



In Memory of
Private
WALTER SECCOMBE EWIN

354, 9th Bn. Australian Infantry, A.I.F.
who died age 25
on 25 April 1915

Son of William Walter and Caroline Ewin. Native of Nowra, New South Wales

Remembered with honour
LONE PINE MEMORIAL, TURKEY



PRIVATE
WALTER SECCOMBE EWIN
9TH BN. AUSTRALIAN INFANTRY, A.I.F.
SERVICE NUMBER: 354



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

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Three weeks after war was declared and almost as soon as recruitment began, **Walter Seccombe Ewin** enlisted in Toowoomba. He became an “original” of the 9th Battalion, the first to be raised in Queensland. He trained for a short time at Enoggera from the end of August until 24 September 1914, when he sailed with the first contingent on board A5 *Omrah* from Brisbane. The first contingent gathered at Albany, Western Australia, then crossed the Indian Ocean, where the escorting cruiser HMAS *Sydney* sank the *Emden* in a famous engagement off the Cocos Islands.

Walter was born at Nowra in the Shoalhaven district of southern NSW, the son of William Walter and Caroline Ewin. It’s not clear when his family moved to Wyreema to farm, but Walter grew up mostly on the Downs and received his education at the Toowoomba Grammar School (1904-05). The earliest recruits for the AIF faced the most stringent physical examinations for health, height and weight. Walter was assessed by Dr Alex Horn on 31 August; he was almost 5’11” tall, weighed 164 pounds with a fair complexion, grey eyes and sandy hair. He was of the Church of England religion and was 24 years old.

In Egypt, the 9th Battalion trained near the pyramids. As part of the 1st Division, the 9th was embarked in March for the invasion of Turkey at the Dardanelles. On 25 April 1915 these first men of the AIF landed at Gallipoli, the most famous day in Australian military history. On that day the 9th Battalion, as part of the 3rd Brigade, was among the first to reach the beach. The task facing the 9th was to penetrate inland as quickly and as far as possible to seize the high ground. Following units would secure the beach. Eventually, the units would co-ordinate with the British and French in a drive towards Constantinople. The hope was that this strategy would force Turkey out of the war.

Walter Ewin was one of the men who lost his life on the first day. Several of his comrades made statements to a Court of Inquiry convened “in the field, France” in June 1916. The fact that it took over a year for the army to make a determination of his fate testifies to the confused nature of the first days of fighting at Gallipoli. Private A. Forster stated that he had seen Walter leaving the transport for the beach on the first day but by day three “noticed that he was absent.” Private A. Marshall gave a more detailed account that probably explains why Walter’s fate remained a mystery for so long. They were both members of a storming party of 30 men sent out on the day of the landing. They got a long way out, about 1.5 miles further than the front line trenches of the evacuation. At about 10 a.m. they were on Gun Ridge when they saw the Turks marching down on them in three columns. The party fell back; Ewin (sic) refused to leave the place. . . . He remained lying down and firing rapidly. He was never seen again. A drawn-out process to ascertain whether Walter had been captured was also pursued.

When the Turkish counter-attacks began on 25 April the furthest Australians were heard firing from their advanced positions. They were eventually overwhelmed where they stood. The historian Charles Bean and

the Historical Mission found the remains of some of them in 1919 when they surveyed the entire battlefield. Walter remained among the missing of the first day.

At home at Wyreema, Caroline Ewin began a long correspondence with the army in search of information about her son's fate. Some sentences from one of her letters give an insight into the painful emotional journey families endured in the Great War. On 21 November 1915 she wrote to Army Base Records, *I have been advised to apply . . . to inquire if any further news of . . . (details), . . . reported missing since June. It is so long since the above news came to us & we've been daily expecting to hear something further of our son. The anxiety is dreadful. If no further official news has been received, can you advise what is to be done & oblige.*

Yours faithfully,

C. Ewin.

The Ewins would never learn more than the witness statements referred to above. Walter was almost 25 when he died; his name is inscribed on the Lone Pine Memorial.

Toowoomba Grammar School Archives show he started at the school on 12th July 1904 and left on 20th April 1905. Four T.G.S. boys have given their lives for the Empire, and another, E. Ewin, of Wyreema, is missing.

