

Word Count: 1,500

'The Premier's ANZAC Spirit School Prize 2010'

Accessing historical records from decades past can help us to bring to life the achievements of an ordinary South Australian man named John Gilbert Jacob, who like thousands of others, went on to play a part in a tragic historical event. He was to be one of 60,000 Australians who paid the ultimate sacrifice and created the spirit of the ANZACs.

John Gilbert Jacob was born in Glenelg, South Australia in 1896. The exact date of his birth is unknown. John Gilbert Jacob was the second son of the late Mr Henry Jacob and Mrs Florence Jacob of Blackwood. John lived in Kensington Gardens with his parents and brothers and had previously attended Adelaide High School, South Australia. After graduating from high school John won a University Scholarship and had almost completed his Bachelor of Arts course, when he enlisted in Adelaide on 9 March 1916. John was twenty years of age and was single at the time of his enlistment. Information from 'The Advertiser' (Friday 2 August, 1918, Page 5), stated that John "took an active interest in all educational work, was a regular attendant of the Unitarian Christian Church, Sunday School, and guild, and an earnest member of the University Christian Union". John's mother, Florence Jacob, was next of kin as his father had passed away.

According to (www.aif.adfa.edu.au), John Gilbert Jacob was listed as a 'Private' on the rank of enlistment and was a part of the Unit '50th Battalion, 2nd Reinforcement'. The '50th Battalion, 2nd Reinforcement' departed from Adelaide, South Australia on board the ship 'HMAT A60 Aeneas' on 11 April 1916. John and many of the other Australian soldiers travelled to the battlefields from their given destinations to the Western Front by a ship. John served on the Western Front for a period of time and according to the 'Australian Imperial Force' documents dated 28 September 1916 and 25 April 1917, he was twice injured on 6 September 1916 and 5 April 1917. On 6 September 1916 John was admitted to the 'Ontario Military Hospital' in England, Orpington due to suffering from a mild wound on his back, caused by a bayonet. On 5 April 1917 John was wounded by a bayonet on his leg and was admitted to the 'Royal Surrey County Hospital' in England, Guildford.



1. Ontario Military Hospital, England between 1914-1918 (accessed from www.archives.gov.on.ca)

John Gilbert Jacob was killed in action by shell fire on 7 July 1918 at Hamel near Villers-Bretonneux, France aged twenty-two. He was buried at Villers-Bretonneux Military Cemetery (Plot I, Row F, Grave No. 5), Fouilloy, France. For his efforts in defending his country, John Gilbert Jacob was awarded the 'British War Medal' and 'Victory Medal'.

John Gilbert Jacob may have enlisted for the same reason that many other soldiers enlisted, which was to serve and protect their country. Many saw it as their moral obligation to defend Australia and the British Empire, to help Britain their 'Mother Country'.

John would have seen a variety of recruitment posters and displays which could have influenced his decision to enlist. There were different types of propaganda to influence many men and women to serve their country. Key words such as "Free Trip To Europe" were often displayed on posters in order to promote a once in a lifetime opportunity. Other posters incorporated the theme of 'good versus evil' and reflected unity and comradeship. These themes were used to highlight the message that enlisting was the right thing to do. Such images showed soldiers who were smiling and happy to go to war. These images may have misled John Gilbert Jacob as well as many other soldiers into thinking that going to war was a simple and worthwhile decision.

Soldiers would have seen the opportunity of travelling overseas an exciting life experience. John Gilbert Jacob may have seen this as a great opportunity to defend his country and visit other parts of the world, rather than continuing his 'Bachelor of Arts' course at University. He may have even thought that travel would be a valuable educational opportunity, an extension of his 'Bachelor of Arts' course.

Across the battlefields of France and Belgium known as the Western Front, the British, French and their allies were ~~fighting~~ ^{fighting} the German Army. During World War 1, areas of France and Belgium were described as a war-zone, which reflected trench-warfare. John Gilbert Jacob would have been exposed to disease, poor hygiene and freezing cold weather conditions. He would not have felt safe with the constant explosive artillery shells that could rain down on the front line soldiers every few seconds for days at a time.



