

Constable Patrick James MOYNIHAN



Patrick James MOYNIHAN circa 1913

Patrick MOYNIHAN was born at Allora, Queensland, on 19 August 1888, one of three sons of Patrick (Snr) and his wife. Two of the sons, Patrick and Cornelius were to later serve during the Great War. Cornelius served in the 10th Artillery Field Brigade from 1916 and survived to return to Australia in July 1919.

Patrick was employed with Queensland Railways as a shunter at Wallangarra before he joined the Queensland Police Force on 20th February 1913. A good friend at the depot at Petrie Terrace was John GRAHAM and a photograph of them both was taken there in 1913. They were to share fortunes together later during the early part of World War 1. MOYNIHAN was sworn in as a Constable on 4th July 1913 with the Service Number of 1749 and his first station was Fortitude Valley.

The winds of war were blowing for much of 1914 and the inevitable occurred on 4th August, when Britain and then her dominions including Australia declared war on Germany. Although War had been expected, it was thought that it would be of short duration prompting a rush to be part of what young Australian men saw as a 'great adventure'. Patrick was in an exempt occupation being a police officer, however he did not hesitate very long before joining the AIF. He gained leave of absence from the Police Force and on 17th October 1914, at Bells Paddock, Enoggera, he signed his Attestation Paper to join the 9th Battalion for the duration of the war. His mate, John GRAHAM also signed up to join the 9th Battalion in Townsville a week later, which was most likely planned rather than a co-incidence. They both did their initial training together.

The 9th Battalion at this time was fully manned from the flood of recruits who rushed to join at the declaration of War and the first contingent had sailed for Europe on 24th September. Patrick was assigned to the 1st reinforcements for the Battalion and both he and John GRAHAM followed on the transport ship A32 'Thermistocles' from Melbourne on 22nd December 1914.

They arrived at Mena Camp in Egypt on 9th February 1915 and commenced training with the rest of the 9th Battalion. Both Patrick and John GRAHAM were absorbed directly into the Battalion with Patrick joining 14 Platoon in 'D' Company.



Mena Camp at the foot of the Pyramids

On the 27th February 1915, their Battalion was ordered to move to Lemnos and boarded the ship 'Ionian' at Alexandria, arriving at Mudros on 6th March. They were the first British troops to arrive at this staging post for the Gallipoli Campaign. During the following month, they saw the great concentration of troops and ships in Mudros harbour and trained for disembarkation and landings from ships to shore first in daylight and then in darkness. They also saw the damaged British warships limp into the harbour following the failed forcing of the straits of the Dardenelles.



Practicing Landings at Mudros

On 15th April, the Battalion was issued the first sign of impending action in the way of 'emergency rations' of a tin of bulley beef, a cube of 'OXO' beef extract, biscuits, tea and sugar in a calico bag. Other issues were caps for the landing similar to British troops and a new identifying colour patch. The colour patch replaced the brass numeral number '9', which they had worn on their epaulettes as insignia to identify their Battalion. For the 9th Battalion, their colour patch was a felt black rectangle over a light blue rectangle. It was sewn on both shoulders and is still worn proudly as the colour patch of the 9th Battalion today.



Colour Patch of the 9th Battalion

The landing was initially set down for the 23rd April however due to a gale, which blew up on the night of the 20th, it was postponed to the 25th. This postponement had the effect of reducing the time from moonset to dawn by almost two hours, which was to be crucial to the landing. Moonset on the 25th was at 3:00am with the first light of dawn breaking at 4:05am. On the afternoon of the 24th April, the armada of ships set off for the landings on the Gallipoli peninsula.



