



Captain William Ambrose Cull



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Captain William Ambrose Cull

ANZAC and author

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William Ambrose Cull was born in Sandford, Victoria on 31 July 1894. An apprentice coachbuilder, he enlisted in the First AIF, joining the 71st Ballarat Regiment and training as an officer. Too young for command in active service, he resigned his commission, enlisted in the AIF, and with the 23rd Battalion, landed at Gallipoli in August 1915. His daring as a scout in 'No Man's Land' earned him the title 'Hot Spur of the 23rd'. He was wounded by a Turkish bomb blast, recovered in Malta, and was sent to the Western Front with his battalion in 1916.

William saw bitter trench fighting on the Somme at Pozières. In February 1917 he was instructed to lead an attack on Malt Trench near the village of Warlencourt. Held by impenetrable barbed wire they came under a barrage of German machine gun fire and grenades, one landing at William's feet and blasting away a portion of his hip. Cull was taken prisoner but was not expected to survive. For the next twelve months, he at times endured brutal treatment, and solitary confinement, before being transferred to Switzerland. He was repatriated to Australia in October 1918.

His memoir *At All Costs*, written only months later, remains one of the few published accounts of a WW1 POW in Germany. An edited version of the book *Both Sides of the Wire* was published in 2011 by Historian A.Pegram.

Despite his permanent disability, Cull was active in wartime recruitment for the AIF. After the war, he became a representative on the Repatriation Commission Board and the RSL Executive, and stood for the National Party in the 1919 Albert Park By-Election. He married Doris Whitelaw in 1920, and in 1923, became a father to Elsa. Cull later became the Managing Editor of *The Shepparton Advertiser*, until poor health forced his retirement.

William Cull died on 29 July 1939, aged 45 years. He was responding to the toast at his mother's 80th birthday party when he collapsed and could not be revived. The Last Post sounded as he was laid to rest at Coburg Cemetery where he is buried with his father John Francis, baby niece Freda and mother Janet.

The above information is based on research conducted in 2011-2012 and is presented in good faith by the Friends of Coburg Cemetery. Should family members wish to upgrade existing monuments within this cemetery please email enquiries@gmct.com.au