

# ESPLASH

ANZAC 2023 Issue



# 2023

23.04  
2023

YEA WAR MEMORIAL

LARK FORCE

# AUSTRALIANS AT WAR



This issue is dedicated to the men and women who have served and sacrificed during periods of war. It is a collection of contributions received during the year.

*Photographer J.P. Campbell  
Courtesy Rod Falconer*

[CLICK TO VISIT THE  
WAR MEMORIAL SITE](#)

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## HIDDEN IN THIS ISSUE?



### War Memorial



Strathbogie

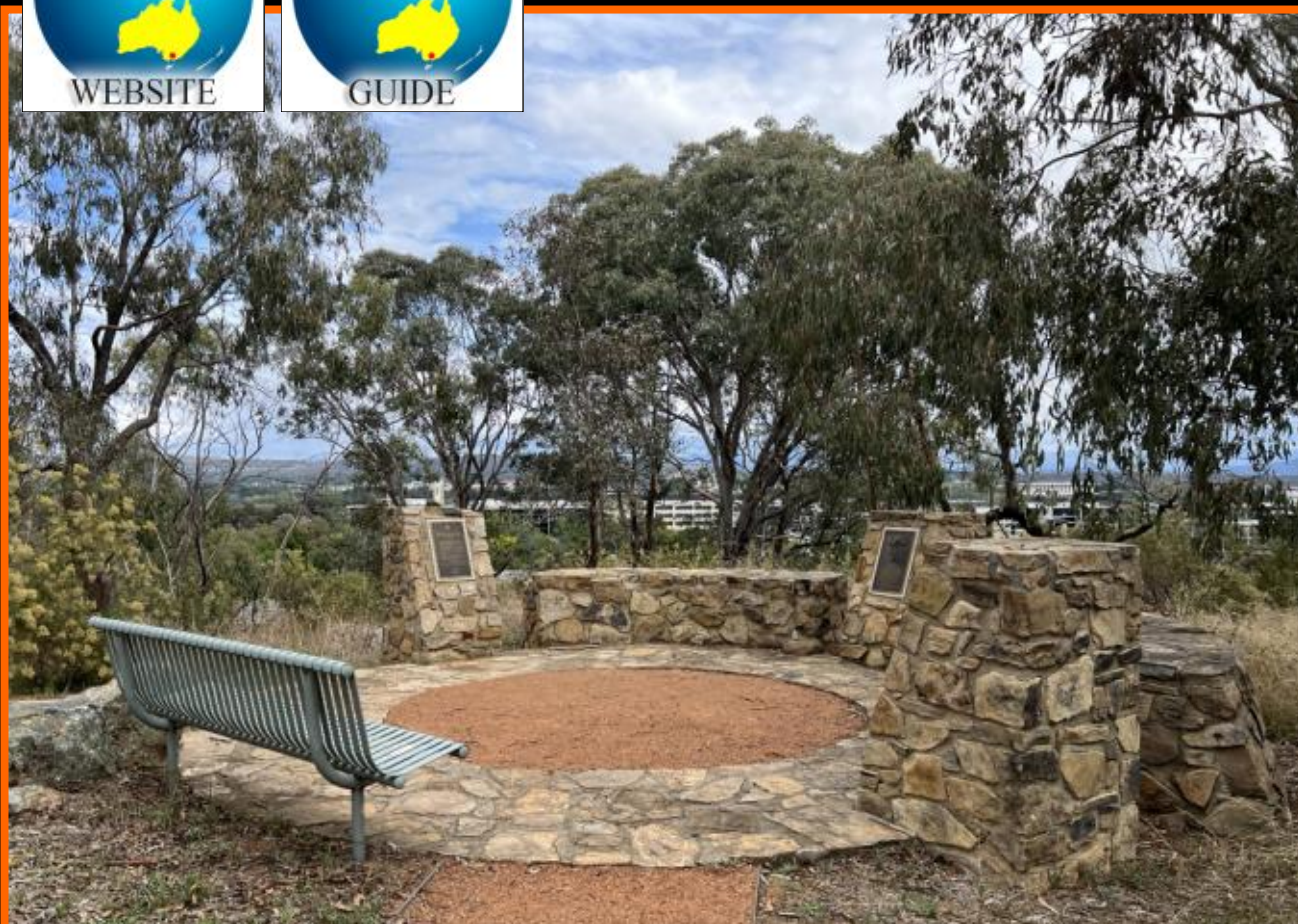
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## Centenary of Legacy Legacy Park, Campbell, ACT



Legacy, one of Australia's oldest and most trusted charities, turns 100 years old this year, having been established in 1923. It was formed on the basis of a simple promise made in the battlefield between diggers to 'look after the missus and the kids.'

Legacy is an Australian non-profit organisation and the only group whose efforts are solely dedicated to the care of the families of ex-servicemen and servicewomen who lost their lives in conflict. One of the closest Legacy offices in Central Victoria is at 20 Edward Street, Shepparton. They combine the Seymour and Kyabram groups. Shepparton Legacy was formed in 1950.

The top image shows Legacy Park at Campbell in the ACT. This beautiful memorial was dedicated in 2001 on their 78th Anniversary.

Y o u r   S u b m i s s i o n s   w e l c o m e



ANZAC



Unknown young AIF Soldier at Gallipoli circa 1916

THEY WERE YOUNG



A composite image featuring a woman with dark hair, smiling, wearing a red bandana tied around her head and a red jacket. The background is a stylized American flag with red and white stripes and blue stars. A bright yellow lightning bolt is visible in the upper left corner. The text "We Did It!" is overlaid on the left side of the image.

**We  
Did It!**

*Women* **in the  
Weather Service  
During World War II**



ANZAC

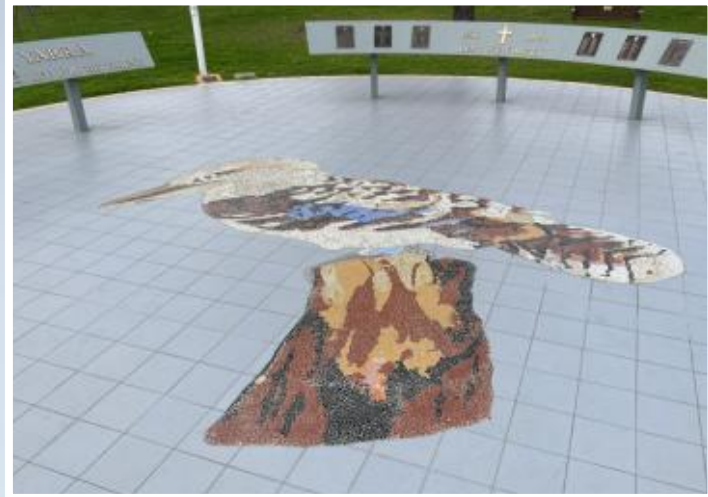


THEY FOUGHT IN THE OCEANS



# AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIALS

## HMAS Yarra National Memorial, Williamstown



IN REMEMBRANCE, SO WE NEVER FORGET THEIR SACRIFICE



ANZAC



THEY LEFT ON SHIPS



# CANBERRA BOER WAR MEMORIAL

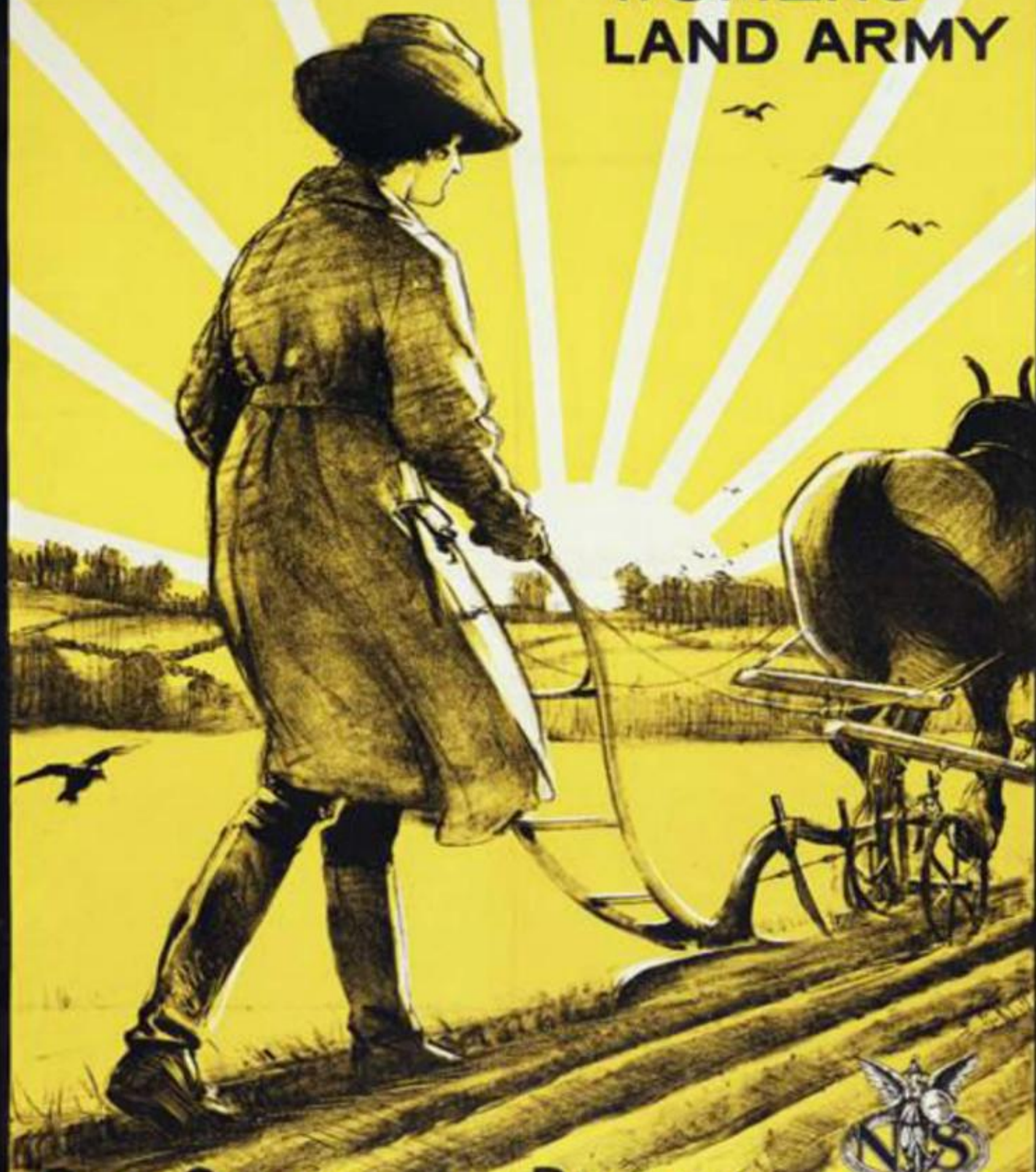


THEY RODE HORSES



# NATIONAL SERVICE

## WOMEN'S LAND ARMY



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AND THE WOMAN WHO DRIVES IT™**



SERIES W-4  
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EMPLOYMENT EXCHANGE**



## ANZACS in trenches circa 1916 Western Front



Presbyterian Church



Courtesy Tony Ballino 2021

The Western Front was one of the main theatres of war during the First World War. After the war commenced in August 1914, the German Army opened the Western Front by invading Luxembourg and Belgium, then gaining military control of important industrial regions of France.

To break the trench warfare deadlock, which had become established along the front, both sides tried gas, aircraft and tanks. By 1918 the front had become more mobile. The Western Front was where the most mighty forces in Europe met and where WWI was largely decided.

Y o u r   S u b m i s s i o n s   w e l c o m e





Courtesy Tony Ballino 2021



This photograph taken in Tasmania shows what appears to be a large solid tripod and the bracing holding it to the horses seems to suggest the apparatus is heavy.

