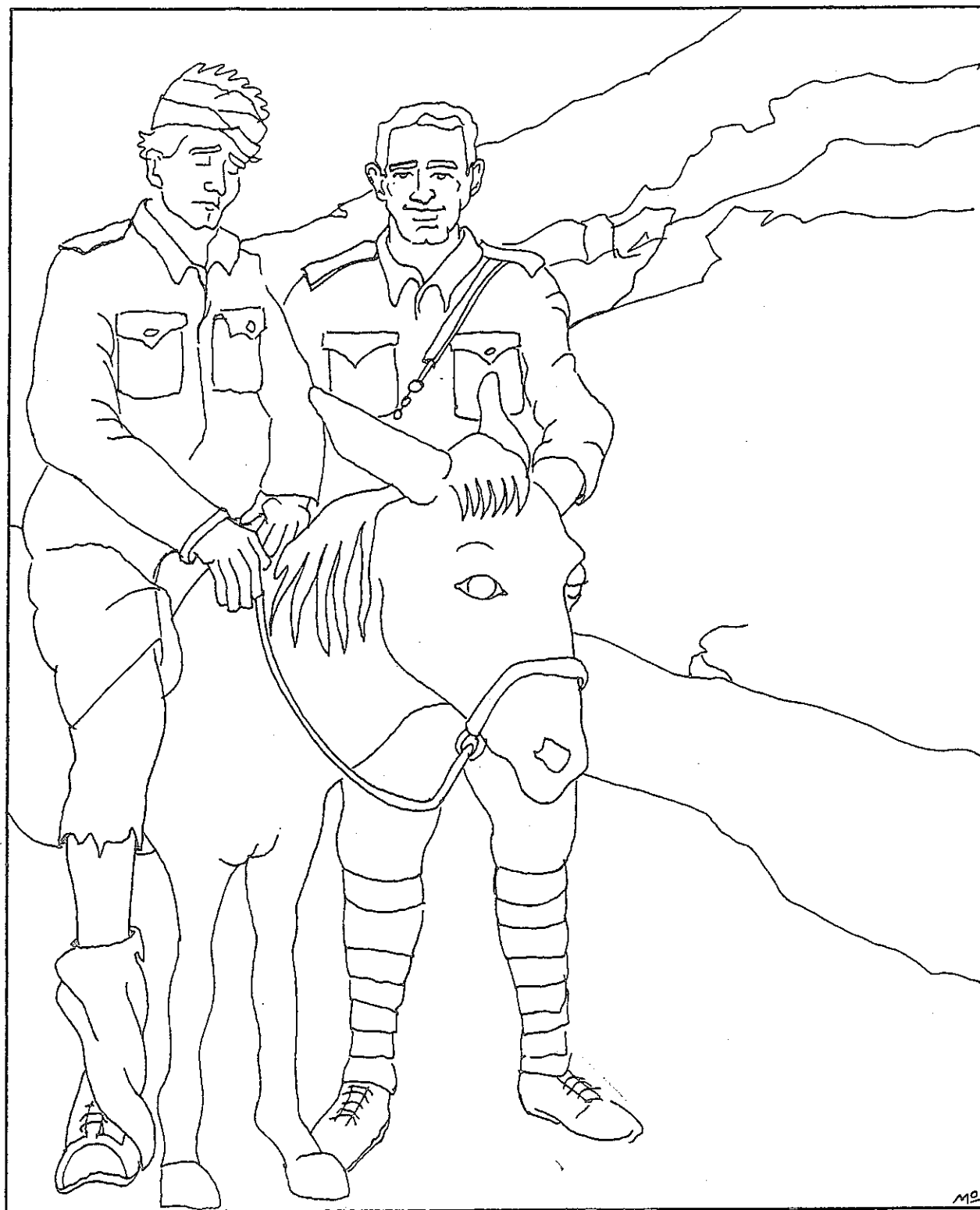


SIMPSON AND HIS DONKEY



Foreword

This story has been written and illustrated specifically for children of ages 5 - 9 years. It is recommended for distribution to Primary Schools.

This booklet may be used in a variety of ways:

- as a story that junior officers may wish to tell when they are invited to address schools in preparation for Anzac Day.
- as a story book for children.
- as a colouring in book for children.

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Does anyone know what a “stretcher bearer” is ?

