

## **The First of the WW1 Recruitment Marches Centenary 2015 commenced in Gilgandra October 1915 arriving in Sydney in November 1915**



### **The original 26 men leaving Gilgandra**

The Coo-ee March began with 26 men, multiplying ten times by the time it reached Sydney.

My grandmother used to tell me how she heard them marching near their property "Maiala" 15 Kms from Balladoran the first stop for rest, where the Coo-ees were greeted by locals.

My grandfather gave them their first welcome speech and then another at their next stop, Eumungerie.

The third stop was at Moriguy where they were also greeted again, some further family members refreshing each of them with a good bath!

Several of those recruited went on to gain some of the highest military honours including the Victoria Cross.

A sad and unexpected epitaph to the Wallabies march was the death of the Rev. John Wilkinson, Methodist minister, who had joined the march at Narrabri. He was killed by a lightning strike in West Maitland camp!

You can read about the Marches at these websites:

"Following the disaster of Gallipoli and the heavy casualties in France in the latter half of 1915, recruiting figures for enlistment in World War I had dwindled. Numerous recruiting rallies became increasingly ineffective. It was at this dark hour that Gilgandra's butcher, R.G. Hitchen and his brother Bill, the local plumber, had the idea of organising a route march of volunteers to Sydney, enlisting recruits as they marched.

The idea caught the imagination of the public, and the Coo-ees (as the volunteers were known) became national heroes. The action of "Hitchen's Own" and the subsequent marches, which followed, were responsible for a dramatic upturn in recruitment figures.

Twenty six men left the little Western town on the Castlereagh River. They were feted at each town on the route, and the stirring story of their march has become part of the official war history of Australia. Recruitment meetings were held in each centre and their number increased to 263 by the time they reached Sydney."

After 4 months of training at the Liverpool camp the Coo-ees embarked on 8 March 1916 on the Star of England for Egypt where some stayed with the 13th Battalion, while others joined the 45th Battalion. All served in France.

[Read more](http://cooemarch1915.com/) & at <http://cooemarch1915.com/>



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

H02203

**Dungarees recruitment march passing through Ipswich en route to Brisbane, 29 November 1915.**



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

H16093

**Kangaroos marching to Sydney, December 1915. [H16093](#)**

**Route Wagga Wagga, Junee, Illabo, Bethungra, Cootamundra, Wallendbean, Galong, Goondah, Binalong, Bowning, Yass, Goulburn, Wingello, Bundanoon, Sutton Forest, Moss Vale, Mittagong, Picton, Camden, Campbelltown, Petersham, ending at The Domain, Sydney.**

**More about the Marches at the [Australian War Museum website](#)**

- [Document: route and statistics for recruiting marches, 1915-1916](#)
- **March summaries:**
  - [Central West Boomerangs](#)
  - [Coo-ees](#)
  - [Dungarees](#)
  - [Kangaroos](#)
  - [Kookaburras](#)
  - [Kurrajongs](#)
  - [Men from Snowy River](#)

- [North Coast Boomerangs](#)
- [Wallabies](#)
- [Waratahs](#)