

HOME FROM HOME:

ANZACs in Westminster during the Great War

Throughout the centenary of the First World War (2014-2018), Westminster Archives Centre is researching and telling the fascinating stories of Westminster residents.





Florence Brill and son Jim

James Brill's family came from Pavilion Road, SW1 and his wife Florence was an employee for Westminster Council.

James Brill (1893-1915) was born in Chelsea. When war came in 1914 James joined the Chatham Battalion of the Royal Marine Light Infantry (RMLI) on October 10th 1914. Just a month later his girlfriend Florence gave birth to his son and to ensure she avoided the scandal of life as an unmarried mother, James went absent to marry her at St Simon's Church, Chelsea, on Boxing Day 1914. He was promptly arrested and confined to barracks for 14 days. In 1915, Brill's battalion embarked for the ill-fated Dardanelles campaign at Gallipoli, Turkey. On the Greek island of Skyros on the eve of their attack James

and the Chatham Battalion provided the guard of honour for the funeral of poet Rupert Brooke famed for his poem, *'The Soldier' (If I should die think only this of me, that there is a corner of a foreign field that is forever England)*. The RMLI were thrust into the fiercest fighting, in the Monash Valley, where Australian and New Zealand troops (ANZACs) were suffering heavy casualties. On 3 May 1915 the Chatham and Portsmouth Battalions, RMLI, attacked a key ridge held by well-entrenched Turkish defenders. They were driven back with severe losses. An Australian major present



described their action as *“the bravest thing (he’d) seen so far”*. Marine Brill was badly wounded in the assault. He was evacuated to a hospital ship but died later the same day. Brill was buried in Egypt, at the Alexandria (Chatby) Military and War Memorial Cemetery. His *‘corner of a foreign field’* would forever be beyond the reach of his wife Florence, who was widowed and cast into poverty at just seventeen.



James Brill, front left, Chatham Battalion Royal Marines, 1914

An employee of Westminster Council for over twenty years, she carried James’ photograph and the parcel string from his last effects in her purse for the rest of her life.

Westminster Archives have worked with local schools to help children to re-discover this story of a local hero:

‘James Brill grew up in Chelsea. But his dad abandoned his family when he was young and so he grew up in poverty. To begin with he was a painter then he took an apprenticeship as a plumber. Then on August 4th WWI began and he became a Royal Marine.’

Kiara Camacho Moreno, Westminster Cathedral School Y5

‘Before Gallipoli, James’s girlfriend gave birth to his son Jim so he had a quick ‘shot gun marriage.’ He was punished for leaving the barracks with two weeks

in prison. He was considerate and gave his mum five of his eight shillings Royal Marines pay.'

Oscar Tohux, Westminster Cathedral School Y5

'James travelled to Gallipoli on the Cawdor Castle. The most special island he visited was Skyros and he saw the poet Rupert Brooke being buried under an olive tree.'

William Costales, Westminster Cathedral School Y5

'On the 25th of April in Gallipoli. He survived the attack at the Monash Valley but came out wounded. On the 3rd of May, James died of his wounds because the country was so hot that there were a lot of flies which infected the wound which sadly killed him.'

Sofia Miseria, Westminster Cathedral School Y5



James Brill's grave in Egypt



Leonard Keyser from Paddington was part of the ANZAC forces at Gallipoli.

Leonard Keyser, born 3rd November 1885 at 14 Lanhill Road, Paddington, is considered by many to have carried out some of the most spectacular individual feats of the war, earning him the Victoria Cross, the highest award for gallantry that a British and Commonwealth serviceman can achieve.

When the First World War broke out, Keyser was living in Sydney – where he'd emigrated a few months earlier – and he enlisted in the First Australian Imperial Force. Two months later Keyser sailed to Egypt and on 25 April 1915 he landed at Gallipoli to take part in a major expedition to take the Gallipoli Peninsula.