In times of war, stretcher bearers carry badly wounded soldiers back to a safe place far away from the enemy where they can be given medicine and looked after by a doctor.

Does anyone know where Gallipoli is?

Gallipoli is in Turkey, a long way from Australia. Many years ago a terrible battle was fought at Gallipoli. Hundreds of thousands of men fought very bravely and a lot of these lost their lives for Australia.

This is the story of a man who was a “stretcher bearer” at Gallipoli, Private John Simpson Kirkpatrick.

It was 4.30 am on the 25th of April 1915. The tightly packed, darkened boats slowly approached the shore. Every soldier on the boats was quiet. On deck, they began to form up in their platoons awaiting the order to move out.

“We are going ashore in a minute”, someone whispered.

Firing echoed across the water and real artillery shells exploded like puffs of cotton wool against the clear night sky. Simpson looked towards the dark coastline where they would soon be.

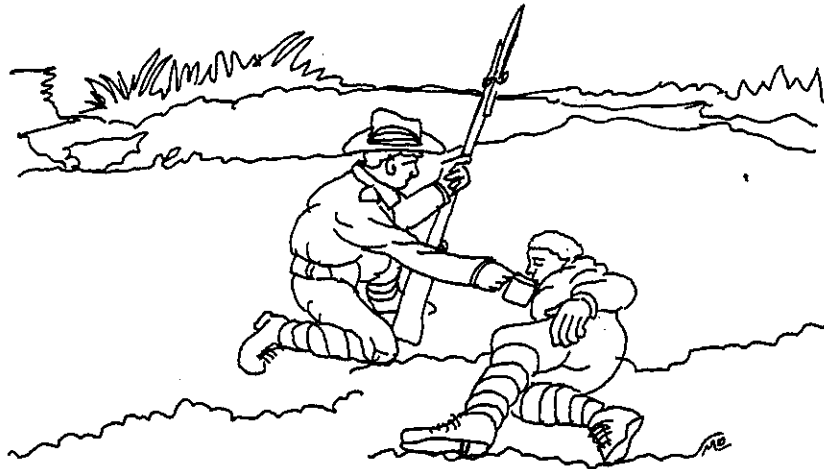
“Good luck!” Simpson’s mate Bluey whispered. “Thanks, mate”, said Simpson and he turned once more to look at the coastline. Bluey and Simpson had become good friends.



They were going there as part of the medical party and their job was to search for wounded soldiers and bring them back to the dressing station in the foothills near the beach for medical treatment.

None of the men knew then that the events of this day would see the name ANZAC pass into legend.

