

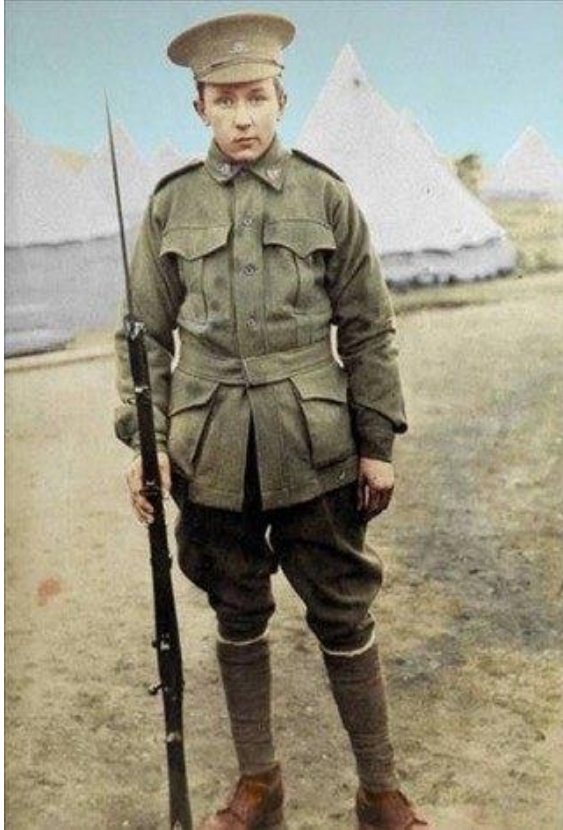
Alec Campbell, the last known survivor of the ANZAC forces at Gallipoli (and the last known survivor of Gallipoli) died on Thursday, May 16, 2002 at the age of 103. Mr. Campbell enlisted at 16, and served at Gallipoli in 1915. He led Hobart's ANZAC Day parade three weeks prior to his death.

The Last Anzac - A Letter from Alec Campbell to his Mother

April 1st, 2019

On the 25th April, Australia and New Zealand will commemorate all those who lost their lives in wars, conflicts and peacekeeping operations. Although Anzac Day honours those who have died throughout the countries' histories, the origins of the commemorations are firmly rooted in the Gallipoli campaign of the First World War.

One of the most well-known and extraordinary stories surrounding Gallipoli is that of Alec Campbell. Falsifying his age and enlisting in the Australian army when he was just 16, this young boy from Tasmania wanted to do everything he could to help in the war. He had the important jobs of carrying water and supplies, communicating messages and standing guard. Alec saw many of his friends killed and wounded, and was lucky to escape with a relatively minor injury, suffering a blow to the head when a fellow soldier's rifle struck him as the soldier was shot. Eventually Alec did become very ill, and was sent home in 1916 after the evacuation of Gallipoli had taken place. He became a war veteran at just 17 years old.



What followed was a life lived to the full. Alec worked in all sorts of professions, from wagon building to charity work. He gained an economics degree, became a Tasmanian flyweight champion, and competed in six Sydney to Hobart boat races. He remained extremely active right until the end of his life, and was even driving until he was 95. Alec became the last remaining Anzac in 2001, and it is thought that he was the last soldier left worldwide to be part of the Gallipoli campaign. He died from pneumonia on the 16th May 2002 at the age of 103.

Below is a letter that Alec Campbell wrote to his mother upon arriving in Gallipoli. It is a fascinating insight into everyday life as an Anzac, and a snapshot of the world at this pivotal moment in history.