The hole at the end may be where something such as a machine gun is mounted by simply slotting it into the hole. This would enable the gun to be quickly mounted and for it to easily rotate. What appears to be round leg pads that are visible in the image may be the pads that support the apparatus. The size of the feet suggest they could be designed to stop the device from sinking into sand or mud during operation.

Y o u r   S u b m i s s i o n s   w e l c o m e



# AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIALS

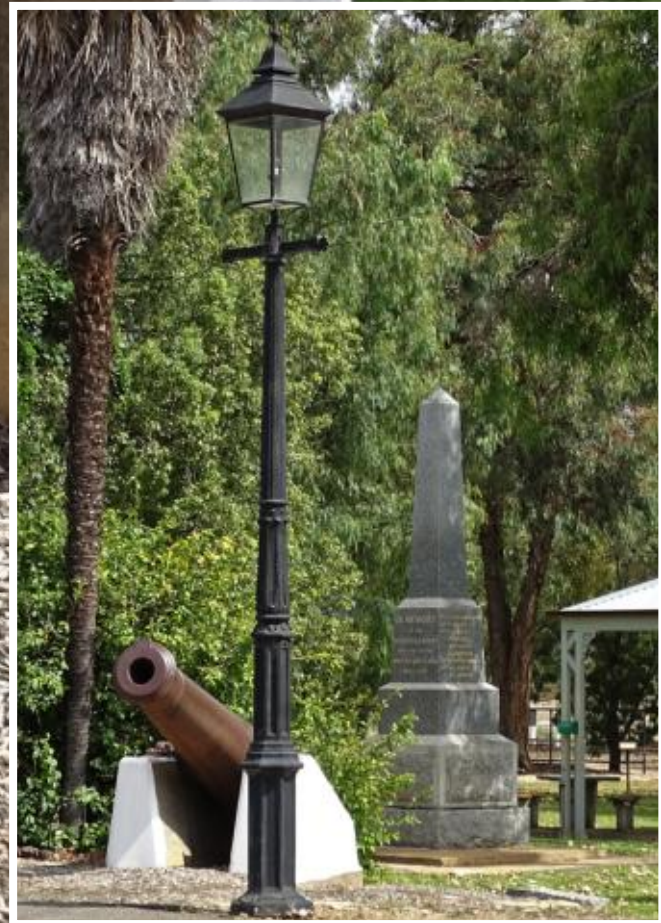
## Soldiers Park, Tarnagulla

© Allan Layton

### CANNON FROM HMVS NELSON

Presented to Tarnagulla Borough Council in 1898 and originally located at the Reservoir Reserve. It was fired on several occasions and weighs around 3 ton. It was relocated to Soldiers Park in 1960. The HMVS Nelson was built in 1805.

An initiative of the Tarnagulla Historical Society and Loddon Shire Council



IN REMEMBRANCE, SO WE NEVER FORGET THEIR SACRIFICE



# OUR HIDDEN MEMORIALS

## MANSFIELD HERBERT JOHN GOODMAN OBELISK



## HERBERT GOODMAN OBELISK

**THIS OBELISK**  
WAS ERECTED BY A FEW ADMIRERS  
TO THE MEMORY OF  
**HERBERT JOHN GOODMAN**  
SERGEANT VICTORIAN BUSHMAN COIRPS,  
KILLED IN ACTION AT KOSTEO RIVER, SOUTH AFRICA  
22ND JULY 1900  
WHILEST HONERABLY UPHOLDING  
THE PRESTIFGE OF QUEEN AND EMPRIE  
**"NO SURRENDER"**



# WWI NURSE



WOMEN SERVED AS NURSES



# AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIALS

## War Memorial, Yea



IN REMEMBRANCE, SO WE NEVER FORGET THEIR SACRIFICE



# YEA WAR MEMORIAL

CENTENARY OF THE MEMORIAL—ANZAC DAY 2023



## **Yea Memorial is 100 Years Old**

Eight years after the commencement of the Gallipoli campaign in 1915, on Anzac Day 25 April 1923, a memorial (or cenotaph) at Yea was formally unveiled in recognition of local soldiers who had lost their lives in the Great War (WWI). One hundred years further on, on Anzac Day 2023, the Yea memorial/cenotaph achieves its Centenary.

That marvellous but simple chunk of Harcourt granite serves as a Visual Reminder to us later generations, that we owe our existence and our way of life, to the efforts of those who went before us, many of whom died or suffered injury and tribulations.

But such a striking Visual Reminder, this memorial/cenotaph, didn't just happen by chance. Nor was it endowed upon us by a Government nor a Shire Council. It happened because people, a grateful community, cared and remembered!



The first recorded proposal for a memorial at Yea was put forward in an anonymous letter to the *Yea Chronicle* on 13 September 1917, whilst the war was still raging!

*'... I would favor the erection of a monument at the intersection of the five roads near the water trough at the end of Station street... "our lads" deeds would be fittingly recorded for all time.'*

And so subscriptions were called for, to be lodged with the Editor of the *Chronicle*. In the early times only 'pledges' were sought, with actual money collected later. At a post-war public meeting on 1 April 1919, the matter of a suitable memorial was raised in the following terms:

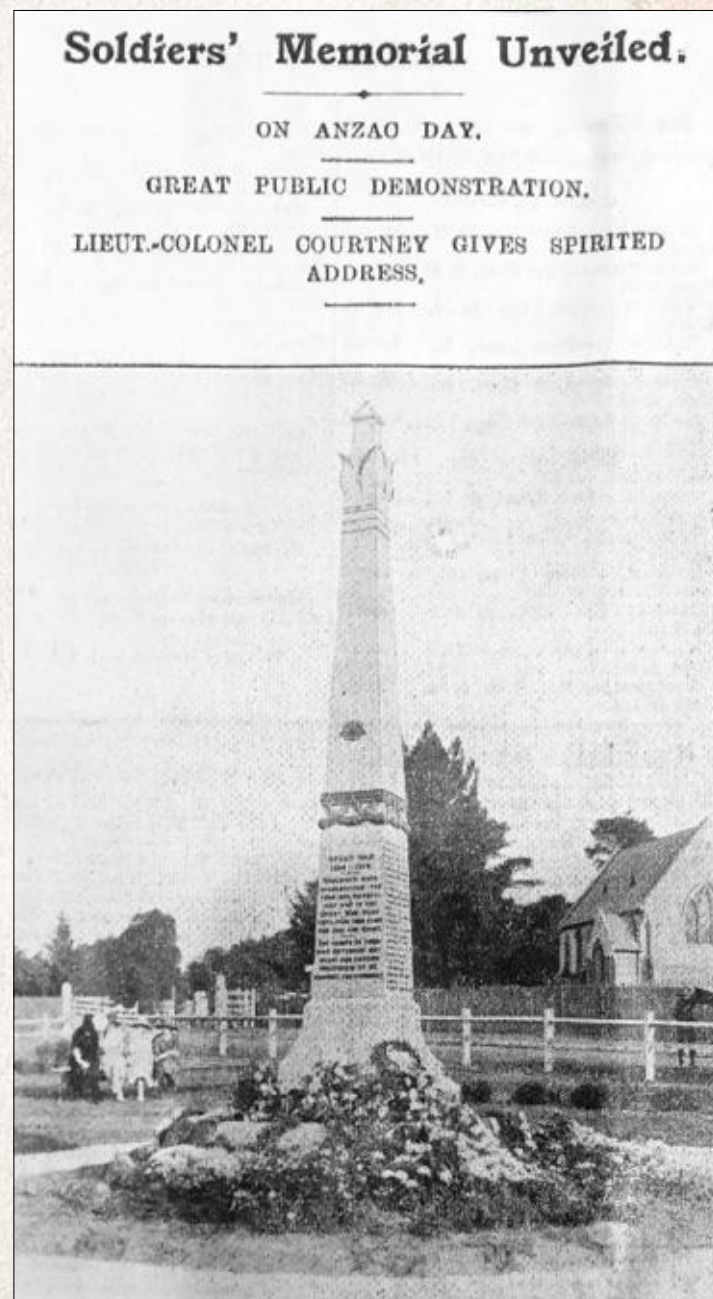
*'... erect a lasting memorial in the shape of an obelisk, of granite, 30 feet high or more, to contain the names of those who have died and fought for their country.'*

Fundraising is never easy, and with concurrent appeals for RSL purposes and to provide gold medallions to returned soldiers and nurses, it was quite some time before the memorial was ready. But by late 1922 the memorial was in place and the formal unveiling of the memorial/cenotaph was to be performed by Lieut. Colonel Courtney on Anzac Day 1923; one hundred years ago.

Courtney was no stranger to Yea. He was also an ANZAC (4th Light Horse) and some of the Yea returned soldiers had served under him. He had also presented official medals and gold medallions during Anzac Day commemorations in 1920.

On 25 April 1923 a procession formed up in front of the Shire Hall, led by the Yea Municipal Band, returned soldiers, girl guides, boy scouts, school children and the general public then marched to the site of the memorial. Anzac services were conducted. The Last Post and Reveille were sounded by bandmaster LT Thorley, after which Cr. CE Bacon, Shire President introduced Lieut. Colonel Courtney who together with Major Purcell (secretary of the Memorial Committee) released the Union Jack covering the monument.

In unveiling the memorial, Courtney spoke of challenging our forgetfulness.





It is easy with the passage of time for memories to drift into the recesses of our mind. That must never be allowed to happen. The sacrifices made on our behalf, the future generations, must be remembered and revered.

In Courtney's words:

*'This monument in the centre of your district, standing four-square to all the winds that blow, will be a perpetual challenge to forgetfulness – an enduring evidence that their memory will not be lost amongst us nor our descendants, a mark of appreciation for all time that our freedom and our institutions are still ours only because so many thousands of men felt them worth fighting for, felt us worth dying for.'*