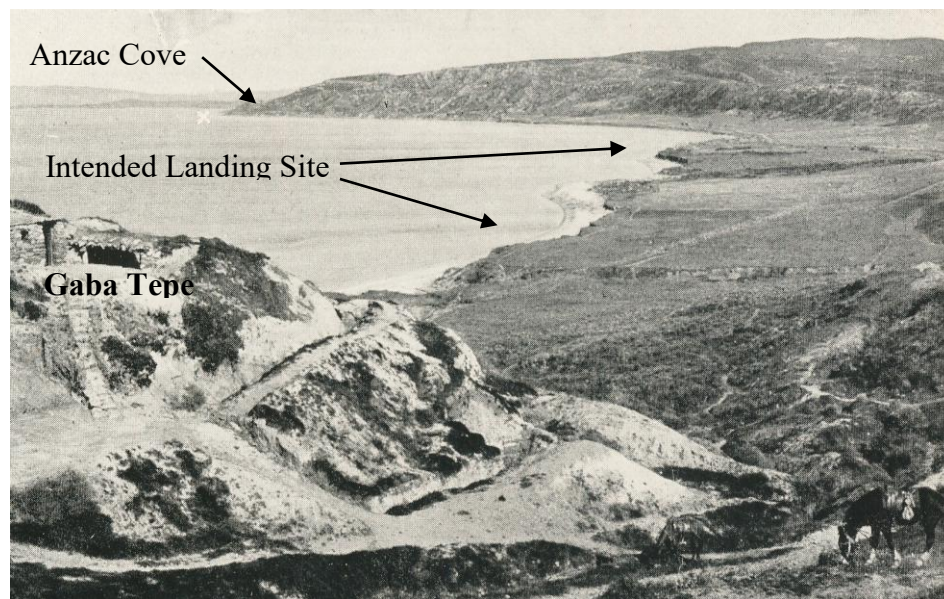
Armada in Mudros Harbour

The 9th Battalion was one of four Battalions making up the 3rd Brigade who were to be the first to land at ANZAC as the covering force to secure a beachhead. The other three battalions in this force of about 4,500 soldiers, were the 10th, 11th and 12th Battalions. The intention was for the 9th Battalion to be on the extreme right of the landing. Two Companies were to swing to the right and capture fortifications at the headland of Gaba Tepe and the other two companies to seize an area designated 'Anderson Knoll' on the second ridge from the beach. Due to the altered landing site however, the second ridge became the third ridge from ANZAC Cove.

Each soldier was checked by their officer that they carried a quart of water in a water bottle at the top of their pack, 200 rounds of .303 ammunition, three days iron rations, an entrenching tool with two sandbags wrapped around the handle, a greatcoat and a waterproof sheet. Their orders were that there was to be no firing until it was light, with the first rush to be made only with the bayonet. The reason for this was to try to

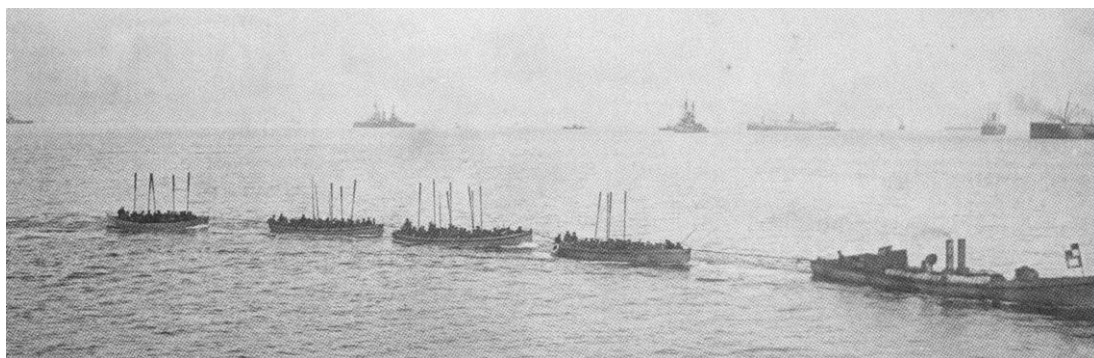
avert troops from firing on their own men in the half light. After landing on the beach, they were to drop packs, fix bayonets and advance. Their rifles were not to be loaded during the landing but on the beach, they were to load rounds into the magazine but leave the magazine cut-off, closed.

The day had been hot, but the night came in quite fresh. Where possible the troops were able to sleep but excitement and cramped conditions prevented many from doing so and they mostly sat around smoking and talking. No doubt, Patrick was with his mate John GRAHAM at some time to wish each other good luck if they were not together at the landing itself. Everything was prepared but no-one at this point was to know that the landings would end up at a different spot to where was intended.