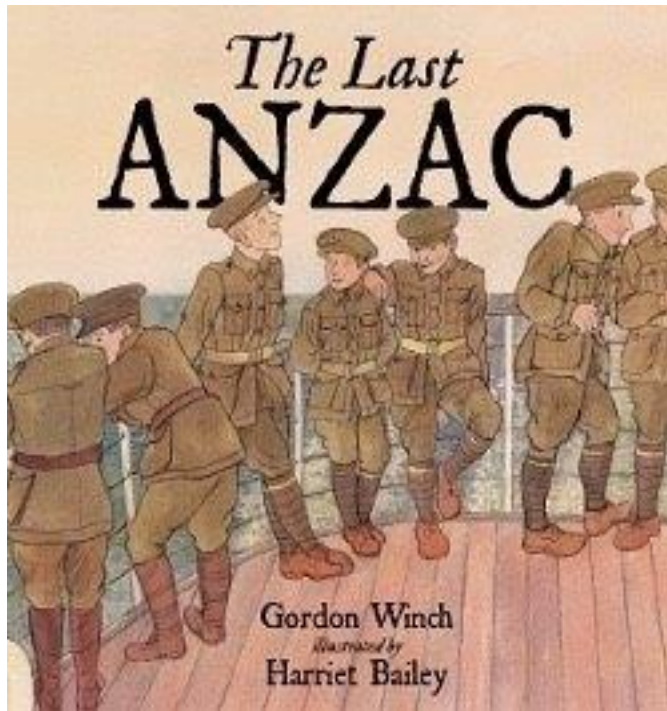
Balpoles
5 Nov 1915

Dear Mother

All but we have
reached our destination. We landed
about 3 days ago under fairly safe conditions
all except one poor fellow who got
shot through the head. He was
swung in to the side of a gallery
just @ the bottom of the big
hill 971 which I suppose you
are making a lot about in England.
The Turks shot at few sheep and killed
over into our valley but luckily nobody
was hit. We were digging a new
trench yesterday & there was a young New Zealander
in charge of us he was talking
to me, when he lifted his head up
above the trench and a few inches
a ~~bullet~~ ~~hit~~ ~~me~~ ~~in~~ ~~the~~ ~~head~~
till you I kept my own head
pretty low.

I have not had a letter for quite a
long time now old darling, but
I know you are writing every week
so I will have a bunch of letters
to get sometime. Don't worry about
my safety darling as it is quite
safe as long as you don't pop
your head up over the trench top.
I suppose you are all getting on
alright but I wish they could
arrange a better mail system.
We are treated pretty well
out here concerning the matter
of troops there and here to go.
Tell Angus that I met Frank
Waltch's big brother what have the one
in the red cross the other one in
England on a holiday. And tell
dad that a lot of fellows say that
Hermann is in England, but
other say he is dead, as you don't
know which is right.
Kisses of love to Darling
Your loving son Alec

In 2015 New Frontier published *The Last Anzac* by Gordon Winch, illustrated by Harriet Bailey. It tells the true story of a young boy who goes to meet the 102-year-old Alec at his home in Hobart. To order a copy of the book, please follow the link below.



The Last Anzac

To James, Alec Campbell was a hero. The last living Anzac, and all the Australian and New Zealand soldiers who fought at Gallipoli, were heroes, everyone's heroes. Alec, who died in May 2002 at the age of 103, enlisted in 1915 when he was sixteen. He had put his age up to eighteen in order to be accepted by the army and to fight at the front, wherever he was needed. James travels to meet Alec, and gives us a special view of this humble and remarkable man, the year before he died.