© Allan Layton 2023

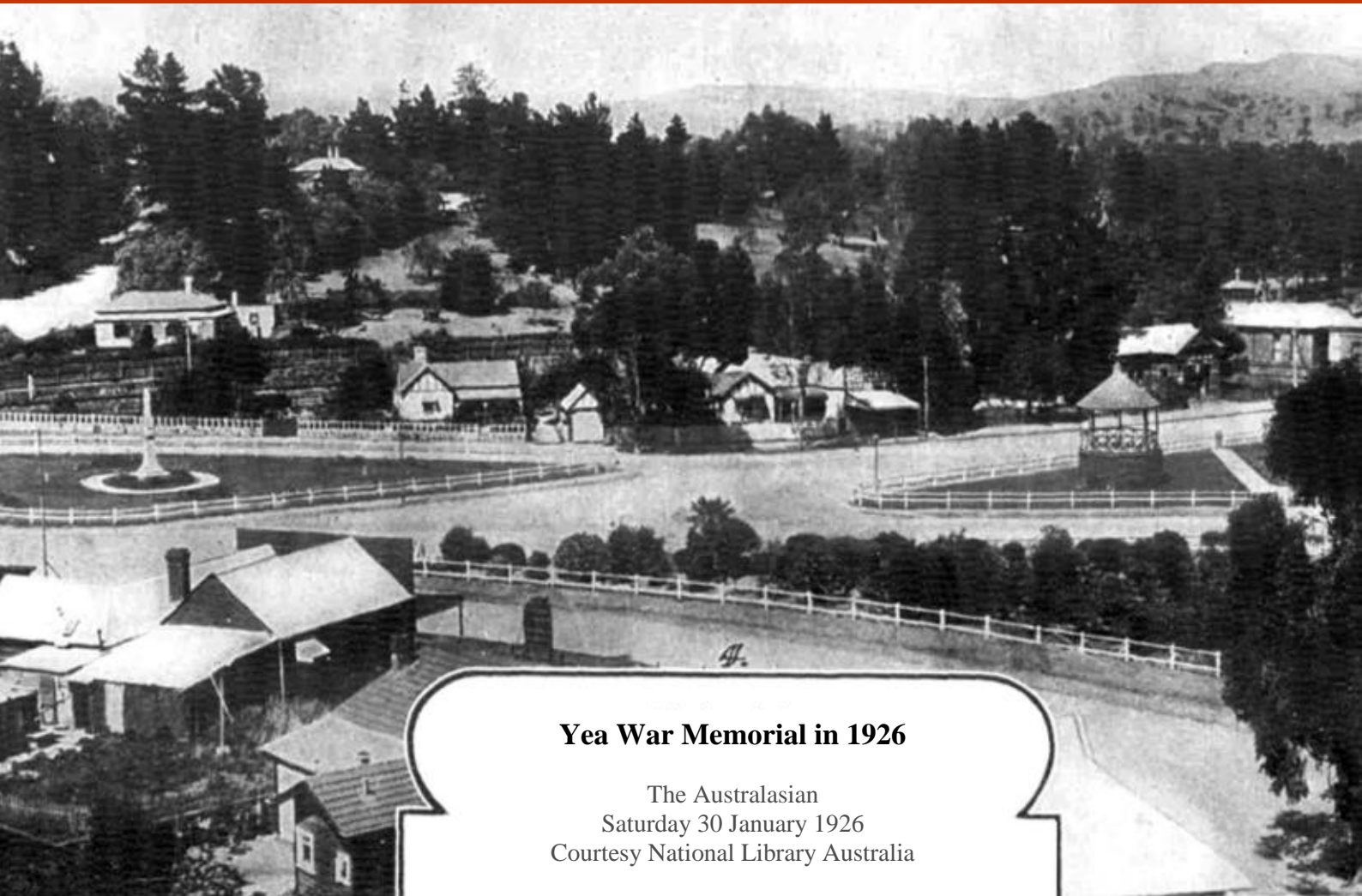
**Yea War Memorial circa 1930**

George Rose Stereograph  
State Library Victoria



*More photographs of the memorial  
on the following two pages*





**Yea War Memorial in 1926**

The Australasian  
Saturday 30 January 1926  
Courtesy National Library Australia

**Yea War Memorial circa 1927**

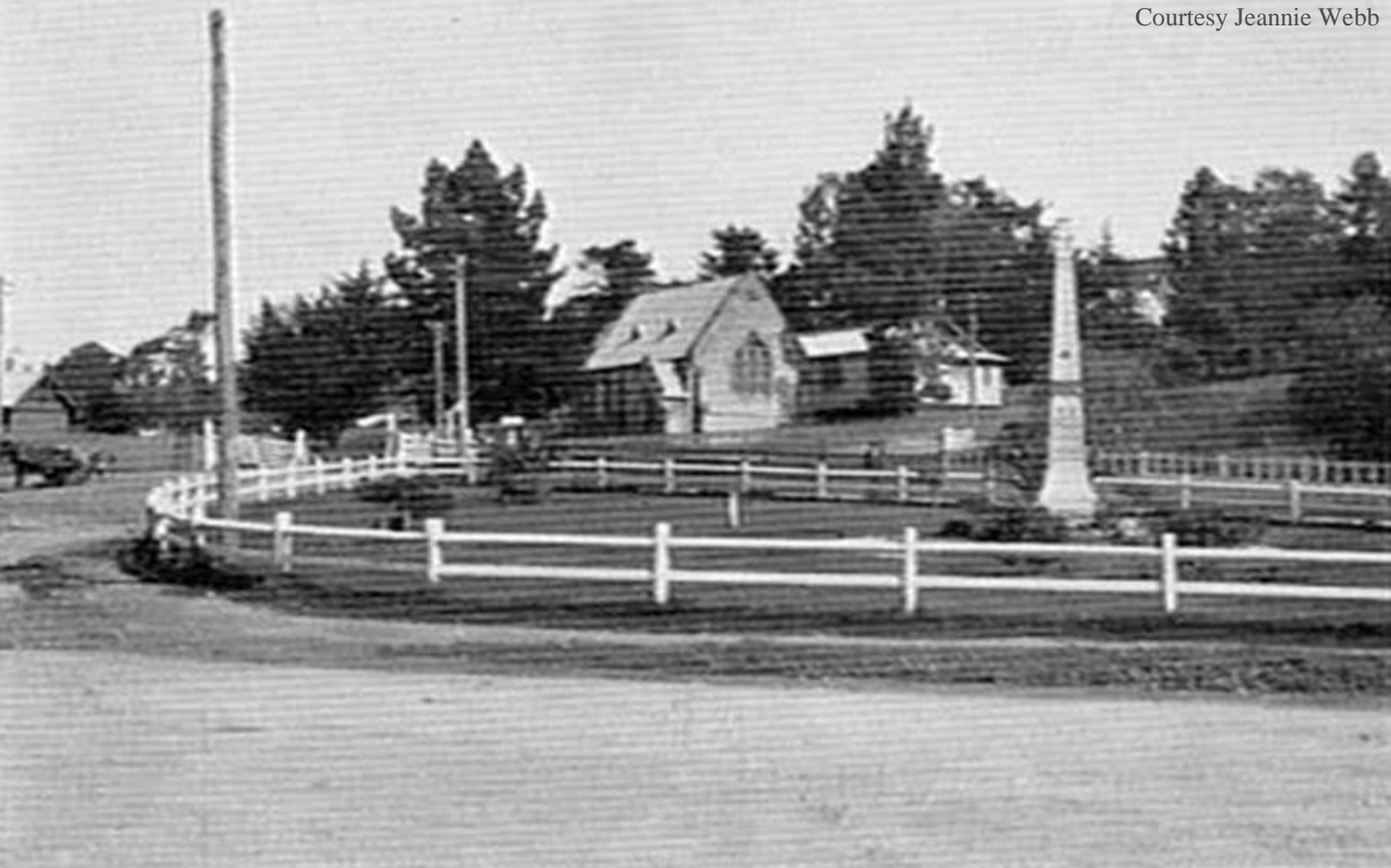
State Library Victoria





**Yea War Memorial 1928**

Courtesy Jeannie Webb



**Yea War Memorial circa 1930**

Photographer Gilbert J Ball

Courtesy David & Debbie Hibbert





# AUSTRALIA'S GREATEST ANNIVERSARY

ANZAC DAY 1915

---oooOooo---

That distant land had known the birth  
Of natives in the mists of time,  
Had watched new empires proudly climb  
To harsh dominion of the Earth.

About her hills strange warriors surged:  
Swart traders crept along her coasts;  
And, wave on wave, barbaric hosts  
From legendary night emerged.

For here in Europe's darkest night  
Leapt Greece, on high a torch to lift,  
Whose splendour soared and gutted swift  
But left long centuries of light.

And here stood Troy that Homer made  
Imperishable in his song,  
Though Helen and those towers are long  
Beneath the dust of ages laid.

. . . . .

Far southward in deserted seas  
That round her empty beaches roll,  
A nation slept without a soul,  
Unmarked in mankind's histories.

And unperturbed from shore to shore,  
The young tribe slowly knew increase  
Within its hemisphere of peace,  
Till on its silence thundered War!

In diffidence and youth they came,  
Though in them pride of manhood slept,  
But as upon that shore they leapt  
Their No-Man's-Land had found a name!

They came a race of Avatars;  
And in old Europe's sight amazed  
A new and unknown flag they raised,  
A standard strange with southern stars!

That banner, blood-bedewed and torn;  
Flew out, upheld by dying hands  
When on the oldest of all lands,  
The newest nationhood was born!

*By Arthur H Adams  
Courtesy State Library Queensland*



ANZAC

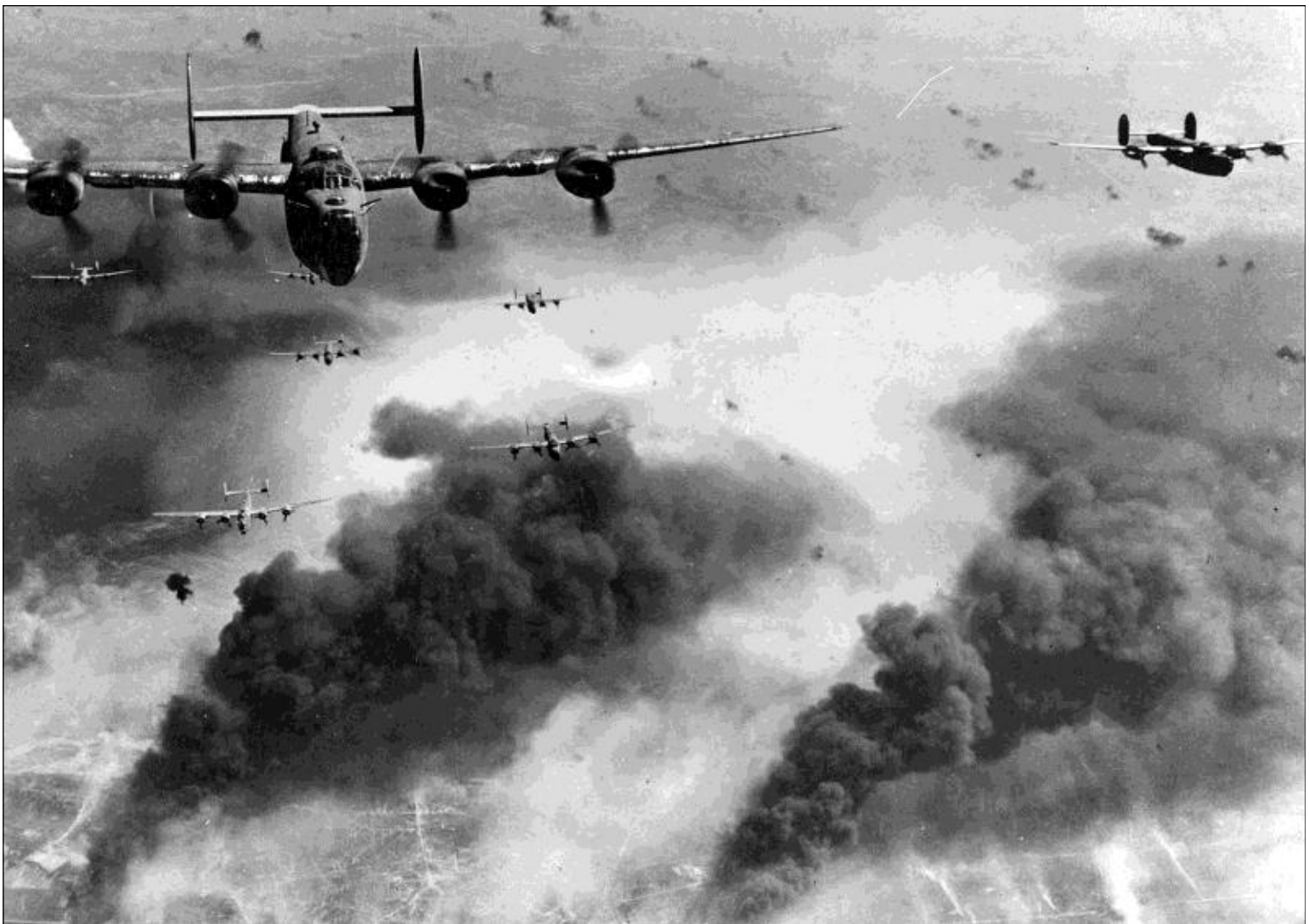


THEY FOUGHT IN THE SKIES



# EARLY AMERICA SERIES

Australian life has been strongly influenced through the years by countries, such as America.



