

# LOCAL ANZACS AND CLERGYMEN ON WORLD WAR I

Compiled by Professor John Lack

LETTERS HOME ABOUT THE LANDING AT GALLIPOLI, 25 APRIL 1915

## **Lance-Corporal H.W. Thomas (of Seddon):**

‘We went ashore in rowing boats about daybreak . . . The fire was terribly thick. The bullets were dropping in the water just like rain.’

(writing to his parents on 27 April 1915)

‘I think the boys have made a name for themselves.’

*and*

‘we . . . lost a lot of men, but it is all in the game.’

(writing from Mena Hospital on 7 May 1915)

## **Private Charlie Kaye**

**(an Australian who served with the New Zealanders at Gallipoli):**

‘I do not think history can tell of such deeds as the Australian and New Zealanders have done. It is a marvel that any of us survived. . . Australia and New Zealand may well be proud of the boys who left their homes for the Empire.’

(written to his mother in Footscray in June 1915)

## **Lance Corporal Jackson of Footscray:**

‘Our boys . . . have made a name in history for Australia – but at what a cost to some homes!’

(letter in the *Footscray Advertiser*, 7 August 1915)

## **Corporal Barklamb:**

‘one cannot help marvelling how on earth a landing was accomplished at all.’

(letter to his grandparents, *Footscray Advertiser*, 25 September 1915)

## **Private Owen Hughes:**

‘Give the junior [footballers] my best wishes and tell them the colors (sic) are flying over here. Charlie [Stephens] and I are still sporting our red, white and blue Guernseys.’

(writing from hospital in Cairo: *Footscray Independent*, 1 June 1915)

**Private John Keo**, who appears to have been at the landing on 25 April:

‘Shells and bullets were falling like wheat to the fowls.’

(writing from Alexandra Hospital: *Footscray Independent*, 12 June 1915)

**J.M. Fisher, 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion AIF**, writing about the 25 April landing:

‘It was simply like hell on earth.’

(*Footscray Independent*, 19 June 1915)

**Quarter Master Sergeant J.H.G. Gordon:**

‘I think our fellows acquitted themselves very well, considering it was their baptism of fire.’

(writing from hospital at Alexandria, 3 May 1915: *Independent*, 26 June 1915)

**Sergeant McKechnie:**

‘Nearly all our company (E Company) was wiped out after six or seven hours fighting on that memorable Sunday morning, 25<sup>th</sup> April, only one officer and a few men being left standing. It is said the famous Light Brigade rode to the gates of hell, but we went one better, and sailed right into hell itself, and stopped there, refusing to retire. . . I am afraid there will not be many of us present [at the welcome home].’

(writing from hospital: letter in the *Footscray Independent*, 3 July 1915)

**W. Greenwood and Wallace Fraser:**

‘“How are you, Wal?” He said, “I’m satisfied.” Those were his last words.’

Wal Fraser died on 1 May 1915.

(Greenwood wrote from hospital in Egypt: *Independent*, 3 July 1915)

**Johnnie Scott wrote from Alexandra:**

‘It was half-past four in the morning of April 25 that we landed and I can tell you it was hell upon earth.’

(*Yarraville Weekly News*, 9 October 1915)

**‘Nugget’ Price and Bert Ellis**, writing from the Western Front:

‘Tell the Footscray people that their boys are doing their bit and the Australian soldiers have a great name in England or wherever they go.’

(*Footscray Advertiser*, 7 April 1917)

**Gabriel [Gabbie] Aarons** wrote to his parents at Yarraville:

‘I am going back [to France] to avenge the death of our poor, dear old [brother] Harold.’

‘the Australians in France . . . are regarded . . . as the best fighters. They have made a big name for themselves, but are getting cut up badly.’

(Yarraville *Weekly News*, 26 October 1916)

**Corporal Robert [Bob] McDonald** of Yarraville:

‘The courage of the Australian soldier is sublime.’

(Yarraville *Weekly News*, 4 November 1916)

SUNDAY 28 AUGUST 1915 - IN MEMORIAM SERVICES WERE  
HELD IN FOOTSCRAY'S CHURCHES  
HONOURING THOSE WHO HAD DIED AT GALLIPOLI

**Rev. A.W. Butler (Footscray Presbyterian)** preached on the words from the Acts of the Apostles, 20-24 ("Neither count I any life dear unto myself") in admiration of

'those who had fallen . . . to preserve for generations to come the freedom and privileges – the very civilisation – won and handed down to them by their forefathers. . . In the eyes of right-thinking men life had always seemed a small thing in comparison with duty.'

At the **Hyde Street Methodist Church**, the **Rev. Oliver Dowling** preached from John 15-13 ("Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends"), speaking of

'the feat of the Australians as the supreme exhibition of Love and Sacrifice. . . the fallen men [were] our heroes, martyrs and saviours of mankind'

**Rev. J.T. Baglin of St John's Anglican Church, Footscray:**

The 'one thing could justify the sacrifice . . . was that sacrifices were being made for the sake of high ideals . . . the rights of the weak against the arrogance of the strong, . . . for national and personal freedom'.  
'Our dead had died for the sake of a high ideal.'

**Rev. W.R. Byer, Yarraville Presbyterian Church:**

**The following words have been selected from the summary of a longish sermon:**

'the torrid dust of cruel Gallipoli is a ready-made God's acre. It is not one that any of us would choose; equally it is not one that any of us will lament. Eternal vigilance is the price to be paid for freedom. The price has been generously, nobly and fully paid by our Australian boys'.

'Hitherto our hearts beat quickly at the heroism in other lands and places. We were hero-worshippers living afar. But today the heroes are our very own. Our own comrades, schoolfellows and neighbours have climbed the bullet-swept heights and proved themselves dauntless and chivalrous. They have made our mood and sealed our holy sorrow and joy with the young, fresh blood of invincible heroes. The mother Empire gave them the task; they gave to these, the most distant domains of the Empire, an imperishable name.'

(All "In Memoriam" quotes are from the Footscray *Advertiser*, 4 September 1915.)

EVACUATION OF ANZAC AND SUVLA BAY BY THE AUSTRALIAN  
Extract from editorial published in the *Advertiser*, 25 December 1915

‘Many of Australia’s noblest sons are sleeping their last sleep on the Gallipoli peninsula.’

In the same issue there is reproduced a greeting card pencilled on a piece of cloth torn from his khaki jacket and sent by Sergeant P.C. Stephens to his family in Footscray



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