

# The Spirit of the Anzac

## PART A:



**Figure 1:** Fredrick Walter Hamilton Toop, Service Number 12683.

Blood, sweat and tears were shed as our Australian soldiers who sacrificed their lives to protect their home soil for four years, three months and fourteen days. War was declared on July 28, 1914 and the British Empire soon followed with an entry into war. Every Australian soldier emulated the *Spirit of the Anzac* during their time serving Australia including a local hero from the small coastal town of Kingston SE, SA, Fredrick Walter Hamilton Toop, Service Number 12683. Known in our local community as 'Tiny' or 'Walter', Toop stood at 6 feet and 4 inches tall, and although his height could be measured, his generosity and courage could not be (see Figure 1)<sup>1</sup>. Toop was a stretcher bearer on the Western Front during the war and often ran from the safe haven of the medical station into horrific conditions of the trenches, dodging enemy bullets and artillery to save his fellow Aussie soldiers'. Toop, whose contribution to the war effort was anything but 'Tiny', will always be recognised as a local legend and an Australian war hero as he was one of six men selected to represent the British Army in ringing in peace to signify the end of Great War on Armistice Day (see Figure 6)<sup>2</sup>.



**Figure 2:** Toop Road, Rosetown SE SA.

Before the war, Toop lived in the coastal, fishing and farming town of Kingston SE. Toop was the son of George Langdon Toop, and grew up with his mother Susannah (nee Oakley) Toop, and his older brother William Arrais Toop (See Figure 6). Before enlisting, Toop purchased farming land between Rosetown and Old Coorong Road, known as the 'Hummocks'; today there is a road named after him

<sup>1</sup> Rslvirtualwarmemorial.org.au. (2018). *Frederick Walter Hamilton TOOP*. [online]: <https://rslvirtualwarmemorial.org.au/explore/people/15724>, accessed April 17, 2018.

<sup>2</sup> Letter from the British Consul to Private FWH Toop, Kingston RSL, 2018

bordering his old farmlands (See Figure 2)<sup>3</sup>. On his land he farmed cattle and sheep but bee keeping was his passion and he worked hard as an apiarist.<sup>4</sup> His farm was located on a flood plain along the Princess Highway, and as his war experiences will adhere, he was not shy of any hard work. Toop was said to have spent much of his time working in water up to his ankles, endeavouring to clear thick scrub land to make way for better farming pastures.<sup>5</sup> One of his favourite pastimes was to go rabbit trapping and he is remembered for his hunting expertise. This skillset of Toop's, comprising of hard work and dedication, would become invaluable to him as he found himself answering the call of war.

When Britain declared war on August 4, 1914, Australia was still a young country with a population of only 4.5 million but was extremely loyal to the British Commonwealth<sup>6</sup>. Australia deployed some 416,000 men into battlefields around Europe, which represented a staggering 38.7% of the total adult male population<sup>7</sup>. Toop was eager to do his bit for the country so he travelled to Adelaide to enlist in the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) a decision that would alter his life completely. Initially denied for active duty in the AIF as he did not pass the physical testing, Toop's eagerness to serve his country saw him persevere and on second attempt he found himself successful, set be deployed to the Western Front as a stretcher bearer on February 21, 1916.<sup>8</sup> He descended Adelaide to Europe on the "Ballarat", August, 12, 1916 (see Figure 3)<sup>9</sup>; Toop was 21 ¾ years of age when he was deployed to the Western Front<sup>10</sup>. Like many young single men, Toop enlisted because he felt a sense of duty towards the mother country, England, but was unaware of the horrors he would face in the realities of war.

**Figure 3:** Toop's enlistment papers.

**Figure 5:** Stretcher bearers on the Western Front.



<sup>3</sup> Peter Jackson, Interview with the author, April 18, 2018  
<sup>4</sup> Peter Jackson, Interview with the author, April 18, 2018

<sup>6</sup> Australians on the Western Front. (2006). Canberra, ACT.: Department of Veterans' Affairs.  
<sup>7</sup> Ibid  
<sup>8</sup> Australia National Archives, (2018). NAA: B2455, TOOP FREDERICK WALTER HAMILTON [online]: <<https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=8392395> [Accessed 15 May 2018].  
<sup>9</sup> Australia National Archives, (2018). NAA: B2455, TOOP FREDERICK WALTER HAMILTON [online]: <<https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=8392395> [Accessed 15 May 2018].