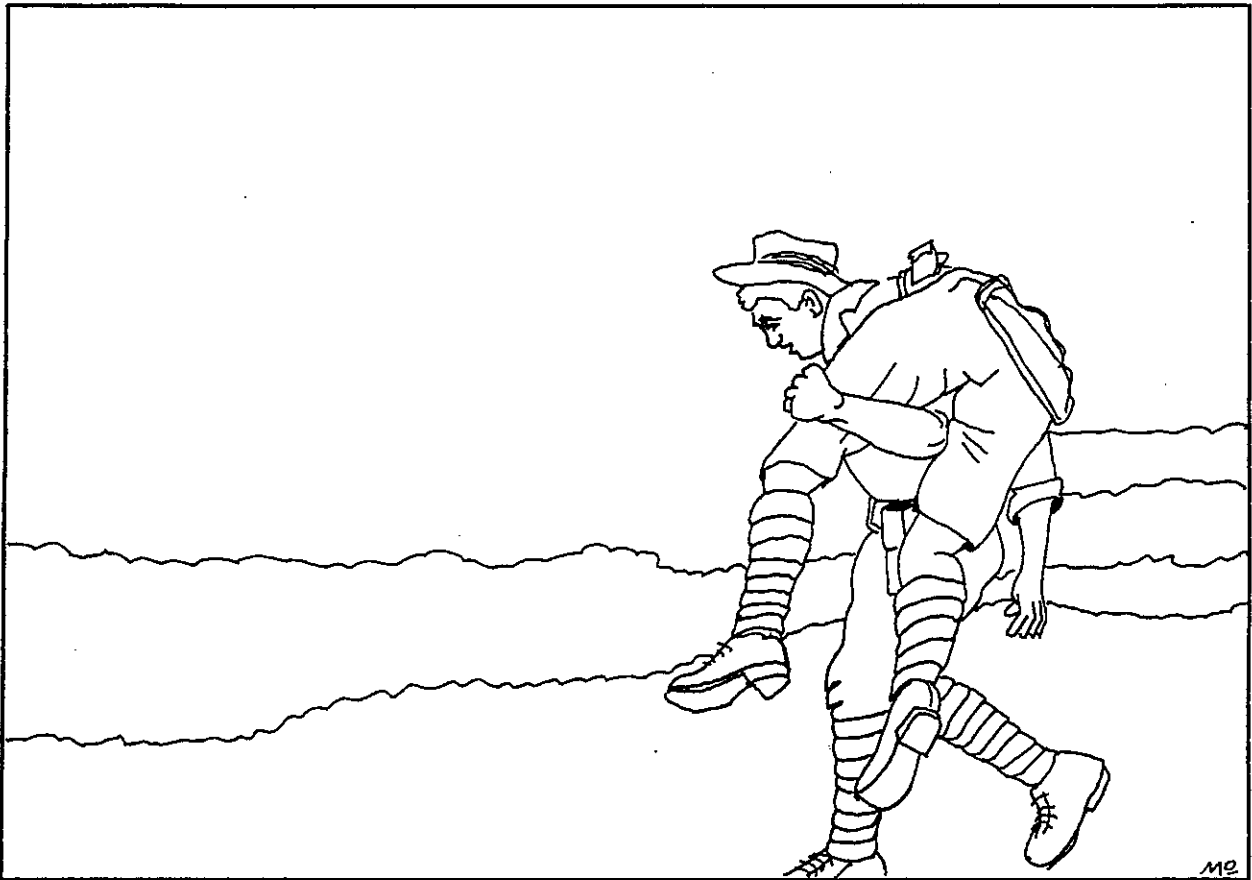
As they landed the Turks peppered the surf with machine gun fire and artillery. Bombs went off all around as Simpson and his mates raced through the waves to the safety of the foothills.



As he ran he saw some of his friends fall. Ahead of him, Simpson could see his friend Bluey already helping the wounded. Some were shot by the machine guns, others hit by shrapnel and badly wounded. Simpson reached Bluey and together they started to carry the wounded out of the line of fire. Then suddenly, there was silence. Bluey smiled at Simpson and chuckled, "Mate, they've stopped".

Bang! A single shot rang out. Bluey slumped heavily to the ground. Losing no time, Simpson hoisted his friend onto his shoulders and carried him to the safety of a large rock.

"They need you, I'll be alright mate", said Bluey and beckoned



Simpson to help the others. Bluey smiled as he watched Simpson disappear into the darkness.

It wasn't supposed to happen this way Simpson thought. Men were dead or wounded all over the place. It was terrible.

Simpson and the other medics had a lot of work to do. They worked all night and were saddened to see so many young men had already been killed.

