

They Crossed the Ocean

**The names on the Port Macquarie War Memorial
from the Great War 1914 - 1918**



Preface

This publication has been created as a research aid for anyone who has an interest in the people behind the names inscribed on the Port Macquarie War Memorial who served in World War One. It is not intended to be a definitive personal history of each person, nor a biographical profile. For each person listed there are eleven fields of information giving place of birth, occupation at time of enlistment, next of kin, as well as service number, embarkation details and whether returned to Australia or killed in action. Any significant or interesting facts are included in a general notes field.

The names on the original memorial were inscribed after a public appeal for people to request the inclusion of family or friends names who saw service. For personal reasons some people preferred not to be listed. Not all names are exclusive to the Hastings region either as residents could nominate relatives or friends from nearby , or in some cases, more distant locations.

In the year 2000 names of service personnel who enlisted in World War One, but whose names were not on the original memorial, were inscribed on plaques beside the main memorial. These names have not been included in this publication as their identity, in some cases, has been difficult to prove and some are believed to be variant names of names already on the main memorial. A list of these year 2000 names is included as an appendix to the main work.

Researchers seeking further information on any individual can use the information provided here to access service details at the Australian War Memorial or view full service dossiers at the National Archives of Australia.

Cover: The War Memorial on Town Green at Port Macquarie. It was originally erected at the intersection of Clarence and Horton Streets Port Macquarie but was removed to its present location in 1969 due to heavy traffic movements and the limited seating space available to accommodate the growing numbers of people who gathered on ceremonial occasions. The title of this publication is taken from the inscription on the globe atop the memorial

A note on sources

The following sources have been used to compile this publication:

- Australian War Memorial (website)
- National Archives of Australia (website)
- Mapping our ANZACS (website)
- Port Macquarie News
- Wauchope Gazette
- Macleay Argus
- Macleay Chronicle
- Macleay Valley Volunteers by Rod and Wendy Gow (2005)
- North Coast ANZACS Vols. 1 & 2 by Rod and Wendy Gow and Val Birch (2000)
- Port Macquarie News Index 1903 - 1920 (3 vols.) by Rod and Wendy Gow (2007)
- Commonwealth and New South Wales Electoral Rolls
- Ancestry.com (online database)
- Find My Past Australasia (online database)

Acknowledgements

This publication was made possible by the research efforts of Port Macquarie Hastings library staff members Sue O'Brien, Karen Rowan Hodges and Jeff Stonehouse. Some additional material has been made available by family members of those named on the memorial. The library also acknowledges the assistance of staff from the Port Macquarie Historical Museum in identifying some names.

Abbreviations Used



Died whilst on military service

DCM

Distinguished Conduct medal

DOW

Died of wounds

HMAT

His/Her Majesty's Australian Transport

Private

Private

KIA

Killed in action

MM

Military Medal

RTA

Returned to Australia

SS

Steam Ship

Introduction

On a wet Canberra morning, the 11th November 1993, the Prime Minister of Australia The Hon. P.J. Keating MP, delivered a eulogy at the funeral service of the Unknown Australian Soldier. In part he said:

"He may have been one of those who believed that the Great War would be an adventure too grand to miss. He may have felt that he would never live down the shame of not going. But the chances are he went for no other reason than that he believed it was his duty - the duty he owed his country and his King."

Prior to August 1914 no conflict or war had involved so many nations, involved so many men and women, cost so many lives or maimed so many bodies. What we now call World War One came to be known then as the Great War by the generations who suffered or died over more than four years of unprecedented horror from 1914 to 1918. Those who enlisted saw it as an adventure, as the Prime Minister said, or felt that they were defending the Empire against German led aggressors.

The Commonwealth of Australia had only been proclaimed some thirteen years earlier and many Australians still considered themselves British. A considerable number had in fact been born in Britain or were first generation. As Trooper Les Pountney of Port Macquarie wrote to his parents on the 1st May 1915 from Egypt:

"...one can't help but feel proud to be a Britisher, under the proud old Union jack"

This from someone born and raised in New South Wales. Les Pountney was badly wounded at the Dardanelles and died on 08 July 1915 aged 26.

Conflict was no longer limited to standing armies on set battlefields. The civilian population became caught up in the war, either through direct assault or through the heavy propaganda of the recruitment processes and conscription campaigns. The war that was to be over in three months was becoming bogged down in the mud of France and the toll of dead and wounded exhausted the ranks of the regular armies.