<sup>10</sup> Ibid

The Western Front was positioned on the north- eastern side of France where the allies held back the Germans from invading France. The Germans had already invaded Belgium and were aggressively pushing into French borders. The Allies fought hard, through tough and freezing weather, which made for challenging conditions; most soldiers suffered frostbite and trench foot as a result<sup>11</sup>. Soldiers endured the perils of battle in the large trenches dug on the battlefield where they not only risked being intercepted by the enemy but were exposed to diseases like influenza, typhoid, trench foot, trench fever and malaria<sup>12</sup>. Toop was positioned in the Third Australian General Hospital during the 'Hundred Days' campaign, a campaign on the Somme<sup>13</sup>. The Hundred Days' Campaign was led by a combined army of British, Canadian and Australian soldiers who attacked and successfully broke



through German defences, which saw them gain 13 kilometres of territory and take 12,000 prisoners.<sup>14</sup> Although not directly on the front lines, he still experienced the horrendous conditions whilst retrieving the injured soldiers (See Figure 5)<sup>15</sup>. Many soldiers became deaf from artillery and bullets being fired at close range. Soldiers were also exposed to the first chemical weapons of war including Chlorine Gas, Phosgene and Mustard Gas which had debilitating impacts on those who were exposed to them<sup>16</sup>.

In World War 1 approximately 179,537 soldiers' Australian soldiers were injured<sup>17</sup>. Most soldiers were wounded by flying shrapnel and high velocity bullets. The stretcher bearers would often respond to the cries of the injured men who lay waiting for help in no man's land. The medic from Kingston was often requested by the wounded because of his stature that was said to have made the soldiers feel safe<sup>18</sup>. Once returning to the medic tent, Toop was exposed to horrific injuries and sights, including dismembered and severely traumatised soldiers, and large pools of blood following surgery. These experiences caused post-traumatic stress or what became known as 'shell shock.'<sup>19</sup> Following the war, Toop was never able to tolerate blood or even the sight of a bleeding animal, such as sheep cut during shearing as he would associate it with his past

**Figure 6:** Frederick Toop and his brother William Toop, March 1918.

<sup>11</sup> Australians on the Western Front. (2006). Canberra, ACT.: Department of Veterans' Affairs.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid

<sup>13</sup> Rslvirtualwarmemorial.org.au. (2018). *Frederick Walter Hamelton TOOP*. [online]: <https://rslvirtualwarmemorial.org.au/explore/people/15724>, accessed April 17, 2018.

<sup>14</sup> Memorial, T. (2019). *The Hundred Days | The Australian War Memorial*. [online] Awm.gov.au. Available at: <https://www.awm.gov.au/visit/exhibitions/the-hundred-days> [Accessed 15 May 2019].

<sup>15</sup> The Australian Army, 2018. *WWI The Western Front | Australian Army*.

<<https://www.army.gov.au/our-history/history-in-focus/wwi-the-western-front>> Accessed May 9, 2018.

<sup>16</sup> Australians on the Western Front. (2006). Canberra, ACT.: Department of Veterans' Affairs

<sup>17</sup> Australians on the Western Front. (2006). Canberra, ACT.: Department of Veterans' Affairs

<sup>18</sup> Peter Jackson, Interview with the author, April 18, 2018

<sup>19</sup> Ibid

experiences<sup>20</sup>. Back at the medic tents, Toop was praised by the surgeons because of his height and strength, which enabled him to hold up a lantern above the surgery table for hours on end while they attempted to save countless lives.<sup>21</sup>

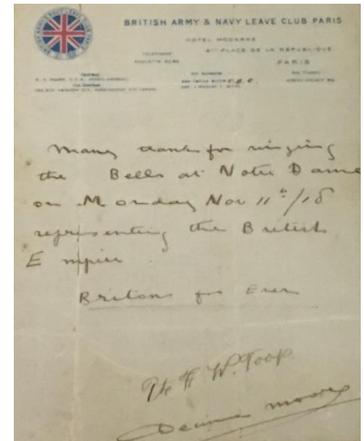


**Figure 7 :**  
Fredrick Walter  
Hamilton Toop 's  
war medals.

After a series of defeats and the many years at war took a toll on resources and manpower, Germany agreed to sign an armistice that would cease fighting in effort to create peace. Toop played a significant role in the celebration of the signing of the Armistice agreement on November 11, 1918 (see Figure 8)<sup>22</sup>. He was chosen to represent the British Army and Navy Leave Club Paris to ring the bell at Notre Dame to signify peace. Six soldiers, some representing the British Empire, France and America, were selected for the honour, from hundreds of thousands of servicemen. There is no recorded history as to why Toop was chosen to ring the bell, but some people believed it was because of his strength and height, assets that were of value to him and others during wartime. The story goes that as the bell ringers were approaching the bell frey, an American serviceman pushed his way to the front of the group

when a Canadian serviceman grabbed hold of him and told Mr Toop "get going Aussie it's your honour"<sup>23</sup>. Toop was also awarded the "The British War Medal" and 'The Victory Medal' for his services during the war (see Figure 7).<sup>24</sup>

