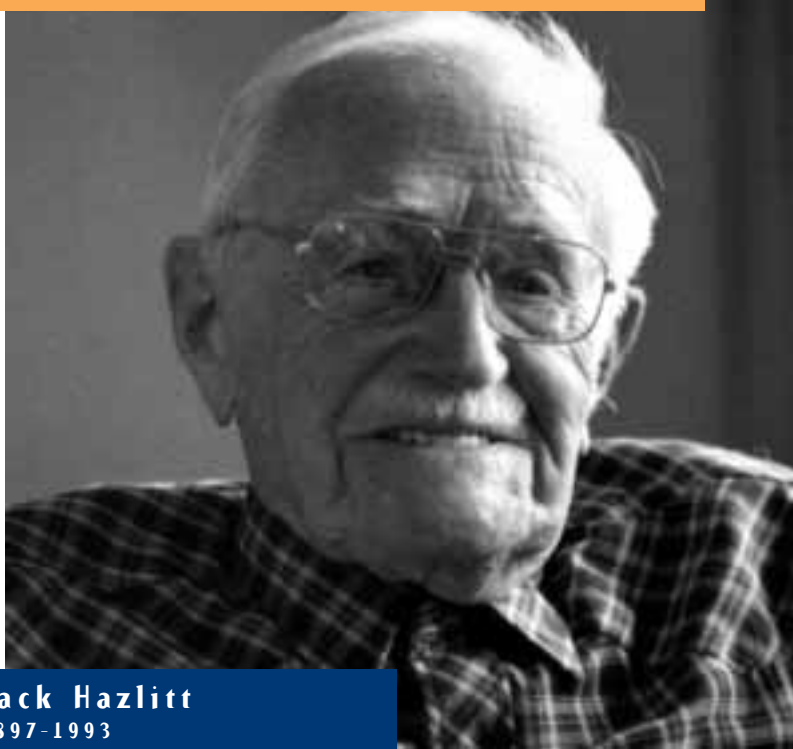


# AUSTRALIAN BIOGRAPHY

A series that profiles some of the most extraordinary Australians of our time



**Jack Hazlitt**  
1897-1993  
First World War Veteran

This program is an episode of **Australian Biography** Series 1 produced under the National Interest Program of Film Australia. This well-established series profiles some of the most extraordinary Australians of our time. Many have had a major impact on the nation's cultural, political and social life. All are remarkable and inspiring people who have reached a stage in their lives where they can look back and reflect. Through revealing in-depth interviews, they share their stories—of beginnings and challenges, landmarks and turning points. In so doing, they provide us with an invaluable archival record and a unique perspective on the roads we, as a country, have travelled.

**Australian Biography: Jack Hazlitt**

**Director/Producer** Frank Heimans **Executive Producer** Ron Saunders

**Duration** 26 minutes **Year** 1992

Study guide prepared by Kate Raynor © NFSA

Also in Series 1: Neville Bonner, H.C. 'Nugget' Coombs, Dame Joan Hammond, Donald Horne, Sir Marcus Oliphant, Nancy Bird Walton

## A FILM AUSTRALIA NATIONAL INTEREST PROGRAM

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## SYNOPSIS

Jack Hazlitt could be described as a 'survivor's survivor'.

When war broke out in 1914, Jack lied about his age and enlisted in the Australian Infantry Forces. He was looking forward to a life of adventure and overseas travel. In July 1915 Jack arrived at Gallipoli where he became a 'runner', jumping across the trenches and constantly dodging enemy fire. Miraculously he survived for five months.

Jack went on to fight in France and Belgium and he took part in the Battle of Pozieres on the Somme, where he saw his brother for the last time. Finally, a bomb blast put an end to Jack's army career.

Jack Hazlitt was a daredevil, the archetypal Australian of a past era. This interview for **Australian Biography** was his last. He died in 1993, aged 96.

## CURRICULUM LINKS

This program will have interest and relevance for teachers and students at middle to senior secondary and tertiary levels. Curriculum links include Australian Studies, English, Modern History and SOSE/HSIE.

## ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSION POINTS

### World War One

- What did you know about World War One prior to watching this program? Ask your grandparents what they know of this period in our history.
- What can you find out about the causes of this war?
- Construct a timeline of the war.
- Chart the major battles of World War One on a map.
- Research the background to the Battle for the Somme.
- The line of trenches dug by the German army that stretched from the North Sea to the Swiss border became known as the Western Front. Visit [www.worldwar1.com/maps/anzwfbig.gif](http://www.worldwar1.com/maps/anzwfbig.gif) to locate key sites.
- Why was it difficult for the Allies to break through the Front?
- Ten thousand men died in a few weeks in Pozieres alone. How many Australians lost their lives during World War One? Where were the heaviest casualties suffered? How does this compare to losses in other wars?
- In what ways did combat during World War One differ from World War Two and more recent wars?
- Find out about life on the home front during the war and write a short report or article.
- What can you find out about the arguments and campaigns for and against conscription during 1916 and 1917?
- What does 'trench warfare' involve? How were the trenches constructed? What were 'duckboards'?
- What particular health problems did veterans of this war suffer?
- What is shellshock? How was it treated?
- How many veterans of World War One are still alive today?

- Many veterans have returned to Gallipoli over the years. Why might veterans want to return? What might such a journey achieve? Imagine how these men and their families might feel on such a trip.

- How did World War One impact on Australia's relationship with Britain?
- Make a list of some of the war films you've seen. Write a couple of sentences about each one, outlining the impression the film created, the themes or messages about war imparted, and anything it might have taught you.
- What does the Returned Services League (RSL) do?
- Contact the Department of Veterans' Affairs in your state to find out more about their work.
- What exhibitions are currently on display at the Australian War Memorial? What is the purpose of this space?

### Early Days: Enlisting and Training

News of the outbreak of war was met with great enthusiasm in Australia, as it was in many other places. Tens of thousands of men very quickly volunteered to enlist in the armed forces.

- Why were so many Australians so eager to join the war? Make a list of some of the reasons motivating volunteers.
- Jack Hazlitt's opening line in this interview is: 'It was a spirit of adventure [that] took me away'. What constitutes an adventure for you? Is it still possible, after all the horrors of warfare in the last century, for soldiers to consider going to war an adventure?
- Jack was working with his brother in Western Australia in 1914 when war was declared. His brother immediately enlisted, and Jack followed suit, despite being two or three years under the required age limit. How common was it for under-aged boys to be accepted into the armed forces?
- Jack joined the 28th Battalion, Seventh Brigade, and lived at Blackboy Hill Camp. What do you think daily life would have been like at this camp?
- Where did Jack do his army training? How heavy were the packs the men carried? What were conditions like?
- Jack tells a story about an experience in Egypt at a place called Tel el Kebir Camp. What happened there and why?
- Why does Jack liken himself and his fellow soldiers to 'a lot of chooks in a chook yard'?
- Jack says, 'In the army, you absolutely have to respect commissioned ranks; you made an oath to that effect and you mustn't think otherwise or you'll get into trouble'. Discuss.

### Gallipoli: 'The Runner's Life Wasn't a Happy One...'

- Use the Visit Gallipoli website ( see p. 4 ) or other sources to research the Gallipoli environment. What difficulties might the topography and other factors have presented to the troops?
- As Jack says, many mistakes were made by the military in Gallipoli. What do you think he would say if he could talk to these generals whose decisions cost the lives of so many men?
- One of Jack's jobs during his deployment in Gallipoli was as a signaller. What was involved in this? How were the field telephones used and what particular problem did they face? Did they have radios?

- What was a runner? Jack survived in this job for five months. What was the average lifespan of a runner? How does Jack try to account for his survival? He can't really explain why he survived, when so many around him were killed. Is there any way of making sense of the arbitrary nature of who lives and who dies in war? How do soldiers deal with the randomness of it all?
- How did Jack cope with being afraid? What does he mean by 'making yourself harder and harder in your attitude'? How might this explain some of the difficulties soldiers faced when returning to civilian life with their families?
- How does Jack describe the sound of the bullets that whizzed past him as he ran between the trenches?
- 'The average Turk...was a much more dangerous man on aiming his rifle than the average Aussie.' Discuss.
- What were some of the problems with the water supplies for the troops?
- What are the symptoms of dysentery? How is it contracted? What other health problems were rife in the trenches?
- The soldiers' diet consisted of salty tinned beef ('they took all the goodness out of the beef, then tinned the rest'), apricot jam (so dreadful Jack suggests it was supplied by 'some rascally English contractor') and hard army biscuits, which he says were like dog biscuits. They never had anything fresh. What health problems could such an inadequate diet have led to?
- How did the men feel when the British general staff decided to call a halt to the campaign in Gallipoli and evacuate the troops?

