

ALFRED THOMAS OZANNE

1877 - 1961



MP (Corio, VIC) • ALP, 1910–1913 • 1914–1917

Born in 1877 in Melbourne, Victoria, Alfred Ozanne was an accountant and municipal officer with the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works before entering politics. Elected to the House of Representatives in 1910 as the member for Corio, Ozanne retained his seat despite a challenge in the Court of Disputed Returns by rival candidate Richard Couch. Defeated at the 1913 general election, he regained his seat in 1914 following the double dissolution.

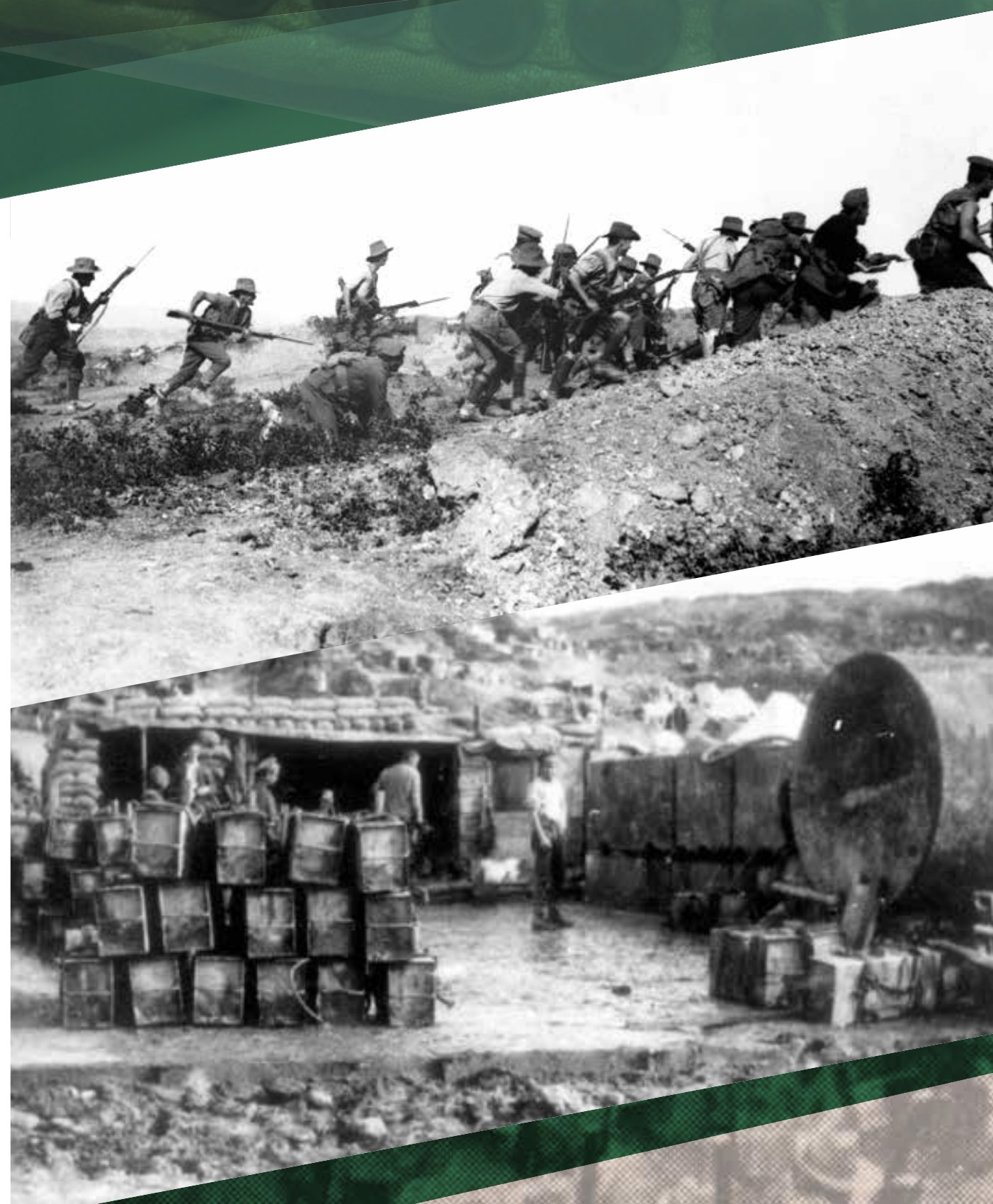
Ozanne had five years' service in volunteer regiments (reaching the rank of sergeant) when he enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force in January 1916 following the death of his brother at Gallipoli. (Sensitive to criticism, he explained his delay in volunteering was due to his slow recovery from typhoid fever.) At a farewell dinner in Queen's Hall in Melbourne Parliament House, Ozanne 'made a stirring appeal to the manhood of Australia to respond to the call of duty', saying:

If they asked him, 'What did you do as a legislator responsible for Australia's part in the war? Did you stay in your soft cushioned seat, drawing your salary, and asking others to give up their lives so that you might stay here in safety?' he wanted to be in a position to say, 'No; when my country asked me to do my duty I heard the call, and I went.' (Cheers.)

Ozanne embarked from Melbourne in June 1916 as company quartermaster sergeant in the 22nd Company, Australian Army Service Corps. Before leaving England for the front, he developed a severe ear infection requiring hospitalisation. He was erroneously listed as 'Absent Without Leave' from his regiment and charged with desertion—charges that were subsequently struck out following an investigation. Discharged on medical grounds, Ozanne was not able to return to Australia until March 1917, missing the campaign for the 1917 election in which he stood for his old seat.

In his absence, rumours circulated that he was a deserter and questions were raised in the local press. A heated pamphlet campaign ensued, strengthened by the release shortly before the polls by Defence Minister Pearce of a cable stating that Ozanne had been absent without leave, but neglecting to explain that the charges were made in error. He was defeated in the election by fellow First World War soldier John Lister. Ozanne's libel action against the *Geelong Advertiser* in 1920 was unsuccessful. Attempts to have a Royal Commission inquire into the affair were defeated on party lines.

After his return to Australia, Ozanne farmed near Geelong until his death in 1961.



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- 'Quarter-Master-Sergeant Ozanne' *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic: 1848–1957) 27 May 1916: 20. Web. 31 Mar 2015. <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article2097914>
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