External Links:

[National Archives of Australia Military Record](#)

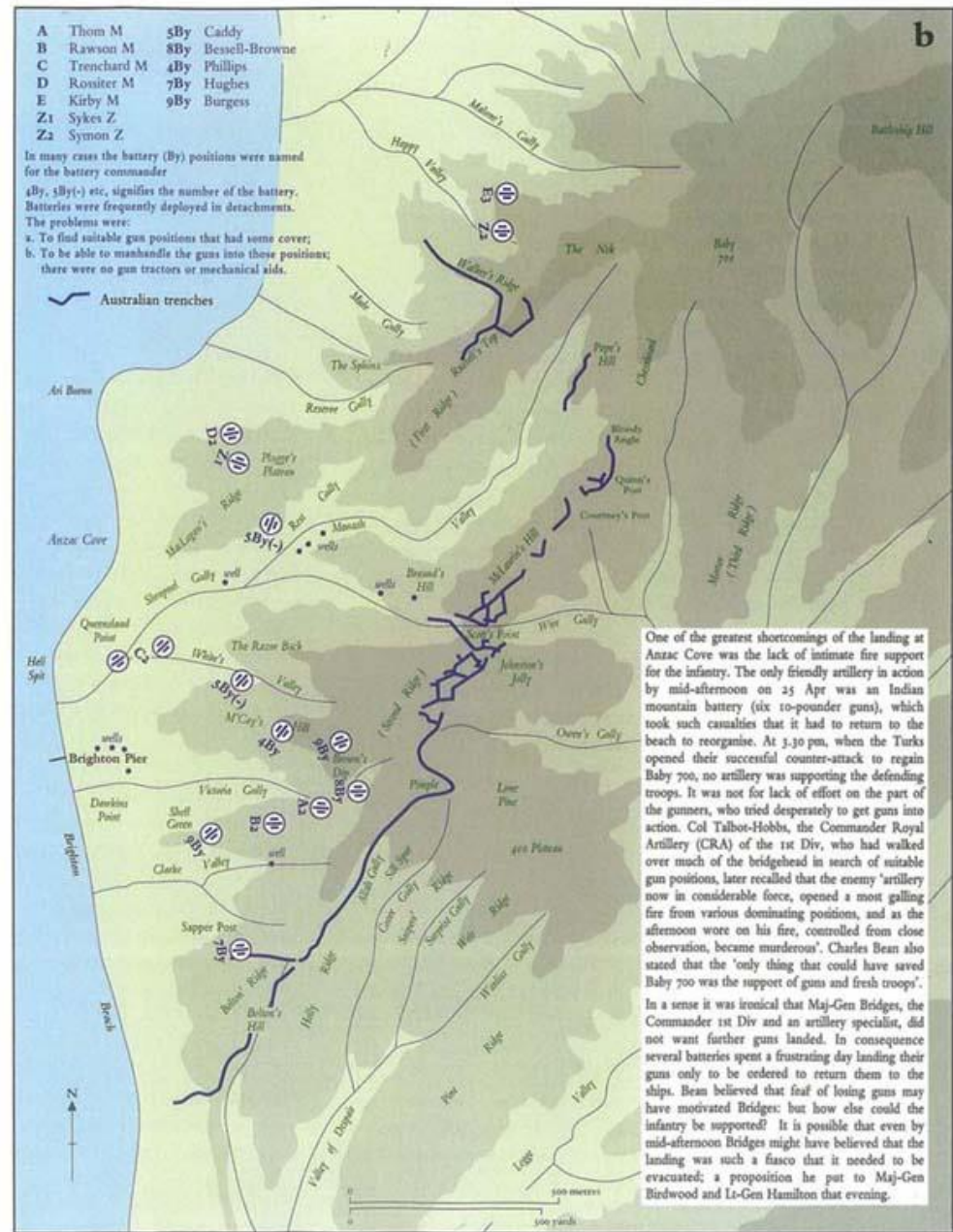
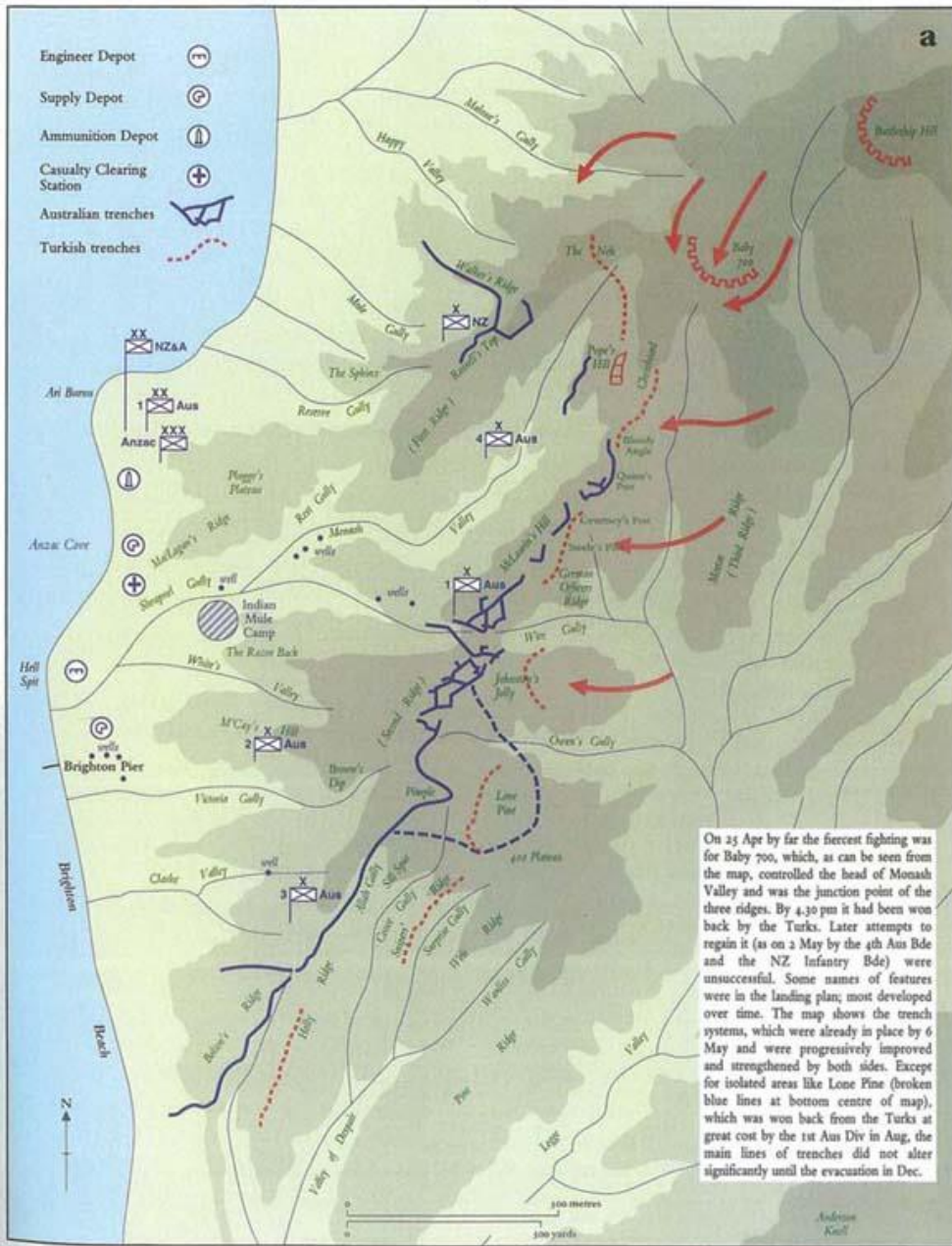
[CWGC](#)

