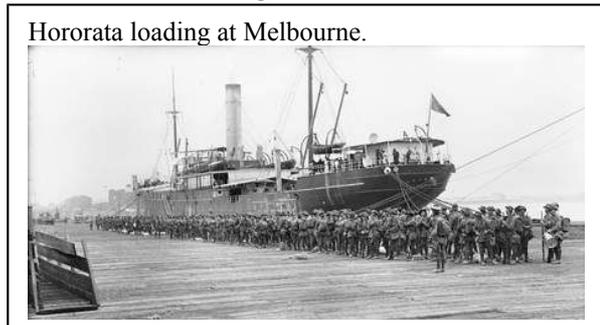


The military adventures of Richard (Dick) E Charters pre 1914 to post 1919, eventually arriving at Monte Video Camp

Richard Ernest was born in Cobram, Victoria in 1889, the son of James Henry Constantine Charters & Barbara Helen (nee Huggard). He had 2 brothers & 5 sisters. His father died in 1892 and he with a sister & brother were put into an orphanage in Brighton, Victoria. Until Barbara remarried about 1892, and then they were returned home.

By the age of 21 he had already started on a uniformed career by joining the RAFA on 9th January 1911 and training as a gunner. The Royal Australian Field Artillery were the civil defence force of their day, his trade listed as Horse Rider, earning his Good Conduct badge in Jan 1913. Promoted to Acting Bombardier in Aug 1913. He resided in Middle Park, then after at Footscray North

Enlisting in AIF - At the outbreak of WW1 and the need for the formation of the AIF, and the encouragement to recruit a force found Dick among those first to sign up, he had already done 3.75 years in the RAFA and enlisted on 27th August 1914 in Melbourne as a private in the 7th Infantry Battalion, this was part of the 2nd Infantry Brigade made up of 5th, 6th, 7th & 8th Infantry Battalions (Victoria). After presumed war training and kitting out he was embarked for Europe on 14 Oct 1914 on HMAT Hororata [A20] landing in Egypt in Dec 1914. It was originally intended to send the division to England for training and thence on to the Western Front but the division was diverted to Egypt instead, on the recommendation of Colonel Harry Chauvel, owing to the state of training areas in the United Kingdom. The division arrived in Egypt in December



Hororata loading at Melbourne.

and began training at Mena, near Cairo, and in sight of the great pyramids.

Dick Charters in Nov 1915 - dressed for action



Presumably on joining AID, Abbey Wood

Egypt to UK, via Dardanelles

Military action followed further training before the proposed transfer to the Dardanelles, via Lemnos Island, Greece. The first arrivals were on 14 Apr 1915, then they started doing practice landings, however on 15 Apr 1915 Dick received a gunshot wound to the left foot, this led to an enquiry, result not found, and he was subsequently evacuated to

Alexandria and into the No.5 Indian General Hospital where he remained for two month until (25th June) when evacuated on the Glengornn Castle to UK, presumably docking in Manchester in Sep 1915. As he was next listed in Manchester Hospital for some time before being transferred down to the County of London [Horton] War Hospital, where he remained until 5 Oct 1915. Then Dick was moved on to Woodcote Park for 10 days recuperation, before being discharged and given 1 months leave prior to joining AID [see photo] Abbey Wood, Kent on 13th Nov. Next he was reported to be readmitted on 30th Dec to the Herbert Hospital, then back to Abbey Wood before being transferred down to Bulford Camp, Wiltshire in June 1916 for only 2 months before eventually being moved on to AID No.2 Depot, Monte Video Camp on 21 Aug 1916.

A separated romance and a hasty wedding and then a prompt departure

This was either an instant love match with my great aunt Ethel May Wickenden, or they had crossed a romantic path somewhere before ? Ethel, apparently, was a cook at a large property before the war, presumably in the urban area south of London - near Plumstead where Ethel was born and brought up and where her Wickenden family were still living in 1911. Then during War Service she was released and re-employed at the Royal Woolwich Arsenal, where her brothers and father had also served. This is in the same area as Abbey Wood. So a very likely neighbourhood for their initial meeting. From above it can be seen that they were split up by Dicks postings. They were eventually reunited and married in Weymouth, where the Wickenden family had moved to. Three of them finding employment at the Vickers [Whiteheads] torpedo works. This was on 9th Oct 1916, that's just 48 days later, and then he was repatriated just 8 days later, on HMAT Ajana from Portland. This was not just an Aussie running off - NO. Further records show that he requested a disability discharge from the Army on 22 Jan 1917 and was discharged 3rd Feb 1917. Latterly he learnt that Ethel, still in England, was now pregnant, so Dick made hasty plans to return, working his passage as a coal stoker, to England. The next official entry shows he was back with Ethel living in Plumstead, Kent by May 1918, at 107 Brewery Road, where his War Badge was delivered & he signed for it. He got employment in the Royal Arsenal, while Ethel had their first son - born in Euston, London

Dick eventually moved, with his new family, back to Australia in 1919 and settled in the Melbourne area, where they had 2 more children, Dick finding work on the railways then later as a prison warder, must still have liked a uniform as he re-enlisted with the Australian Militia in Jul 1934.