Pvt Alexander William “Alec” Campbell

Birth 26 Feb 1899
Launceston, Launceston City, Tasmania, Australia

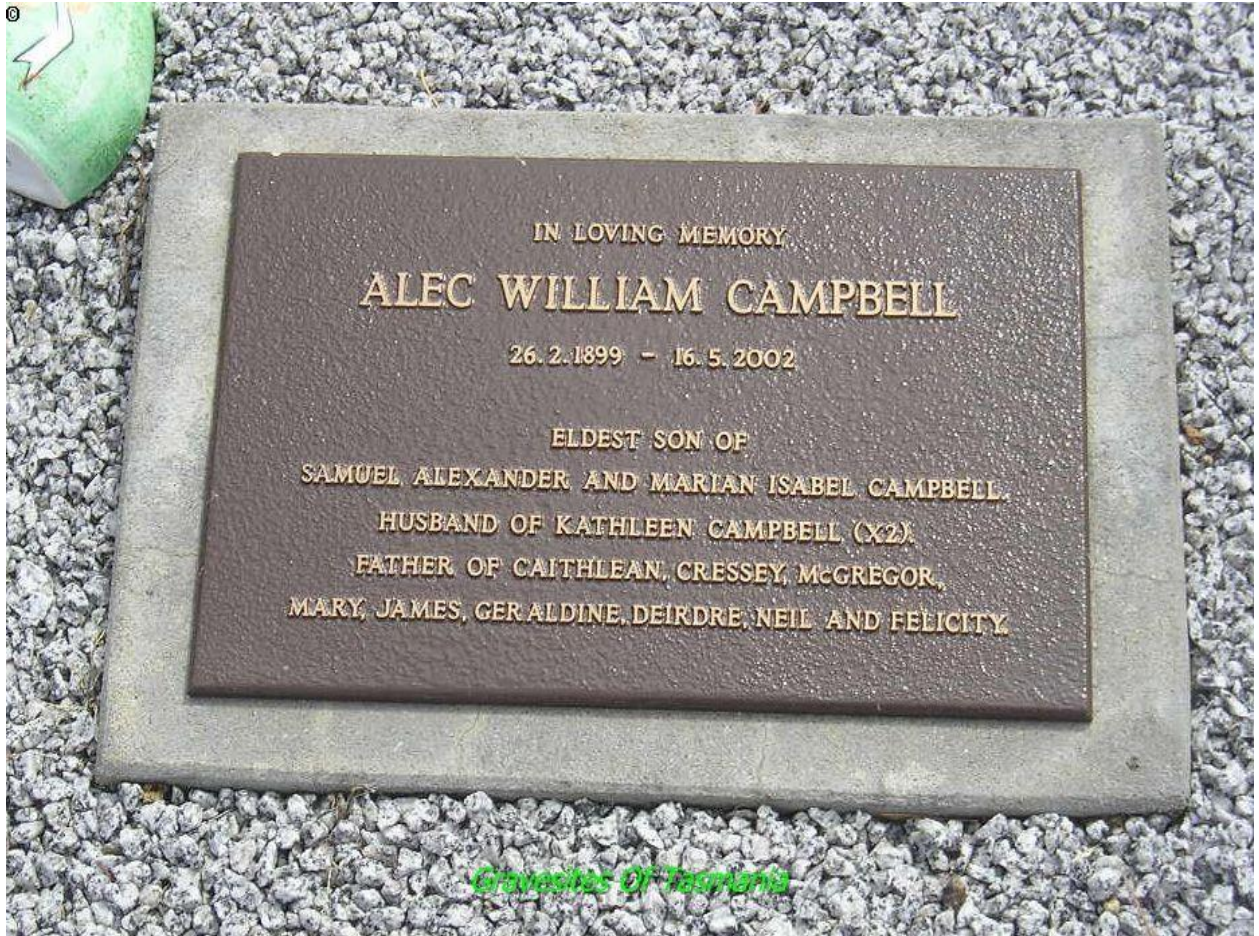
Death 16 May 2002 (aged 103)
Hobart, Hobart City, Tasmania, Australia

Burial [St. David's Park](#)
Hobart, Hobart City, Tasmania, Australia

Memorial ID 51799896 · [View Source](#)



©



Gravestones of Tasmania



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

ART190416



The last known survivor of the ANZAC forces at Gallipoli and the last known survivor of Gallipoli, died on Thursday, May 16, 2002 at the age of 103.

He had lied about his age to enlist at 16, and landed on Gallipoli in October 1915, with the 15th Battalion. He was evacuated about two months later suffering war wounds and partial paralysis brought on by mumps, which affected his right eye for the rest of his life.

In 2000, Mr. Campbell was recognized as one of the "Australian Legends". His name and photograph were honored as part of an annual series of commemorative postage stamps issued by Australia Post since 1997. The stamps commemorate living Australians who have made lifetime contributions to Australia's national identity and character

Mr Campbell's medals and honors include:

1914-15 Star.

British War Medal

Victory Medal.

80th Anniversary Armistice Remembrance Medal.

Centenary Medal.

Australia Post Australian Legends Award, Campbell's 45-cent Legend stamp displays the soldier's portrait as a young man, photographed just prior to his departure for Gallipoli.

Mr. Campbell led Hobart's ANZAC Day parade three weeks prior to his death.

