

FORGET ME NOT

THOMAS JAMES “RUSTY” RICHARDS, MC JOHN MANN’S GREAT UNCLE

Tom Richards was born at Vegetable Creek, Emmaville, in outback New South Wales, in April 1882, whilst his mother and father were travelling overland in their horse-drawn wagon, from the goldfields in Victoria to the newly-discovered goldfields in North Queensland, at Charters Towers. Tom thus grew up with both a travel bug and an inbuilt understanding of mining for gold. To these early instincts was added, at an early age, a passion for Rugby, when he saw a New South Wales Rugby team play against a Charters Towers team.

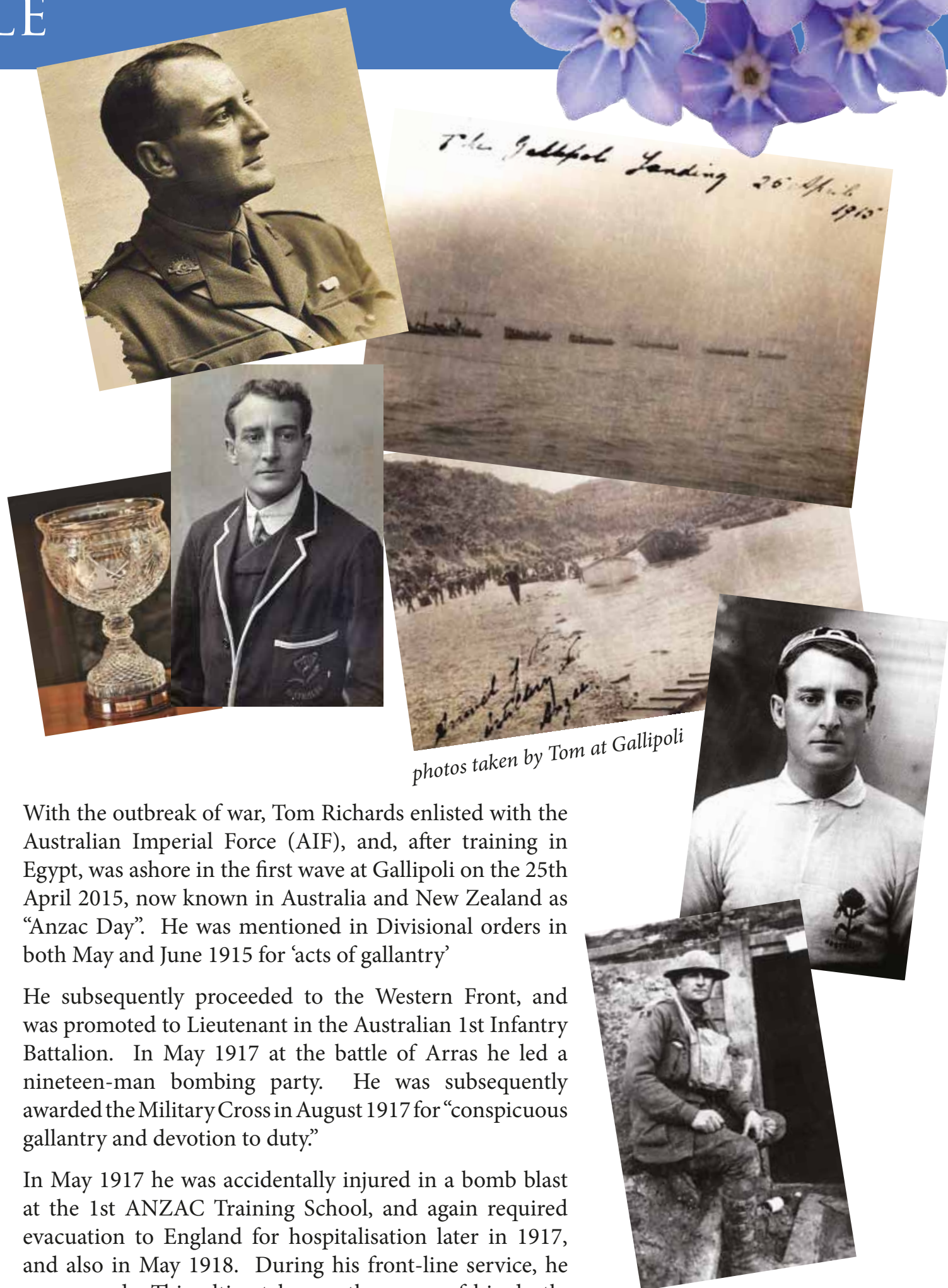
By the age of 23, he had already been selected to play for Queensland, but the following year he decided to emigrate to the goldfields in Johannesburg, South Africa, where he again took up Rugby, playing for Johannesburg Mines and Transvaal. He was selected for the South African squad due to tour the UK, but nationality problems prevented this from happening. He therefore emigrated to England, and played for Bristol, getting chosen for the Gloucestershire team which was scheduled to play against the Springboks, from which he had previously been excluded.

After this, he went back to Australia, and achieved membership of the Wallabies in their 1908 tour of the UK. Whilst in the UK, the Australian team competed in the 1908 London Olympics, winning the Gold Medal.

Going back to South Africa, Rusty Richards was working in the goldfields when the British Lions toured that country. They were hit by injury, but because travel in those days was by boat, and hence slow, they persuaded the South African Rugby authorities to allow them to play Rusty Richards, on the qualification of his membership of the Bristol Rugby Club. He ended up representing Britain on 12 occasions, including two tests against South Africa.

He played again for Australia, both on their tour of the United States and Canada, as well as against the touring British Lions, thus becoming the only man ever to have played both for and against the British Lions. It is therefore fitting that the cup awarded for the successful team in encounters between the Wallabies and the British and Irish Lions is known as the “T J Richards Cup”. His rugby career ended with a tour of Europe, playing in England, France, Italy and Switzerland. While in France, he signed with Toulouse as a player and manager.

The Times in 1908 described him as “the first man to be picked for Earth if we were to ever play Mars.”



With the outbreak of war, Tom Richards enlisted with the Australian Imperial Force (AIF), and, after training in Egypt, was ashore in the first wave at Gallipoli on the 25th April 1915, now known in Australia and New Zealand as “Anzac Day”. He was mentioned in Divisional orders in both May and June 1915 for ‘acts of gallantry’

He subsequently proceeded to the Western Front, and was promoted to Lieutenant in the Australian 1st Infantry Battalion. In May 1917 at the battle of Arras he led a nineteen-man bombing party. He was subsequently awarded the Military Cross in August 1917 for “conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty.”

In May 1917 he was accidentally injured in a bomb blast at the 1st ANZAC Training School, and again required evacuation to England for hospitalisation later in 1917, and also in May 1918. During his front-line service, he was gassed. This ultimately was the cause of his death, at the Greenslopes Military Hospital outside Brisbane, in September 1935.

My maternal grandmother married Thomas’s younger brother Charles John Richards.

DENNIS WOODFIELD SUE HENDRY’S GREAT GRANDFATHER

Dennis Woodfield, my paternal great grandfather, worked for his father at the family business, Thurmaston Tile Works on Church Hill Road in Thurmaston.

In the 1911 census Dennis’s occupation is listed as Terra Cotta worker and he is living at 9 Belgrave Avenue, Leicester with his wife Beatrice and 2 year old daughter Florence.

Dennis was 33 years old when the First World War broke out. His business was deemed to be a reserve occupation as his factory made roof tiles, chimney pots and land drains, things that were considered vital to the war effort.

The only family record I can find of him is this picture of him on his wedding day, looking very dapper in his top hat!