The numbers of early volunteers soon proved insufficient to replace the thinning ranks of the armies and so recruitment campaigns were stepped up. Propaganda became a powerful tool in recruitment and the pressure on men to enlist became more intense as the war dragged on. The new recruits came from all walks of life - lawyers, teachers, printers, clerks, railway men, farmers, labourers, students - even veterans of earlier

conflicts such as Arthur Douglas Woodlands of Wauchope who had previously served in the Boer war with the Royal Engineers. They were single or married, young or old, from the cities, towns and country areas all across Australia.

Women too became involved, usually in nursing capacities, like Jean Davidson of Port Macquarie who enlisted in the Australian Army Nursing Service and served in the Middle east from 1917 to 1919. Jean also had three brothers who enlisted. Her father Robert, a prominent Presbyterian minister in Port Macquarie and later State member for the electorate of Hastings-Macleay from 1901 to 1910, was one of the original organisers of the North Coasters recruitment march. He led off the march from Grafton and spoke at most of the stops on the way down the coast.

In February 1916 the North Coasters recruitment march entered the Hastings. It was one of a number of marches that originated in country areas and recruited men from towns and villages before terminating at a military barracks for official enlistment and training.



Arrival of the "North Coasters" in Port Macquarie 1916

Arriving at Cooperabung by car from Kempsey, the North Coasters received an enthusiastic welcome from the residents of Telegraph Point, Rollands Plains and The Hatch. Two welcome arches had been erected, one proclaiming "Welcome from the Railway". The Taree to Wauchope and Wauchope to Kempsey sections of the North Coast railway line were being constructed at this time and many of the workers enlisted locally. This explains why men from other districts have Telegraph Point as their place of enlistment with no other local connection.

Arriving the next afternoon in Port Macquarie the marchers proceeded to the Town Hall where they were addressed by the Mayor, Mr. D. Stewart and the local member Mr. H.D. Morton M.L.A.. Looking dusty and tired in their blue dungarees the men received a warm welcome from the townspeople.

After speeches the men marched off to the Agricultural Grounds where they were billeted for the night. Saturday evening was devoted to speeches and a musical programme and during the evening many appeals were made for local young men to come forward. Many of the North Coasters fastened on to the men watching and urged them to enlist. The pressure would have been enormous.



Watermelons at the Old Gaol grounds

On the Monday morning the North Coasters marched out from the Agricultural Grounds on their way to Wauchope where they camped at the recreational ground and enjoyed a swim in the river. As well as the usual speeches and entreaties to the local men to join-up an evening open air picture show screening was held featuring a film called "Heroes of the Dardanelles". After parading at 6:30 am on Tuesday and breakfasting at 8:00 am the North Coasters marched off towards Kew and ultimately Maitland camp. After that the reality of war would soon become evident.



North Coasters at Kew

While only a relatively small number of men enlisted during the recruitment marches many more enlisted at the outbreak of war and during the ensuing four years. The enlistment requirements in August 1914 were 18–35 years, height of 5ft 6in (167cm) and chest measurement of 34 in (86cm). In June 1915 the age range and minimum height requirements were changed to 18–45 years and 5ft 2in [157cm), with the minimum height being lowered again to 5ft (152cm) in April 1917.

Commonwealth of Australia.
 STATE OF NEW SOUTH WALES.
 DIVISION OF COWPER.
 REFERENDUM, 1916.

PUBLIC NOTICE is hereby given that a Referendum will be taken under the provisions of the Military Service Referendum Act, 1916, on Saturday, the 28th day of October, 1916, on the following question, viz. : —

Are you in favour of the Government having, in this grave emergency, the same compulsory powers over citizens in regard to requiring their military service, for the term of this war, outside the Commonwealth, as it now has in regard to military service within the Commonwealth!

The Poll will open at eight o'clock in the morning, and will not close until all Electors present in the Polling Booth at eight o'clock in the evening, and desiring to vote, have voted.

The Polling Places appointed for this Division which are prescribed for the Sub-division of Port Macquarie are as follow :—

SUBDIVISION OF PORT MACQUARIE.
 Dick's Mount (Post Office), Fernbank Creek (Post Office, Blackman's Point), Port Macquarie (Court House), Rollands Plains (Public School), Smith's Creek (A. Rosenbaum's Residence), Telegraph Point (Public School), The Hatch (Public School).

NOTE.—A list of all the Polling Places appointed for the Division is advertised in the Kempsey "Argus" of the 13th instant. Dated at Grafton this ninth day of October, 1916.