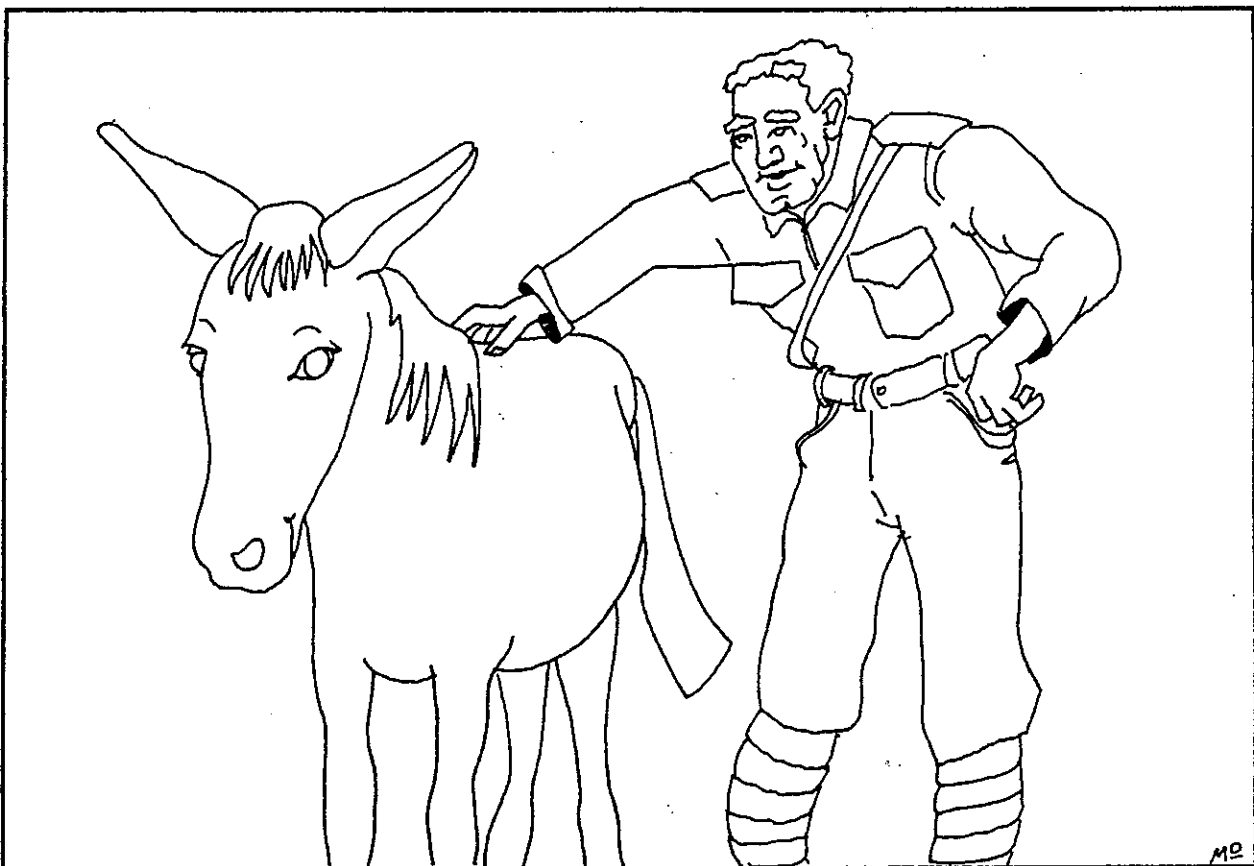
Next day, Simpson was sent to look for water and as he crept about

the hilly ground he found a donkey feeding in a gully.

“Hello little donkey! This isn’t a very safe place for you to eat”, he said.