Intended landing Site

In the order of landing, A and B Companies of the 9th Battalion, boarded the battleship, HMS 'Queen'. Hot cocoa in a bucket was bought around to the troops and at 1.30am about 5 miles off Gaba Tepe, they transferred to small boats containing from 30 to 40 men per boat. A string of four rowing boats was towed by steam pinnaces as close to the shore as possible with the men then having to row the remaining distance. In total darkness at 3:30am, the tows set off from the 'Queen'.



Troops being towed toward shore by a Pinnacle on the morning of 25th April

C and D companies stayed on the transport ship 'Malda' until close to Gaba Tepe where they transferred to destroyers. At midnight on 24th April, C Company boarded the HMS 'Beagle' and D company the HMS 'Colne'. The ships then waited until the moon had set and the order to 'Go ahead and land' was given. The destroyers then moved towards the shore with the other armada of ships as far as their draught would allow. At 4:00am, C and D Companies silently climbed over the sides into lifeboats to row the 500 metres ashore.

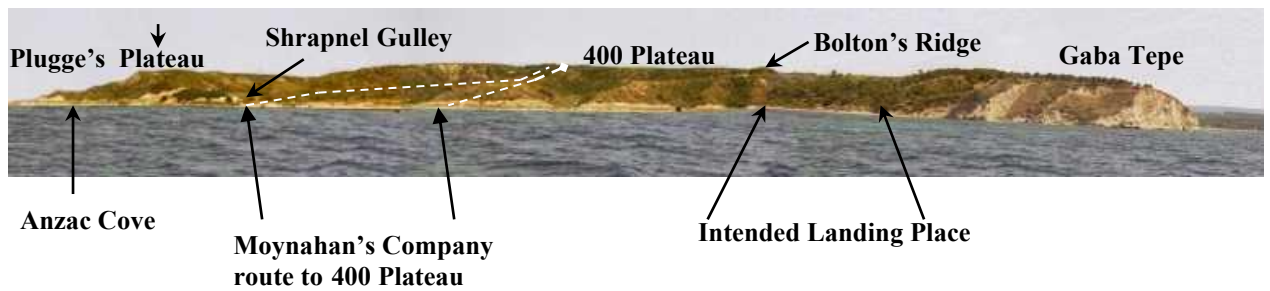
The water was like glass and covered by a mist, however it was so dark that the boats could not see one another to keep in line and the landing force ended up almost a mile further north of the intended landing place. It was later learned that a Northerly current ran along the coast, which may have caused this drift to the North. In the confusion, the order of landing also became mixed, and some battalions landed hopelessly intermingled with each other.

The first troops of the 9th Battalion disembarked by HMS 'Queen' landed in ANZAC Cove at 4:29am being the first soldiers ashore. They were able to run to the shelter of the bank and drop packs before the first firing began. From the first shot, an increasing fusillade of fire commenced from the Turks and soldiers in the boats not yet landed became the first casualties.