THOMAS HERBERT WALL,
 Returning Officer
 For the Electoral Division of Cowper.

Port Macquarie News 14th Oct. 1916

During the first year of the war approximately 33 percent of all volunteers were rejected. However, with relaxation of physical standards of age and height, as well as dental and ophthalmic fitness, previously ineligible men were now eligible for enlistment.

The failure of the conscription referendums in 1916 and 1917 caused recruiting officers to be less cautious in applying the official standards. At the outbreak of war Aboriginal people were excluded from military service as all recruits had to of "substantially European origin". By 1917 these standards were altered to allow "half-castes" to enlist.

A number of local men enlisted early on in the war such as Francis Gannon who at one time drove the mail coach between Port Macquarie and Wauchope. Born in Bathurst, Gannon had only lived in Port Macquarie for a few years prior to the war and, being an excellent horseman, he joined the 7th Light Horse in December 1914. He served in the Dardanelles where he was critically wounded and died aboard a hospital ship. He was buried at sea in July 1915.

Donald Miller Dennis from Kempsey enlisted on the 11th August 1914 and embarked with the Naval and Military Expeditionary Force to German New Guinea. He was discharged on the 4th March 1915 and subsequently re-enlisted

on the 18th March 1915 serving with the 7th Light Horse. He returned to Australia in November 1918.

Other men who enlisted never got to see active service. Private Firman Gale Judd, a nephew of Mr. A. Judd of Pappinbarra Creek, enlisted on the 11th March 1915. He died in the Liverpool Military Camp hospital of pneumonia on the 13th April, 1915. His body was brought to Wauchope by train and he was buried at Beechwood. He was aged 22.

Percival Ernest Lyon enlisted on the 3rd July 1916 into the 7th Light Horse but died on the 29th August 1916 of measles at the "Coast Hospital" Little Bay in Sydney aged 24.

Alberto Dias Mc Iver (Mc Ivor) enlisted on the 19th June 1917 aged 30. He was returning home by train on final leave before embarkation when he was taken seriously ill. Dr. Begg of Wauchope diagnosed the illness as meningitis. He died in Kempsey Hospital on 24th August 1917.

Another to die of meningitis before seeing overseas service was Reuben Redman. He enlisted on the 19th June 1915 but tragically died at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital Sydney, while based at Liverpool Army Camp, on the 11th July 1915. He was buried in the Presbyterian Cemetery at Rookwood.



North Coasters being sworn in at Port Macquarie Showground January 1916

Reuben Redman's brother Donald was one of the few known local men who served in the Navy. Donald received his initial training at TS "Tingira" in Sydney before being posted to HMAS Sydney and was on board when the German High Seas Fleet surrendered in the North Sea. He was welcomed home at a Peace Celebration on 16th August, 1919.

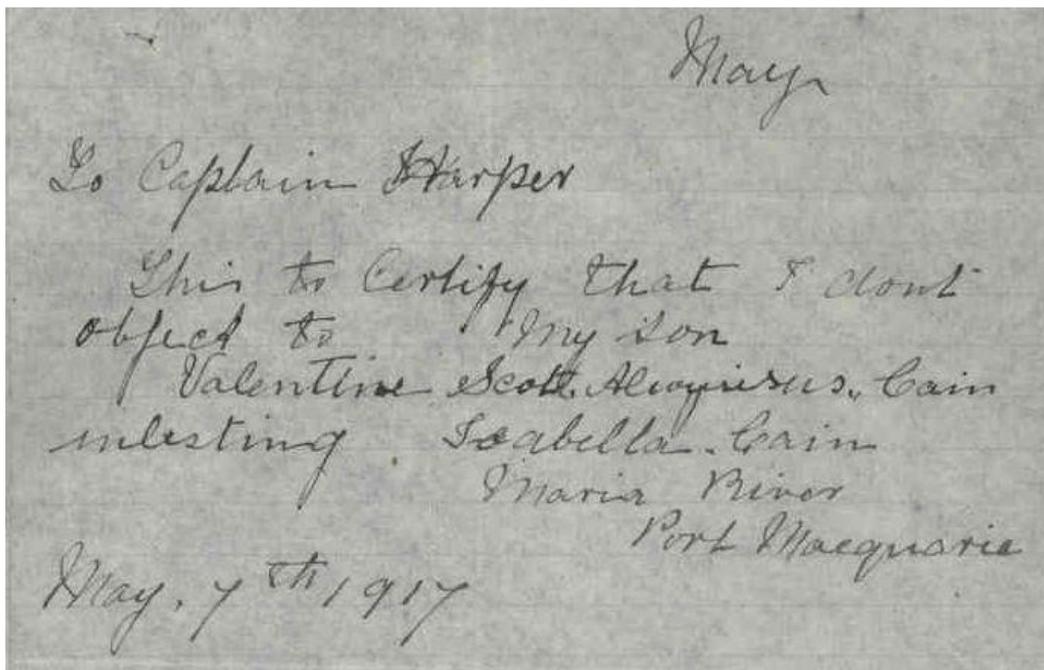
Other young men did not make it overseas for far better reasons. Clive Kingsford, a 20 year old Bank Clerk from Port Macquarie, enlisted on the 7th November 1918 but his troopship