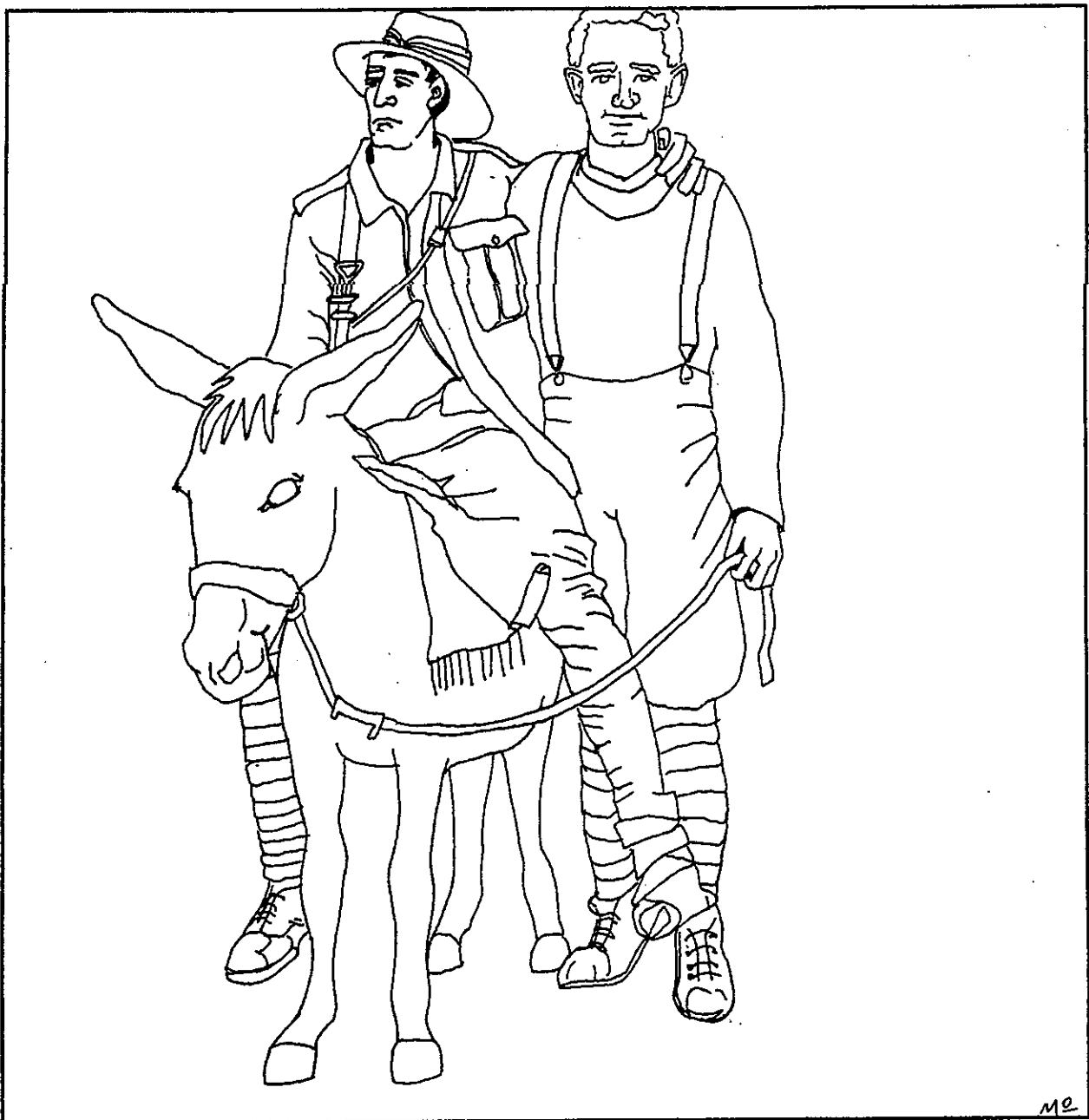
With this the little donkey looked up from the big patch of juicy grass and then walked over to Private Simpson. The big soldier was a very gentle man and he stroked the donkey’s head affectionately. “You’re a friendly little fellow aren’t you”, Simpson said in a quiet voice as he reached into his pocket for a small piece of biscuit which he fed to the donkey.

“I think I will call you Murphy. You can help me carry the injured back from the front trenches.” Simpson knew he would need a strong, faithful friend to help him. Bluey had been shot in the leg and would not be able to walk for quite some time.



Simpson had worked with donkeys before and he could see that she was a sturdy animal who would be able to carry wounded men carefully down the steep hill. The donkey was patient and sure-footed and would be capable of carrying loads much bigger than herself.

Soon this little animal, no taller than a large dog, and the big soldier became a familiar sight in the trenches and the pair soon came to be know to all as “The Man with the Donkey”.





Day after day and into the nights Simpson carried wounded men down Shrapnel Gully. Leaving the donkey under cover, Simpson would dive out and pick up a wounded man and carry him back to the donkey and then they would begin the dangerous descent through the storm of bullets back to the medical post at the bottom of the hill.

From their first meeting in the gully Simpson and his donkey were inseparable.

His daily trek was up Shrapnel Gully and into the deadly zone around Quinn's Post where he collected the wounded men. Fearless for himself, he was always considerate for his donkey. He shared his meagre rations with her and always made sure she had plenty of water to drink.