### The Somme: 'You Stuck It Out Until You Were Killed, Wounded or Relieved'

- Why was Jack excited to see Paris?
- Jack says the roar of thousands of guns went on 24 hours a day at the Somme; it never stopped. The enemies' trench lines were much closer than at Gallipoli—sometimes only 20 yards away. Was the casualty rate worse here than at Gallipoli? What weapon caused the most death and destruction?
- Jack was briefly reunited with his brother. Describe the situation as Jack recalls it. What did Jack's brother die of? How do you think Jack feels about the loss of his brother? Explain your answer.
- Jack recounts the story of a huge shell exploding near him as he tried to carry a message up to the front line. How big was the shell-hole? How long did he spend in it? How did he make his way back to brigade headquarters? Imagine you were stuck in that shell-hole. What do you imagine you might think about? How would you keep yourself going?
- Did Jack ever feel like running away?

### Life and Death: An Extraordinary Story of Endurance

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, by the end of World War One nearly 60,000 Australian soldiers had been killed—one in five who went to war didn't return. Australia's population at that time was only about five million. The country went through a period of great social, economic and political division. The war shocked people all over the world. It had caused so much senseless loss of life, with as many as ten million soldiers killed. Many Australians came home physically crippled and psychologically traumatised.

- What social measures were taken to ease the transition from wartime to peace for returning servicemen?
- At the end of the interview, we see Jack walking along a beach with his wife. What impact might the war have had on his personal relationships? How difficult was it for returned servicemen to integrate themselves back into civilian life?
- Jack has confronted death many times, and yet strangely, he says he hasn't thought about it a lot. What do you think the war might have taught him about life?
- Nearing the end of his life, Jack says that death doesn't impose on him, he's not scared of it. It has lost its sting for him. Do you think this is because he faced it so many times during the war?
- Jack demonstrates great charm and humour in this program. He finds something to laugh at in the bleakest experiences. Do you think Jack's sense of humour is a factor in his survival? Is this quality part of a unique Australian identity? To what extent do you think that Jack represents the typical Australian 'digger'?
- Essay topic: 'Jack Hazlitt is a hero'. Discuss.

### The Program: Story of a Life

- Why might the filmmakers have thought Jack Hazlitt a worthy subject to be included in the **Australian Biography** series?
- Imagine that you are a producer on the **Australian Biography** series and that you could have access to three people from Jack's life—family, friends, colleagues, critics. Compile a list of four questions for each of these people, using this additional interview material to further develop the portrait of Jack given in this program. How would you decide who might offer a valuable perspective on his life and achievements? Consider what new details you might gather when formulating your questions. Write a production statement outlining what you hope to achieve.
- The filmmakers intercut shots of Jack responding to questions posed by interviewer, Robin Hughes, with occasional photos and archival footage. Choose four family photos from different periods of your life and use them to construct a series of autobiographical snapshots. Who is in each photo? Who took the photo? Where were you? What was the occasion? What was the mood? Does the photo correspond with your memory of the time? What has happened to the other people (if any) pictured in the photo? How have you changed since then? Do you like the photo? Why/why not?
- Jack shares a number of anecdotes from his life. Choose one of his stories and explain what it tells us about him. Imagine you could tell just one story from your life to convey a sense of you and your family. Write this story and then at the end note what you think it reveals about you.