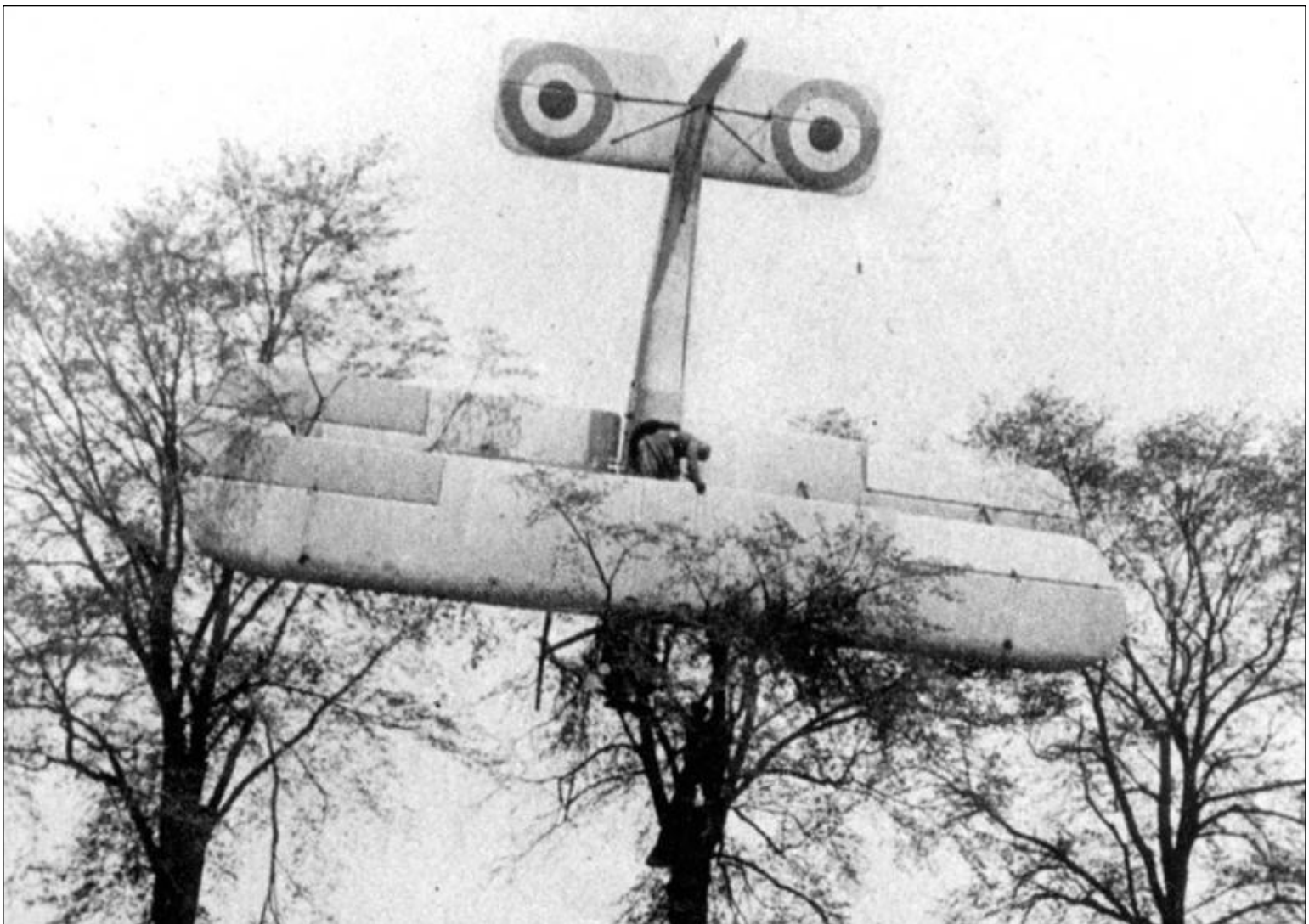
**Consolidated B-24 Liberators (heavy bombers) involved in the bombing campaign over Bucharest by American and Allied forces in 1943.**

At this time Bucharest was considered the most important oil target in Europe. This image illustrates the result of allied bombing designed to incapacitate German transport and oil depots.



# EARLY EUROPE SERIES

*Australian life has been strongly influenced through the years by countries, such as England.*



## **A French plane crash-lands in a tree on the Western Front during WWI**

The plane had attempted to attack a Zeppelin hanger near Brussels in 1915.  
Soldiers can be seen climbing the tree to help rescue the pilot.



**WARNING:**

*If you are an Aboriginal or Torres Strait  
Islander reader, please be advised that the  
following page contains an image and  
name of a person who has died.*



# First Aboriginal Military Aviator

**Name:** Leonard (Len) Victor Waters  
**Born:** 20 June 1924, Boomi, NSW  
**Died:** 24 August 1993 (aged 69), Cunnamulla, QLD  
**Known for:** Australia's first Aboriginal Australian military aviator



Public domain image

Leonard Waters was the first Aboriginal Australian military aviator, and the only one to serve as a fighter pilot in the RAAF during WWII. He also held the RAAF middleweight boxing title for a period of time. His post-war attempts to open a rural airline were resisted by the government even though he had funding.

Len was born on 20 June 1924 at Euraba Mission to parents Donald Waters and Grace (nee Bennet). He grew up in Queensland and received an education to seventh grade level at Nindigully State School. He left school when aged 14 to work as a ring-barker to help support his family. In 1939 he commenced work as a shearer.

After the restrictions stopping Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders from serving in the armed forces were lifted in 1942 (a result after Japan entered World War II), Waters enlisted in the RAAF (24 August 1942) and became one of the estimated 3000 who served with the armed forces. He commenced training as an aircraft mechanic, though longed to be a pilot. He did night studies to improve his education to raise his chances of being accepted. However, he was convinced he would not be accepted and even bet against himself numerous times. Eventually, when selected for pilot training, he had to pay out 15 pound. He stated:

*I was terribly keen to prove myself in the elite ... The flying part of the Air Force was the elite. I might add that there were 375 [students] on that course and 48 of us finished up as pilots ... and the end result when we got our wings ... there were only three blokes ahead of me on average.*



# First Aboriginal Military Aviator

---

Waters commenced pilot training in December 1943. After he received his wings with the rank of Sergeant Pilot, he commenced flying the P-40 Kittyhawk. He was then posted to the 78 Squadron operating from Dutch New Guinea where he was allocated a P-40 Kittyhawk previously nicknamed *Black Magic* by an earlier pilot, who also painted the name on its nose. Waters went on to fly 95 sorties. On 1 January 1945 he was promoted to Flight Sergeant and by war's end was commanding operations, with commissioned officers under his direction. At this time he also had the distinction of holding the RAAF middleweight boxing title. He was officially discharged on 18 January 1946.

Upon returning to civilian life, he tried to establish a rural airline in Queensland, and had even found financing. However, his application for a civilian pilot licence was declined five times – because he was Aboriginal. Sadly, no regard was given for his war service. Waters never flew again and later wrote how after taking off his uniform, he 'returned to being a blackfellow'.

A month after leaving the RAAF he married Gladys Saunders and had six children. He worked as a mechanic for a period of time, however union rules enforced the need of young men to serve an apprenticeship, which he was not willing to do. He then worked for a short period as a road worker for a Queensland council, before commencing shearing again. Shearing provided a good income for him, however it also kept him from his family for long periods of time as he travelled for the work. By the end of his working career he estimated he had sheared one million sheep across Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria. In 1956 he was awarded a housing commission home in Brisbane, eventually buying the property. His family lived in the home for 33 years in total. Len died on 24 August 1993 at Cunnamula, aged 69. He was buried at the St George Cemetery.

After his death Waters was depicted with his P-40 Kittyhawk *Black Magic* on an Australia Post stamp as part of the Australian Remembers series. A brand of port was named after his Kittyhawk, and Leonard Waters Park was established in Boggabilla, NSW. Len Waters Street was also established in Ngunnawal, ACT. A memorial to Len and Squadron Leader John Jackson was unveiled in St George and the Len Waters Estate was established in the City of Liverpool, NSW. In 2020 a new building at the Williamstown RAAF Base was named after him. In 2018, author Peter Rees published his biography on Waters named *The Missing Man*, describing how after the war ended Waters became another forgotten contributor to WWII. Rees wrote of the Australian hero how he was: *A man who breaks through the barriers of poverty, racial discrimination and limited schooling to realise a boyhood dream to fly.*



# Kittyhawk P-40

Similar plane as flown by Len Waters during WWII – 78 Squadron

**The Black Magic Kittyhawk**  
Courtesy Australian War Memorial



The P-40 Kittyhawk was a WWII single engine and single seat fighter plane which was a variant of the Curtis P-40 Warhawk. The P-40 was just one of a large number of variants built by US manufacturer Curtiss-Wright and was used by the RAAF during World War II. The P-40s designated for the Pacific Theatre of war first arrived in 1942 with the 75 Squadron who were stationed at Port Moresby. Just under 850 P-40 planes were purchased by the RAAF for use during WWII.

## SPECIFICATIONS:

<b>Crew:</b>	Pilot
<b>Capacity:</b>	1 Person (pilot)
<b>Wing span:</b>	37 ft 4 in (11.38 m)
<b>Length:</b>	31 ft 4 in (9.55 m)
<b>Height:</b>	10 ft 7 in (3.23 m)
<b>Ceiling:</b>	28,000 ft (8,534 m)
<b>Weight:</b>	2,903 pounds (2,903 kg) – loaded: 8,400 pound (3,810 kg)
<b>Engine:</b>	988 kw Allison V-1710-73 twelve cylinder VEE engine
<b>Maximum speed:</b>	At 5,000 ft – 320 mph (515 kmh)
<b>Maximum speed:</b>	At 15,000 ft – 363 mph (584 kmh)
<b>Range:</b>	1,400 miles (2,253 km)
<b>Armament:</b>	Six 12.7 machine guns (281 rounds each) One 227 kg or two 45 kg bombs



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WITHOUT YOUR CONSENT.



# WAR PIGEONS

BY © DAVID HIBBERT



## Motor bus converted to a British Army mobile pigeon loft

Courtesy Australian War Memorial



Attempts to use animals in the arena of war have existed as long as there has been wars, and pigeons were a reliable and practical solution to long-distance wartime communications. They were used widely during both of the Great World Wars, as well as in other conflicts.

By 1942, the Australian Corps of Signal Pigeons Service had over 13,000 homing pigeons available to them. Initially pigeons were primarily used for communications between remote Australian coastal sites tasked with reporting enemy movements and HQ. However their use quickly expanded to the Voluntary Defence Corps and active warzones.

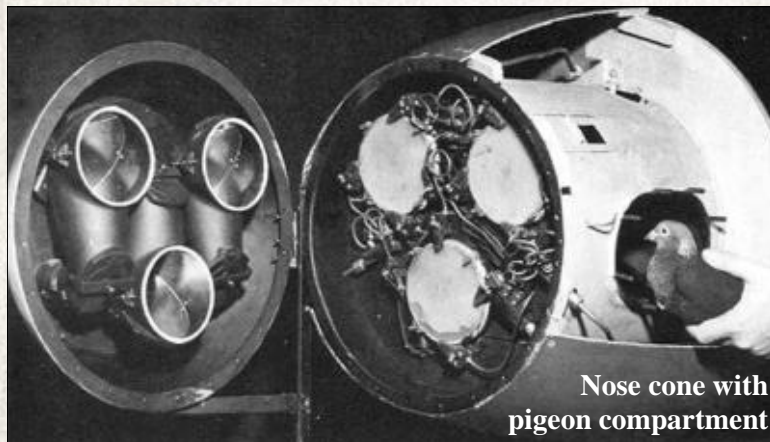
One gallant pigeon known as *Blue Bar Cock Pigeon No. 139*, received the Dickin Medal for gallantry in recognition of his journey through a severe tropical storm near Madang, New Guinea, on 12 July 1945. Thanks to the pigeon's efforts, an allied ship that had foundered was able to receive timely assistance and its valuable cargo successfully salvaged.



