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## Life

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# Trooper shot at the front

By PETER MCLADY

TROOPER William Sharpe, of the second Light Horse Regiment, arrived at Anzac Cove on August 6, 1915, as one of the many reinforcements for the major August offensive.

He immediately joined the fighting but his time at the front lasted only one or two days.

According to William's service record, he arrived in Malta aboard a hospital ship on August 12, suffering from severe gunshot wounds that he died from a day later.

William had arrived in Gallipoli only four days after Private Thomas Marstella.

Thomas was also from Stanthorpe, but was unfortunately killed in action one week after landing.

William Sharpe was the son of David and Emily Sharpe, from Glenlyon.

He was born at Pikedale and attended school at Glenlyon.

Prior to enlisting, he was an engine driver at the Silver Spur Mining Company – a silver, lead, gold and copper mine situated east of Texas.

On December 12, 1914, William enlisted in Warwick aged 25.

He joined the 3rd reinforcements of the 2nd Light Horse Regiment.

William left Brisbane on active service on February 9, 1915, aboard HMAT Itria, disembarking in Egypt.

Here he trained with his regiment in preparation for the fighting on the Gallipoli peninsula.

Along with two officers and 34 other men of the third reinforcements, William sailed from Alexandria, Egypt, on August 1, 1915, to Anzac Cove, where he joined up with C Squadron of the 2nd Light Horse Regiment.

Immediately upon William's arrival at Gallipoli, the 2nd Light Horse joined the August offensive against the Turkish positions.

In his book, Quinn's Post Anzac, Gallipoli, Peter Stanley wrote "The massive offensive entailed a major advance over the main Sari Bair range by three columns of British, Australian, Indian and New Zealand infantry, assisted by a British landing at Suvla Bay.

"In addition to the big diversionary attack at Lone Pine, Australian Light Horse Regiments would make diversionary attacks from the Nek, Pope's Hill and Quinn's."

At 4.30am on August 7, the 2nd Light Horse Regiment was ordered to launch an attack in four



**CASUALTY OF WAR:** The inscription on William's headstone reads: 795 Trooper W. Sharpe, 2nd Australian Light Horse, 13th August 1915 Age 25, Thy Will Be Done.

PHOTO: CONTRIBUTED

waves of 50 men each from Quinn's Post.

Lieutenant-Colonel George Bourne described first-hand this attack in his book *The History of the 2nd Light Horse Regiment Australian Imperial Force August 1914-April 1919*.

*Major Bourne ordered the first wave to charge. Major Logan and Lieuts. Norris and Burge gallantly led out their men amid a perfect hail of lead. Many were hit as they leapt from our trenches – some got 10 yards – every man but one was hit, most of them in a dozen places. Seeing the enemy was so fully prepared, that the other parties, if the attack were persisted in, must be annihilated as the first was ... Major Bourne ordered the second line to stand fast pending further orders ... To have pressed the attack would have been futile waste of gallant lives ... Major Logan and Lieut. Burge were killed and Lieut. Norris was wounded. Fourteen men were killed and 36 were wounded.*

It appears William was one of those wounded in the fighting on or around the August 7.

His service record shows him arriving in Malta, a week's sailing away, aboard the hospital ship Dunluce Castle on August 12.

William was suffering from severe gunshot wounds to his chest and back.

Tragically his time at the front may have only lasted one or two days.

On August 13, 1915, the



**NOT FORGOTTEN:** Trooper William Sharpe is one of 204 Australian and 72 New Zealand servicemen from the First World War buried on Malta, which stands in the Argotti Botanical Gardens in Floriana.

day after arriving in Malta, Trooper William Sharpe died of wounds received in action and was buried in Pieta Military Cemetery by Reverend M.P. Dodd.

William shares his grave with two other servicemen who died in the First World War, 17-year-old Signalman Frank Levey from Essex, who served aboard the

submarine E7, and Private G. Morrison from the South Lancashire Regiment.

According to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission "the earth is shallow on Malta and during both wars, many joint or collective burials were made, as graves had to be cut into the underlying rock".

## WILLIAM SHARPE

- Name: William Sharpe
- Rank: Trooper
- Service Number: 795
- Unit: 2nd Australian Light Horse
- Date of death: August 13, 1915
- Cemetery: Pieta Military Cemetery, Malta

## Anzacs, Malta and the First World War

THE hospitals and convalescent camps on Malta dealt with more than 135,000 sick and wounded troops, mainly from the campaigns at Gallipoli and Salonika from 1915 onwards, according to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

Many soldiers died from their wounds and Pieta Military Cemetery contains the graves of 1303 casualties of the First World War.

There are also 166 burials from World War Two.

Trooper William Sharpe is one of 204 Australian and 72 New Zealand servicemen from the First World War buried on Malta.

In May 2013 a new memorial was inaugurated in memory of the Anzacs who lost their lives at Gallipoli and during World War Two.

On its steps are recorded the names of those Anzacs who died for

their country.

The memorial stands in the Argotti Botanical Gardens in Floriana, not far from Pieta Military Cemetery.

The Anzac presence in Malta during the First World War is also recognised by the naming of Triq Anzac or Anzac Street in Pembroke, Malta.

On this street are the remains of Australia Hall.

Although now derelict due to severe fire damage in 1998, Australia Hall stands as a monument to the Anzacs on Malta and the Australian Coat of Arms is still clearly visible above the front door.

The Australian Branch of the Red Cross built the hall for the benefit of the soldiers of the empire.

It opened in January 1916 and was extremely popular with the Anzac troops and the doctors and nurses from the hospitals and convalescent camps.

On a busy night well over 2000 soldiers would pack into the hall.