[War Memorial Honour Roll](#)

[Australian Red Cross Society Wounded and Missing](#)

a Situation at the end of the first day: confined to the Second Ridge and the loss of Baby 700, 25 April 1915
b Positions of Anzac artillery at the end of May 1915

Lance-Corporal Albert Jacka, 14th Battalion
 19-20 May 1915
 Courtney's Post, Gallipoli Peninsula, Turkey



One of the greatest shortcomings of the landing at Anzac Cove was the lack of intimate fire support for the infantry. The only friendly artillery in action by mid-afternoon on 25 Apr was an Indian mountain battery (six 10-pounder guns), which took such casualties that it had to return to the beach to reorganise. At 3.30 pm, when the Turks opened their successful counter-attack to regain Baby 700, no artillery was supporting the defending troops. It was not for lack of effort on the part of the gunners, who tried desperately to get guns into action. Col Talbot-Hobbs, the Commander Royal Artillery (CRA) of the 1st Div, who had walked over much of the bridgehead in search of suitable gun positions, later recalled that the enemy artillery now in considerable force, opened a most galling fire from various dominating positions, and as the afternoon wore on his fire, controlled from close observation, became murderous'. Charles Bean also stated that the 'only thing that could have saved Baby 700 was the support of guns and fresh troops'. In a sense it was ironic that Maj-Gen Bridges, the Commander 1st Div and an artillery specialist, did not want further guns landed. In consequence several batteries spent a frustrating day landing their guns only to be ordered to return them to the ships. Bean believed that fear of losing guns may have motivated Bridges; but how else could the infantry be supported? It is possible that even by mid-afternoon Bridges might have believed that the landing was such a fiasco that it needed to be evacuated; a proposition he put to Maj-Gen Birdwood and Lt-Gen Hamilton that evening.