First landings

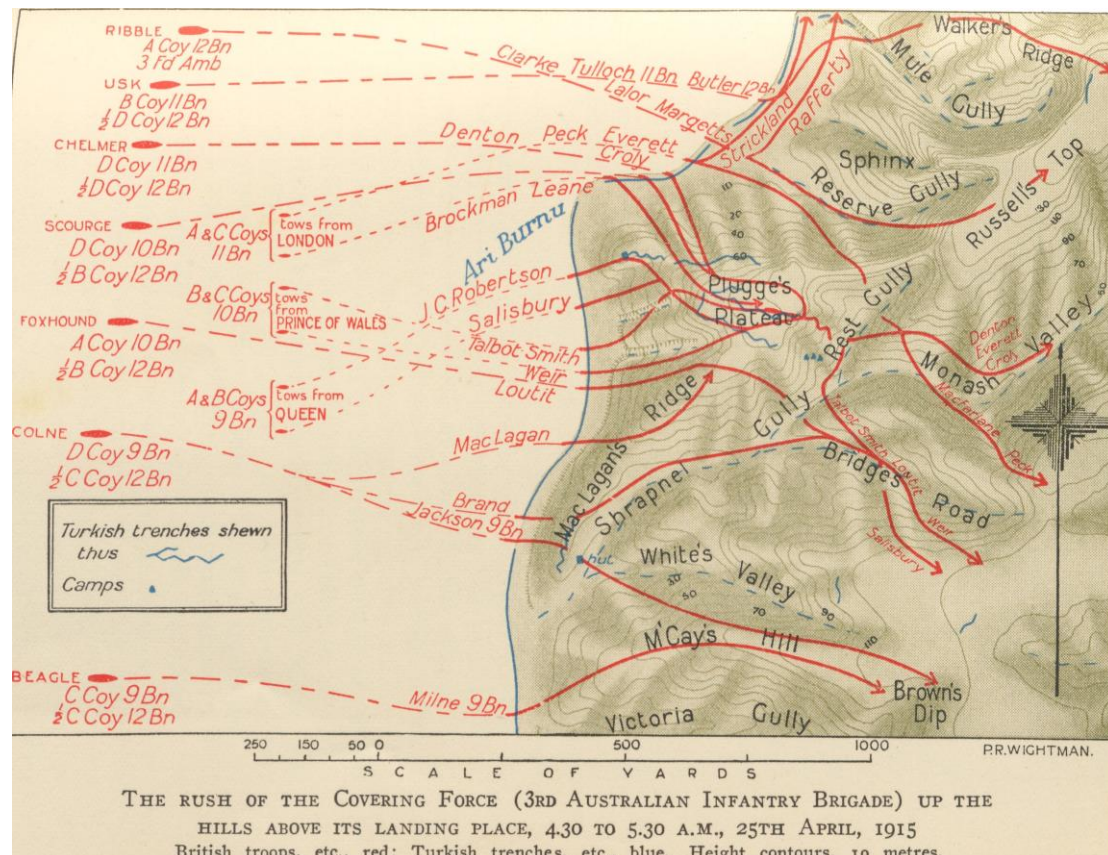
It was already first-light of morning, and the troops were met by steep sloping ground looming above them instead of the open ground they had expected. Many were separated from their officers, however in the confusion that followed, they remembered their orders to press inland at all costs, and fixed bayonets to charge up the slopes.



Although further North from the landing site than expected, MOYNIHAN's D Company commanded by Captain JACKSON were still on the right flank. Part of the Company had landed at Hell Spit on the southern edge of ANZAC Cove, while the remainder landed almost 300 metres further south.

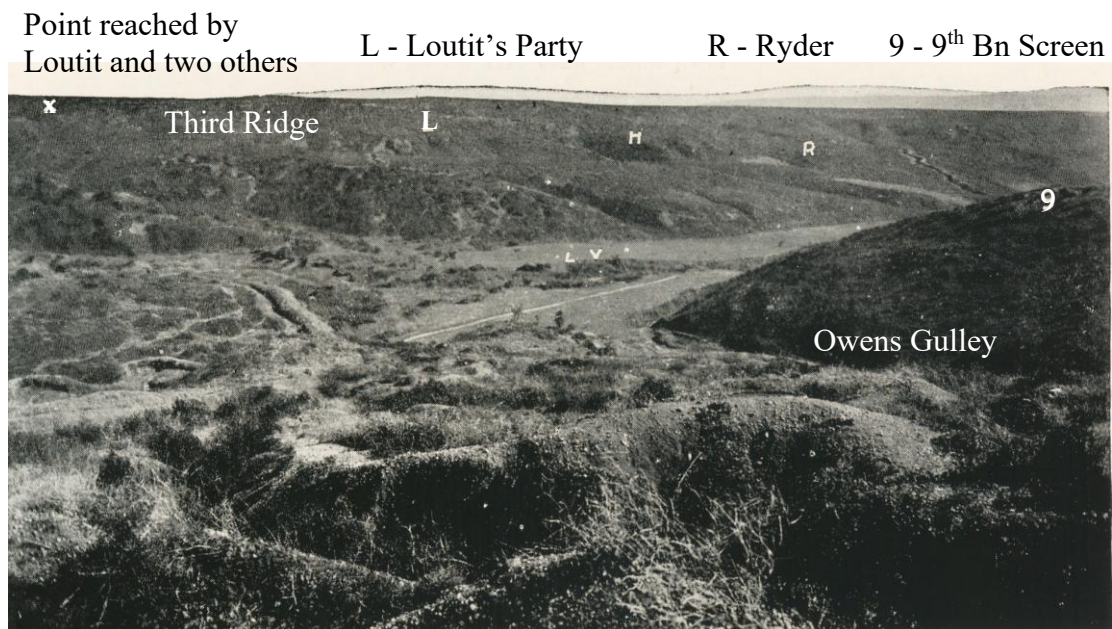
The men at Hell Spit were met with firing from Turks in the scrub and a trench some 60 metres in front of them. They fixed bayonets and charged. A group of Turks were found in a small stone hut just off the beach and they were bayoneted before the men started up the southern slopes.