After the war, Toop decided to stay in London for a year where he met his wife Edith, an English woman who served as a nurse during the war. In 1919, Mr Toop travelled back to Australia with his wife to resume his life as a farmer and apiarist in Kingston. Mr Toop was regarded as a very successful farmer who was responsible for clearing 'harsh and rough scrublands' located along the Coorong which is now regarded as 'good farming land'<sup>25</sup>. Tiny also contributed to the improvement of the pasture on his farm by adding different types of minerals to the soil <sup>26</sup>. Mr Toop was said to be a very kind farmer who cared for his animals as much as he did humans. "he never pushed his animals with his vehicles but would walk behind with them"<sup>27</sup>. Even years after the war, Mr Toop was plagued with nightmares from his horrible experiences and his wife often said that he could not be woken from them. On one occasion, Toop thought their home was being bombed and as a result picked his wife up and put her out the bedroom window for safety<sup>28</sup>. Often serious but always kind, Toop would rarely speak about his wartime experiences<sup>29</sup>. He continued to contribute towards the AIF during World War II (1939-45), where he supplied the forces with honey and bees wax to cover the ammunition heading overseas. The Toop's had no children but took in Jane, a ward of the state, who they treated as "one of their own"<sup>30</sup>. The town's last surviving World War 1 member presented his medals and certificate of honour to the Kingston RSL, on August



**Figure 8:** A letter from the  
British Army and Navy Leave  
Club Paris to Private Toop.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid

<sup>21</sup> ibid

<sup>22</sup> Letter from the British Consul to Private FWH Toop, Kingston RSL, 2018

<sup>23</sup> Certificate to hang in the RSL clubrooms, Kingston Leader September 4, 1985

<sup>24</sup> Private FWH Toop Military Medals, Kingston RSL, 2018

<sup>25</sup> Frank England, Interview with the author, April 3, 2018

<sup>26</sup> Steven and Carolyn Adams, Interview with Author May 10, 2019

<sup>27</sup> Pip Rasenberg, interview with Author April 26, 2019

<sup>28</sup> Steven and Carolyn Adams, Interview with Author May 10, 2019

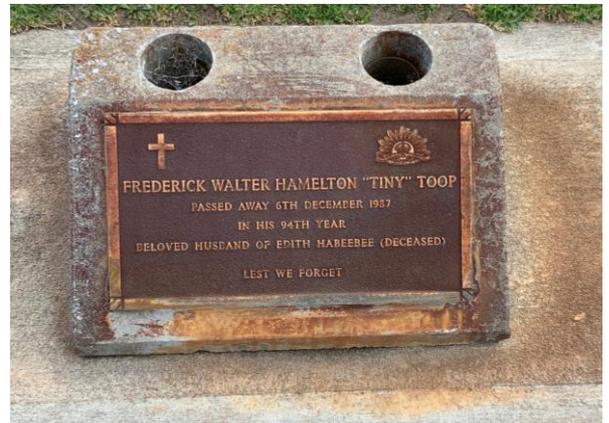
<sup>29</sup> Pip Rasenberg, interview with Author April 26, 2019

<sup>30</sup> Steven and Carolyn Adams, Interview with Author May 10, 2019

18, 1985 (See Figure 9). Even today, Toop is commemorated as a valued member of the RSL. The Kingston RSL Secretary, Rick Haase stated that “Toop was a very compassionate bloke who was also an active member of the Kingston RSL until he got sick. Every year Toop is mentioned at the Remembrance Day service in here Kingston.”<sup>31</sup> Toop passed away in the Kingston Memorial Hospital on December 6, 1987 (See Figure10). Although more than 100 years has passed and Toop is no longer here, his legacy as a gentle, generous and caring man still carries on in the coastal community today and his service in the Great War will forever be remembered.



**Figure 9:** Mr Toop presented the Kingston RSL with his certificate of honour.



**Figure 10:** Frederick Toop Tombstone, Kingston SE SA Cemetery.

## Reference List

Australians on the Western Front. (2006). Canberra, ACT.: Department of Veterans' Affairs.

Australia National Archives, (2018). NAA: B2455, TOOP FREDERICK WALTER HAMILTON: <<https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=8392395>> Accessed 8 May 2018].

Australia National Archives, (2018). Frederick Walter Hamilton TOOP #12683 and William Arrais TOOP #13492 - March 1918:

---

<sup>31</sup> Rick Haase, Interview with the author, April 29, 2019

<<https://discoveringanzacs.naa.gov.au/browse/gallery/174895>> Accessed 8 May 2018>.

Australian Army (2018). *WWI The Western Front*.

<<https://www.army.gov.au/our-history/history-in-focus/wwi-the-western-front>> Accessed 9 May 2018.

Frank England, Interview with the author, April 3, 2019

Memorial, T. (2019). *The Hundred Days | The Australian War Memorial*. [online] Awm.gov.au. Available at:

<https://www.awm.gov.au/visit/exhibitions/the-hundred-days> [Accessed 15 May 2019].

Peter Jackson, Interview with the author, April 18, 2018

Pip Rasenberg, Interview with author, April 26, 2019

Rick Haase, Interview with the author, April 29, 2019

RSL Virtual War Memorial. (2018). *Frederick Walter Hamelton TOOP*.

<<https://rslvirtualwarmemorial.org.au/explore/people/15724>>, accessed 17 April 2018.

Steven and Carolyn Adams, interview with Author, May 10, 2019

World War I Digger dies proud peace role, 8 December 1987, Adelaide, p. 2