

Victor Arthur Jacques

By Erin Rowlands



Victor Arthur Jacques, known simply as Vic by family and friends, is my great, great, great uncle. He was born on the 16th of November, 1894, in Glenorchy Tasmania, son of Samuel and Susannah, known as Susie, Jacques. Victor was the youngest of eleven children. He had 7 brothers named William, Ernest, Herbert, Albert, Frank, George and Rupert, although Rupert only survived one month after birth as he died of bronchitis, and he also had 3 sisters called Evelyn, Emma and Maud. Victor grew up, alongside his siblings, on the family orchard in Hull Street, Glenorchy. At home, they had a routine of picking apples in autumn, apricots, pears and plums in summer and pruning the fruit trees in winter. The family also had to complete farm maintenance work, cut wood for their wood heater in order to stay warm, plant crops, manage the dairy cattle and kill possums for their fur to sell as an extra income. The role of the family was crucial for the purpose of keeping the farm operating as they worked cooperatively to complete the majority of the farm labour.²

From the age of 15, Victor served with the Derwent Regiment as a junior cadet for one year and in the 93rd infantry for two years, in which he was currently serving at the time of enlistment. Vic enlisted for World War One on the 20th of August, 1914. He enlisted at the rank of sergeant and joined the 12th battalion, 'A' company, his regimental number being 62. He then passed his medical examination 8 days following his enlistment. On his medical examination papers, it states he was 20 years old, 5 foot 6 ½ inches tall, 140 pounds, a chest measurement of 34 inches, a dark complexion, grey eyes, dark brown hair, was of the religious denomination of Church of England and had no distinctive marks or any conditions that would make him unfit for active service. His unit then embarked on HMAT Geelong, the

¹ Virtual War Memorial Australia. "Victor Arthur JACQUES." [Vwma.org.au, vwma.org.au/explore/people/293083](http://vwma.org.au/vwma.org.au/explore/people/293083). Accessed 5 May 2024.

² Jacques, Michael. "Book 5 - 'Uncle Victor' - an Ordinary Man in the Great War." Jacques Skelly Family Tasmanian Family History, 2005.

first troopship to leave Tasmania, destined for Egypt. The ship's first stop was at Albany. This is where Victor saw his last glimpse of Australia.

Description of <u>Victor Arthur Jacques</u> on Enlistment.	
Age <u>20</u> years <u>—</u> months	DISTINCTIVE MARKS. <u>Nil</u>
Height <u>5</u> feet <u>6.5</u> inches	
Weight <u>140</u> lbs.	
Chest Measurement <u>34</u> inches	
Complexion <u>Dark</u>	
Eyes <u>Grey</u>	
Hair <u>Dark Brown</u>	
Religious Denomination <u>C of E.</u>	

Attestation papers describe Victor Arthur Jacques physical appearance.



Soldier aboard the HMAT Geelong

On the vessels there was little to do. Ships were overcrowded and there was minimal shade on deck. Sunburn, seasickness and boredom were the main threats onboard. To overcome boredom, soldiers found ways to entertain themselves. Lieutenant Colonel Frederick Forrest, a member onboard the HMAT Geelong, wrote in his diary that the 12th Infantry had held a concert. Other common rituals such as the 'crossing of the line,' an initiation ceremony for those who are crossing the equator for the first time, also occurred on ships as a form of entertainment. Lieutenant Colonel Frederick Forrest also reported passing by a large school of whales on the 22nd of October, two days after departure from Hobart. This would have caused great excitement amongst the troops, especially as many, including

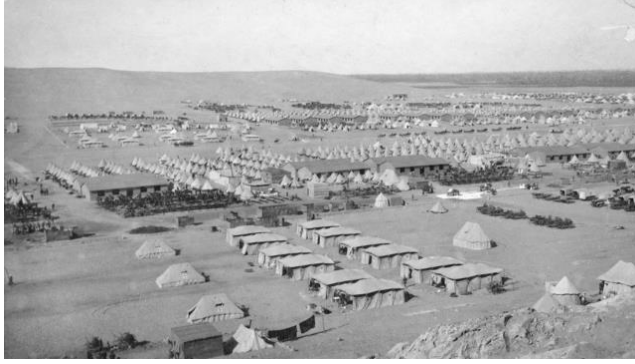


Photo: Training camp in Cairo

Victor, would never have had the opportunity to view a whale before. Forrest describes how there was a case of typhoid on the ship and that all troops then had to be inoculated.³