It was at the Battle of Lone Pine on 7th August 1915 that 29-year-old Keyser performed the act of bravery for which he would be awarded the Victoria Cross. By this time Keyser had become a master bomb thrower. Turkish bombs were round like cricket balls and made of cast iron with an external fuse. Keyser would smother bombs that landed in the trenches with sandbags or clothing. If he had time, he would throw the bombs back – on several occasions he even caught them mid-flight – before lobbing them back into the Turkish trenches. He was twice wounded but refused medical aid, maintaining his efforts for 50 hours and saving the trench.

Keyser had always considered himself a Londoner and he returned to England after the war to live out his life in and around Maida Vale and Paddington. Westminster Council will unveil a memorial paving stone outside his Paddington birthplace in 2015 to commemorate the Victoria Cross Leonard won at Gallipoli a century ago.

Westminster Archives have worked with local schools to help children to re-discover this story of a local hero:

‘Before he went to Australia he lived in Canada and found a woman that he loved, but when Leonard asked her father if he could marry her...He said “No.” When Leonard heard that he was broken-hearted.’

PP, Westminster Cathedral School Y5

‘Leonard attended two schools in Brighton and Ramsgate and in both schools he was a talented cricketer.’

Tegan Ackaah, Westminster Cathedral School Y5

‘In 1920 Leonard became a movie star and made a film about his story that caused him to get injured. In 1937 he went to the coronation because he was a Victoria Cross holder.’

Oscar Tohux, Westminster Cathedral School Y5



Leonard Keyser, returning a hand grenade



Interior of ANZAC Buffet

Minnie Rattigan established a home for her fellow Australians in Horseferry Road.

In 1915, Horseferry Road in Westminster, became a home away from home for the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZACs). A total of 331,781

Australian soldiers embarked for overseas service with the AIF during World War One, as did 3011 members of the Australian Army Nursing Service. The majority of the AIF served with the British Expeditionary Force on the Western Front. Almost without exception AIF members serving in France would have visited London. From mid-summer 1916 until mid-1919 there were never fewer than 50,000 Australian troops in Britain, excluding men on leave. All would have visited at some point their Administrative HQ in Horseferry Road, which was based at Grey Coat Hospital School:

'We leave our kit and pack in the cloakrooms - and with leave pass in hand, for now we are free men; but what to do? Where to go? This question is answered, for there upon a door is a mystic sign ANZAC Buffet, we push open the door and look in, and lo! London is forgotten for there around us are Australian faces.'

Ellis Silas 16Bn. A.I.F.

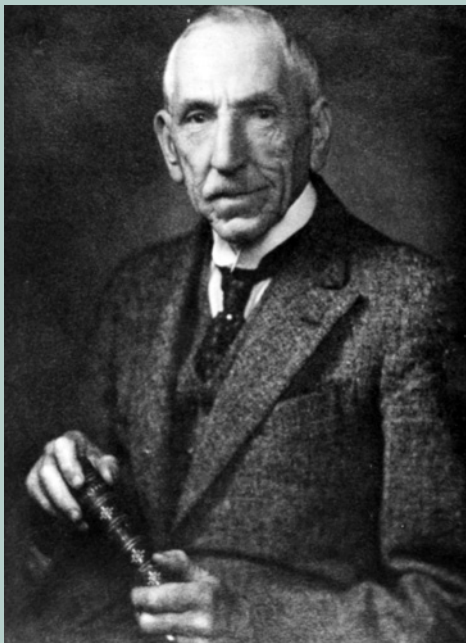
First stop for Australians once their leave had begun was the ANZAC Buffet which was established by Minnie Rattigan of the Australian Natives Association. Minnie was born in 1870 at Barooga Station, Australia and married her second husband Alan in 1912 before they emigrated to London. On the outbreak of war, in 1914, Alan joined the 1st Life Guards as a Second Lieutenant interpreter and with her husband away Minnie decided late in 1915 to open the ANZAC Buffet at 130 Horseferry Road. This was a place for Australian servicemen to find a home from home during their breaks from active service and offered free meals, entertainment and the chance to forget the horrors of war. The Buffet was open seven days a week from 6:00 a.m. to 10:30 p.m. and employed an army of Pimlico women to feed about 1000 men per day. In addition to serving meals, the ANZAC Buffet had billiard, reading and music rooms and organised entertainments for the troops. On one such occasion, on the 20th November 1915, the ANZAC Buffet played host to

six Australian and New Zealand Victoria Cross recipients including Paddington born Leonard Keysor.

