



New South Wales Branch
Hunter & Coastal Region

Simpson and His Donkey Brief Story

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John Simpson Kirkpatrick is affectionately known as “The man with the Donkey”.

Generally known as “Simpson”, he is one of the most famous Anzacs of the Gallipoli campaign. He was born on the 6th July 1892 in South Shields, England. He spent only four years in Australia before enlisting in the Australian Army Medical Corps in 1914.

He landed at Anzac Cove at 5.00 am on the 25th April 1915 and was mortally wounded in Shrapnel Gully, near the mouth of Monash Valley on the 19th May 1915 at the age of 22.

Several Donkeys were landed at Anzac cove and some had been deserted and were grazing in the wild overgrown gullies.

Simpson, having already carried two heavy men down from the front lines, responded to a call from a wounded man.

Simpson, who had by this time been reported missing, saw a donkey grazing nearby and decided to use the Donkey to help carry the man to the beach.

The donkey responded to the touch of this friendly man. There was no saddle, stirrups or reins. Simpson made a head stall and lead from bandages and field dressings for his first trip. He lifted the wounded man onto the donkey and held onto him as he guided the donkey down to the beach.

During the 24 days he spent at Anzac, he operated as a sole unit with his beloved donkey. Simpson and his donkey retrieved perhaps over 300 casualties from the battlefield.

Simpson did this work independently, sometimes in disregard of orders, and frequently with disregard of danger that kept the onlooking soldiers in the trenches enthralled as they watched him moving calmly to rescue wounded soldiers while under direct fire from the enemy.

Although Simpson carried no arms and remains an enigmatic figure, the nature of his sacrifice made a vital contribution to the story of ANZAC

ANZAC QUICK FACTS

- Anzac is an abbreviation for Australian and New Zealand Army Corps.
- April 25, Anzac Day, was the day the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps landed on the Gallipoli Peninsula in 1915.
- The first Dawn service on an Anzac Day was in 1923.
- The Anzacs were on the Gallipoli Peninsula for only 8 months, around 8,000 of them died there.
- There is no town called ‘Gallipoli’. It is the name of an area. Visitors usually stay at nearby town of Ecubeat.
- The Anzacs were all volunteers.

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