Both groups met on McKay's Hill where most of the senior officers of the Company were wounded before even reaching the 400 Plateau. A group under Captain DOUGALL swung south to Bolton's Ridge as had been intended but Gaba Tepe was over a mile away and it was now futile to try and follow the original plan.



Map of First Rush

A section of D Company under Corporal HARRISON fought their way over the 400 Plateau south of Owens Gulley through the dense low scrub. They killed the crew of some artillery and captured their guns at The Cup before advancing to the inland slopes of Legge Valley. Here they looked across the valley toward their intended objective, the 'Third Ridge'.

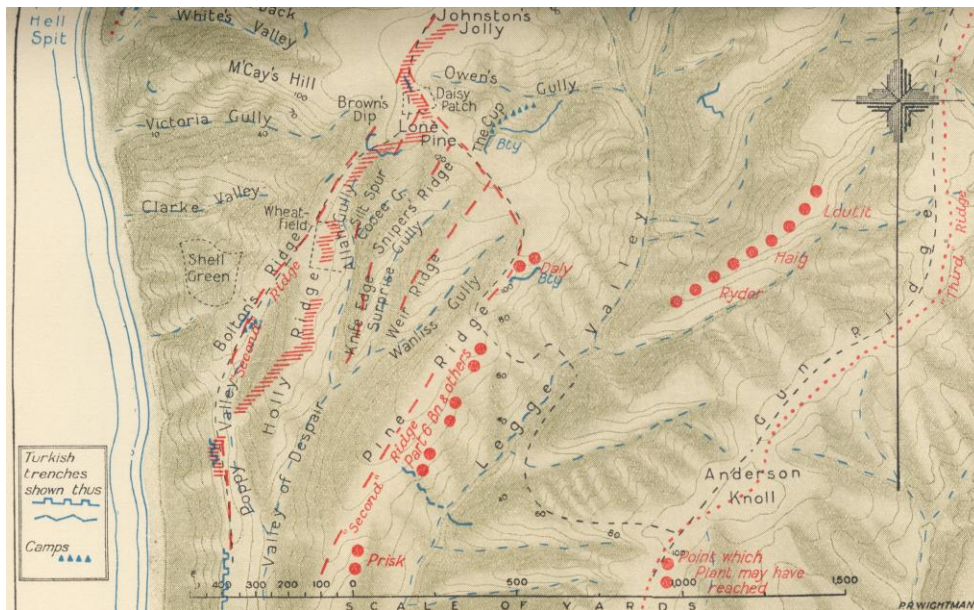


Lieutenant LOUITIT of the 10th Battalion had come from Anzac Cove fighting his way across the 400 Plateau to the mouth of Owens Gulley. Here a group of men mostly from the 10th Battalion but also with members of the 9th and some 11th Battalion men entered Owen's Gulley.

A platoon of D Company had also crossed and taken up a position on the edge of Owens Gulley so some of the 9th Battalion men joining LOUITIT may have been from D Company. They crossed Legge Valley to just below Scrubby Knoll on the Third Ridge. At this point they had reached one of the objectives of the 9th Battalion, but in too few numbers to be of any use and too far ahead of the main force to get any support.

The most part of the 9th Battalion was on the 400 Plateau by 9:00am however some were scattered in small groups over the whole length of the Second Ridge from The Nek in the North, to Boltons Ridge in the South. Owing to the confusion of the landing at a different place and the hopeless intermingling of Battalions that followed in the darkness, the Commander of the 3rd Brigade reassessed the situation and ordered the troops on 400 Plateau to 'dig in'.