In September 1916, the Buffet was relocated to 94 Victoria Street officially because the original premises were required by the military. However, Minnie Rattigan believed it was because the army did not want competition for their newly opened Australian Soldiers' War Chest Club located nearby. This new club charged for meals and other comforts, while the Buffet continued to provide free meals and entertainment throughout the war. In 1916 Australia's Pimlico born Prime Minister Billy Hughes came to Horseferry Road. In addition to visiting his old school, St Stephen's (Burdett Coutts) he came to both the ANZAC Buffet and War Chest Club to pay tribute to women like Minnie Rattigan who were ensuring that that a warm welcome was always on the menu for any visiting ANZAC.



Minnie Rattigan in patriotic dress



Pimlico born William Morris “Billy” Hughes, CH, KC, (25 September 1862 – 28 October 1952), became the seventh Prime Minister of Australia in 1915.

Born at 7, Moreton Place , Pimlico in 1862 Billy lost his mother, a servant, when he was only seven and was sent by his father, a carpenter at the House of Lords, to live with his Welsh relatives. He returned to Pimlico when he was about 12 years old and was sent to St Stephen’s School (now Burdett Coutts) near Rochester Row. Here he met two people that were to change his life. One was school inspector Matthew Arnold, a famous poet, who inspired him to improve himself and to become a pupil teacher at the school.

The other was fellow pupil George Payne, who in 1884 would help to pay Billy’s fare to emigrate to Australia. The penniless Hughes struggled to make ends meet when he arrived down under and was employed in a number of dead end jobs before arriving in Sydney.

In Sydney Billy became involved in socialist politics in New South Wales, becoming an elected Member of the NSW State assembly in 1894, and a Member



Billy Hughes and second wife Mary visit his old school St Stephen's (Burdett Coutts)

of the House of Representatives (MHR) of the first Australian Federal Parliament in 1901. In October 1915, towards the end of the disastrous campaign at Gallipoli, he became Prime Minister of Australia. In 1916 Billy returned to his birthplace and stayed to champion the interests of the ordinary Australian soldier fighting in Flanders. By the time he visited the ANZAC HQ in Horseferry Road and his old school in November 1916 he was already known as ‘The Little Digger’ in recognition of his efforts on their behalf. However, one of these initiatives, conscription, led him to being expelled from the Labor party and forming a new Nationalist Party to enable him to stay on as prime minister.

This poor boy from Pimlico mixed with the world’s great leaders at the Versailles Peace Conference in 1919 that formally ended World War 1. Hughes was

determined to secure reparations from Germany to compensate Australia for its war losses and to maintain control of the former German territory of New Guinea to maintain security. His demands led to a famous confrontation with US President Woodrow Wilson:

Wilson: *“Do I understand that Australia in the face of the wishes of the world would insist upon having her own way?”* Hughes: *“That’s about the size of it, Mr. President.”*

Wilson continued: *“Do you think 5 million Australians should hold to ransom the 1,200 million represented by the Conference”*. Hughes: *“I speak for sixty thousand (war) dead. For how many do you speak?”* which as everyone knew was more than Wilson did.

As a great patriot and supporter of the British Empire Billy remained Prime Minister until 1923, and continued as a MHR until his death, aged 90, in 1952. He is still the longest-serving member of the Australian Parliament, and one of the most colourful and controversial figures in Australian political history.



Billy Hughes (far right, standing) The Signing of Peace in the Hall of Mirrors, Versailles, 28th June 1919, William Orpen



Churchill inspecting naval recruits

Winston Churchill who lived at both Eccleston Terrace and Morpeth Place was seen by many as the architect behind the failed Gallipoli campaign of 1915.

“Are there not other alternatives than sending our armies to chew barbed wire in Flanders?”

