman. Albert's name was then wrongly included in a list of wounded published in the *Sydney Mail* in mid-June, raising hopes that he was still alive. Albert's father wrote to see if it could be true. The army wrote back that, as far as they knew, he was dead.

In 1923, his remains were reinterred at Quinn's Post Cemetery, Pope's Hill plot. His inscription, decided by his parents Joseph and Eliza, says:

'Dearest son, thou has left us, we thy loss most deeply feel.'

In September 1919, Albert's brother Walter, aged ten, took part in a tree-planting ceremony for Arbor Day at the Rossendale State School, in honour of boys of the district who had died in the war. Walter planted a camphor laurel for Albert, the brother he had barely had time to get to know.



Hughie O'Donnell's 11th Battalion was among the first ashore at Gallipoli on 25 April, but Hughie was not with them. He had been struggling to catch up since he enlisted, always one step behind. While a battalion was at full strength of about 1000 men, it had no need to call up reinforcements, except to replace men who were sick or absent. Once the 11th Battalion went into action at Gallipoli, things moved quickly, because of the casualties. On 5 May, the battalion had lost thirty-eight men killed and 200 wounded since the landing, and another 197 were still missing. The battalion was effectively at half strength after ten days.

Hughie finally arrived on Gallipoli on 7 May in a group of 214 reinforcements. He went into C Company under Captain Raymond Leane, who had already distinguished himself as a leader during the first weeks. Ray Leane had been a successful merchant in Kalgoorlie before the war, and a resident of Boulder. As in many battalions, men from the same town or district were kept together, as much as possible. Hughie's C Company was largely made

up of men from the West Australian goldfields. He had friends among them, like David Crisp, who had worked at the post office in Kanowna when Hughie was a boy. Crisp was ten years older, and an Anglican like Hughie.

Soon after Hughie arrived, the 11th Battalion was sent to hold a section of the line at Bolton's Ridge, with the 2nd and 3rd Battalions on their left. Hughie

and John Lyons – a long-distance cyclist – were now within coo-ee of each other's positions, in a line of trenches that ran from the beach near Gaba Tepe to the hill known as Baby 700, where the Turks could see most of their positions.

John, the sixteen-year-old from Murchison, came ashore in the second or third wave on the first day of the landing. He survived those first terrible



This memorial holds the only known photograph of **JOHN LYONS**, a long-distance bike rider from South Murchison, Victoria.

weeks, while many around him in the 3rd Battalion did not. Colonel MacLaurin, his brigade commander, was one of the dead.

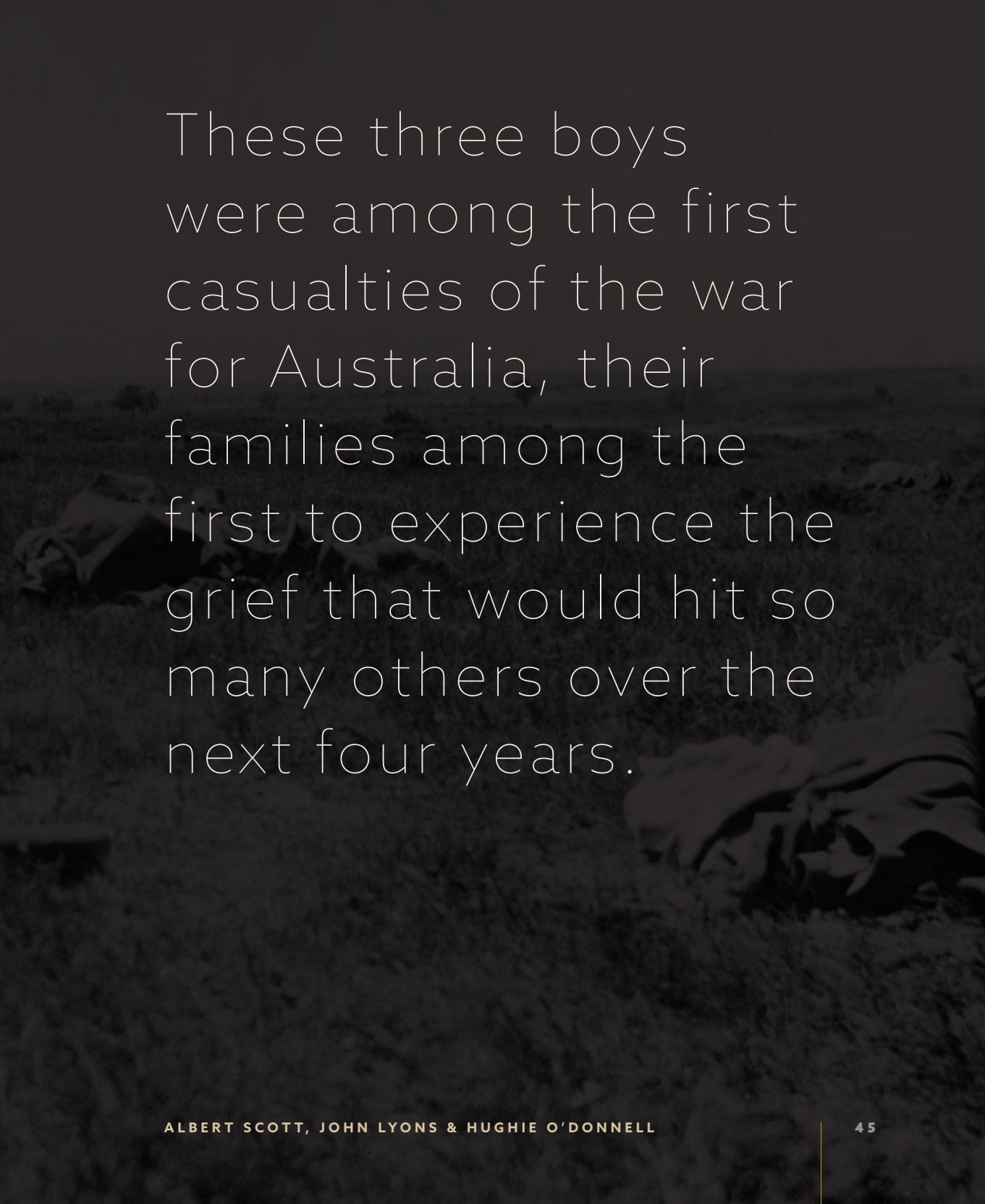
After three weeks, a stalemate had set in. The British and French had failed in an attack at Krithia on 8 May, but kept up the pressure on Turkish battalions at Cape Helles. The Anzacs clung to the heights above Anzac Cove, opposite determined Turkish defences, caught between the Aegean Sea and razor-backed ridges.