HMAT Geelong arrived in Egypt in early December 1914 and disembarked at Alexandria. The soldiers were then moved to training camps near Cairo. In the training camps the soldiers completed drills and manoeuvres, in preparation for the upcoming battles. During their time in Egypt, the soldiers were given short periods of leave. Victor took this as an opportunity to explore the ruins, pyramids, biblical landmarks and immerse himself in the art and culture of Egypt, an event that would have been significantly different from life in Tasmania.

In early April, they left Egypt and gathered on Lemnos, a Greek Island, 100km south west of Gallipoli. On Saturday the 24th of April, troopships departed Mudros Harbour, headed for the shores of Gallipoli. Upon landing on the 25th, troops were immediately confronted with heavy fire, resulting in a great deal of casualties. In time, soldiers were forced to endure the appalling conditions associated with the location of the battle. The weather conditions ranged from unbearably hot summer days in a thick uniform to pouring rain, heavy snowfalls and strong, harsh winds in winter. Soldiers suffered due to the unsanitary conditions leading to outbreaks of disease, infestations of lice and constant dehydration, all while being under the constant threat of enemy fire.⁴ Here, the legacy of the ANZAC spirit was initiated, whereby soldiers demonstrated the qualities of mateship, discipline, endurance and courage in times of great hardship.

Victor did not escape illness. He was admitted to the 2nd stationary hospital in Mudros on the 19th of June, 1915 with a serious case of influenza. This put him out of action for eight days. He rejoined his unit at Gallipoli on the 27th and continued fighting. During the Gallipoli Campaign, Victor was awarded a mention in despatch for his distinguished and gallant services rendered during the period of Gen. Sir Charles Munro's command for leading an attack of 20 men at Leane's Trench and succeeding in bringing in all his wounded. Vic left Gallipoli on the 6th of January, 1916, on HMT Lake Michigan, disembarking at

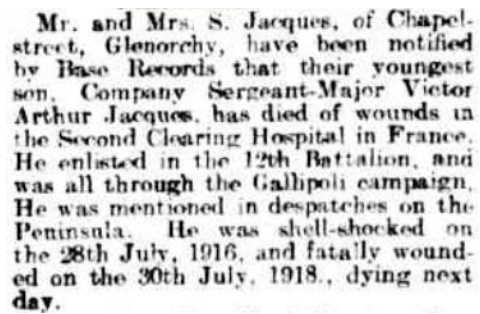
³ ScribbleMaps.com. "HMAT Geelong A2." Scribble Maps, www.scribblemaps.com/maps/view/HMAT-Geelong-A2/Oy3RluKftJ. Accessed 5 May 2024.

⁴ Sharwood, Anthony. "Weather News - from Scorching Heat to Snow: The Extreme Weather of Gallipoli." www.weatherzone.com.au, 24 Apr. 2021, www.weatherzone.com.au/news/from-scorching-heat-to-snow-the-extreme-weather-of-gallipoli/533981. Accessed 13 June 2024.

Alexandria where training was commenced in preparation for battle on the Western Front. The Gallipoli Campaign would have given Victor significant experience in battle.

Victor spent the majority of his service on the Western Front. His unit disembarked at Marseilles, France on the 5th of May, 1916. Following disembarkation, Vic received a promotion to the rank of a warrant officer. On the 29th of July, during Battle of the Somme, Victor was admitted to the 22nd General Hospital in Camiers, France, with shell shock and urethritis. On the 2nd of August, he was transferred to the 18th General Hospital in Etaples. Victor was given light duties after being discharged from hospital, but he did not rejoin the 12th Battalion at the front until the 17th of November. On the 23rd of February, 1917, Victor departed from the front as he had been posted to command the 4th Army Training School at Flexcourt. This lasted until the 30th of March, where he then rejoined his unit at the frontline.