FROM WIKIPEDIA:

Alec Campbell

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For other people named Alec Campbell, see [Alec Campbell \(disambiguation\)](#).

Alec Campbell	
Birth name	Alexander William Campbell
Nickname(s)	The Kid
Born	26 February 1899 <div> Launceston, Colony of Tasmania, British Empire</div>
Died	16 May 2002 (aged 103) <div> Hobart, Tasmania, Australia</div>
Allegiance	 Australia <div> Australian Army</div>
Service/branch	Australian Imperial Force (AIF), 15th Battalion , 4th Infantry Brigade
Years of service	2 July 1915 – 22 August 1916
Rank	Private
Battles/wars	World War I : Battle of Gallipoli
Awards	1914–15 Star , British War Medal , Victory Medal , 80th Anniversary Armistice Remembrance Medal , Centenary Medal
Relations	Ruby Rose (great-granddaughter)
Other work	Jackeroo , carpenter , mechanic , builder , boxer (Tasmanian Flyweight Champion), sailor (six Sydney to Hobart Yacht Races) and unionist

Alexander William Campbell (26 February 1899 – 16 May 2002) was the final surviving Australian participant of the [Gallipoli campaign](#) during [the First World War](#).^[1] Campbell joined the [Australian Army](#) at the age of 16 in 1915, and served as a stores carrier for two months during the fighting at Gallipoli. He was invalided home and discharged in 1916. He later worked in large number of roles, was twice married and had nine children. He is the great-grandfather of actress, singer and model [Ruby Rose](#).^{[2][3]}

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Biography

Alec Campbell was born in [Launceston, Colony of Tasmania, British Empire](#), the son of Marian Isobel (Thrower) and Samuel Alexander Campbell.^[4] He studied at [Scotch College, Launceston](#),^[5] and then worked as a clerk with the Colonial Mutual Fire Insurance Company. At the age of 16 he left his job to enlist in the army. Not having his father's permission, he lied about his age, claiming to be two years older to enlist without parental consent.^{[6][7]} He joined the 15th Battalion of the [Australian Imperial Force](#) in July 1915. Not even being old enough to shave, Campbell gained the nickname "The Kid" during his training in [Hobart](#). One of his cousins had died already at Gallipoli, and the idea of Campbell's deployment terrified his parents. His unit embarked from Melbourne aboard HMAT *Kyarra* on 21 August 1915, and Campbell landed at [Anzac Cove](#) in early November 1915. He assisted in carrying ammunition, stores and water to the trenches. He received a minor wound in the fighting at Gallipoli; when evacuated with the rest of the Australian forces in 1916, he became ill with a fever which caused partial facial paralysis.^[1] He was subsequently invalided home aboard HMAT *Port Sydney* on 24 June 1916, and was formally discharged on 22 August 1916^[8]—a Gallipoli veteran at only 17.^[9] He only fought in the war for two months; he later explained tersely,

"I joined for adventure. There was not a great feeling of defending the Empire. I lived through it, somehow. I enjoyed some of it. I am not a philosopher. Gallipoli was Gallipoli."^[1]

Civilian life

Campbell had a crowded life. In South Australia, [New South Wales](#) and [Tasmania](#), he was variously a [jackaroo](#), [carpenter](#), railway carriage builder, mature-age university student, public servant, research officer and historian.^[9] He received vocational training in motor-body building at the Hobart Repatriation Trade School.^[6] He was a union organiser in the Launceston and Hobart railway workshops and an organiser with the [Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners of Australia](#) (now part of the [Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union](#) (CFMEU)). He became president of the [Tasmanian](#) branch of the [Australian Railways Union](#) between 1939 and 1941, and president of the Launceston Trades and Labor Council between 1939 and 1942.^[9] He also worked on the construction of [\(Old\) Parliament House](#) in [Canberra](#).^[6]

After the Second World War, Campbell completed an economics degree at the age of 50. He worked with the [Department of Labour and National Service](#).^[8]

A lover of sailing, he became an accomplished boat-builder, and competed in seven [Sydney to Hobart yacht races](#).^[8] In 1950, he circumnavigated Tasmania aboard the *Kintail*.^[6]

Campbell married twice - both wives were named Kathleen - and he fathered nine children,^[6] the last one being born when he was sixty-nine.