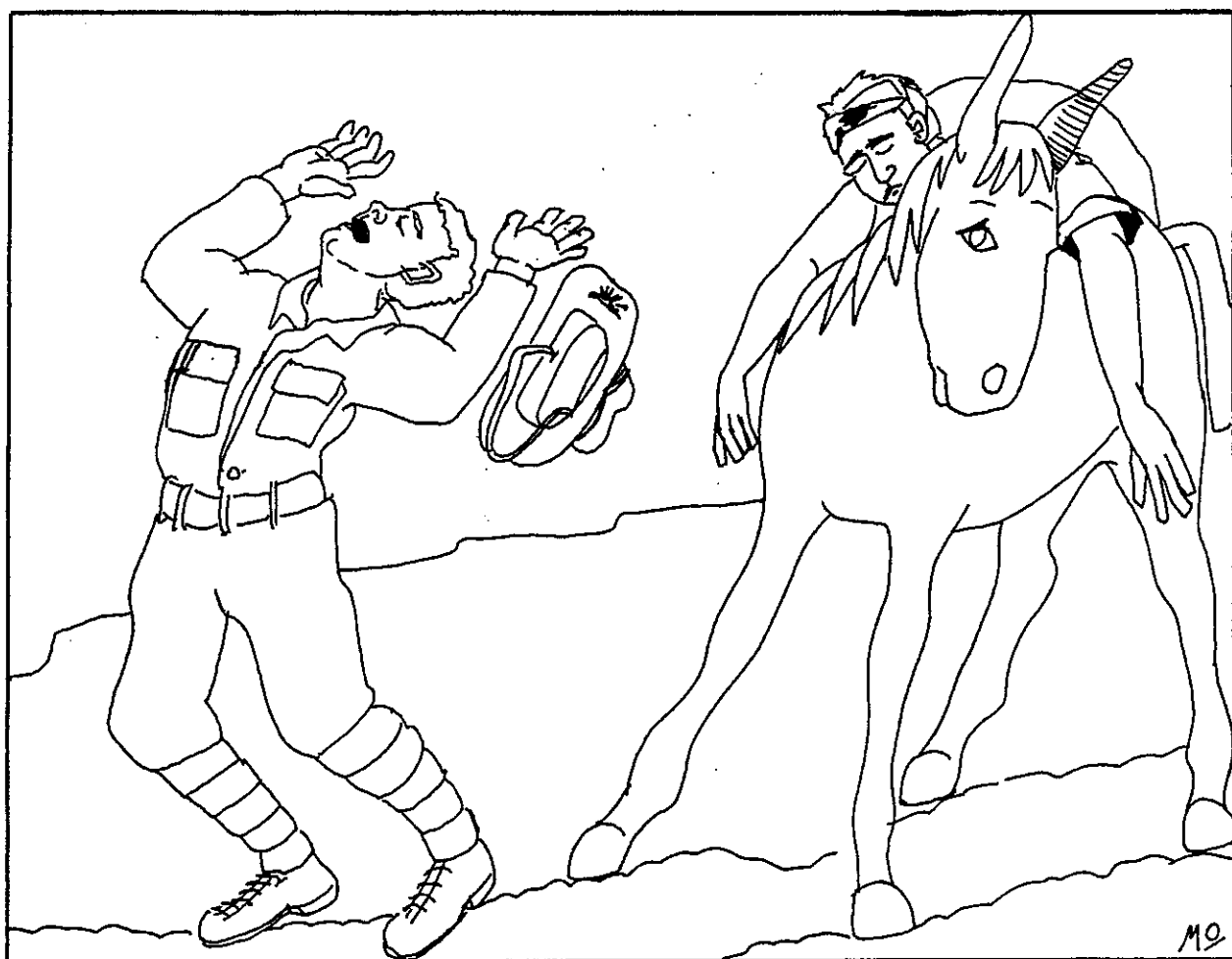
It was on the morning of the 19th of May that Simpson made his last journey with his donkey up the gully. That morning Simpson went up the gully to the water guard where he usually had breakfast, but it wasn't ready because enemy snipers had shot a hole in the billy can. So Simpson decided to keep going on his way.

"Never mind" he called cheerily to the cook, "make me a good dinner when I come back".



But Simpson never came back. He was coming down the gully, with two patients on the donkey, when he was hit by machine gun fire. His friends saw him fall beside the donkey and raced over to help him but the bullet had pierced his heart and he was already dead. With a tear in its eye, the little donkey continued on her well worn path to the dressing station still carrying the two wounded soldiers Simpson had saved on its back.

Simpson and his donkey had carried many men down the gully and saved many lives at the cost of his own. His friends buried his body that night and only after his death did everyone realise that he didn't belong to any of the medical units in the area. In all the confusion of the landing Simpson had become separated from his unit and had continued to operate as a one-man rescue team for nearly four weeks.



In Melbourne at the Shrine of Remembrance and in Canberra at the War memorial you will find a statue dedicated to this ANZAC hero, Simpson and his Donkey.

“Simpson and His Donkey” is a story that reminds us of the selflessness and courage that all Australians share.

It is about the strength of mateship we Australians have and the sacrifices that are made in times of adversity.

Simpson’s story is a sad one, but it is also one that a nation can be proud of.