

# A Man and His Donkey

John (Jack) Simpson Kirkpatrick grew up in South Shields, England, with his seven siblings and Scottish parents, Sarah and Robert. They grew up close to the sea where great ships were carried out to sea. During his early years, Jack tried his hand at many different jobs. In the summer, he would work down on the beach with his donkey. He would sell people donkey rides on the beach for one penny. As he would walk alongside his donkey, he would whistle tunes to those who were riding along. During winter, Jack delivered milk to people in the small town where he lived. He would always hear the whistles and toots of the tugboats in the river close by. Every time he heard these sounds, he would sit and imagine he was travelling on a great adventure

Jack had a variety of jobs as he grew up. When he was only 17 years old, he travelled to Australia looking for work. He worked as a steward, stoker and greaser on Australian coastal ships. He also worked as a cane cutter in Queensland. After that, he was employed on a cattle station, rounding up the cattle. It was hard and laborious work but Jack loved it. After working in a coal mine, he thought that panning for gold would help him find his fortune so he decided to give that a try as well. Unfortunately, Jack did not have much luck. He did not make lots of money in the Gold Rush as he had hoped. He stopped this work and went back to working on the coastal ships.

While he was in Australia on the ship, Jack heard that Britain had declared war on Germany. As a result, he made the brave decision to enlist in the Australian army because he thought that serving his country would make his family proud. He enlisted as a soldier using the name John Simpson.

Jack became a field ambulance stretcher-bearer, which was a very important job. This job was only given to physically strong men. His job required him to treat wounded soldiers that were fighting in the war. There was one problem though. Jack was sent to help the soldiers in Egypt and not England, where he had hoped. After a little bit of training, Jack was sent to the Gallipoli Peninsula. He landed there on 25th April 1915 as part of the Anzac forces. He became very scared as the small boat approached the steep cliffs of Anzac Cove.



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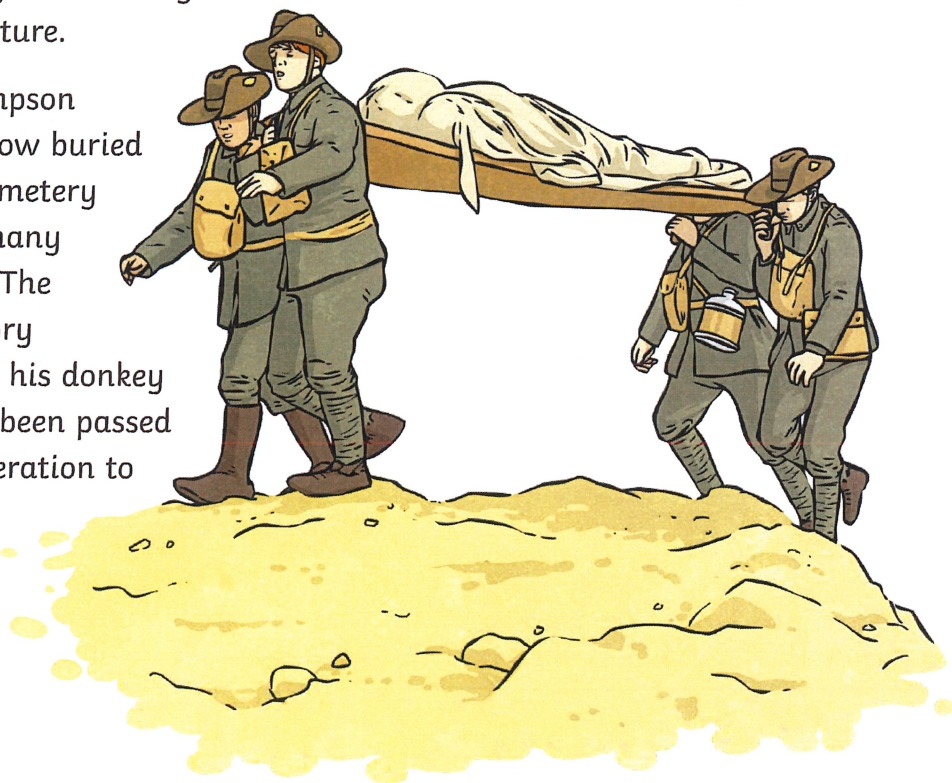
As the boats came to the shore, many shots were fired at them. Jack was lucky he did not die: as he was getting off the boat, he felt a bullet pass by his head. Many soldiers died before setting foot on land. Jack had a first aid station at Hell Spit. The number of wounded soldiers that had to be treated was so great that there were not enough stretcher-bearers to save them all.

In the early hours of one morning, when Jack was out trying to help wounded soldiers, he spotted a donkey. He named it Duffy. Duffy was used to carrying fellow soldiers back to Hell Spit to be treated. Jack would sing and whistle as he tended to the soldiers. Every day, Jack would courageously walk up and down Shrapnel Valley with his donkey, Duffy, carrying water and food to the soldiers.

The work of Jack and Duffy was nothing short of extraordinary. They worked tirelessly all day and through the night to help the wounded soldiers. Colonel John Monash thought their work should be admired so he gave them both a Red Cross armband to show them that their work was greatly appreciated.

One morning, Jack travelled with Duffy back up to Dead Man's Ridge. Suddenly, a bullet struck Jack in the heart and he died. Although it was a tragic loss, he died serving his country and living an adventure.

John (Jack) Simpson Kirkpatrick is now buried at the Beach cemetery and there are many statues of him. The inspirational story of Simpson and his donkey is one that has been passed down from generation to generation and it will continue to be told for many years to come.





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1. What was the name of the person in the story?
2. Where did he grow up?
3. What were some of the jobs Jack did?
4. What job did Jack do in the war?
5. Where was Jack sent in the war?
6. Explain how you think Jack felt as he was travelling on the boat.
7. What was the name of Jack's donkey?
8. Why do you think Jack decided to use a donkey to help him?
9. Pretend you are with Jack in Gallipoli. Write a diary entry of what a day might be like.