

Subject: ANZAC ON THE WALL

A must to read for us all as we approach ANZAC Day...LEST WE FORGET .

The Anzac on the Wall

I wandered thru a country town 'cos I had time to spare,
And went into an antique shop to see what was in there.
Old Bikes and pumps and kero lamps, but hidden by it all,
A photo of a soldier boy - an Anzac on the Wall.

'The Anzac have a name?' I asked, The old man answered 'No,,
The ones who could have told me mate, have

passed on long ago.

The old man kept on talking and, according to his tale,

The photo was unwanted junk bought from a clearance sale.

'I asked around,' the old man said, 'but no one knows his face,

He's been on that wall twenty years, deserves a better place.

For some one must have loved him so, it seems a shame somehow.'

I nodded in agreement and then said, 'I'll take him now.'

My nameless digger's photo, well it was a sorry sight

A cracked glass pane and a broken frame - I had to make it right

To prise the photo from its frame I took care just in case,

'Cause only sticky paper held the cardboard back in place.

I peeled away the faded screed and much to my surprise,

Two letters and a telegram appeared before my eyes

The first reveals my Anzac's name, and regiment of course

John Mathew Francis Stuart - of Australia's own
Light Horse.

This letter written from the front, my interest
now was keen

This note was dated August seventh 1917

'Dear Mum, I'm at Khalasa Springs not far from
the Red Sea

They say it's in the Bible - looks like Billabong to
me.

'My Kathy wrote I'm in her prayers she's still my
bride to be

I just cant wait to see you both you're all the
world to me

And Mum you'll soon meet Bluey, last month
they shipped him out

I told him to call on you when he's up and
about.'

'That bluey is a larrikin, and we all thought it
funny

He lobbed a Turkish hand grenade into the Co's
dunny.

I told you how he dragged me wounded in from
no man's land

He stopped the bleeding closed the wound with
only his bare hand.'

'Then he copped it at the front from some stray

shrapnel blast

It was my turn to drag him in and I thought he
wouldn't last

He woke up in hospital, and nearly lost his mind
Cause out there on the battlefield he'd left one
leg behind.'

'He's been in a bad way mum, he knows he'll
ride no more

Like me he loves a horse's back he was a champ
before.

So Please Mum can you take him in, he's been
like my brother

Raised in a Queensland orphanage he' s never
known a mother.'

But Struth, I miss Australia mum, and in my
mind each day

I am a mountain cattleman on high plains far
away

I'm mustering white-faced cattle, with no camel's
hump in sight

And I waltz my Matilda by a campfire every night

I wonder who rides Billy, I heard the pub burnt
down

I'll always love you and please say hooroo to all
in town'.

The second letter I could see was in a lady's
hand

An answer to her soldier son there in a foreign
land

Her copperplate was perfect, the pages neat and
clean

It bore the date November 3rd 1917.

'T'was hard enough to lose your Dad, without
you at the war

I'd hoped you would be home by now - each day
I miss you more'

'Your Kathy calls around a lot since you have
been away

To share with me her hopes and dreams about
your wedding day

And Bluey has arrived - and what a godsend he
has been

We talked and laughed for days about the things
you've done and seen'

'He really is a comfort, and works hard around
the farm,

I read the same hope in his eyes that you wont
come to harm.

Mc Connell's kids rode Billy, but suddenly that
changed

We had a violent lightning storm, and it was
really strange.'

'Last Wednesday just on midnight, not a single

cloud in sight

It raged for several minutes, it gave us all a
fright

It really spooked your Billy - and he screamed
and bucked and reared

And then he rushed the sliprail fence, which by a
foot he cleared'

'They brought him back next afternoon, but
something's changed I fear

It's like the day you brought him home, for no
one can get near

Remember when you caught him with his black
and flowing mane?

Now Horse breakers fear the beast that only you
can tame,'

'That's why we need you home son' - then the
flow of ink went dry-

This letter was unfinished, and I couldn't work
out why.

Until I started reading the letter number three
A yellow telegram delivered news of tragedy

Her son killed in action - oh - what pain that
must have been

The Same date as her letter - 3rd November 17
This letter which was never sent, became then
one of three

She sealed behind the photo's face - the face she

longed to see.

And John's home town's old timers -children
when he went to war
Would say no greater cattleman had left the
town before.
They knew his widowed mother well - and with
respect did tell
How when she lost her only boy she lost her
mind as well.

She could not face the awful truth, to strangers
she would speak
'My Johnny's at the war you know , he's coming
home next week.'
They all remembered Bluey he stayed on to the
end
A younger man with wooden leg became her
closest friend

And he would go and find her when she
wandered old and weak
And always softly say 'yes dear - John will be
home next week.'
Then when she died Bluey moved on, to
Queensland some did say
I tried to find out where he went, but don't know
to this day

And Kathy never wed - a lonely spinster some

found odd

She wouldn't set foot in a church - she'd turned
her back on God

John's mother left no will I learned on my
detective trail

This explains my photo's journey, that clearance
sale

So I continued digging cause I wanted to know
more

I found John's name with thousands in the
records of the war

His last ride proved his courage - a ride you will
acclaim

The Light Horse Charge at Beersheba of
everlasting fame

That last day in October back in 1917

At 4pm our brave boys fell - that sad fact I did
glean

That's when John's life was sacrificed, the
record's crystal clear

But 4pm in Beersheba is midnight over here.....

So as John's gallant spirit rose to cross the great
divide

Were lightning bolts back home a signal from the
other side?

Is that why Billy bolted and went racing as in

pain?

Because he'd never feel his master on his back
again?

Was it coincidental? same time - same day -
same date?

Some proof of numerology, or just a quirk of
fate?

I think it's more than that, you know, as I've
heard wiser men,
Acknowledge there are many things that go
beyond our ken

Where craggy peaks guard secrets neath dark
skies torn asunder

Where hoofbeats are companions to the rolling
waves of thunder

Where lightning cracks like 303's and ricochets
again

Where howling moaning gusts of wind sound just
like dying men

Some Mountain cattlemen have sworn on lonely
alpine track

They've glimpsed a huge black stallion - Light
Horseman on his back.

Yes Sceptics say, it's swirling clouds just forming
apparitions

Oh no, my friend you cant dismiss all this as
superstition

The desert of Beersheba - or windswept Aussie
range
John Stuart rides forever there - Now I don't find
that strange.

Now some gaze at this photo, and they often
question me
And I tell them a small white lie, and say he's
family.
'You must be proud of him.' they say - I tell
them, one and all,
That's why he takes the pride of place - my
Anzac on the Wall.

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