Winston Churchill, 29th
December 1914

Less than a year after its outbreak in August 1914, the Great

War produced a bloody stalemate for the British and French on the Western Front and serious setbacks for the Russians on the Eastern Front. Winston Churchill believed that the stalemate could be broken by invading the Gallipoli Peninsula via the Dardanelles strait, reinforcing Russia, and knocking Turkey out of the war before seeking victory by attacking Germany from the rear.

As First Lord of the Admiralty, based in the heart of Westminster, Churchill championed a campaign in the Dardanelles because it seemed tailor made for the British forces: they had naval superiority and troops from Australia and New Zealand (later called ANZACs) could be used together with soldiers of the Royal Naval Division who were under his command.

But the operation failed for lack of proper coordination between the Army and Navy and, while there were many fingerprints on the operation, Churchill took the blame. Asquith remained Prime Minister only by entering into a coalition with the

Conservatives. The price the Conservatives demanded was Winston's head - he was forced out of the Admiralty and the failure was firmly pinned to him.

"I am the victim of a political intrigue," Churchill bitterly remarked, *"I am finished."*

Dismissal from the Admiralty was such a crushing blow for him that his wife Clementine remarked, *"... I thought he would never get over the Dardanelles; I thought he would die of grief."*

Churchill initially accepted an obscure Cabinet post as Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster - but in the middle of November 1915 sought permission to leave the government to take command of a battalion of the 6th Royal Scots Fusiliers in Flanders. Despite proving himself in the front line he remained haunted by Gallipoli for decades and was to remain a political outsider throughout the interwar years. *"Remember the Dardanelles,"* his political opponents would taunt him when he stood up to speak in the House of Commons. When running for Parliament in 1923, hecklers called out, *"What about the Dardanelles?"*

It was whilst Churchill was living at Morpeth Terrace, Westminster in 1931 that a political commentator commented on his apparently dismal future in politics: *"the ghosts of Gallipoli will always rise up to damn him anew,"* However, we know now that Churchill was to prove this prediction wrong. He became prime minister in 1940 with Britain again at war and on taking office, he wrote, *"All my past life had been a preparation for this hour and for this trial."* That preparation included Gallipoli.

Turkish map of Gallipoli campaign



On 6th May 1915, Henry Friston, a 21-year-old seaman found himself in Hell - a narrow beach known only as 'X Beach', Gallipoli. Henry, ferrying the wounded from the battlefield, had not eaten or slept for three days. Then, somehow, in the midst of the bombardments, he met an unlikely companion - a tortoise. Many years later Henry's son Don would tell the story of this tortoise, whom he called Ali Pasha, to author Michael Foreman. On the centenary of the story Michael met children from Westminster Cathedral school, who were set the task of re-writing the story from Ali Pasha's point of view.



“I was all lonely and scared. My beautiful home in Gallipoli had been turned into hell and I was hiding in a deep crater when a man fell down with me as a deafening bomb exploded. He saw that I was upside down so he put me the right side up. Then he started talking to me about stories of his home - England. I thought he was nice and would do me no harm so I slipped me head out of my shell to say hello.”

“He took me in his bag to two sailors. He said to promise not to tell anyone about me. I don't know why, but he called me Ali Pasha. My home was inside gun number 2. He put me in a box with a bit of food. Then he quietly whispered to me I will always keep you safe and take care of you..”





“It’s Christmas!! I don’t know what Henry and I will do today, but I hope it’s fun! One of Henry’s friends gave us two crowns to wear, they are kind of silly but if my friend Henry wants me to wear it I will. I watched the sailors put on a funny play, and they gave me so many dates, I’m very full.”

“Today Henry took me off the ship, which was nice. Sometimes I hate being on that metal box and all I want to do is go outside

and get some fresh air. When we came back Henry had so many dates. I daren’t tell him that I’m getting sick of eating them!! He also told me he was taking me home to England with him.”



