

THE FIRST TO DIE AT GALLPOLI WAS A TASMANIAN AS WAS THE LAST TO LEAVE.

It is a dubious honour, but it is possible that the first ever Australian soldier to be killed at Gallipoli was a Tasmanian. Upon evacuation, the last Australian soldier to leave Gallipoli was (again) a Tasmanian.

Harry Hodgman of the 5th Battalion was born at Brighton in 1893. Enlisting only a week or so after war was declared he was killed by a sniper's bullet 25th April 1915 while coming ashore. Eight months later, in December when Gallipoli was ordered to be evacuated. Captain Charles Littler, from Launceston, was the last to leave. While surviving Gallipoli, Littler was killed the following year in France.

Harry Hodgman was in Melbourne at the time of his enlistment. His brother, Corporal Alan Hodgman was also to serve, he losing his life on the Western Front in June 1917. Another brother Frank served, but survived. A cousin, Vincent Lade Hodgman died because of his service in The Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902) in South Africa.

Harry on that fateful day, 25th April 1915 was killed as he was coming ashore on the Peninsular. A sniper had found his mark, thus it is believed that he was the first-ever Australian casualty of that campaign, one of more than 8,500. It took a few days for the news to be relayed home when the local casualty list was published on the 4th May 1915. Four days after the landings, the local media had reported: "*Despite the continuous opposition of the enemy, the allied troops have established themselves across the Gallipoli Peninsular northeast of Hissarlik and have repulsed all attack from Kilid Bahar. Our forces are steadily advancing.*" Harry was dead by that time. Sadly most of the family records were destroyed in the 1967 files. Only a photo of Harry survives (see photograph) with the inscription written on its back, "*Gallipoli, Harry Hodgman, who gave his life for King and Empire on the day of the landing 25th April aged 23 years*". Actually he was 22 years and 5 months. Harry is buried at Lone Pine Cemetery, Gallipoli. Together with brothers Frank and Alan, there is an imposing memorial and an honour roll to him in the old Congregational Church, Pontville. There is also a plaque to Alan and Harry in the Soldiers Walk, Hobart's Queens Domain.

Like Hodgman, Captain Charles Augustus Littler went ashore at Gallipoli on the 25th April, but he survived the ordeal. Over the next few days he narrowly escaped death several times. As a captain he was commanding the beach parties having to deal with the huge congestion of men, stores and ammunition with their unloading and transport. The Turks constantly shelled the beach. Working as the official government historian (C.E.W. Bean) states, the beach was under constant fire with Littler becoming "*the best known personality on Anzac Beach*".

On the 18-19th December orders was received to evacuate and it was Littler's job to organise the evacuation from the beaches. He was to write: "*Captain S.H. Watson was the last officer I sent on board at North Beach on the evacuation of Anzacs*"*. It was Captain Stanley Watson, backed by historian Bean who stated that Littler was the last man to leave. Watson wrote: "*I met Captain Littler and he told us to hurry as we*

were to be in the last boat. Littler then gave orders for the barge to leave.” There was a belief that Littler had embarked on the same boat, but Watson, stated *“I have felt that I must somehow let his people (Littler’s family) know of his being the last man to leave Anzac on 18-19 December 1915.”* Watson died in 1985, having penned the previous mentioned words in 1984.

But there are always other claimants to any distinction. Originally the historian Bean had named Colonel John Paton, the rearguard commander as the last man, but later he wrote to Captain Watson in 1955, *“I had always understood that old Littler was the last and as he was killed at Mouquent Farm I couldn’t consult him”*.

Littler was awarded the Distinguished Service Order (DSO) for his work at Gallipoli. From there he went to Egypt, then to France when during the Battle of the Somme, even though the doctor had told him he was not well enough, as he was suffering from rheumatism, he led his men into battle. He was wounded while doing so. Nonetheless, he was helped forward by a fellow officer towards an enemy trench. *“I will reach that trench if the boys do,”* he said, but he took another wound to the head. He died on the edge of the trench. He was well known for going into battle with a walking stick.

It is only fair to add that the author is now investigating another Tasmanian who claims to be the last man to leave Gallipoli, that of Gunner Clifton James Mason, who it was believed was manning the telephones, waiting for a call to leave.

*This note is lodged with the Australian War Memorial, Canberra.