Australian pigeon (DD.43.Q.879) was also awarded a Dickin Medal. His citation read:

*During an attack by Japanese on a US Marine patrol on Manus Island, pigeons were released to warn headquarters of an impending enemy counter-attack. Two were shot down but DD43 (despite heavy fire directed at it) reached HQ with the result that enemy concentrations were bombed and the patrol extricated.*

Burrhus Frederic Skinner (1904–1990) was a noted psychologist who was considered to be the most influential psychologist of the twentieth century. He developed the theory of operant conditioning (use of reward and punishment stimuli to change behaviour) and the highly significant behaviourism school of thought, both of which influence psychology to this day.



During WWII, BF Skinner approached the secretive US National Defense Research Committee (NDRC) with the idea to create a smart bomb using pigeons. The NDRC was in-part tasked with problem solving and conducting scientific research into the elements of modern warfare. While the committee had misgivings, they allocated \$25,000 to the pigeon initiative and Project Pigeon was born.

Skinner was able to successfully train pigeons using operant conditioning, to then act as the intelligence to produce a basic guided ship-to-ship missile. The pigeons were trained to identify a ship (enemy target) on a screen that was positioned in the front of the bomb, and to peck the enemy ship on the screen. The pigeon pecking the screen initiated a complex mechanical process which resulted in the bomb's heading being adjusted towards the target vessel (or to maintain its heading if already on track). It represented an excellent use of operant conditioning in animals, and the mechanical implementation was cutting edge. However, the project was ended as it was considered too impractical by superiors. Skinner later stated how 'our problem was no one would take us seriously'.



Animals helped the ANZACs.



# PDSA DICKENS MEDAL

Instituted: 1943  
Area: UK



The PDSA (People's Dispensary for Sick Animals) was a veterinary charity founded in 1917 by social reformer and animal welfare pioneer Maria Dickin. She founded the charity specifically to provide care for any sick and injured animal owned by those in the lower class, who could not afford animal care. The bronze medallion was instituted to honour the work of animals in World War II. It has a laurel wreath and the words *For Gallantry* and *We Also Serve*. It is awarded to animals who have displayed conspicuous gallantry or devotion to duty while serving or associated with any branch of the Armed Forces or Civil Defence Units.



ANZAC



THEY FOUGHT ON THE SHORES



# AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIALS

## Bendigo Barristers Seat, Pall Mall, Bendigo

### *THEIR NAMES LIVETH FOR EVERMORE*

Captain Clive Emerson Connelly Gallipoli  
Major Eric Winfield Connelly DSO France  
Lieutenant Alan Newcombe Hyett LLB Belgium  
Major Murdoch Nish Mackay LLM France

Erected by Barkly Hyett President of the Bendigo Law Association 1921

This Barristers Seat was built to commemorate these members of the Bendigo legal profession who died during World War 1

This plaque has been updated with kind assistance from the families produced by the Bendigo Law Association & the seat restored by the City of Greater Bendigo to commemorate the Anzac Centenary 2014-2018



IN REMEMBRANCE, SO WE NEVER FORGET THEIR SACRIFICE



# WHAT HAPPENED TO 'LARK FORCE'?

BY © RON TURNER 2023

During WWII, various military units were formed at Trawool, near Seymour, Victoria, as featured in the 2020 ANZAC issue of the eSplash234.

My father, Sgt VH Turner, became a member of Lark Force here. From his wartime diary and military records, and other official records and various books, I have been able to piece together what happened to this ill-fated group of mainly southern Victorian men, which included a complete Salvation Army band, for they had enlisted as a group.

The officer in charge of Lark Force was Lt Colonel HH Scanlan. His recent military experience stemmed from the Citizen Military Forces – known by some as 'weekend warriors'. He worked for the Victorian Postal Service, joining the Army four days before the 2/22nd Battalion was formed. Apparently he was fond of playing cards; three 'twos' was said to be the worst hand that could be dealt to a player, and was known as 'Little Hell'. This term was promptly applied to Lark Force.

**My father leading his unit  
into Bonegilla**

Courtesy Turner family



After basic training, my father's and other units marched 146 miles (235 kms) from Trawool to Bonegilla. After further training, he left Sydney as part of a second contingent aboard the *TSS Zealandia* for the Australian administered territory of New Britain, arriving at the capital, Rabaul, on 3 May. Other members of the unit had previously been conveyed to Rabaul aboard the *SS Katoomba*.

Other units formed at Trawool were Sparrow Force: destination Timor, and Gull Force: destination Ambon.

Rabaul wasn't located in an ideal location for it was actually inside an old volcanic caldera which resulted from a huge explosion some 1400 years ago. (The township area was destroyed in a subsequent eruption in 1994).



They were greeted by 200 mm of rain in two hours. Humidity was often a steamy 100 percent and clothing and other material rotted quickly, especially due to ash and volcanic fumes. Daily showers were compulsory and a spoonful of quinine was administered into the mouth each day. Simple scratches would quickly fester if left untreated, and could develop into a tropical ulcer.

Lt. Col Scanlan often over-rode suggestions from his staff to contemplate a 'Plan B', should the Japanese invade. Advice from these men recommending reserves of stores of food, ammunition and radios be located in the jungle were not accepted by him, and no training or exercises were held to acclimatise troops in jungle fighting or survival in the strange habitat.

The War Cabinet of the Australian Government and Lt Col Scanlan were well aware of a large Japanese naval force approaching Rabaul. No contingency plans had been made by Cabinet and they recognised Lark Force was trapped; there was no relief and no hope of rescue for any survivors.

The official Cabinet records show they considered the force of 1,396 officers, men and nurses as 'hostages to fate'. Two ships were despatched to evacuate civilian women and children but the second, the *Herstein* of 5100 tons, had to be loaded with copra before it would be allowed to depart with other civilians. It was sunk in Rabaul Harbour as a result of enemy bombing. Thus, many civilians and ship's crew were imprisoned and destined to later meet their fate in the depths of the ocean off the Philippines aboard the *Montevideo Maru*.

Having previous military experience with the British Army in India, including use of field artillery, my father was part of a force of 70 men assigned to the two 6" (150 mm) guns and other artillery situated on Praed Point. Red tape frustrated their efforts to cut down palm trees that interfered with their field of fire. The heavy guns had been mounted one above the other on the steep hillside – against the advice of experienced men.

Other armaments included an anti-tank regiment with their two-pounder guns (with 'useless' solid projectiles), and two Anti Aircraft guns (one of which was inoperable). Permission had been denied for training practice, so the guns were used to track the incoming weekly mail plane, and again when it took off.

My father maintained a small diary recording his wartime experiences and on his return to Australia. Excerpts from this surely reflect the awful hardships and suffering that the majority of troops who survived the Japanese invasion of New Britain endured.

### **The Invasion**

On 18 January 1942, a reconnaissance plane came in with a report that a Japanese fleet was off the tip of nearby New Ireland. This force, of 30 or more ships, included two aircraft carriers, cruisers, destroyers and troop transport ships: it was an overwhelmingly superior force.



**Tuesday 20th:** Father records: ... *a large force of jap planes raided the upper drome and also dropped bombs on Praed Point* ... The five defending RAAF Wirraway aircraft were quickly swept aside, outmatched by the numerically superior force of much faster Japanese fighters.

**Wednesday 21st:** The atmosphere is full of smoke and ash from the volcano, Mt Matupit. ... *today has been for us a day of Orders ... an air of expectant disaster prevails as we read the latest order, 'Every man shall fight to the last'.*

**Thursday 22nd:** *We have been standing-to since 0400hrs, still expecting an enemy landing, but dawn breaks with no sign of the Japs ... heavy clouds are hanging low over Praed Point [but when they clear] the Japanese air fleet numbering 150 ... soon show from a height of about 100 feet (33 metres) and blasted the guns and our positions to pieces ... .* The upper gun was destroyed and tumbled down onto the lower gun.

**Friday 23rd:** He summed up the position: ... *we have a few anti-tank guns but have only about half a dozen rounds per gun. The Japanese landed an overwhelming force at 0235hrs and quickly over-ran the coastal defenders ... the Japanese captured Rabaul and my unit retreated into the jungle'. No orders arrive as to where to make for ... the orders were given 'every man for himself' and to 'clear out' ... it pours with rain all night ... .*

Father and the group of gunners at Praed Point were isolated from the main group of defenders and as such, his point of view must be somewhat narrowly based. What is clear is that the Japanese landed a force of men who were met by a heavy fusillade of small arms fire, suffering many casualties. As the bodies of the invaders piled up on barb wire entanglements, their comrades ran over the top of them and quickly established a beachhead. As the Japanese moved inland toward the two airstrips and other key infrastructure, the Australians could only retreat, being hotly pressed by the invaders. As the defenders covered other retreating units, they were constantly threatened by the Japanese movements to outflank them and had to keep moving back to avoid being surrounded.

Over-run by the invaders, there was all round confusion. Father wrote that he had seen one officer during the day and he was only able to tell me it's now ... *every man for himself*. Radio links to Australia were destroyed. The fate of Rabaul garrison was unknown to the outside world for three weeks before word got to Australia that the Japanese had taken Rabaul. However, there were no plans for retreat, virtually non-existent communications within the defenders, no depots of emergency supplies and they had no training or experience in jungle warfare – or survival. Each man carried his own food and ammunition into the unknown.

I cannot imagine how my mother must have felt not knowing what happened to her husband, with four children to care for. At about this time, my mother moved the family to live at Ocean Grove (Victoria), near the school (this is where, for some reason, I had the nickname of *Wagger* bestowed on me), and a military camp.



From Rabaul, there were roads and tracks of various grades leading to numerous plantations and villages sited mainly along the coast. Two lines of escape developed: south to the southern coast, and across the Gazelle Peninsula towards the north coast. The interior of the country was inhospitable with dense jungle, deep gorges and fast flowing rivers, and endless steep mountains in places over 2000 metres high.