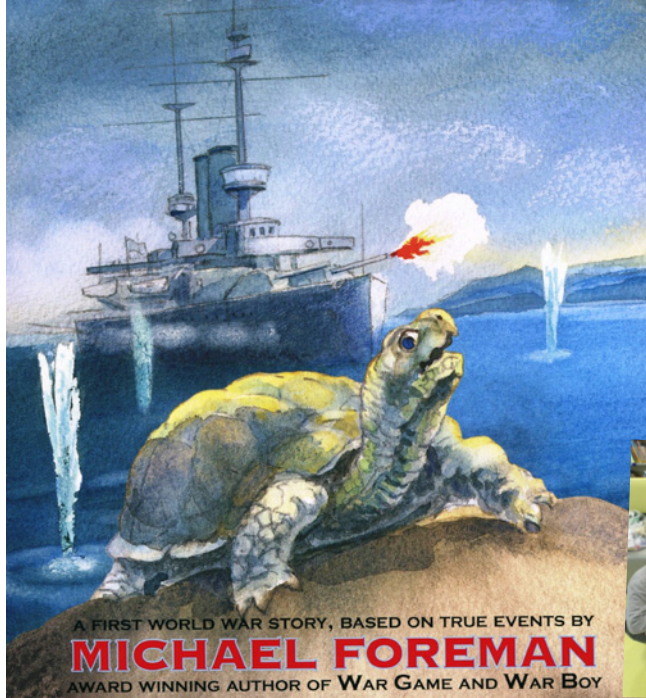
“Finally we are back on land for good! But Henry put me in a basket, which I don’t like, I want to walk on land again! After hearing so many stories about England I can’t wait to see it, I hope its as nice as Henry said. But I really want to meet his Mum...maybe she can give me something nicer to eat than those dates!”



"This touching story will live on for generations to come."

MICHAEL MORPURGO, AUTHOR OF *WAR HORSE*

THE AMAZING TALE OF **ALI PASHA**



A FIRST WORLD WAR STORY, BASED ON TRUE EVENTS BY
MICHAEL FOREMAN
AWARD WINNING AUTHOR OF *WAR GAME* AND *WAR BOY*

Ali Pasha would live with Henry for the rest of his life, the two old friends would never be separated. Ali Pasha even became famous in his old age, appearing in many newspapers and even appearing on the BBC's Blue Peter! Although Henry went to war to find adventure, what he brought back with him was a life-long friend.



FROM GALLIPOLI TO WEMBLEY:

The Remarkable Story of Harry Cook, Everton's 'Blind Masseur'

Gallipoli, June 1915 – Private Harry Cook of the East Lancashire Regiment came into close combat with the enemy: *“I fired at the Turk: missed. The Turk threw back a grenade which exploded a yard or so in front of me. Everything went black – I was blind.”*

This life changing moment would lead 18-year-old Harry on the road to a “hands-on” role in three Football League Championships and an FA Cup victory.

Richard “Harry” Cook was born in January 1897 and turned out as an amateur forward at Clitheroe FC whilst dreaming of playing for Everton in the F.A. Cup final. Gallipoli seemed to have shattered his dreams until he found himself in September 1915 at St Dunstan's, Sir Arthur Pearson's rehabilitation home for blind servicemen in Regent's Park. Here Harry learnt that blindness was “not an affliction but a handicap which could be overcome. Soon he was joining in blindfolded “shoot-out” matches for the “St Dunstaners” and even played in a match against Arsenal. Spotting Harry's potential staff persuaded him to re-train as a “Blind Masseur” (physiotherapist) and it was whilst learning this new profession that he fell in love with one of his nurses, Kate Penfold, who would later become his wife.

For Harry the shattered dream of playing for Everton had now been replaced by a desire to work for them as a masseur, an ambition he attained when he was taken on as the team's physiotherapist in August 1923. Such was his skill and memory that he came to recognise every Everton player by touch. Knowing this, the players would attempt to trick Harry but he always recognised his “patient” – even an attempt to pass off the tea-lady as a player failed.

In 1933 Harry achieved his life time ambition of walking out of the Wembley tunnel with the Everton team on F.A. Cup Final day. After the game, as he

celebrated Everton's 3-0 victory over Manchester City, Harry realised that he too had triumphed over what had happened to him at Gallipoli eighteen years before.

