

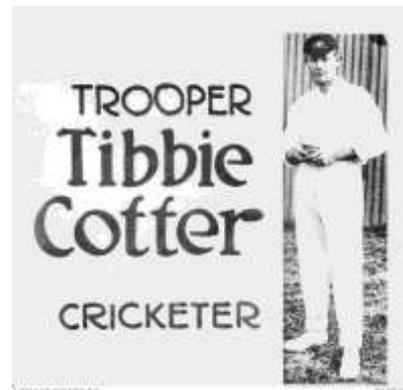
## TIBBY COTTER - Australian Cricketer Killed at Beersheba in WW1 -- Jill Curry

### Australian Curriculum, Year 9 – ACDSEH095



In Sydney there is a walkway and cycle path named after 'Tibby Cotter'. It goes from the Light rail station, over ANZAC Parade to the Sydney Cricket Ground. Albert 'Tibby' Cotter was an Australian cricketer who was killed at the Battle of Beersheba whilst serving as a stretcher bearer.

Cotter played 21 test matches, taking 89 wickets for Australia between 1904 and 1912. He was the fastest bowler of his time, was the first to use the bouncer as an intimidation tactic, and had a reputation for breaking wickets. He was also a hard-hitting tail-end batsman. In 1915 he joined the 1<sup>st</sup> Light Horse Brigade, despite not being a very accomplished horseman and headed for the Middle East. As a well-known person, his image was used on recruitment posters. He served in Gallipoli and was described as a man without fear. This was needed as those who pulled the injured from the front lines had no weapons, yet were constantly in the line of fire. He was transferred to the 12<sup>th</sup> Light Horse regiment in 1916 and took part in the second battle of Gaza, which was unsuccessful, as the first had been. It was then decided to attack Beersheba, the biblical city at the other end of the Turkish line which was thought impractical because it required a three-night trek through the almost waterless desert.



At dawn the bombardment of Beersheba began and the British and New Zealanders did much of the hard work till mid-afternoon but the wells of Abraham were still in Turkish hands. With only an hour till sunset, General Chauvel decided on a daring charge. The 4<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Light Horse regiments, consisting of 800 men, (with the 11<sup>th</sup> regiment and ambulance wagons following behind) set off across 6 km of open ground in the full face of 4,000 entrenched Turkish soldiers with artillery and rifle fire. They wielded their bayonets and yelled as they went. The Turkish gunners were ordered not to fire until the troops dismounted, as they always did – at least up till now.



By the time the Turks realised the galloping horses were not going to stop, they could not wind down their heavy machinery fast enough. The shrapnel flew over the horsemen's heads

and exploded behind them. Of more concern were the bombs dropped from the German aircraft above.



Many riders simply jumped three lines of trenches and continued on into town. Others dismounted and began fighting hand-to-hand in the trenches. Some were hit and fell, injured or dead. The reserve troops began swarming on the city but there was still danger – the precious wells had been mined and the German officers were beginning to blow them up. Trooper ‘Scotty’ Bolton managed to follow the wires, stop the German officer at the switchboard and save all the wells except a couple. Against ‘impossible’ odds, they miraculously lost only 31 men, with another 36 wounded and 70 horses dead.

Cotter died of a gunshot wound whilst bearing a stretcher for another wounded man. The bullet is thought to have been fired at close range by a Turkish soldier who had supposedly surrendered. ‘Tibby’ was only 33 years old and is buried in Beersheba. His brother had been killed 4 weeks earlier in Belgium.

This historic day turned the tide of the war in the Middle East and ultimately led to the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. The capture of Beersheba paved the way for the taking of the whole of the ancient Holy Land, the creation of the present day nations of Israel, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria and the unfolding of many biblical prophecies. One German officer commented, “they are not soldiers, they are madmen”<sup>1</sup> and they feared these brave men. The courage and sacrifice of men like Cotter and many others made the ANZACs legendary and etched the Light Horse in the annals of history.

Footnote:

1. Gullet. H., *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918. Vol VII, Sinai and Palestine*. Angus and Robertson, 1923, 404

Pictures:

1. Tibby Cotter Walkway. Picture John Appleyard  
<http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/newslocal/city-east/13m-albert-tibby-cotter-bridge-budget-blowout-under-investigation/news-story/fd74ad199d87c29ec301cdf68add1d6e>
2. Tibbie Cotter – Stretcher bearer with the 12<sup>th</sup> Light Horse Regiment. Australian War Memorial Photo <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/P04366.001> Photo by Linton Slide.
3. Disputed picture of the charge at Beersheba (or re-enactment) – Australian War memorial <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/A02684/> It was probably taken when two regiments of the 4th Brigade, Australian Light Horse, re-enacted the charge for the official photographer Frank Hurley, at Belah on 7 February 1918.
4. Jumping the trenches – from a photograph at an exhibition in Beersheba in 2012

Powerpoint:

1. <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/in-depth/anzac-day/wwi-death-of-test-hero-albert-tibby-cotter-revealed/news-story/6d86bacde0f5bc84ce5cae292b2c8833>

2. Tibby Cotter Walkway. Picture John Appleyard  
<http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/newslocal/city-east/13m-albert-tibby-cotter-bridge-budget-blowout-under-investigation/news-story/fd74ad199d87c29ec301cdf68add1d6e>
3. Tibbie Cotter WW1 recruitment poster - <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/P04366.001>
4. Disputed picture of the charge at Beersheba (or re-enactment) – Australian War memorial  
<https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/A02684/> It was probably taken when two regiments of the 4th Brigade, Australian Light Horse, re-enacted the charge for the official photographer Frank Hurley, at Belah on 7 February 1918.
5. Jumping the trenches – from a photograph at an exhibition in Beersheba in 2012
6. Sloan ‘Scotty’ Bolton and Monty - <https://anzacday.org.au/trooper-sloan-scotty-bolton-dcm>
7. Counting the dead <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/P02279.003> One marked X is believed to be Tibbie Cotter.
8. Cotter’s grave – J Curry; Beersheba Commonwealth War Graves cemetery – J Curry
9. Text only