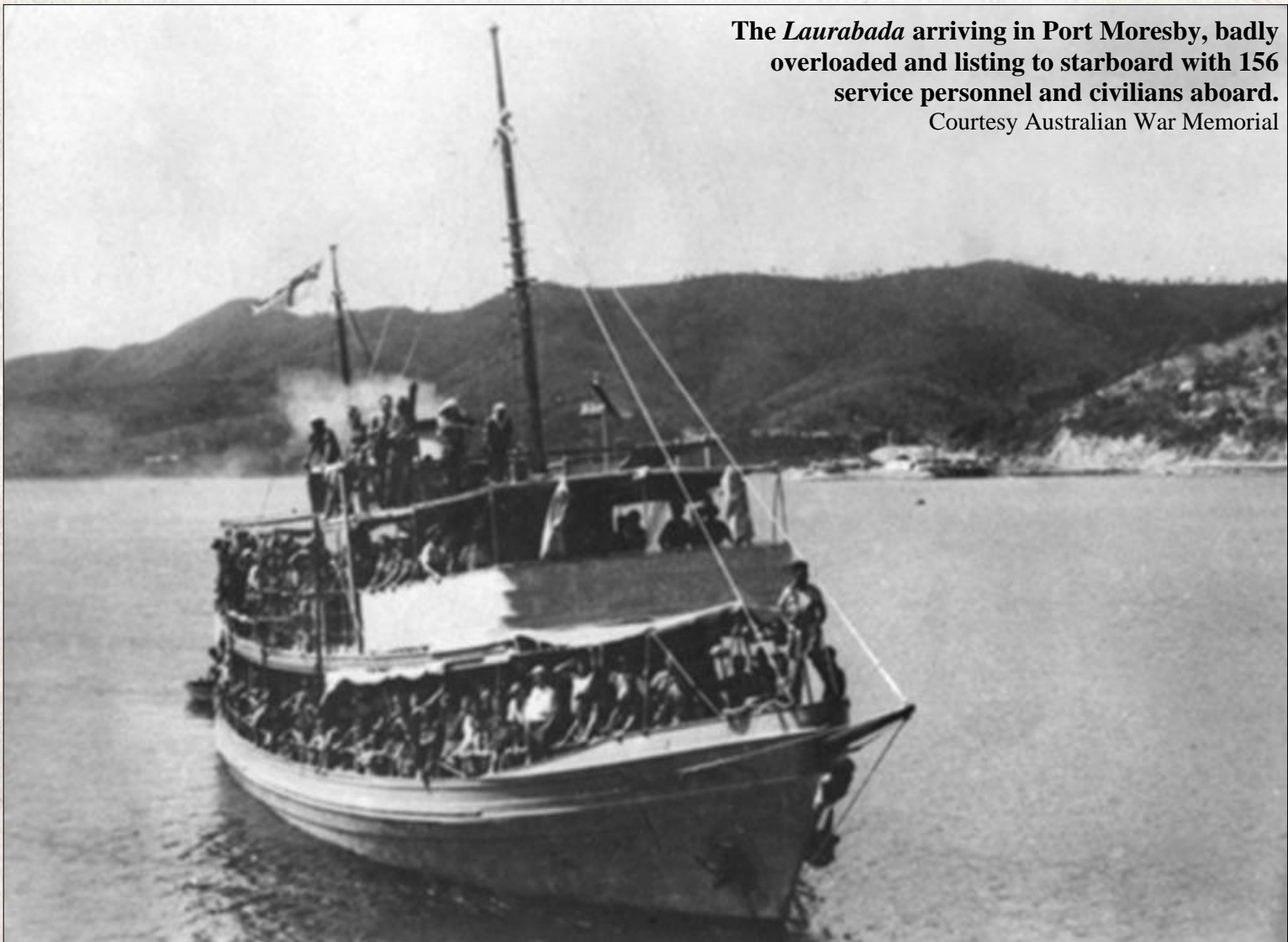
### After the Invasion

Several hundred troops surrendered, or were later caught and returned to be imprisoned at Rabaul. Many troops traversed mangroves and mosquito and leech infested swamps while moving south from Rabaul. At least 200 survivors had reached Tol plantation by 1 February. Some continued along the coast beyond here, but others were too exhausted and surrendered.

Subsequent events were researched by a military court after the war, hearing evidence from survivors. Writing in his book *Darkest Hour*, Bruce Gamble wrote '*... The bare facts are that the Japanese carried out ... at least four separate massacres of prisoners on the morning of 4th February, the first of about 100 troops, the second of 6, the third of 24 and the fourth of about 11 men. These figures are only approximate ... The executions were mainly by bayonet, and shooting. A few men survived this ordeal.*

**The *Laurabada* arriving in Port Moresby, badly overloaded and listing to starboard with 156 service personnel and civilians aboard.**

Courtesy Australian War Memorial





Other stragglers continued along the coast past Tol to Palmalmal. These men eventually reached Port Moresby by means of the 150 ton *Laurabada*, formerly the yacht of the Administrator of New Guinea.

On 22 June 1942, 849 military prisoners and about 200 civilians embarked on the *Montevideo Maru* destined for Japan. This 7267 ton ship was darkened, showing no lights at night, or displayed any form of international recognition such as red crosses. On 1 July, while off the Philippines coast, the ship was sunk by torpedoes fired from the US Submarine *Sturgeon*. All prisoners were lost while a handful of Japanese reached shore – where they were not welcomed with open arms.

Other officers and nurses were shipped from Rabaul in – according to one nurse ... *a dirty old freighter, packed in a hold. We were all mixed together and spent nine days sweating and starving before we reached Japan.*

### **Escape Through The Jungle**

As a Non Commissioned Officer, my father led a small group of troops into the mountains. My father recorded: ... *We had gone into action with only one day's rations and were dressed in khaki shorts and shirts.* It appears they had no map, but followed verbal advice, foot paths and the footprints of other escaping troops. They once learnt of Japanese ahead of them. Day after day, and at night, there is almost incessant rain ... *it has been a day of rain and mud ... [they] ... sleep another night in the jungle ...* or in any native huts they come across while heading for plantations around the coast towards Cape Lambert.

Food, and the lack of it, is frequently recorded in his diary; they are forced to subsist mainly on rice. We ... *have only one tin of Bully for the seven of us and one biscuit each ...* Another day they have ... *one tin of bully between the seven of us .... On arriving at Kerevat some Chinese people helped us by giving us tinned food and also smokes ... we only have rice to eat ... we are all very tired, and weak ... .*

Resting after struggling through the almost impenetrable jungle he mentions they have ... *one blanket and two ground sheets between us'...* Reaching the Mandras saw mills they are ... *given a meal of rice and bully with a cup of hot tea.*

A week later ... *I am still very ill and don't eat much as I cannot stomach the rice ... there are about 30 other men now down with fever; we have no quinine and have had very little since the fall of Rabaul.* They ... *are too weak to move.* [However] ... *We bought three small goats [and] have some meat and sweet potatoes and rice for breakfast as we mean to stay here and build our strength up ... .*

Exhausted and weakened by malaria and poor food, they find officers at two plantations with rice which would only be available on condition they surrendered to the Japanese. On the



second occasion, after stating a false intention to surrender, they received 25 lb (11 kg) of rice which they paid for, and also got a lot of bananas.

*They continued on ... passing through valleys and over mountains until we arrive at St Pauls mission and have a good feed our first since the day before ... my party now try and push on but it is hopeless as the jungle is so thick we cannot get through and it is still pouring with rain, we return to a native village where we dry out and roast a small pig and make a billy of tea and stay and rest ... .*

*Japanese planes fly overhead dropping leaflets addressed: To the Officers and men of this island. Surrender at once and we will guarantee your life, treating you as prisoner of war. Those who resist us will be killed, one and all. Consider it seriously. You can find no food on this island nor any way of escape and you will die.*

They are obliged to retrace their path for some days and find Japanese had visited and destroyed a site they previously used to camp in. The Japanese land troops nearby and my father's group move into jungle to cross the Baining mountains with their sharply defined ridge tops and fast flowing rivers in the valleys below, climbing one steep range after another until they were about 4000 ft (1300 m) above sea level. Next morning it was sunny, but clouds below them blocked any view of the ocean.

**Tuesday 24:** *I have discarded shorts for a native style lap-lap due to severe chaffing between legs ... We have discarded most of our rifles as these are useless to us now and food comes first with us. The leeches have been very bad.*

*In the Bainings ... we boiled some rice; this is all we have to eat ... it has begun to rain again. all we have for covering is my waterproof cape and a copra bag to keep two of us dry and warm'. Next morning they ... moved off early in the pouring rain [there was] mud everywhere a slip means death as one would slip over and fall hundreds of feet down the side of the mountain. At one stage he ... trips and starts to slide over the side when another man .... catches him and drags him back to safety. In the late afternoon, a large party of natives arrive with instructions to help us on the march to Pondo where, for tea ... we got a thick stew with plenty of meat and rice in it .... this is the first real meal we have had for six weeks ... .*

**Friday 27:** *... It has taken us five days to cross thirty miles of mountainous country [living] on a handful of rice each day. There aren't any maps but the idea is to travel along the coast where one has a chance of being picked up and a good chance at getting a little native food at villages on route ... you dried your clothes and your boots rotted. The Japanese planes also keep us on the alert ... searching along the coast ... a flight of them dropped bombs on the next river along the coast ... we are all weak from hunger and suffering from fever.*

It is at Pondo they learn that District Officer McCarthy, a member of ANGAU ... is making arrangements for us to move along the coast from village to village until we get picked up.



(The Australian New Guinea Administration Unit was responsible for the civil administration of Papua and New Guinea. During the war, it came under military control). McCarthy had a radio and was trying to organize an escape route by sea. Using that radio on 14 February, he had given Australia the first news of events on New Britain.

**Sunday 1 March** They are forced to rest for the night beside a deep, flooded river full of crocodiles, they ... *endure the hell of and torment of the mosquitoes and sand flies, and frogs which at night drive us almost mad ... short of fresh water ... heat drives us to drink out of the swamp. Some men are down with malaria ... everyone has got that ...* Two days later they finally meet McCarthy who advises them of plans for a pinnace to pick them up at about 0100hrs and move them a short distance along the coast.

Following a coastal track they take a wrong turn but, using a compass, struggle through swamps for three hours back towards the coast. ... *the soles of my boots are pulled off as I was pulled from a swamp.* He continues barefooted. Along the coast, they are plagued by hordes of mosquitoes, sand flies, and numerous swamps.

Groups of soldiers are now being leapfrogged short distances along the coast between villages and plantations by pinnace, schooner, motor launch and canoe, mainly at night, but sometimes during the day. This is very dangerous as the skies are constantly patrolled by Japanese war planes.

We ... *travel in about 40 large war canoes.* (These would most likely be the traditional double hulled canoe known as a lakatoi). *At one stage jap planes pass overhead, but the acute hearing of the local men gave them warning and allows us time to hide under sails on deck ...* He becomes badly sunburnt.

They commence a long 30 km march across the Talasea Peninsula then continue by pinnace to another plantation where they find ... *civilian sister Mrs Baker who dresses wounds and there is plenty of this work for her - every man has sores, cuts and tropical ulcers ... my legs are in an awful mess with sunburn and both are badly blistered and full of pus and are badly in need of attention.*

Arriving at another small bay by pinnace on 19 March, they find a large plantation called 'Iboki' (this word later became the plaque at the doorway of his house in New South Wales) where they find the *Lakatoi*, a 341 ton schooner, hidden in an inlet. Dozens of men are, like himself, so weak they can hardly stand and suffering badly with malaria and diarrhoea. Two women and 212 troops board this schooner bound for Australia firstly being warned they ... *sail at our own risk as we cannot expect any help on the way.* There is no support or assistance forthcoming while travelling on waters and under skies controlled by the Japanese. Firstly, they head north to Bali Island, then south westerly. While traversing the strait between New Britain and New Guinea, a large force of Japanese bombers pass overhead. They continually fear detection and use the cover of rain squalls where possible.



**The *Lakatoi*. Note people on board. The ship carried two women and 212 troops plus crew to Australia, across enemy controlled waters.**

Source unknown



They arrive off Cairns on 27 March, but are held waiting an infuriating twenty-two hours for a pilot and doctor to arrive ... *As we land the VAD's [Volunteer Aid Detachment] and Red Cross Ladies give us all a packet of cigarettes and a box of matches'. They are taken to a restaurant and have ... their first bread and butter for 71 days, and we are given as much as we can eat, then billeted at St Augustines School where [we] have a lovely warm shower with soap and clean towels ... after the shower the Red Cross ladies gave us all a pair of shorts, a shirt and a singlet, socks and a pair of sandshoes then get tea for us. Three or four of our men are put into hospital – where one of them dies after getting this far ... [another dies on the train at Albury]. We also get treatment for our sores and cuts, some of these tropical ulcers are very bad.*

**Sunday 29 March** ... *the Red Cross ladies get us a very good breakfast and the V.A.D.'s treat our wounds, and gallons of milk to drink. Afterwards we board a train for Brisbane ... More cigarettes and matches, and also plenty of books to read. At every station en route to Brisbane [including Gympie, where I now live] the Red Cross Ladies and V.A.D.'s gave us a great welcome, and we are laden with fruit, food and cigarettes. To the Red Cross ladies and the V.A.D.'s of Queensland who gave us so much – the thanks of the 2/22 boys go out to them – we shall never forget the kindness of those ladies in Queensland ... To District Commissioner McCarthy we owe our escape.*

The train continues to Melbourne where he (and other troops) are admitted to the Heidelberg and Fairfield Infectious Diseases Hospital, suffering from – among other things, malaria, starvation and tropical ulcers.