was recalled mid Pacific Ocean as the Armistice had been signed. He disembarked around the 28th November 1918 and was officially discharged on the 12th December 1918.

A similar thing happened to Private Leslie Hastings Staples. Whether they were disappointed or not we do not know. However, it is likely their families were not disappointed that the troopships were turned back to home.

With the minimum enlistment age being eighteen, there were numerous instances of underage boys trying to enlist. Some were discovered immediately and sent home, while others managed to escape detection and went off to serve at the front. Underage boys could enlist if permission was granted in writing by one of their parents.

This was the case for Valentine Aloysius Scott Cain of Maria River. Originally enlisting under the assumed name of James Morgan, Cain was rejected as being under age but was allowed to re-enlist under his proper name with parental permission. Having an older brother in the services was often an encouragement for younger brothers to try to join. The pressure to allow underage boys to join would have been an incredibly emotional burden for a parent. In Cain's case his mother gave permission.



May

To Captain Harper

This to Certify that I don't
object to my son
Valentine Scott Aloysius Cain
enlisting. Seabella Cain
Maria River
Port Macquarie

May, 7th 1917

National Archives of Australia Service Dossier

One can only imagine the pain and grief of a loving mother who gave this permission only to receive word that your son was killed less than twelve months later.

The great majority of the men that went to France and the Middle East had never travelled overseas before. Many would never have even travelled far from their places of birth. The excitement of seeing England and Europe for the first time would have been an added incentive to enlist. Most would have had no other opportunity in their lifetimes to travel

that far. Some of the letters sent home read like travelogues. Les Pountney described a three day trip down the Nile River as "a very nice holiday". He gave his parents a detailed view of the agriculture and irrigation systems in use in Egypt.

Private W. Fage, writing to his brother at Telegraph Point in May 1918, describes his eight days leave in Paris as anyone else would describe a holiday event:

"..I saw some of the principal sights of the city. The trip only cost me 600 francs, about £20 in our money, but I didn't mind how much it cost me, for it is heaven - on earth to get away from this for a while, and be free to go and come, as you please .I would like you to see the city and some of the country in summer time, as part of it is very pretty.."

Private Robert Colin Graham, son of Mr. Duncan Graham, of Koree Island, Beechwood wrote a detailed letter to his father on July 17th 1916 to relate his Paris experiences:

'Since last writing, some things have happened unexpectedly. I have had a visit to Paris, and was very lucky indeed. Five out of each battalion were chosen to represent the Australians at a review in Paris. The 5th Division— that is our division— is supposed to be the best behaved and trained that has yet arrived in France, so five out of each of our battalions were chosen to go on this tour. Well, I was one of the lucky ones, and consider it an honour to be one of the chosen ones out of about 20,000 men. On our arrival in Paris we were accorded a grand welcome. The streets were lined with crowds of people from the time we left the station till we reached the Pepiniere Barracks. Every nation fighting in France was represented — British, Canadians, Anzacs, Indians, Belgians, French, Russians, New Foundlanders, and South Africans. I think the Anzacs and Canadians were more cheered and got the best reception of any. On the Friday we were marched from the barracks to Napoleon's Square, where all the troops were formed up, and medals were handed out by the President to the widows whose husbands had fallen in the present war. After this a procession was held through all the main streets of Paris, and it ended up by us all being taken back to the barracks again in motor cars. The procession proved a great success, and the French were very pleased indeed with their Allied soldiers. Probably Paris had never seen such a day as this before, being represented by all the Allied nations on her great day of July 14th— the day France was declared a republic. On Saturday we were granted general leave, and were taken about to many of Paris' beauty spots by kind friends. It is indeed a very pretty place, and one could spend a nice little holiday there. We visited the Eiffel Tower, which is now used as a big wireless station. Messages can be sent to all parts of the world from here. Also saw Joan d'Arc's statue, Napoleon's tomb, and a great number of other important places; but, really, we couldn't have the whole history explained to us, as our time was so limited. We were treated exceptionally well in the French barracks, and didn't like having to leave again. We gave our Allied friends three hearty cheers, to which they as heartily responded. We were cheered from the time we left the barracks until we reached the station, and could scarcely march along for the crowds who wanted to kiss us and shake hands as a token of their esteem.' . . .