The German commander of the Turks, General Otto Liman von Sanders, wanted to drive the Anzacs back into the sea with a wide frontal assault, starting early on 19 May. New battalions arrived from Constantinople, including young officers straight from the academy. The plan was simple and blunt: 42,000 Turkish infantry would fling themselves at 17,000 Anzacs and overwhelm their positions with sheer numbers. The Anzacs could tell something was about to start, and made ready to repel the attack.

Until this point, the Anzacs had rarely seen their enemy, concealed as he usually

was in well-prepared trenches. Now he came at them out of the pre-dawn, thousands of voices crying ‘Allah’, bayonets glinting in the moonlight. The attack was sheer madness and over the next ten hours, it became a bloodbath. On Johnston’s Jolly, where John was firing, the initial waves of Turkish troops were mown down by machine guns. They kept coming and dying. The men of the 3rd Battalion climbed up on the parapet to continue firing, as dazed and wounded Turks tried again and again to rush forward, against all odds. Anzacs fought each other for the best positions, their guns overheating as dawn broke. And with the light, the Turks could see the Australians sitting cockily on the parapets – and took careful aim.

Ten thousand Turks fell in that assault, for no gain. Charles Bean, witnessing the slaughter, wrote that the Australians’ attitude to the Turkish soldier changed that day. A fierce hatred had motivated the Anzacs since the landing. That now disappeared, as the Turkish soldiers displayed a sobering discipline and bravery, refusing to surrender or retreat.

A dark, grainy photograph of a battlefield. In the foreground, several bodies are lying on the ground, some partially covered by blankets or cloths. The background shows a hazy, open field under a dark sky. The overall tone is somber and historical.

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Anzac losses amounted to 160 men killed and 468 wounded. Unfortunately for one family in South Murchison and another in Kanowna, those numbers included their sons, Private John Lyons and Private Hughie O'Donnell.

Hughie was killed by a shrapnel blast. Captain Leane wrote to Jack and Lily

O'Donnell soon after to say that although he had not known their son long, Hughie had impressed him as a lad who would fearlessly do his duty. 'He lived but a few minutes and his last words were addressed

to Private Crisp also from Kanowna,' wrote Leane. A chaplain also wrote to the family, telling them that Hughie's last words had been: 'Tell my mother I died fighting'. He was one of nine men in the 11th Battalion killed that day.

We know less about John Lyons' death, except that he fell nearby on the

same day. Both boys died during the greatest firefight that the Anzacs had yet seen – and during the greatest victory they would have on Gallipoli.

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The tactics used at Gallipoli are hard now to understand. Frontal assaults against machine guns were doomed to failure, and still, both sides attempted them.

Anzacs would use the same tactics a few weeks later on a smaller scale in the August offensive, with huge losses. To some extent, 19 May was a turning point in the fight for Gallipoli. The Turks gave up the

idea of winning by offence and settled in to win by implacable defence, knowing that winter would eventually be on their side. The Anzacs, in turn, now knew the determination of the men they were facing, if they had not already.

The *Murchison Advertiser* of 25 June 1915 acknowledged that John Lyons,

now seventeen, was the first soldier from the district to die in the First World War. They mentioned his age without using the words 'under-age'. John's father would enlist in February 1916 and follow in his late son's footsteps to Europe. He was luckier: at forty-two, he developed rheumatism soon after arriving in France and was invalided back to Australia. Hughie O'Donnell is thought to be the youngest West Australian to die on Gallipoli, aged sixteen years and eight months.

These three boys were among the first casualties of the war for Australia, their families among the first to experience the grief that would hit so many others over the next four years. Albert Scott's siblings had many children. There are now at least 300 descendants of that large family, according to Adrian Scott, who grew up on the same farm at Mount Bauple. A number of them have been to visit Albert's grave on Gallipoli.

In October 1915, Prime Minister Andrew Fisher resigned in favour of his deputy, the belligerent London-born Welshman William Morris Hughes, who

embraced the war as a holy duty and a cleansing fire. One of Hughes's first acts was to promise 50,000 more Australian men to the conflict. Meanwhile, in South Murchison, Mount Bauple and Kanowna, three mothers and three fathers wept for three sons. 🕯️