

# Robert William Breckenridge

Robert William Breckenridge's horsemanship skills took him from the life of a station hand to a mounted soldier fighting in Middle East during World War One.

Robert William Breckenridge was a 21 year-old station hand working in the Clermont/Capella area and unmarried when he enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force on April 28, 1915.<sup>1</sup> This was just three days after Australian and New Zealand soldiers landed at Gallipoli and the legend of the ANZACS was born. Had Robert heard about the heroism of the ANZACS and was inspired by them to enlist?

After enlistment, Private Robert William Breckenridge – Service Number 1233, was assigned to the 9<sup>th</sup> Reinforcements of the 5<sup>th</sup> Light Horse Regiment.<sup>2</sup> The 1<sup>st</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> Reinforcements of the 5<sup>th</sup> Light Horse Regiment embarked on the HMAT Hymettus A1 at Brisbane on September 15, 1915 to sail to the Middle East.<sup>3</sup> When the Battle of Gallipoli began on February 17, 1915, the Australian Light Horse Regiment had been sent to Gallipoli, without the horses, to reinforce the infantry. The 5<sup>th</sup> Light Horse Regiment fought a defensive role for most of the Battle of Gallipoli but was involved in several minor attacks. The 5<sup>th</sup> Light Horse Regiment left the Gallipoli peninsula on December 20, 1915 and took up long-range patrolling in the Sinai Desert. The 5<sup>th</sup> Light Horse's advance party was stalled at Gaza, which was under the control of the Turks. The 5<sup>th</sup> Light Horse participated in three battles aimed at the Allies capturing Gaza. The 5<sup>th</sup> Light Horse was fighting its way through the Gaza township when given the order to withdraw. When Gaza fell on November 7 1917, the Turkish stronghold in southern Palestine dissolved, the 5<sup>th</sup> Light Horse was involved in the pursuit that followed.

For the first six months of 1918, the 5<sup>th</sup> Light Horse held the west bank of the Jordan River and was involved in campaigns in the Amman and Es Salt. Both campaigns were tactical failures but led the Turks to believe the next offensive would be launched across the Jordan. The Turks were caught off guard as the offensive was launched along the coast in September 1918. The 5<sup>th</sup> Light Horse's role in this campaign was minor, attacking Amman twice. On September 29, 4,500 Turks surrendered to two squadrons from the 5<sup>th</sup> Australian Light Horse at Ziza. A month later, on October 31, Turkey surrendered. Although World War One ended on November 11, 1918, the 5<sup>th</sup> Australian Light Horse remained in service and helped stop the Egyptian Revolt of early 1919. The 5<sup>th</sup> Australian Light Horse finally left the Middle East for Australian shores on November 28, 1919.<sup>4</sup>

However, Pte Breckenridge left for Australia months earlier, suffering from a leg ulcer. He left Egypt on January 26, 1919 and sailed home on the Demosthenes. Upon return to home soil, Pte Breckenridge was admitted to hospital for treatment on his leg ulcer. Pte Breckenridge was awarded the 1914-1915 Star, British War Medal and the Victory Medal.<sup>5</sup> It is unknown if Robert William Breckenridge returned to station work after the war but it appears he remained in Military Service as his occupation listed 'Soldier' in Queensland Electoral Rolls from 1936<sup>6</sup> to 1980<sup>7</sup>. There are no records to indicate if Robert William Breckenridge served in World War Two.

Robert married Dorothy May Elliott on November 30, 1929.<sup>8</sup> Robert William Breckenridge died in 1984.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 'ROBERT WILLIAM BRECKENRIDGE', Military Service Record – Australian Imperial Force: Attestation Paper of Persons Enlisted for Service Abroad, AncestryLibrary, Available at: [https://www.ancestrylibrary.com.au/imageviewer/collections/60864/images/3115393\\_0022?treeid=&personid=&rc=&usePUB=true&phsrc=EZ11&phstart=successSource&pld=99126](https://www.ancestrylibrary.com.au/imageviewer/collections/60864/images/3115393_0022?treeid=&personid=&rc=&usePUB=true&phsrc=EZ11&phstart=successSource&pld=99126). Viewed [Online] February 4, 2022