He led an uncommonly vigorous life. Only in his final few months did he need to use a wheelchair. In the end, a chest infection led to a deteriorating condition, and the 103-year-old war veteran died peacefully on 16 May 2002. He is buried at the [Cornelian Bay Cemetery](#) in Hobart.^[7]

His second wife, who survived him, observed:

"Alec has become national property, although I'm not sure he realises it."^[11]

He was survived by thirty grandchildren, thirty-two great-grandchildren (which includes [model/actress Ruby Rose](#)) and two great-great-grandchildren, as of 2000.^[8] As of 2018, he has seven great-great-grandchildren.

Australian "legend"

In 2000, Campbell was recognised as one of the "[Australian Legends](#)". His name and photograph were honoured as part of an annual series of [commemorative](#) postage stamps issued by [Australia Post](#) since 1997. The stamps commemorate living Australians "who have made lifetime contributions to the development of Australia's national identity and character".^[10] Campbell lived to fully enjoy this honour.^[11]

Campbell's 45-cent Legend stamp displays the soldier's portrait as a young man, photographed just prior to his departure for Gallipoli. Formal photographs of the other two Anzac centenarians complete this stamp set. In addition, a fourth stamp features the 1914–15 star medal which was presented to all those who fought in campaigns during those war years.^[12] These stamps, designed by Cathleen Cram of the Australia Post Design Studio, commemorate the story of events and people shaping contemporary Australia.^[13] The Campbell stamp honours him as an individual and as a representative of all 68,000 soldiers at Gallipoli whose actions affected Australia's evolving self-image.^[14]

In one of his last public appearances, Campbell led the 2002 [Anzac Day](#) Parade in Hobart. As he sat in his car before the parade, he especially seemed to enjoy shaking hands with the dozens of young children who came up to greet him.^[1]

Campbell's birth in 1899 was just shortly before the Commonwealth of Australia came into being.^[1] At his death, the nation honoured him with a Commonwealth-sponsored [state funeral](#) at Saint David's Anglican Cathedral in Hobart on 24 May 2002.^[6]

In the context of Campbell's death, then [Australian Prime Minister John Howard](#) observed that Campbell was the last living link to that group of Australians that established the ANZAC

legend. Howard also acknowledged that Gallipoli was "a story of great valour under fire, unity of purpose and a willingness to fight against the odds" and that Campbell "was the last known person anywhere in the world who served in that extraordinarily tragic campaign."^[6] Campbell never understood the intense public attention on his later life and his longevity, and was unhappy at times that he was lauded by conservative politicians who ignored his later union activity. After his death he received many tributes, including from Tasmanian [Returned and Services League](#) (RSL) State President Ian Kennett, who said that Mr Alec William Campbell was a great Australian and that he "led a full and happy life and put his energies, upon returning to Hobart, back into his career and family".

At some point between 1996 and 2002, as the ranks of Anzac survivors thinned and Campbell's own health failed, his name rose to prominence. According to Rowan Cahill, writing for the [Australian Rail Tram and Bus Industry Union](#), assertive nationalist and martial forces sought to turn Campbell into an icon as "the last of the Anzacs." Campbell resisted the myth-making. He observed that there was nothing really extraordinary in being the last; rather, he pointed out the simple fact that he had been one of the youngest at Gallipoli.^[9] Shortly before his death, Campbell stated that "For god's sake, don't glorify Gallipoli - it was a terrible fiasco, a total failure and best forgotten".^[15]

Medals and honours

- [1914-15 Star](#)^[7]
- [British War Medal](#)^[7]
- [Victory Medal](#)^[7]
- [80th Anniversary Armistice Remembrance Medal](#) (21 April 1999)^{[12][16]}
- [Australia Post Australian Legends Award](#) (2000)^[12]
- [Centenary Medal](#) (1 January 2002)^[17]

See also

- [Roy Longmore](#), one of the last two surviving veterans of Gallipoli.^[11]
- [Walter Parker](#), one of the last three surviving veterans of Gallipoli.^[11]