Victor was then withdrawn from the front on the 11th of May to act as a company sergeant major for the 3rd training battalion in Durrington, England. On the 8th of July, he arrived at the Chelsea Drill School and on the 25th of September, he was promoted to regimental sergeant major at Sutton Veny. On the 30th of January 1918, Vic left Southampton headed back to France to rejoin the 12th battalion. Once he had returned, he was demoted to the rank of company sergeant major. Throughout his time on the Western Front, according to family legend, Victor fell in love with a French girl, whom he was bound to marry. When Victor had asked for leave to be closer to her, sadly, his request was not granted.



Mr. and Mrs. S. Jacques, of Chapel-street, Glenorchy, have been notified by Base Records that their youngest son, Company Sergeant-Major Victor Arthur Jacques, has died of wounds in the Second Clearing Hospital in France. He enlisted in the 12th Battalion, and was all through the Gallipoli campaign. He was mentioned in despatches on the Peninsula. He was shell-shocked on the 28th July, 1916, and fatally wounded on the 30th July, 1918., dying next day.

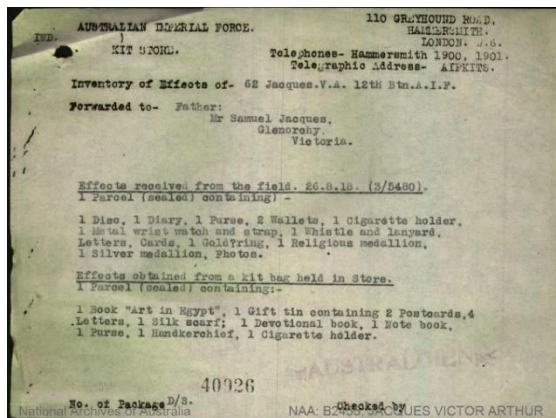
By 1918, the soldiers, including Victor, who had been fighting in the war since the beginning considered themselves as 'lucky old-timers.' Little did Victor know that his time would soon come to an end, only 103 days before the Armistice was signed, ending WW1. On the 30th of July, 1918, Vic was admitted to the 2nd Australian casualty clearing station in St Omer with a gunshot wound penetrating his abdomen. The family received a telegram on the 7th of August, reporting that *Figure 5: Newspaper Extract, Wed 21 Aug 1918*⁵ Victor was 'dangerously ill'. After an unanswered attempt to find out the nature of their son's situation, they received another telegram on the 12th of August confirming that Victor had died of wounds in hospital the following day, on the 31st of July, 1918.

⁵ The Mercury. "TASMANIAN CASUALTIES." Mercury, 21 Aug. 1918, p. 5, trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/11406130?searchTerm=TASMANIAN%20CASUALTIES.%20PERSONAL%20NOTES.%2021%20Aug. Accessed 15 July 2024.



Photos. Graves of Victor Jacques. The original cross (left), the Commonwealth War Graves headstone (middle) and a headstone from his parents (right).

Victor's remains were then buried in St Omer, where he was considered one of the lucky ones who had received a well-marked grave. After the death of their youngest son, the second child that they had lost, they paid, in 1922, to have the inscription "he fought and died to save us all" inserted onto his headstone and arranged for his details to be included on their own tombstone (see *figure 8*) when they passed away, including the words "at rest."



In April 1919, Victor's family received a package containing the last remains of his life. The items sent home were, from the field: a disc, a diary, a purse, two wallets, a cigarette holder, a metal wrist watch and strap, a whistle and lanyard, letters, cards, a gold ring, a religious medallion, a silver medallion and photos, and from his kit bag: a book titled "Art in Egypt," a gift tin containing two postcards, four letters and a silk scarf; a devotional book, a notebook, a purse, a handkerchief and another cigarette holder. The gold ring and silk scarf suggest that the family legend is true, that Victor did have a French fiancé. The family received a memorial plaque, *Figure 9: Inventory of Effects*⁶ commonly referred to as a dead man's penny, and a memorial scroll. Victor's medals, including the 1914-15 Star, British War Medal,

⁶ NAA. "Victor Arthur Jacques." Naa.gov.au, recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRRetrieve/Gallery151/dist/JGalleryViewer.aspx?B=7371049&S=59&N=59&R=0#/SearchNRRetrieve/NAAMedia/ShowImage.aspx?B=7371049&T=P&S=13. Accessed 5 May 2024.