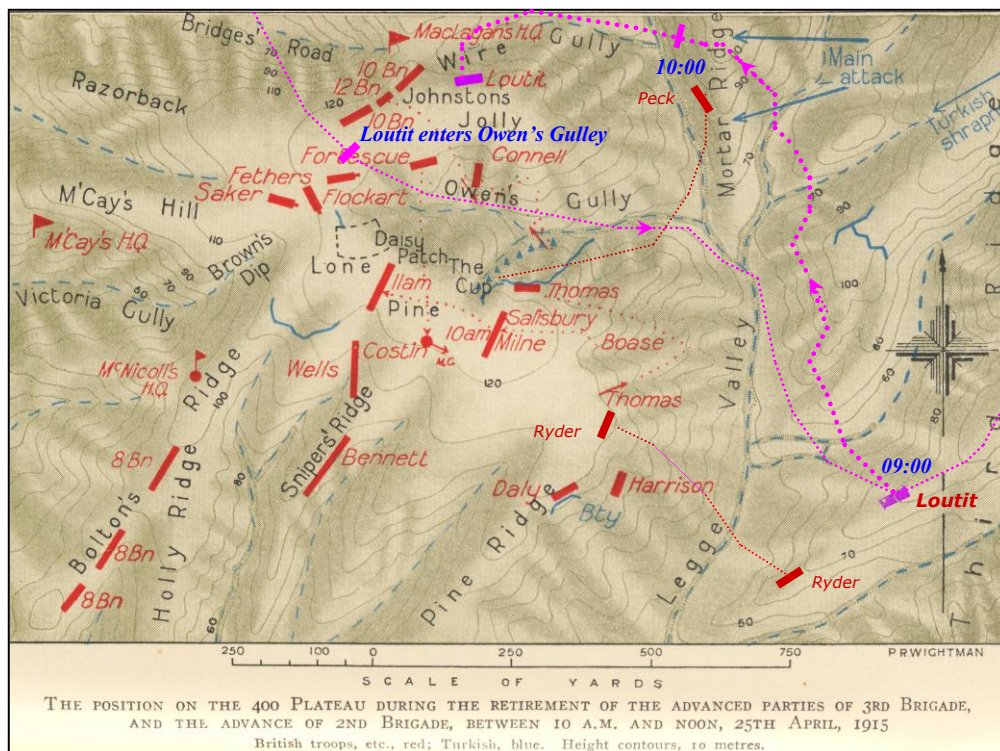
Members of D Coy and others of the 9th Battalion on the forward slopes remained there as a screen while the work was commenced, but the whole area now came under intense fire from shrapnel fired by artillery on the Third Ridge and extremely heavy machine gun fire from the high ground toward Baby 700. Bullets were striking every square metre of ground cutting the vegetation to shreds and the shrapnel wounded or killed many as they lay on the ground under what cover they could find.



Forward Positions South ANZAC

Lt PRISK of the 6th Battalion with a few men from the 9th also advanced to the southern slopes of Pine Ridge but the intense fire forced him to retire to Allah Gulley before being called in to Bolton's Ridge at nightfall.

At 9:00 am the Turks began a major counterattack from the Third Ridge. The party of Lt LOUITIT was forced into a fighting withdrawal along the seaward slope of Third Ridge, pursued by Turks a short distance behind them. They reached the protection of Wire Gulley where the few survivors dug in as an outpost about 50 metres in front of the trenches being dug along the Second Ridge.



Lt Loutit's Fighting Withdrawal

Between 10:00 am and midday some more men from the 9th Battalion, who had been digging in, went forward a few hundred metres to the edge of 400 Plateau to fire at the advancing Turks. All of the advanced parties, were forced back to the line they had been digging by 2:00 pm. The line was to only advance marginally for the rest of the campaign.

Patrick MOYNIHAN was listed as missing during the first day of the landing. His body was not found on the Australian side of the line and was never recovered. It was not until 9th June 1916 that a Board of Inquiry convened in France found that he had been killed in action at ANZAC on 25th April 1915.