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 - • [80th Anniversary Armistice Remembrance Medal](#), 21 April 1999, It's an Honour
17. • [Centenary Medal](#), 1 January 2002, It's an Honour

Further reading

- Jonathon King and Arthur Smout (2003) [Gallipoli: our last man standing: the extraordinary life of Alec Campbell](#), John Wiley & Sons

External links

- Photos of a very young Alec in uniform: [\[2\]](#), [\[3\]](#) (Note: If these pages come up with Error 403, click on the URL and press enter.)
 - Source: [Alec William Campbell](#), 'the Last Sentinel of Gallipoli', Anzacs.org
- Australian War Memorial Collection:
 - [ART90416](#): 1991 painting, oil on canvas, by Bryan Westwood
 - [REL30869.001](#): 1914–15 Star c.1919
 - [REL30869.002](#): British War Medal 1914–1920 c.1920
 - [REL30869.003](#): Victory Medal c.1920
 - [REL30869.004](#): 80th Anniversary Armistice Remembrance Medal c.1999
 - [REL30869.005](#): Centenary Medal c.2002
 - [REL30869.006](#): Gallipoli Star (unofficial), manufactured privately and presented on 22 April 1990 by Mr Ross Smith
 - [S03425](#): Interview by Peter Rubenstein for "Voices From The Great War", 26 February 1997, 54 min 24 sec

Alec Campbell

18 May 2002 • 12:10am

-The Telegraph

Alec Campbell, who has died in Hobart, Tasmania, aged 103, was the last known survivor of 50,000 Australians to fight at Gallipoli in the attempt to seize control of the Dardanelles from Turkey in the First World War.

Campbell was 16 years and four months old when he walked into a recruiting office in 1915 and somehow passed for the necessary 18. The photograph taken of him before he left for Gallipoli shows an earnest, slightly-built boy, 5ft 5ins tall, enveloped in an ill-fitting uniform, with soft cheeks yet to require a razor. He stands at ease with upright rifle and bayonet as tall as himself.

He reached Lemnos in October 1915 with reinforcements for the 15th Battalion, made up of Tasmanians and Queenslanders, which had landed at Anzac Cove on April 25 that year. The 15th was to be badly knocked about in scaling the heights and in close-quarters work in rough, confused terrain, where 20 yards or less separated some of the opposing trenches.

The Turks commanded high ground, were equipped with a seemingly endless supply of "cricket-ball" bombs and were supported by accurate sniper fire. At the crucial Quinn's Post, the centre of fighting for most of May, men of the 15th were reduced to holding rifles above their heads and firing into the air, for as soon as a periscope showed above a trench parapet, it was shot away.

Worse losses were to come elsewhere, when the 15th was called to join an attack on the strategic heights of Hill 971. On August 6, the Battalion had numbered 850 men; on August 8, after Hill 971, there were 280 left to fight.

C E W Bean, the official Australian war historian, was to write later of the attack that "the distance had been under-estimated, the locality mistaken, and the start made hours too late". The fault was not the 15th's - whose strength, by August 29, was down to 210.

By the time that Private Alec Campbell landed at Anzac Cove in October, more than 6,000 Australians had died. By then the invasion had reached something of a stalemate.

Campbell had his first taste of death when the man beside him was shot as they embarked in a small boat to be ferried ashore. After that he saw death daily, sometimes in grizzly guises, but never with the same sense of shock.

Campbell was known in the 15th as "The Kid", and his job was to carry water from the beach to supply the heights. Men were sometimes picked off doing this, and he did not find it comfortable work. The men still talked of the legendary Simpson, the lone soldier who had carried the wounded down to the beach on his donkey until he was killed.

In his later years, Campbell was asked why he rushed into the war. He said he didn't have much sense then, and it had been "the fashionable thing to do". It was not a great feeling of defending the British Empire. "I lived; I enjoyed some of it, I didn't enjoy some of it. I am not a philosopher. Gallipoli was Gallipoli."

He was present when Kitchener visited Anzac Cove and remembered him as a big man with stooped shoulders, who said that "we [the 15th] were as fine a group as was ever sent".