### FURTHER READING AND RESOURCES

#### Books

- Les Carlyon, **Gallipoli**, Macmillan, Sydney, 2001
- Patrick Carlyon, **The Gallipoli Story**, Penguin, Camberwell, Victoria, 2003
- Peter Charlton, **Pozieres 1916: Australians on the Somme**, Associated Book, Sydney, 1986
- Commonwealth Department of Veterans' Affairs, **A Guide To The Battlefields, Cemeteries and Memorials of the Gallipoli Peninsula**, Commonwealth Department of Veterans' Affairs, Canberra, 1998

Martin Marix Evans, **The Battles of the Somme**, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1996

B. Gammage, **The Broken Years: Australian Soldiers in the Great War**, Penguin, Melbourne, 1975

Richard F. Hamilton and Holger H. Herwig, **The Origins of World War I**, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2003

Philip J. Haythornthwaite, **A Photohistory of World War One**, Arms and Armour, London, 1993

Leslie Hazlitt, **Just Call Me Jack**, Lexington Avenue Press, Copacabana, 2004

Neil M. Heyman, **World War I**, Greenwood Press, Westport, 1997

Robin Hughes, 'Jack Hazlitt: The Survivor's Tale' in **Australian Lives: Stories of Twentieth Century Australians**, Harper Collins Publishers, Sydney, 1996, Chapter 7

Jonathan King, **Gallipoli Diaries: The Anzac's Own Story Day By Day**, Kangaroo Press, East Roseville, 2003

John Laffin, **British Butchers and Bunglers of World War One**, A. Sutton, Gloucester, 1988

Robert Lewis and Tim Gurry, **The Anzac Experience: Investigating Australians' Battlefields Experiences in World War I—Evidence and Activities**, Anzac Day Commemoration Committee of Queensland, Ryebuck Media, Malvern, 1999

Michael J. Lyons, **World War I: A Short History**, Prentice Hall, Upper Saddle River, New Jersey, 2000

Donald J. Murphy (ed), **World War I**, Greenhaven Press, San Diego, 2002

A.M. Nixon, **Somewhere In France: Letters To Home—The War Years of Sgt. Roy Whitelaw**, 1st AIF, Five Mile Press, Melbourne, 1989

Gary Sheffield, **The Somme**, Cassell Military, London, 2003

Tony Stephens and Steven Siewert, **The Last Anzacs: Lest We Forget**, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, Fremantle, 2003

James Woolley (ed), **We Fought the Battles: Letters and Diaries of World War One Soldiers**, J.M. Woolley, Eastwood, 1998

## Kit

**Images of World War I**, Resource Service, NSW Department of Education, Ryde, 1988

Includes one video (42 minutes), 42 slides, 40 resource sheets and 19 student activity sheets.

## Video/DVD

**ANZACS**, Pino Amenta, John Dixon and George Miller (directors), Burrowes Dixon Production Company, Sydney, 2003, 524 minutes

**Australia at War 1914-1918**, Barrie Pattison (director), Film Australia, Sydney, 1967, 63 minutes

This detailed account of the 'war to end all wars' is made up of actual footage shot on the battlefields of Europe at the time.

**Australia in World War I**, National Film and Sound Archive and Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 1997, 150 minutes

These silent films from the collections of Screensound (the National Film and Sound Archive) and the Australian War Memorial are some of the most significant surviving filmed records of World War One, showing the battlefields, including Gallipoli, France and Belgium, and the homefront in Australia.

**Australians at War**, Episodes 1 to 3, presented by the Commonwealth Department of Veterans' Affairs, in co-operation with the Australian War Memorial, ABC Video, Canberra, 2001, 165 minutes

Part of a series looking at Australia's wartime history, covering our involvement in the Anglo-Boer War, the battle at Gallipoli and the period from 1916 to 1918 when thousands of Australian lives were lost in France and Belgium.

**Gallipoli**, Peter Weir (director), Roadshow Entertainment, Sydney, 1981, 107 minutes

**Pozieres: Australians on the Somme 1916**, Australian Film Commission, 2000, 52 minutes

**The Trench**, William Boyd (writer/director), Portman Entertainment, London, 1999, 95 minutes

## Websites

Australian War Memorial  
[www.awm.gov.au](http://www.awm.gov.au)

National Archives of Australia—Defence Records—Australian Service Records from World War I <http://www.naa.gov.au/collection/explore/defence/service-records/army-wwi.aspx>

Trenches on the Web: An Internet History of the Great War  
[www.worldwar1.com](http://www.worldwar1.com)

The World War I Document Archive  
[www.lib.byu.edu/~rdh/wwi](http://www.lib.byu.edu/~rdh/wwi)

Visit Gallipoli  
[www.anzacsite.gov.au](http://www.anzacsite.gov.au)

For more information about Film Australia's programs, contact:

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