In 1939, with Everton the reigning League Champions, World War 2 brought a premature end to Harry's Goodison career. He continued in private practice, on the Wirral, before taking up a post in 1945 at Hackney Hospital in London. Tragically he would die within weeks of his retirement on 25 February 1961.

And what became of St Dunstan's?

The charity has continued to assist people who have suffered loss of vision during, or after, military service. It is now known as Blind Veterans UK (www.blindveterans.org.uk) with a motto that Harry would have endorsed wholeheartedly: "Life Beyond Sight Loss".





Charles Sargeant Jagger was born in Kilnhurst, South Yorkshire on 17th December, 1885. He left school aged fourteen to learn the craft of engraving on silver with the Sheffield firm of Mappin and Webb. He also studied at the Sheffield School of Art in the evenings before in 1907 he won a scholarship to the Royal College of Art, South Kensington.

In 1914 Jagger won the Rome scholarship in sculpture. However, the outbreak of the First World War led him to turn his back on this opportunity and instead enlist as a humble private in the Artists' Rifles. On the 23rd September 1915 he set sail with the British Mediterranean Expeditionary Force for Gallipoli.

He was by then a 2nd Lieutenant in the 13th Battalion Royal Worcesters. Jagger described their send-off at Plymouth as “magnificent” and as “one of the greatest days I shall live to see.” Little could have prepared him for the conditions under which he was to serve. In a letter to his girlfriend Jagger wrote:

“We have got many men who fought in France and I believe they would sell their souls almost to get back to Flanders again. You people at home have no idea what sort of Hell this is. It strikes me as being the home of the damned.”

On the 5th November, he was shot through the left shoulder and evacuated first to a hospital in Malta and then back to England. Once recovered he married Violet Constance Smith before he was sent out to the Western Front where he was wounded again in 1918. In recognition of his valour, he was awarded the Military Cross.

As the Armistice was declared on November 11th 1918, a convalescing Jagger heard that the British War Memorials Committee were looking for sculptors who



had first hand experience of the war. Jagger immediately realised he could use his experiences to create works that would honour those who had died and later admitted that it was the horror of Gallipoli, not the trenches in France, which most influenced the work he would undertake.

Jagger was to win many commissions around the world, however, he is best known for two war memorials in Westminster; the Royal Artillery Memorial at Hyde Park Corner and the Great Western Railway War Memorial in Paddington Railway Station. Both of these works reflected

Jagger's desire for his memorials to be realistic portrayals of the men who had fought, and would also show, controversially, depictions of dead soldiers, something the government was keen to avoid. Two of Jagger's realistic figures from the Royal Artillery memorial were recast and now form part of the shrine of Remembrance in Melbourne, Australia.



The Westminster Cathedral Primary School writing team are: Daisy O'Shea, Louis Penne Stuart, Kelly Abreu, William Costales, Ashley Heathfield, Oscar Tohux, Kiara Camacho Moreno, Daniel Tyundi, Tegan Ackaah, Samuel Franco Halili, Sofia Miseria, PP, Wisley Glenn Vergara, Louie Gilbert and Mason Williams-Mitchell.

ANZAC Project Co-ordinator: Peter Daniel, Westminster Archives
Project Support: Samantha Tarde, Alexandra Piatelli and Allison Darhun

Westminster Cathedral Catholic Primary School: Alex Stacey, Deputy Head and Nicola Cavill, Y5 Class teacher

Images and archive material: Westminster Archives, Australian War Memorial, Pat Daniel and Lin Bardill

With thanks to: Australian War Memorial; Imperial War Museum; Pathe; MOD Theatre Group; Abbey Community Centre; Elisabeth Parker, Head of Westminster Abbey Education; Will Ewart, actor; Rob Baker, Blind Veterans UK; Chris Payne; Carl Bridge, Professor of Australian Studies, Kings College London; Sam Doty, Education Officer, National Army Museum; Tristan Langlois, Head of Education, National Army Museum; Rob Fleming, Historian, National Army Museum; Chelsea pensioners John Gallagher and Dave Thomson for sharing their Gallipoli stories.



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