2. Trench warfare conditions that some of the ANZACs had to endure on the Western Front (AWM E862) (accessed from www.awm.gov.au)

John Gilbert Jacob's view on war might have changed as soon as he spent his first few days in the trenches. Living amongst human waste and remains, as well as being exposed to the harsh environmental conditions would have highlighted the false advertising of the propaganda he saw, whilst living in Adelaide. John Gilbert would not have known what he was getting himself into. He was a city man, living in Adelaide, a relatively young, antipodean city. John would have been exposed to hot dry summers and cool wet winters in Adelaide. This is in stark contrast to the flat, muddy, fields of the Western Front. Fields that had been settled and ploughed since The Middle Ages.

John and many of the other soldiers fighting on the Western Front would have been exposed to a variety of technology. Weapons such as explosive artillery shells, bayonet, gas, flamethrowers, grenade and trench mortar were commonly used in defence against the opposition. John Gilbert Jacob personally experienced some of these elements of warfare specifically having a bayonet piercing his leg as well as eventually being killed by a shell fire. John Gilbert returned to pay the ultimate sacrifice knowing he had to challenge one of his Christian beliefs "Thou shalt not kill", which is one of the 'Ten Commandments'. There in Hamel, France, John's body lay decomposing in damp fields alongside many other ANZACs in a foreign land.

John Gilbert Jacob's mother, Florence Jacob, who was the next of kin, was notified of John's death via mail. His name is located at panel 150 in the Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial. He is remembered as an ordinary, yet brave, young man who volunteered to be involved in a foreign war.

The ANZAC Spirit has been respected by the community within Australia and overseas since World War 1. The spirit focuses on the soldiers' commitment, dedication, patriotism and ultimate sacrifice. It is the spirit which Australian soldiers since World War 1 have tried to live out whilst wearing the Australian defence uniform. The ANZAC Spirit also reflected mateship and comradeship whilst fighting for a common cause. It ties Australian and New Zealand servicemen/women who shared the same cause and displayed acts of bravery. In order to continue the ANZAC spirit we are obliged to defend and assist our country in times of national crisis, so that future generations will benefit, just as we have benefited from the efforts of the ANZACs.