© Ron Turner



# STANHOPE *MONTVIDEO MARU* MURAL

BY © GEORGE GEMMILL 2023



© George Gemmill



© George Gemmill

A *Montevideo Maru* Tragedy Mural has been painted on the hardware shop wall in the centre of Stanhope, just across from McEwen Place. This is where the Stanhope War Memorial is located, which includes a bronze bust with story boards to honour former Australia PM Sir John McEwen, who had a farm in Stanhope.

Three Stanhope soldiers (Bill McLennan, Percy Crombie and Alf Meldrum) were lost when the SS Montevideo Maru was sunk by the US Navy submarine *Sturgeon* – which resulted in just

over 1050 Australian prisoner or war and civilian deaths. This event is written in Australia's history books as our worst maritime disaster. The three local Stanhope soldier's names are listed as paying the Supreme Sacrifice on the War Memorial. The Stanhope RSL (Est. 1918) were responsible for getting the mural painted, greatly assisted by the Stanhope Development Committee. The mural was painted by well known Artist Tim Bowtell and was half funded by a grant while the rest of the money raised came from generous local donations. The mural has already attracted many visitors. Interpretative signage is planned for the site.



© George Gemmill



In April 2023, it was announced that the wreck of the *Montevideo Maru* had been discovered in 2023, 80 years after her sinking in July 1942. She had been accidentally sunk by an American submarine and her sinking remains one of the worst international maritime disasters in history. The discovery was made by an expedition team led by Australian businessman, maritime history philanthropist and explorer John Mullen. John is also a director of the not-for-profit Silentworld Foundation. The specialist deep sea survey company Fugro, with support from Australia's Department of Defence, were also involved in the complicated and expensive search. The ship, which was laying at a depth in excess of 4000 metres, will now be protected.

*[Click this box to read the entire ABC Article](#)*



© George Gemmill



HOSPITAL



GARDEN SITE



Mention of the  
sinking of the  
*Montevideo  
Maru* by an  
allied submarine



IN MEMORY OF THE OFFICERS AND MEN OF THE 2/22ND BATTALION A.I.F.  
AND ATTACHED UNITS OF "LARK FORCE".

ON JANUARY 1942, THIS SMALL UNSUPPORTED GARRISON AT RABAU, NEW  
BRITAIN, WAS OVERWHELMED BY A HUGE JAPANESE INVASION FORCE.

IN THE SUCCEEDING MONTHS, SOME ESCAPED TO AN ALLIED BASE, 160  
WERE MASSACRED AT TOL PLANTATION AND GASMATA; MANY BECAME  
PRISONERS OF WAR. ALL OTHER RANKS WHO WERE CAPTURED, TOGETHER  
WITH CIVILIANS TAKEN INTO CUSTODY, WERE SHIPPED OUT OF RABAU ON  
THE "MONTEVIDEO MARU".

AN ALLIED SUBMARINE SANK THIS UNMARKED JAPANESE PRISON SHIP IN  
JULY 1942. THERE WERE NO SURVIVORS.

"LEST WE FORGET"

UNVEILED ON 11 NOVEMBER 2002

## LARK FORCE

Two plaques  
unveiled at the  
Heidelberg  
Repatriation  
Memorial Garden  
that relate to  
Lark Force.

See the following  
page to view their  
placement in the  
Memorial Garden.

The photo overleaf  
only shows a small  
portion of the much  
larger garden, which  
contains over 40  
memorial plaques.



IN MEMORY OF THE BANDSMEN OF THE  
SALVATION ARMY WHO FORMED THE REGIMENTAL  
BAND OF THE 2/22ND INFANTRY BATTALION A.I.F.

THE MEN OF THE 2/22ND BATTALION WERE SENT  
TO DEFEND NEW BRITAIN AGAINST JAPANESE ATTACK  
AND WERE PART OF "LARK FORCE".

IN 1942, TWENTY TWO MEMBERS OF THE BAND  
PAID THE SUPREME SACRIFICE  
ONLY ONE SURVIVED.

"LEST WE FORGET"

UNVEILED ON 11 NOVEMBER 2002





The main  
Lark Force  
Memorial  
Plaque



# AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIALS

## War Memorial, Strathbogie



IN REMEMBRANCE, SO WE NEVER FORGET THEIR SACRIFICE



ANZAC



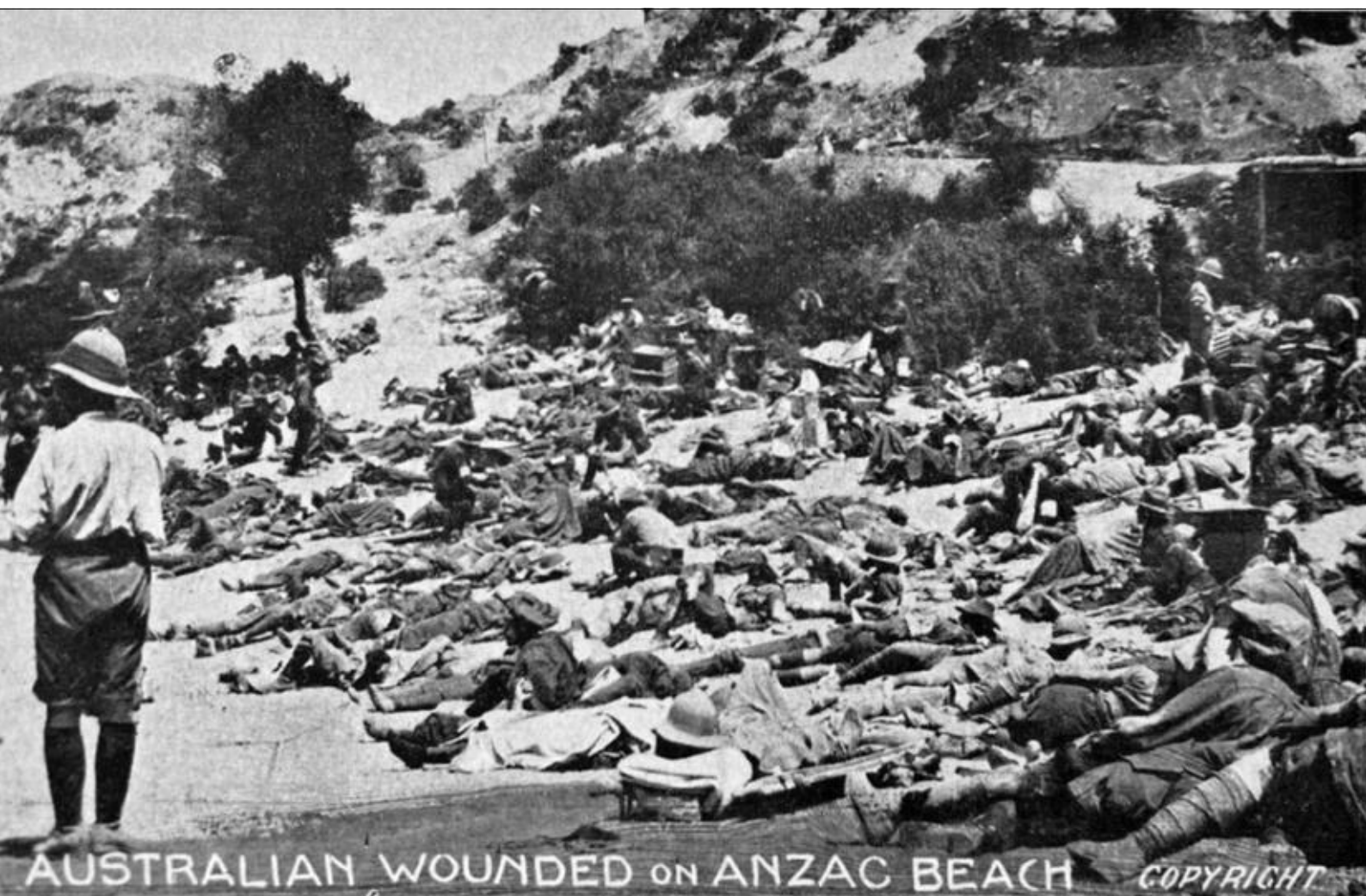
THEY FOUGHT ON LANDS





QUINN'S POST AT ANZAC

COPYRIGHT



AUSTRALIAN WOUNDED ON ANZAC BEACH

COPYRIGHT



# LETTERS FROM THE FRONT

Doug, France, 23 September 1918

My dear Family,

Another Sunday and I must send you a few lines tho' excepting for one or two little pieces of excitement of which I will tell you directly, I am afraid I have very little to write about as it has been rather an uneventful week. Yesterday two Australian letters drifted in, one from Doll and one from Mimi, and both dated July 7th. I was very glad to know that Doll had got over her attack of mumps, and that up to the time of writing that no-one else had developed them.

Bess was being kept busy with her lambs, and only hope that she did not have a very severe winter. By the time this arrives it will be shearing time again. It is really marvellous how the time flies. I am glad to know that Harris has been with you. He is a good man and Bess can trust him with anything. My kind regards to him if he is with you when this arrives, and also my thanks for the honey he has sent and is sending to me. It is a long time since any arrived but from what you said in your letters I am looking forward to a tin shortly.

A few days ago I saw Frank Paton, he is just the same and still going strong. Last night I saw Salmon and Charlie Price. They are both quite O.K. and have had a wild time with the battery since they joined it. I also saw a live Robertson. He has just come back from his leave and is camped only a couple of hundred yards away just at present.

He had a much better leave than he did last year, but was very very loath to leave his family and come back to this again.

So far I have not heard anything further of my transfer but I know it is only a matter of waiting for a vacancy now, and it may come at any time. It is possible that Clive Robertson may come with me if he can get out of the battery, but nothing is fixed yet, but it would suit me fine if he does come.

He is one of the best, and I would very much like to be with him again. He could have had his commission long ago if he had asked for it, but for many reasons, with most of which I at any rate quite agree, he would not take it.

I enclose three little snaps which will probably interest you and I also sent a couple more to Jack last night and asked him to send them on to you when he had finished with them. I got a little camera when I was over and had intended taking quite a lot of snaps but found, too late, that the films are practically unprocurable at present and I only managed to get two or three of each printed, hence you will have to just pass them round amongst yourselves. I was very sorry that I could not get more films, especially when I saw how well these had come out, and I am afraid the camera is not going to be much use to me now for they are not allowed over here.



# LETTERS FROM THE FRONT

Doug, France, 23 September 1918

If they only were we could get some lovely pictures sometimes. On the last afternoon of my leave, when I met the two Sisters, we went through Hyde Park and the pictures of the two Sisters, and Sister Graham and myself were taken there. The two I sent Jack were of sheep taken at Allanfearne.

On Wednesday last I had a really good day. I left here at 7 am with the Boss and went down to get the money. It had been raining and blowing pretty hard for a couple of days previously but it fined up that morning and it wasn't a bad day at all. It took us about four hours to get to the town where we drew the money, and it was a bonzer trip in spite of the two punctures we got on the way. It was grand to see some civilisation again, especially after being in these parts where there is absolutely none. I had a glorious dinner, and if I don't get another feed for a week I won't hurt much. I was at this particular town about four months ago and then it was more or less deserted on account of the way it was being bombed, but now it is practically back to its old life again and was quite gay. We have been moving about so much lately and each time a bit further ahead that I really had no idea till I went this trip that we have come so far within the last few weeks. We got back to the camp about 6 o'clock after a real good run home and no accidents; it will probably be the last trip I will get for some considerable time to come so I enjoyed every bit of it.

About 8.30 p.m. the aeroplanes started and provided us with a most excellent entertainment for an hour or so. The Bosch started the show by [coming over and bombing us well, but the search lights did some fine work and tho' seven planes in all came over in our little piece the search lights picked up every one. A plane in the search lights is always well worth looking at, and always reminds me of a great big golden moth. I can't describe what it is actually like for it is one of the things which has to be seen to be fully appreciated.

As each machine came over and the search lights picked it up all the guns and machine guns within range got busy, and between the noise they made and crash of the bombs that were dropped, it was "Hell" let loose for a little while. About half way through the show, one of our little scouting machines came over and took a hand in things and finally brought two of the Bosch machines down in flames.