C E W Bean recorded Kitchener as saying: "The King asked me to tell you how splendidly he thinks you have done. You have done splendidly, better even than I thought you would."

After two months in the action Campbell fell ill, and was in a field hospital when the campaign ended with the evacuation of Gallipoli in December. He was invalided home and, after six months in hospital, was discharged from the Army as medically unfit.

Alec Campbell was born at Launceston, Tasmania, on February 26 1899 and after school began work as an insurance clerk. On returning from the war he roamed far, working as a jackaroo, then in various building trades in Canberra, the burgeoning national capital, and as a Commonwealth public servant. Later, in his fifties, he took an economics degree. He taught himself to sail, was a crew member in six Sydney to Hobart races, and circumnavigated Tasmania in his own yacht.

He thought that wars rarely achieved anything, blamed the politicians for not averting them, and campaigned for movements for peace. He worked as a volunteer for the National Heart Foundation until he was 80; and three weeks before he died he led the annual Anzac Day parade in Hobart, though not on foot.

With his first wife, Kathleen Connolly, who predeceased him, he had seven children. With his second wife, Kathleen Corvan, who survives him, he had two more children, the last when he was aged 69. He leaves 73 direct descendants, including two great-great-grandchildren.

In a country that considers the Gallipoli experience to be at the heart of its national character, Campbell was looked upon as a national treasure. His death sparked a wave of emotional outpouring, beginning with the governor-general and the prime minister and rolling on. He is to be given a state funeral.

There is some evidence that Alec Campbell may have been the last of all the British, French, Australian, New Zealander, Indian and Canadian participants in the Gallipoli campaign - more than half a million men in all.

He is also thought to have outlived the last of the Turkish survivors.

Alec Campbell Was the final surviving Australian participant in the Battle of Gallipoli during World War I. His death broke the last living link of Australians with the Gallipoli story. At the age of 16, Campbell left his job as an insurance clerk and lied about his age to enlist in the 15th Battalion of the Australian Imperial Force in 1915. Not even being old enough to shave,

Campbell gained the nickname 'The Kid' during his training in Hobart. One of his cousins had died already at Gallipoli and the idea of Campbell's deployment terrified his parents. He landed at ANZAC Cove in early November 1915 and assisted in carrying ammunition, stores and water to the trenches. Illness forced his evacuation in December 1915 and Campbell was formally discharged in 1916. He only fought in the war for six weeks. Like many veterans, Campbell was reluctant to talk about his experience at war. Later in life, Campbell was a union organiser in the Launceston and Hobart railway workshops and an organiser with the Amalgamated Carpenters and Joiners (now part of the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union). He was president of the Tasmanian branch of the Australian Rail Union between 1939 and 1941 and president of the Launceston Trades and Labor Council between 1939 and 1942. He also worked on the construction of Old Parliament House in Canberra. He completed an economics degree at the age of 50. A lover of sailing, he built boats and competed in six Sydney to Hobart yacht races. Campbell fathered the last of his nine children at the age of sixty-nine. When it was realised that he was one of the few remaining Gallipoli veterans, he led the ANZAC Day Parade in Hobart. In 2002 he sat in his car, before the parade, and shook hands with dozens of young children. In the final few months of his life, he was confined to a wheelchair. Suffering a chest infection, the condition of the 103-year-old deteriorated and Campbell passed away peacefully beside his wife. He received a state funeral at St David's Anglican Cathedral in Hobart on May 24, 2002. As Australia's last ANZAC he represented the last physical link with the campaign that forms a large part of Australia's national identity described by Prime Minister John Howard as 'a unity of purpose and a willingness to fight against the odds'. Campbell never understood the intense public attention on his later life and his longevity and was unhappy at times that he was lauded by conservative politicians who ignored his later union activity. After his death he received many tributes including from Tasmanian Returned and Services League (RSL) State President Ian Kennett, said that Mr Alec William Campbell was a great Australian and that he 'led a full and happy life and put his energies, upon returning to Hobart, back into his career and family'. Campbell is survived by his wife, Kate, thirty grand-children, thirty-two great grand-children, and two great-great grand-children. Died in Hobart on May 16, 2002 of a chest infection aged 103.