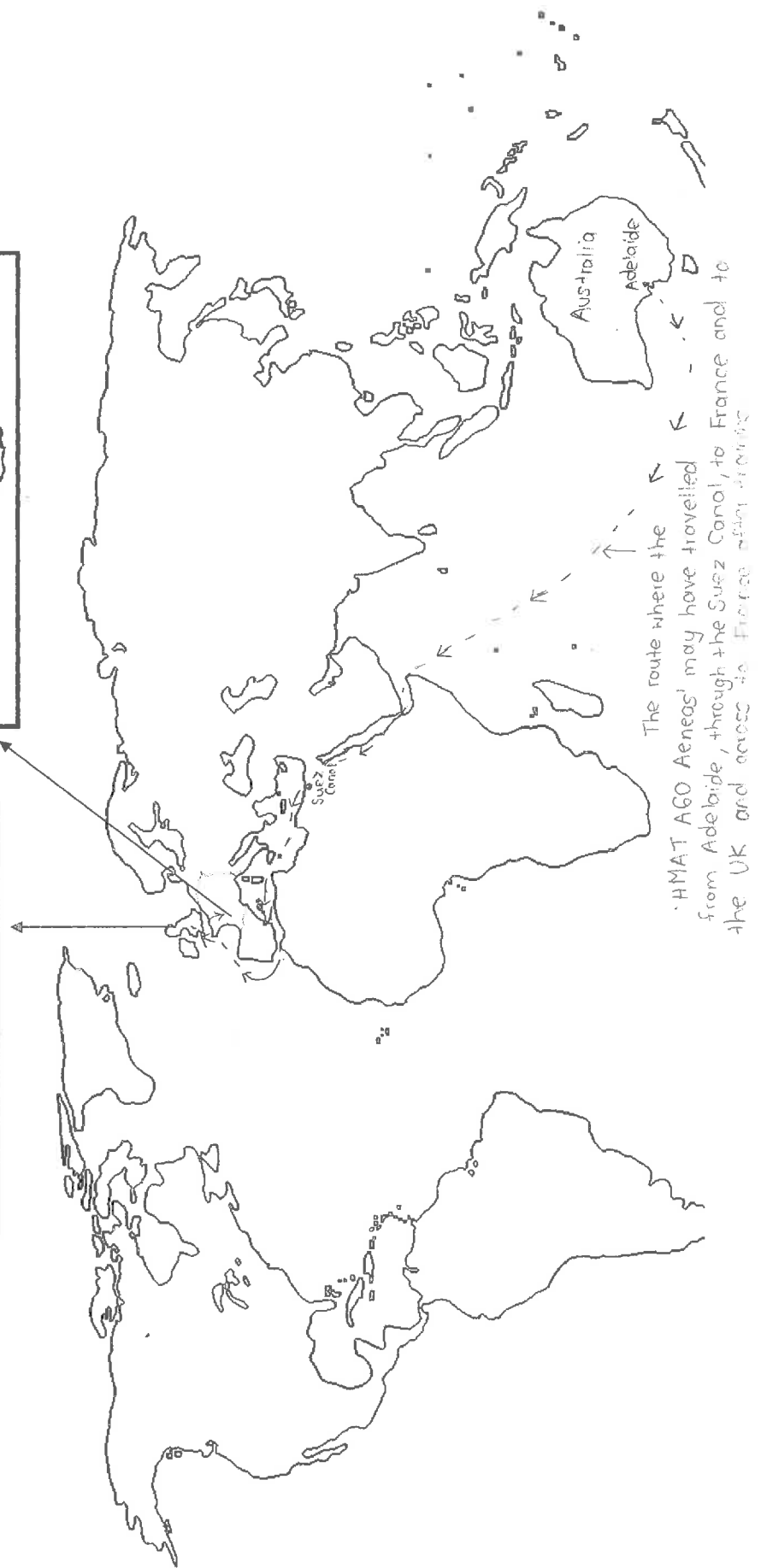
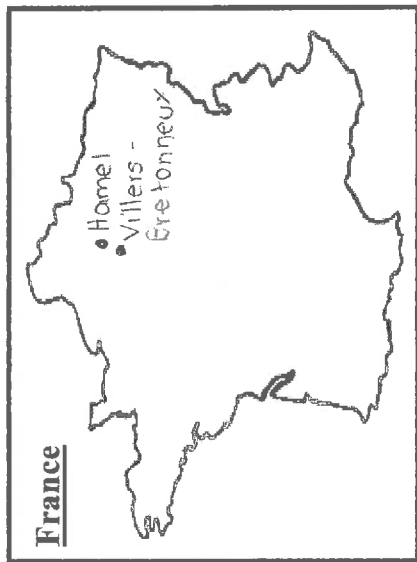
The ANZACs like John Gilbert Jacob are role models for the rest of the community in terms of displaying bravery and risking their lives in order to defend our country. In order to honour the ANZACs, today in society we need to appreciate our freedom, rights and entitlements which we have due to their sacrifices.

John Gilbert Jacob should be honoured and remembered for his achievements and ultimate loss of life whilst defending allies in France. John had a stable lifestyle in Adelaide with a good tertiary education and commitment to serving his Christian community. John Gilbert Jacob risked all these aspects of his life to fight a war in a foreign land. The Kensington and Adelaide University communities lost an honourable and respected member for the cause of the ANZACs. Whilst at war John would have established new communities and 'family ties' amongst his fellow soldiers. The living conditions he had to endure whilst fighting in trench warfare would have tested the

commitment and the mental strength of any human being. By giving up what he had in Adelaide to fight in the trenches is a testament to the ANZAC spirit which he displayed. Even though John Gilbert Jacob was twice wounded during battle, he still continued to put his country first as he resumed his role as a soldier.

John Gilbert Jacob and all ANZAC soldiers initiated the ANZAC spirit which is still living today. This spirit continues to live through Australian soldiers when they represent our country in war-torn places, such as East Timor and Afghanistan. I did not personally know John Gilbert Jacob but I have come to know him through my research. He has had an impact on me, to such a degree that I will not forget his achievements. The ultimate gift that one person can give to another is their life. John Gilbert Jacob has given this to Australia and we are indebted to him and all of the other fallen ANZACs.

Places Where John Gilbert Jacob Travelled (1916-1918)



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