It was a wonderful bit of work on our machines' part, and we could see him for some time signalling for the guns to cease fire and give him a chance. A machine coming down on fire at night is a most wonderful sight and beats any fireworks display that I have ever seen, especially when all the 'very' lights start going off. The first one to come down had not dropped its bombs, and as they all exploded at once as soon as it hit the ground it was a sight to remember I can assure you. Both machines fell some distance away, but quite close enough for us to get a most excellent view, and especially myself as I was using a pair of German Zeiss glasses which I got hold of some little time ago.



# LETTERS FROM THE FRONT

Doug, France, 23 September 1918

It was a most thrilling show and I suppose under ordinary circumstances should have been a most horrible one, but under present circumstances we have very little sympathy, for after having been bombed as much as we have, it is only seeing a thing like this that consoles us a bit, and also the fact of knowing that tho' the Bosch started the business, he is getting all and more of it than he wants himself now, and in any case after seeing the country round these parts in the state it is and seeing some of the things he has done so recently, I for one have no sympathy for any German that walks. Even tonight whilst I have been writing this I have had to stop twice and put out the lights because there has been a Fritz plane about, tho' so far he has dropped nothing anywhere near us.

But can you wonder that we feel as tho' we want to exterminate the whole lot!

I am anxiously waiting for the letters that will tell me all about Bess and her Leslie, for I have a great deal to hear I can tell you, so hope that you don't miss out on anything.

Anyhow I don't expect they can arrive before another five or six weeks. I should write to Leslie but don't exactly like to risk it and fancy I will wait till I get something more definite to go on. But at any rate once again they have my heartiest congratulations and I only hope that they are both supremely happy. Now I must turn in. Good night and my love to each and all of you.

From Doug  
France  
September 23rd 1918



# AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIALS

## Forbes Memorial Hill

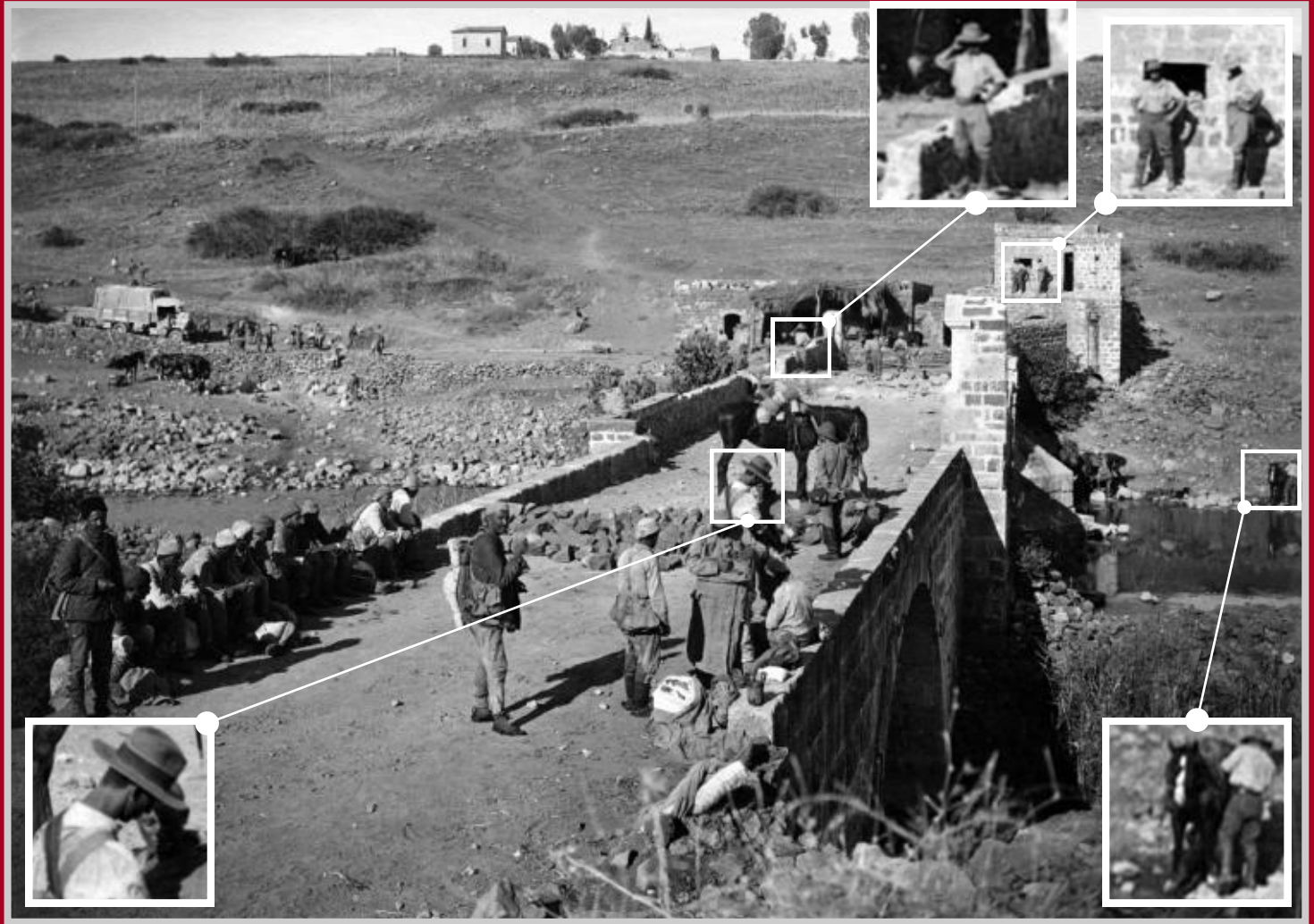


IN REMEMBRANCE, SO WE NEVER FORGET THEIR SACRIFICE



# ROD FALCONER COLLECTION

District imagery from yesteryear!

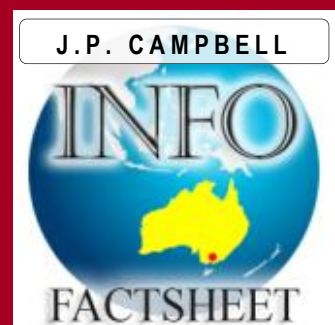


## SINAI AND PALESTINE CAMPAIGN

This photograph is from the collection of Australian War Photographer J P Campbell, who served during the Sinai and Palestine Campaign. The collection was opened to Artworkz in 2010 by local contributor Rod Falconer.

This image shows a bridge the morning after it was captured and before being repaired. Men from the Light Horse can be seen scattered throughout the frame.

The Light Horse served in the Second Boer War and World War I. By the outbreak of World War I there were 23 Australian Light Horse Regiments with over 9000 part-time trained personnel ready for action.







**stoush**





# Stoush

verb

A fight or brawl

Examples

They boys were involved in an ugly stoush.

The stoush between the two countries lasted for over a year.





ANZAC

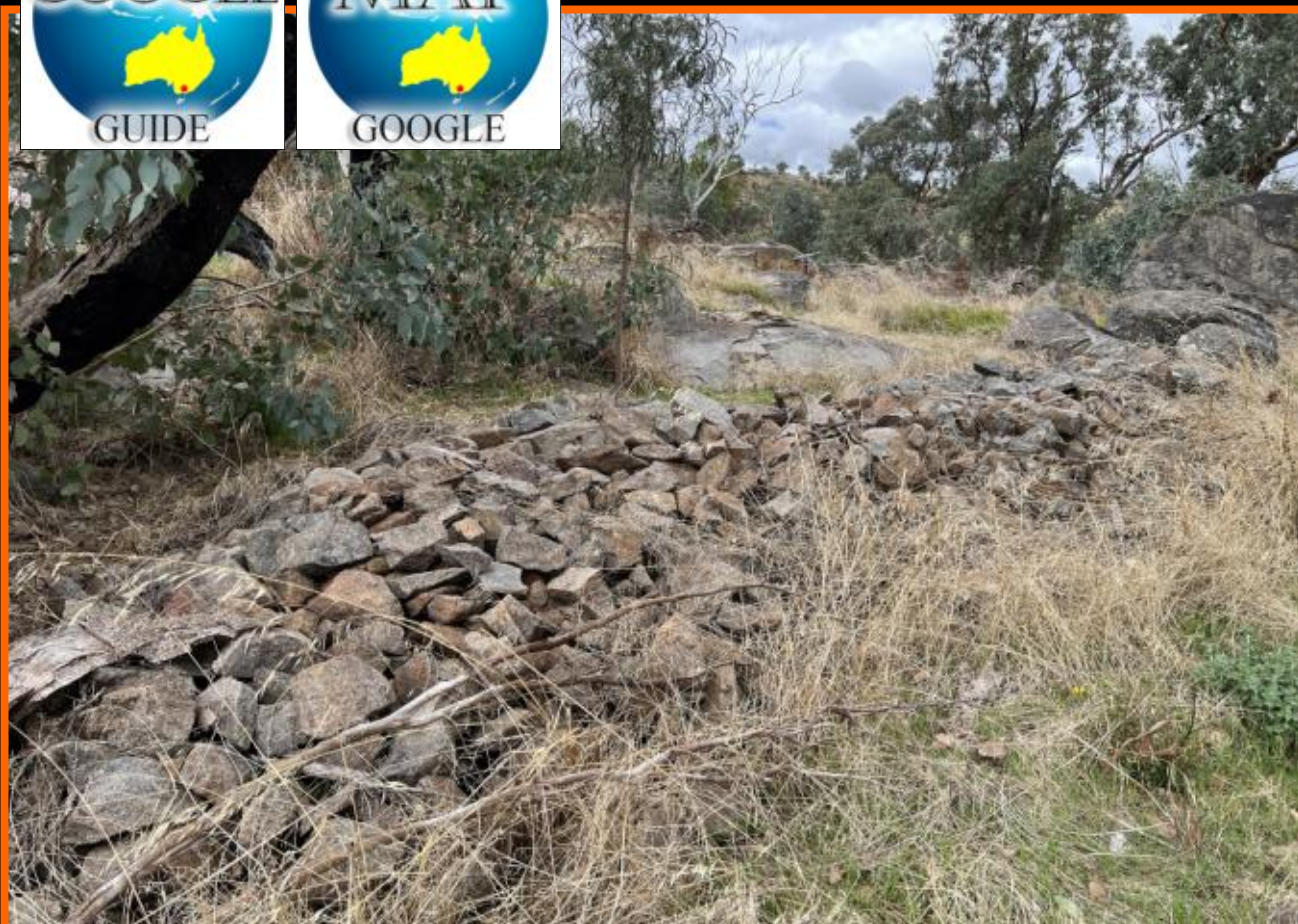


THEY FOUGHT AT GALLIPOLI





## Balmuttum Hill Walking Track Balmuttum Hill, Euroa



Balmuttum Hill is located just south of the township of Euroa, and a walking track to the top commences just off Euroa Strathbogie Road near the freeway overpass. The driveway is signed, and parking is available at the Euroa water plant gate.

The walk was established in 2011 by the Rotary Club of Euroa to encourage people to enjoy nature walk and views. Interpretative signage positioned along the track makes the walk even more interesting. A rotunda is positioned along the walk and a seat is located at the top.

Interestingly, lines of rocks stacked by soldiers conducting training exercises during World War II, are visible along the walking track.

We will feature the walk and views in a future eSplash.

Y o u r   S u b m i s s i o n s   w e l c o m e



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# AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIALS

## War Memorial, Marysville



IN REMEMBRANCE, SO WE NEVER FORGET THEIR SACRIFICE



# AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIALS

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## A growing collection of Australian War Memorials



*Press to download*

IN REMEMBRANCE, SO WE NEVER FORGET THEIR SACRIFICE





They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old.  
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.  
At the going down of the sun and in the morning,  
We will remember them.