One can only hypothesise on his fate, but some evidence exists that he may have been one of the 9th Battalion men with Captain RYDER or Lieutenant LOUTIT on the Third Ridge at the time of his death. In a letter to the Base Records Section written by his brother in 1921, an account is given that from letters received from friends of Patrick, he had advanced too far and was shot in the head and killed during their forced retreat. In Patrick's brothers words;

“As far as I can ascertain my bro was among the first to make the landing at Anzac cove on the morning of 25/4/15 and with a great many others advanced overfar towards the Narrows. It was then found necessary to retreat and in the retreat, he was supposed to have been shot in the head but his mates had not time to obtain his identification disc, and I have not been able to get any further information concerning him.” (J. MOYNAHAN 1921)

If such circumstances of urgency existed that his friends were not even able to retrieve his identification disk and had to leave him behind, then this may have been the retreat under heavy fire from pursuing Turks by Lt LOUTIT, to Wire Gulley.

Patrick's brother forwarded the letters with this information to Base Records, and no copy is held on his military records, so the names of the witnesses to his death are now, not known. So also, is lost, a full description of the circumstances and place where Patrick was killed. At least we do know that he was killed by a bullet wound to the head, somewhere in front of the Australian lines. Red Cross records of the missing to some extent corroborate that he was killed on the Turkish side of the line and may have been buried by the Turks.

Although it cannot be said with any certainty, the group of 9th Battalion soldiers on the Third Ridge would have been the only troops to be considered to have advanced too far and they certainly retreated under great pressure, firing and retreating with the Turks close behind them as they made their way to Wire Gulley. Quite a number of this party were killed during the retreat and were left behind. This certainly fits the description of events as related by Patrick's brother from letters received from Patrick's mates who witnessed his death.

Patrick, however, may have been a member of the forward screen on the slopes of Legge Valley or Pine Ridge. Facing a large-scale attack by the Turks, they were forced to retire to the trench line with the rest of the advanced screen around 2:00 pm, This group however would not have been regarded as having advanced 'to far' as they were no more than 200 metres in front of the troops digging in. The Australian

delegation to the battlefield in 1919 found a number of skeletons of Australian soldiers in the area of Pine Ridge, however they were mostly in groups, being killed at their forward posts facing the enemy rather than retreating under fire. They were on the Turkish side of the line and had not been buried.

The words of Captain James SPENT of the AMC are particularly apt for Patrick.

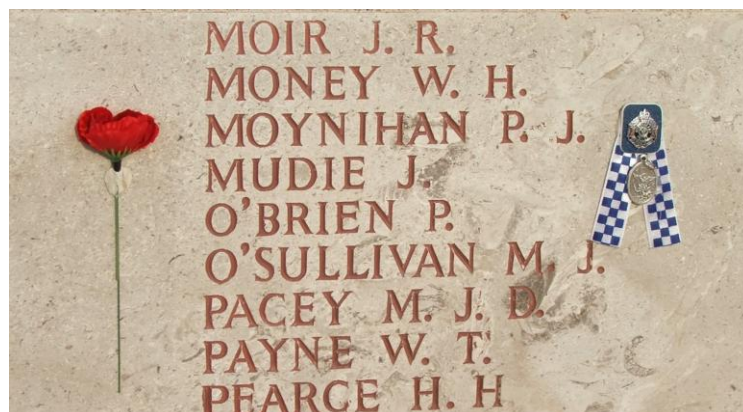
*Bury the body – it has served its ends.
Mark not the spot, but ‘On Gallipoli’
Let it be said ‘he died’, Oh hearts of friends,
If I am worth it, keep my memory!*

Patrick is remembered at the Lone Pine Memorial to the missing.



Australian Memorial – Lone Pine

Patrick's yearn for the 'great adventure' was certainly short lived. He was killed within hours of making the landing at ANZAC and was the first Queensland police officer to be killed during the Great War 1914-18.



He will never be forgotten with a Queensland Water Police Vessel, the 'P.J. MOYNIHAN' being commissioned in his honour in 1995. The vessel is still in service.



1914-15 Star, War Medal & Victory Medal

Patrick was awarded the 1914-15 Star, The British War Medal and the Victory Medal. The holder of these medals at this time is unknown.