

## George Kenny Buckpitt

On this sombre day when we remember the bravery at Anzac Cove and reflect on 100 years of our Cenotaph, I would like to talk to you about Private George Kenny Buckpitt.

Known as Kenny, his father, Edward, was a lightkeeper at Currie where his son was born in 1886. Also born here was Charles in 1882, along with Samuel in 1887; before their father moved back to mainland Tasmania in 1889. This was where the youngest brother, William, was born in 1894. The four brothers enlisted in the First Australian Imperial Force, all saw action and three survived.



*With acknowledgment to the Mercury Newspaper*

Kenny was two years old when his family left King Island and would have few, if any, memories of his life here. But he is a King Islander as are Charles and Samuel. There is a saying, 'You can take the boy off the island but you can't take the island out of the boy.' In Kenny's case he took to the water and became a noted swimmer.

After war was declared, Kenny's Army file shows that he enlisted on 17 August 1914 in Brighton Tasmania, taking the oath 11 days later. He was allocated to the 12<sup>th</sup> Battalion; among the first infantry units raised for the AIF during the First World War. Half of the battalion was recruited in Tasmania, a quarter from South Australia, and the remainder from Western Australia. With the 9th, 10th and 11th Battalions, it was part of the Third Brigade. Kenny's service number was 99 indicating he was the ninety ninth soldier to join the 12<sup>th</sup>.

The battalion was raised within three weeks of the declaration of war in August 1914. Kenny was allocated to A Company of the 12<sup>th</sup> and it took him some time to adjust to Army life. He fronted Captain Elliot twice in October 1914 for disciplinary infringements; lost some pay and did some extra duties. Like most soldiers he settled down, or maybe never got caught again!

Kenny and his Tassie mates embarked from Hobart on the HMAA A2 Geelong on 20 October. After a brief stop in Albany, WA, the battalion arrived in Egypt, in early December. The Third Brigade was the covering force for the ANZAC landing on 25 April 1915 and was the first ashore at around 4:30 am. Lieutenant Colonel L. F. Clarke, commanding officer of the 12<sup>th</sup>, was killed by a sniper within hours of landing. The battalion became heavily involved in defending the front line of the ANZAC position.

Whether Kenny was in the 25 April landing is not known. But his life was soon to end as a result of being on the Gallipoli Peninsula. On 4 June 1915 he received a gunshot wound to the left arm and abdomen, noted as severe. He was evacuated on the Hospital Ship Scilia where he died the following day. On that same day he was given a formal burial at sea by ship's Chaplain Teale. Kenny's personal effects were few – a pull through to clean his rifle, a coin and a testament.

His name is on Tree 13 in the Soldiers' Memorial Avenue, Hobart. However, Kenny is believed to be the first King Islander to die during World War 1. He was not yet 30, and his name should be on the Cenotaph. The Island has only been open to selection for one year when the family left, so they were probably forgotten. Searching records is far easier now and your Sub branch intends to rectify this omission. Kenny's life was a tragic loss. Let me close with these words as way of remembering him, 'He was born surrounded by the sea, swam in it, and has been resting in it for nearly 107 years.'



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Lest We Forget

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