

Bogle Eric

"The Band Played Waltzing Matilda"

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THE BAND PLAYED WALTZING MATILDA

Eric Bogle

Now when I was a young man I carried me pack

And I lived the free life of the rover.

From the Murray's green basin to the dusty outback,

Well, I waltzed my Matilda all over.

Then in 1915 my country said, "Son,

It's time you stop rambling, there's work to be done."

So they gave me a tin hat and they gave me a gun

And they marched me away to the war.

And the band played Waltzing Matilda,

As the ship pulled away from the quay

And amidst all the cheers, flag waving and tears,

We sailed off for Gallipoli

And how well I remember that terrible day,

How our blood stained the sand and the water

And of how in that hell that they called Suvla Bay

We were butchered like lambs at the slaughter.

Johnny Turk, he was ready, he primed himself well.

He showered us with bullets, and he rained us with shells,

And in five minutes flat, he'd blown us all to hell,
Nearly blew us back home to Australia.
(But) And the band played Waltzing Matilda,
As we stopped to bury our slain,
We buried ours, the Turks buried theirs,
Then we started all over again.
And those that were left, well we tried to survive
In that mad world of blood, death and fire.
And for ten weary weeks I kept myself alive
Though around me the corpses piled higher.
Then a big Turkish shell knocked me ass over head
And when I awoke in me hospital bed
And saw what it had done, well I wished I was dead.
Never knew there were worse things than dying.
For I'll go no more Waltzing Matilda,
All around the green bush far and free
To hunt, tent and pegs, a man needs both legs,
No more waltzing Matilda for me.
So they gathered the crippled, the wounded, and
maimed,
And they shipped us back home to Australia.
The legless, the armless, the blind and insane,
Those proud wounded heroes of Suvla.
And when our ship pulled into Circular Quay
I looked at the place where me legs used to be
And I thank Christ there was no body waiting for me

To grieve, to mourn and to pity.
But the Band played Waltzing Matilda
As they carried us down the gangway,
But nobody cheered, they just stood and stared,
Then they turned all their faces away.
So now every April I sit on me porch
And I watch the parade pass before me.
And I see my old comrades, how proudly they march
Reviving old dreams and past glory,
And the old men march slowly, all bone stiff and sore
They're tired old heroes from a forgotten war
And the young people ask "What are they marching
for?"
And I ask myself the same question.
But the band plays Waltzing Matilda,
And the old men still answer the call,
But as year follows year, more old men disappear
Someday, no one will march there at all.
Waltzing Matilda, Waltzing Matilda.
Who'll come a-Waltzing Matilda with me?
And their ghosts may be heard as they march by the
billabong
Who'll come a-Waltzing Matilda with me

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