

John William Donovan

John William Donovan was a dairyman from Gerringong, born in 1893. His mother Eliza saw her boy enlist at Liverpool on 5 February 1915.

Private Donovan was a member of the 18th Australian Infantry Battalion which arrived at Gallipoli in August 1915.

The Battle of Hill 60 was the last major assault of the Battle of Gallipoli. Hill 60 was a low knoll at the northern end of the Sari Bair range which dominated the Suvla landing. Capturing this hill along with Scimitar Hill would have allowed the Anzac and Suvla landings to be securely linked.



— Hill 60 showing bones of members of the 4th Australian Infantry Brigade and New Zealanders, 1919.
(From the CEW Bean Collection).

On the afternoon of 21 August 1915, the first assault was made by Australians of the 13th and 14th Battalions together with the 5th Battalion of the Connaught Rangers. With no effective artillery support, under fire from Hill 60 and neighbouring Hill 100, the infantry were decimated. The undergrowth caught fire, burning to death many of the wounded. By nightfall the Indian Brigade had managed a foothold at the base of the hill.

On 22 August the attack was reinforced by the Australian 18th Battalion, of which Private Donovan was a member. The men were fresh and healthy, in stark contrast to the veteran troops, but were inexperienced and ill-equipped, even by Gallipoli standards. Attacking with bayonet only, they suffered 383 casualties in their first attack. *[Taken from Wikipedia, "Battle of Hill 60"*

(*Gallipoli*)). According to reports, Private Donovan was killed on the extreme left of this charge. One witness, who was only a few yards away, states that Private Donovan stood up on the parapet to get a better aim, and was killed instantaneously.



According to an informant, “Buglar Miles”, on 24 August, 1915, Private Donovan was seen lying dead near Suvla Bay, having been shot in the head. The back of his head had been shot away. There is no evidence of burial. Private Donovan does have a panel at Lone Pine Memorial, no.61., as well as the Soldiers Memorial Hall in Gerringong.



W. 4217
Gerrungong
Capt J McLean South Coast

Sir Some time ago I was
advised my son Pie J W.

Donovan was missing
no 505 B Company 18 Batt

5 Brigade I would feel so
much obliged if you would

please find out any
information you could

for me I his mother am
very anxious also my

son G A Donovan No 2360
4th Rein 4th Batt 5th Brig

I will be very much
obliged and thankful

to you Sir if you will

find this out for me
and let me know

as soon as you can

Yours ffly

M J E Donovan

Gerrungong

South Coast

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