

# The Light Horseman

By Lloyd Nelson

Tommy Tyzack is a sniper on Gallipoli. He's been there from day one of the landing. He's not up there with Billy Sing the Queensland dead eye shot but he's not so far of the pace either.

Tommy is 19, rising 20 and from what he is observing through his trench periscope of what he is involved in this morning he is painfully aware that his chance to get to his twenties is almost zilch, that is if the runner they have sent down to the pommy officers calling the shots on this ill advised venture doesn't come back with a negative to the next scheduled charge which is about seven minutes away. What they're doing is a diversionary attack to draw off surplus Turkish troops from the coast, Suvla Bay in particular where the poms have scheduled a landing this morning for re enforcements for their troops. The British officers running colonial troops such as the Light Horseman on dismounted action have the cavalier attitude so common to cavalry officers of pushing things hard irrespective of high casualty rates. Progress or attempted progress at any price is their creed.

Tommy turns around; Jims Throosel from Northam is geeing up the troop for the next wave of the charge which the two previous attempts have seen the men mowed down like corn in the field. Jim was his footy captain at Cow cowing and when the drought came in they, that is all the team plus the 19<sup>th</sup> man all joined up in Northam together. In the Nature of things there will be many gaps in the team at wars end.

"Christ Jim" Tommy says "do we have to do this?"

"Ours not to reason why Old Cock" Throssel says "but hopefully the runner will be back in a sec with a stop order"

"Who's the runner?" Tim asks "Oh Alby Moore?" Alby represented Australia at the last Olympics and has a gold medal to prove it but Tommy thinks that Alby's speed may only result in sending the next lot to their doom quicker. He's quick and decisive, walks down to the Ell of the trench, rather dangerous spot as the Jackos have a fixed rifle set on the angle and bullets buzz here like bees on a summer day. Because of the circumstances the troops give ell a wide birth so Tommy wraps a sugar bag around his face and takes position. Alby comes burning up the trench, at the fixed rifle spot ducks his head as Tommy knows he will and Tom cold cocks underhand him with the barrel of a Webley revolver which he sounered off a dead British Officer a week or two back. Alby drops like a stone, lies there, doesn't quiver. Tom pulls the pin on a couple of British hand grenades, a new novelty on Gallipoli and drops these in his sugar bag and puts the lot on the field telephone junction box. He gets up to his mob, hearing the roar of the grenades as he runs and as captain Morrison puts his silver whistle to his lips he yells "stop, its been cancelled" Morrison drops his whistle on it lanyard and says "there is a good after all". Having staved off disaster Tommy jumps up to the reverse side of trench and with bullets quickly zinging around him makes it to the small bund of earth put there, to allow a sniper elevated above the trench to get a few shots off where possible.

He makes it to behind the mound and gets organized.

He has a strait view into his trenches and knows full well that the poms will send up an officer or two to find out why their death wave hasn't happened. When he sees two capped men come into view he fires a series of rifle grenades into the Turkish trenches. All hell breaks loose, these things have a goodly dash of phosphorus in them and the Jackos hate them. They fire madly at the mound, Tommy doesn't care a hoot, and it's the Brits he's after. They come rushing up the trench and he head shoots both of them in the fire storm that is happening.

But in getting his second shot off he leans forward a bit of unwittingly exposes himself to a Turkish sniper who is situated diagonally along the line and who up until now has been sitting waiting his chance.

"Bugger" says Tommy, he digs out some twine and sets about fitting a tourniquet to his damaged upper arm. He loses it.

Tommy Light Horse and farming career are now over. They ship him home to Western Australia and in time he goes onto Claremont Teachers Training College to get back to his abandoned career as a teacher of English Literature Geography and History.

He never gets to hear what happened to Alby but to his astonishment at the opening of the Wyalcatchem War Memorial Alby turns up there, indentation in his head and a slight slur in his speech.

"Jesus Alby, I thought you were dead" says Tommy.

"Almost" Alby replies "that ricochet shot at the neck put me in a coma for around three months and when I came out I went to America for therapy". He gestures to the good looking blonde women alongside him "and that when I met Mary-Ellen".

Tommy, consumed with curiosity says "and what was the message to Captain Morrison that you never delivered that day?"

"Oh a big stopper on the next charge, some smarty must have guessed what I was going to tell the Captain and they stopped anyway".

"you never know in a war do you" Alby says

"Gawd Alby" Tommy replies "you can say that again".