<sup>2</sup> 'ROBERT WILLIAM BRECKENRIDGE', Military Service Record – Australian Imperial Force: Attestation Paper of Persons Enlisted for Service Abroad, AncestryLibrary, Available at: [https://www.ancestrylibrary.com.au/imageviewer/collections/60864/images/3115393\\_0022?treeid=&personid=&rc=&usePUB=true&phsrc=EZ11&phstart=successSource&pld=99126](https://www.ancestrylibrary.com.au/imageviewer/collections/60864/images/3115393_0022?treeid=&personid=&rc=&usePUB=true&phsrc=EZ11&phstart=successSource&pld=99126). Viewed [Online] February 4, 2022

<sup>3</sup> 'PRIVATE ROBERT WILLIAM BRECKENRIDGE – FIRST WORLD WAR EMBARKATION ROLL', Australian War Memorial, Available at: Private Robert William Breckenridge | Australian War Memorial [awm.gov.au]. Viewed [Online] February 4, 2022

<sup>4</sup> '5<sup>th</sup> LIGHT HORSE REGIMENT – DESCRIPTION', Australian War Memorial, Available at: 5th Australian Light Horse Regiment | Australian War Memorial [awm.gov.au]. Viewed [Online] February 4, 2022

<sup>5</sup> 'ROBERT WILLIAM BRECKENRIDGE', Ancestry.com. *Australia, World War I Service Records, 1914-1920* [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2015. Available at: [https://www.ancestrylibrary.com.au/imageviewer/collections/60864/images/3115393\\_0022?treeid=&personid=&rc=&usePUB=true&phsrc=EZ11&phstart=successSource&pld=99126](https://www.ancestrylibrary.com.au/imageviewer/collections/60864/images/3115393_0022?treeid=&personid=&rc=&usePUB=true&phsrc=EZ11&phstart=successSource&pld=99126). Viewed [Online] February 4, 2022

<sup>6</sup> 'BRECKENRIDGE, EDWARD WILLIAM', Ancestry.com. *Australia, Electoral Rolls, 1903-1980* [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010; 1937 Edition Queensland, Division of Lilly – Subdivision of Ennoggerra, Pg. 22. Available at: [https://www.ancestrylibrary.com.au/imageviewer/collections/1207/images/RDAUS1901\\_100332\\_051\\_00019?treeid=&personid=&rc=&usePUB=true&phsrc=AC638&phstart=successSource&pld=2100253](https://www.ancestrylibrary.com.au/imageviewer/collections/1207/images/RDAUS1901_100332_051_00019?treeid=&personid=&rc=&usePUB=true&phsrc=AC638&phstart=successSource&pld=2100253). Viewed [Online] February 4, 2022

<sup>7</sup> 'BRECKENRIDGE, EDWARD WILLIAM', Ancestry.com. *Australia, Electoral Rolls, 1903-1980* [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010; 1980 Edition Queensland, Division of Brisbane – Subdivision of Ennoggerra, Pg. 22. Available at: [https://www.ancestrylibrary.com.au/imageviewer/collections/1207/images/33112\\_202978\\_0001-00044?treeid=&personid=&rc=&usePUB=true&phsrc=EZ14&phstart=successSource&pld=22566](https://www.ancestrylibrary.com.au/imageviewer/collections/1207/images/33112_202978_0001-00044?treeid=&personid=&rc=&usePUB=true&phsrc=EZ14&phstart=successSource&pld=22566). Viewed [Online] February 4, 2022

<sup>8</sup> 'ROBERT WILLIAM BRECKENRIDGE', Ancestry.com. *Australia, Marriage Index, 1788-1950* [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010. [https://search.ancestrylibrary.com.au/cgi-bin/sse.dll?dbid=1780&h=1665900&indiv=try&\\_vc=Record:OtherRecord&rhSource=1778](https://search.ancestrylibrary.com.au/cgi-bin/sse.dll?dbid=1780&h=1665900&indiv=try&_vc=Record:OtherRecord&rhSource=1778). Viewed [Online] February 4, 2022

<sup>9</sup> 'ROBERT WILLIAM BRECKENRIDGE', Lloyd-Blanch 2020 Family Tree; AncestryLibrary, Available at: <https://www.ancestrylibrary.com.au/family-tree/person/tree/170832999/person/432213728305/facts/ssrc>. Viewed [Online] February 8, 2022