Victory Medal and the Oak Leaf from being mentioned in despatch, have since been lost following the conclusion of the war.

Following notice of Victor's death, his family arranged for an insert to be integrated into The Mercury newspaper on Thursday the 31st of July 1919, reading:

"IN MEMORIAM

Died on Active Service.

JACQUES—In fond and loving remembrance of my dear son, Victor Arthur Jacques, late Sergt. Major, 12th Battalion, who died of wounds in France on the 31st day of July 1918, In his 24th year. He was one of the Anzacs who departed in the Geelong, and was four years on active service.

*A gallant hero, true and brave,
Now peacefully sleeps in a soldier's grave.
He responded to his country's call.
He gave his life, his best, his all;
He died the helpless to defend
An Australian soldier's noble end.*

Inserted by his loving father, mother, sisters and brothers.

JACQUES. -A tribute of everlasting love to the memory of my dear cousin. Warrant, Officer V. A. Jacques.

Died of wounds July, 1918.

In a soldier's grave he lies sleeping.

One of earth's bravest and best; In my heart I shall miss him forever;

Still I know he is only at rest.

Inserted by his loving cousin, Doris Garth" ⁷



Victor's brother, George Charles Jacques

⁷ The Mercury. "Family Notices." Mercury, 31 July 1919, p. 1, trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/12361014?searchTerm=victor%20arthur%20jacques. Accessed 15 July 2024.

Victor's brother George, who had joined in the later stages of the war, returned home with lungs badly affected by the effects of mustard gas, which left him with a hacking cough. Ronald Jacques, Victor's nephew, recalled how common it was to see an old veteran wandering the streets of Hobart, either out of his mind, or coughing profusely from the effects of gas. George later went on to marry Margery Bailey and have six children, one of whom he called Victor in the memory of his late brother.⁸ This act of naming one of his own children after his brother is a reminder of the significant impact that the loss of Victor's life had on his family⁹



Photo: Glenorchy City War Memorial



Photo: Victor Jacques listed on the Roll of Honour.

Today, we can commemorate Victor's service to our nation at numerous sites. These include panel 66 on the roll of honour (see *figure 12*), located at the Australian War Memorial, the site of his grave at Longuenesse (St Omer) Souvenir Cemetery in France (see *figure 7*), on the Glenorchy City Council War Memorial (see *figure 11*) and by visiting his parent's grave at Cornelian Bay Cemetery (see *figure 8*).

⁸ Jacques, Michael. "Book 5 - 'Uncle Victor' - an Ordinary Man in the Great War." Jacques Skelly Family Tasmanian Family History, 2005.

⁹ Weebly. "WWI Pictorial Honour Roll of Tasmanians." WWI Pictorial Honour Roll of Tasmanians, ww1tas.weebly.com/ja.html. Accessed 15 July 2024.

An article found within The Mercury, dated Wednesday the 5th of March, 1930, titled 'A Glenorchy Veteran: Old Days Recalled,' reflects on the life of Samuel William Jacques, Victor's Father, now 80 years old and married to Susie for 58 years. An extract from this article, 12 years after the death of their youngest son, states that "three sons of the marriage served in the Great War; the now elderly parents still mourning the loss of one of them, though proud that he fell in such a cause."¹⁰ This excerpt reminds us of the impact that Victor's death had and continued to have on his family years after his death, and that even though World War One was the cause of a great deal of suffering and loss of life, it was considered an honour to fight and put one's life on the line in order to serve the nation in which they belong to.

World War One wiped out an entire generation of young men across the world and left many of those who had returned home with the physical and emotional scars of war. It resulted in tens of thousands of Australian casualties, each with their own stories to be told, Victor's being just one of these, passed down generations later, to remember those who sacrificed their lives for the service of their country.

¹⁰ The Mercury. "A GLENORCHY VETERAN." Mercury, 5 Mar. 1930, p. 9, trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/29156962. Accessed 15 July 2024.