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Richard Collins

Richard Collins was born in 1896 at Pyalong, the son of Richard and Lily ( or Lillie ) Collins (nee Milsom). Richard Collins senior and Lily Milsom were married in 1893. His father, known in later life as Old Dick, married twice; having nine children with his first wife and ten with Lily.

Both parents were required to sign Richard's "Application to Enlist" form, as he was under 21 at the time of enlistment. He enlisted on August 18, 1915 at the Melbourne Town Hall, aged 18 years and 11 months. He was a labourer by trade, and gave his address as High Camp. After training in Melbourne he was given the rank of private, number 4464 in the Anzac Police, essentially a Military Policeman, and attached to the 14th Battalion.

Richard's unit embarked from Melbourne, Victoria, on board the Ballarat on February 18, 1916. He disembarked at Egypt in March 1916. About a week after arriving in Egypt, he was taken on strength officially at Abbassia, which appears to have been the headquarters of the Anzac Police, the military police responsible for maintaining order amongst the frequently rowdy Australian troops. It was also the site of the Egyptian Military College, which remains there to the present day.

The Anzac Police were involved in some difficult situations, including the so-called 'Battle of the Wazzir' on April 2, 1915, when an estimated 2500 New Zealand and Australian troops rioted in the red-light district of Cairo's Ezbekieh Quarter. This supposedly began as a reprisal for the spread of venereal disease. It became a milestone in the unofficial history of the Anzacs. Many of those involved were drunk. The houses of prostitutes were ransacked and their furniture thrown into the streets and set alight. Local firefighters were prevented from putting out these fires when their hoses were attacked. A 'Second Battle of the Wazzir' would be fought on July 31, 1915. The duties of an Anzac Military Policeman could indeed be stressful.

Richard's career was to be relatively short lived. Three months after enrolling at Abbassia he was admitted to hospital with a diagnosis of pleurisy. He suffered from persistent tachycardia (rapid pulse rate) which does not appear to have improved in the subsequent months.

A "Proceedings of a Medical Board on an Invalid" form dated July 29, 1916 reports that he "*Has been gradually getting out of breath for the past month or*

*two. Unable to perform his usual occupation owing to his excessive palpitation and breathlessness. Admitted to No 3. AGH July 26, 1916 with tachycardia.... Gets out of breath on the slightest exertion. His heart is very accelerated although he cannot detect any murmur. He has had a great deal of pain in the cardiac area which is certainly improved with the complete rest of the past few days."*

The underlying cause was given as "Active Service – Strain and exposure."

On August 17, 1916 his medical record notes "to Australia for tachycardia – for discharge (via) Suez." He returned on the ship Borda, arriving back in Melbourne on September 15, 1916, some seven months after leaving.

Richard was recommended for discharge as permanently unfit, and was discharged on November 27, 1916. He received the British War Medal, the 1914/1915 Star, and the Victory Medal and a war pension. He attended a welcome home banquet at the Pyalong Hall on September 10, 1919 and was presented with a medal.

His name listed on the Honour Rolls of the Church of the Transfiguration (Anglican) at Pyalong, the Glenaroua Public Hall, and the Shire of Pyalong.

Richard died at Kensington on September 15, 1971, at age 75 years.

