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Premier's ANZAC Spirit School Prize
Charles Joseph Clifford



Marlee George
Loxton High School

www.awm.gov.au 801173



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The word ANZAC is such a little word for so many qualities. To a foreigner it would seem like just some letters thrown together, but to an Australian it has a deep and sentimental meaning. Initially ANZAC was not a proper word it was an acronym that stood for Australian and New Zealand Army Corps. To Australians ANZAC is a word of intent, recognition and understanding. Its meaning embedded into the Australian mind to define the spirit and character of a man and a nation. Charles Joseph Clifford of Penola, South Australia became an ANZAC as a 26 year old man when he fought at Gallipoli. As a man he displayed the characteristics of the ANZAC Spirit. As a soldier of the 11th Light Horse Regiment he demonstrated these characteristics in battle which made him a part of the ANZAC Spirit legend. He helped a nation form a new identity.



The 'ANZAC Spirit' developed because of the way in which the Australian and New Zealand soldiers conducted themselves in World War 1. The way that they took responsibility for their actions and defended their country despite the danger and personal costs. The ANZAC Spirit is purpose and direction. A commitment to country and to service of the nation. ANZAC soldiers knew that fighting was not a personal decision but a national one. The ANZAC legend was an honour given retrospectively, gratefully by the nation that recognised the resilience and sacrifice of a particular group of men who despite the odds stacked against them demonstrated independence, resourcefulness and a practical approach to life to make the best out of a bad situation.

On 24th June 1888 Mr James and Mrs Isabel Clifford brought a valuable life into this world, not to know that he would grow up to be a handsome, gallant soldier. Charles spent his first years growing up in the country on Clark Street in Penola, South Australia. Charles grew up in good health with black hair and blue eyes. He had a quite dark complexion and only saw the height of 5.13 foot (Certificate of Medical Examination, 1914). Charles began his work on the railways as a Station Master in Penola although travelled around the country side to pursue his work and by 1914 found himself as the Station Master in my home town Loxton, South Australia. Charles experiences of growing up in the country atmosphere would have taught him the values of persisting for a purpose, mateship and resourcefulness in times of adversity. The values Charles developed as child living and working in the country where significant contributors to the actions of which Charles Clifford portrayed at Gallipoli. At 26 Charles Joseph Clifford, single and energetic put aside his 9-5 job on the railways and enlisted into the army. By 14th of December 1914 Charles had enlisted at Oaklands, South Australia, into the Light Horse Regiment, and been sent to Queensland for embarkation. Soon enough Charles was shipped out of Australian waters upon the HMAT Medic and onto foreign soil.

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Australia joined Britain's cause in the First World War in August 1914. A stalemate had developed on the Western front and the British war room turned its attention to Germany's allies. The Turkish straits could be cleared Britain argued,



communication with Russia and vital supply routes could be restored. The British landed at Cape Hellas, Australian's at Gabba Tape (now known as ANZAC Cove) on the 25th April 1915. History now shows how Australian forces were 'sitting ducks' for the well prepared Turks. Undermanned and against all odds the Australians fought on (www.army.gov.au, 2014).

Charles had joined the Light horse regiment with an expectation of traditional warfare, yet within six months Charles was at Gallipoli where he joined the ANZAC's of the 9th Light horse, another South Australian regiment already ashore. Private Bates was another soldier upon Charles' troop carrier and described the landing at Gallipoli in a letter to his father, later published in the Sydney Evening News. He described 'being shelled 200 yards from shore, two men shot through with one bullet one dying in front of him' (www.trove.nla.gov.au, 2014). We can only imagine the fear that Charles and the many young men volunteering felt and how quickly they had to adapt to this new environment. Until this point Charles had only known the peace of the Australian countryside and the predictability of the railways. Within 24 hours of landing Charles was wounded while setting up camp at Sazli Beit Dere, Gallipoli peninsula. Despite this he remained on duty with his men and fought and held on to that narrow strip of shore. A severe tonsillitis infection finally removed Charles from Gallipoli. He was transferred to the 2nd Australian General Hospital in Gezira, Egypt on the 30th October 1915. This was the last Charles saw of the horrific battle fields of Gallipoli. His war was now in Egypt.

Charles spent the first half of 1916 retraining, his attributes as a leader recognised by the command as he was promoted first to Sergeant Major and then second Lieutenant. After cavalry training at Serapuem Charles became a first Lieutenant. The passion Charles had to improve himself and his skills for the welfare of his men was a reflection of the ANZAC Spirit.

Charles had been serving for three years. James and Isabel Clifford, Charles' parents would have had contrasting feelings of anxiety and honour about their son's courageous journey so far from home. Isabel specifically would have cherished each piece of hopeful news about Charles as she had already lost son Fredrick aged nine and John at 22, to illness in 1915, her brother James Reid had also followed Charles to war in 1916. Charles' spirit never died.

On the 29th of April 1918 at operations east of the Jordan River he displayed the courageous values of the ANZAC Spirit. This is where Charles was awarded his first

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Military Cross for displaying 'great coolness under heavy shell fire, thereby saving casualties and getting his troop into a good position.'

Over a two day Period as troop leader Charles manoeuvred his troop into a good position saving casualties and improving his chances of himself and his men in the battle. On the second day at the Damieh – Es Salt road he was in command of the forward posts breaking up the tack and giving his regiment time to prepare a defensive position. 'In the final stand of the Brigade on the Umm Esh Shert road his work was splendid.' The citation for the Military Cross describes 'His untiring energy was a fine example to all. This officer has always carried out his work with cool determination and with an absolute disregard of danger to himself.' Charles fighting and advancing despite not knowing what may lay before him is undoubtedly the true definition of honour, courage, leadership and enthusiasm which symbolize the ANZAC Spirit.

Both General W. Grant, Commander of the 4th Light horse Brigade and the remarks from an individual reporting officer speak of Charles as 'A very capable and painstaking officer. He is a great fighter. He should make a good adjutant second in command of squadron' (Citation Military Cross and Bar, 1918). He was a good and helpful instructor, energetic, a good leader of men, physically fit and resourceful these attributes firmly symbolize the Australian morals and what the ANZAC Spirit means to me.

Demonstrating courage against adversity had become a constant for Charles. The events that precipitated the additional award of Charles Bar to the Military Cross was best described by the citation at war 'At Semakh, on the 25th September 1918, he galloped forward with the first wave, and charged through the line of machine guns. He then collected seven men under a withering fire, and led them across to attack a field gun and a machine gun which were firing into our men from the right. Although he had his sword smashed away and his right hand wounded, he attacked four enemy with his revolver in the left hand, killing one and taking three prisoners. After handing these three prisoners over, he again attacked four Turks with an empty revolver and captured them. He set a fine example of daring and fearlessness (Commonwealth Gazette No.10, 1920).

Not everybody who performed courageous or brave acts like Charles Clifford received acknowledgement. Charles had been recommend for the Military Cross on the 7th of November 1917 at Sheria for 'coolness dash and judgement in attack' when he seized a point of high ground to aid the advance of the machine gunners. This was a vital advance for the infantry, although Charles was not awarded the Military Cross. This goes to show many acts of gallantry in the field may have gone unseen or unappreciated. Any man or women who have served for this country despite their time or actions deserve the utmost respect for their contribution.

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Charles Joseph Clifford embarked at Kantara on the HT Morvada and returned to Adelaide, Australia a considerable time after war on the 23rd of August 1919. Charles 37 years old, married Margret Tormay on Thursday evening, April 30 1925 at St. Mary's church, Glenelg, South Australia. In 1916 Margret gave birth to their daughter Marie. Charles, Margret and Marie resided in Broadview, South Australia.

Before researching Charles Joseph Clifford I only had a basic understanding of the principles of war. I had heard the word ANZAC and understood it to stand for our uniquely, Australian approach to adversity. Although this experience of following Charles's campaign from Gallipoli to Egypt and home again has given me a connection to the person and time in history that lead to our country becoming what it is today. It exposed me to the complexities of war and helped me to understand the sacrifices the diggers and their families had to make. The tragedy of humanity is that it takes a war of horrific proportions to recognise our best.

WEDDING.

CLIFFORD-TORMAY

On Thursday evening, April 30, a pretty wedding was celebrated at St. Mary's Church, Glenelg, when Margaret (Maggie), youngest daughter of Mrs. and the late Mr. Thos. Tormay, Mount Gambier, was married to Mr. Charles Joseph Clifford, son of Mr. and Mrs. J. Clifford, Penola. In the absence of the Very Rev. Father Murphy, who was ill, the nuptial ceremony was performed by the Rev. F. O'Connell. The bride, who was given away by her uncle, Mr. Frank Jaegar, looked dainty and sweet in a frock of ivory moiraine, with overdress of silver brocade (same, caught at the side with a cluster of pearls and silver and wax sprays. She wore a wreath of the same flowers, and the veil (kindly lent by a friend) was beautifully worked with silk and pearls. She carried a silver horseshoe with sprays of orange blossoms and silver streamers. The bridesmaid, Miss Nellie Tormay, wore a frock of apple green paillette, and she carried a posy of pink rosebuds, tied with a silver ribbon. A black ermine stole hat completed her costume. Mr. H. Tormay, brother of the bride, was best man. Mrs. Tormay, mother of the bride, wore a tailored costume in cinnamon brown with hat to match, and she carried a posy of autumn tints. The bridegroom's parents were unable to be present. At the conclusion of the ceremony a reception was held at Hongkong Cafe, where the bridal party received about 25 guests. The bride's gift to the bridegroom was a gold watch chain, and the bridegroom's gift to the bride a set of fern and aquamarine brooch set in platinum, and to the bridesmaid a necklace of pearls. The bride's travelling dress was a mode coloured tailor made costume with black hat. A large number of useful presents, including many cheques, were received.

PENOLA.

(From our own Correspondent.)

February 8.

I very much regret having to record the death of Mr. J. H. Clifford, the third son of Mr. James Clifford, of this town. The deceased was only 33 years of age, and was born and brought up in the district, and was very popular with everyone. He has been ailing for many years with a heart affection, so that his death was not unexpected. His remains were interred in the new cemetery this afternoon, a very large cortege following the remains, the Penola Band, of which he was at one time a member, marching in procession behind the hearse. The Rev. Father O'Connell conducted the funeral service. The funeral arrangements were carried out by Mr. P. O'Connell.

Mr. T. F. Oswald, who has been for many years in the employ of Messrs. R. and W. Balmace, Ltd., left town on Monday to go on land which he has recently purchased. Before leaving on Monday evening Mr. R. Balmace, J.P., the chairman of directors, on behalf of the Company, presented Mr. Oswald with an engraved gold watch, and testified to his trustworthiness and loyalty to the firm. On behalf of the employees Mr. R. Richard handed Mr. Oswald a pair of field glasses as a memento of his association with them. Mr. Oswald feelingly replied.

Newspaper Article, Charles and Margret Wedding, Border Watch (Mount Gambier, SA, Tuesday 12 May 1925, page 4

Newspaper Article, Death notice John Clifford, Border Watch (Mount Gambier, SA 1861 - 1954), Wednesday 10 February 1915.

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