Writing to his Aunt Bess on July 22nd, he says:

'Last letter I gave an account of my Paris trip, but in this one there is very little to tell. We have been in action now for a while, and have had a pretty rough time, but we have given our friends the Germans a much rougher one. We were up against some of the enemy's best soldiers — the Prussian Guards, but they seemed very pleased when they were taken prisoners by our men. Some of the German machine gunners were tied to their guns, and could not get away from us. I saw a few chaps I knew wounded on the field. One was Colin Bain, and the other Gus Lawrence, from Port Macquarie. Lawrence was wounded rather badly. I myself never even got a scratch. You could scarcely believe a chap could come out so lucky. Once I got hit with a great big lump of mud in the neck, which resulted from a shell which landed a few yards away.'

Private Graham was killed in action 16 days later, on the 7th August 1916, and was buried at Croix-du-bac British Cemetery, Steenwerck, France.



CROIX-DU-BAC BRITISH CEMETERY, STEENWERCK, FRANCE

Robert Graham's brother William was also killed in action on the 4th August, 1916 at the Battle of Romani, Suez, Egypt. He was buried at Kantara War Memorial Cemetery, Egypt.

Repatriation of bodies to Australia was impossible. So, Duncan Graham, a dairyman and father of Robert Colin Graham, aged 21, and William James Graham, aged 24, would probably have never seen his sons' graves. This was the same for most parents and relatives of men killed overseas.

Often grieving parents requested the Army to send them a photograph of their son's grave. These makeshift graves, with their simple wooden crosses, were later to be replaced by the haunting military cemeteries we now see dotted across the countryside of France and Belgium with their rows and rows of stark white headstones.

In far too many instances however, there was no body found to bury. The clawing mud and the torrents of high explosive shells that rained down upon both sides in this conflict resulted in men literally disappearing. Their names would be later inscribed on one of the various memorials to the fallen but parents and relatives would have no grave to mourn over.

This was the case after the Battle of Fromelles on the night of July 19, 1916 where Australia suffered 5,533 casualties in just 24 hours; among them brothers Eric Robert Wilson and Samuel Charles Wilson of Hibbard, Port Macquarie. A third brother James was wounded and returned home. There were so many casualties on both sides that the German soldiers interred the bodies in mass graves. Ashley Elkins of the Australian War Memorial continues the story of Fromelles and the later discovery of the "missing Diggers":

Over two years after the battle, on the day of the Armistice of 11 November 1918 when the guns of the Western Front finally ceased firing, Australian official war correspondent, Charles Bean, wandered over the battlefield of Fromelles and observed the grisly aftermath of the battle: "We found the old No-Man's-Land simply full of our dead", he recorded, "the skulls and bones and torn uniforms were lying about everywhere". Soon after the war these remains were gathered to construct VC Corner Cemetery, the only solely Australian war cemetery in France. It is also the only cemetery without headstones. There are no epitaphs to individual soldiers, simply a stone wall inscribed with the names of 1,299 Australians who died in battle nearby and who have no known graves. The unidentified remains of 410 are buried in mass graves under two grass plots in the cemetery.

For nearly 80 years this sombre monument remained the only conspicuous reminder of the tragic events of Fromelles until, in July 1998, a new Australian Memorial Park was dedicated there. Situated close to VC Corner Cemetery on a part of the old German front line which was briefly captured and held overnight by the 14th Australian Brigade on 19/20 July, the park includes the stark remains of four German block-houses. A bronze statue, titled 'Cobbers', by Australian sculptor Peter Corlett, depicts Sergeant Simon Fraser of the 57th Battalion in an enduring image of the aftermath of the battle, the rescue of the wounded.

Until recent years, 1,335 Australian soldiers remained 'missing' from the Fromelles battle, having no known grave. Then in 2007, following persistent research by retired Melbourne teacher, Lambis Englezos, archaeological investigations began to uncover the remains of some 200 Australian and 50 British soldiers who were buried in a mass grave at Pheasant Wood by German troops in 1916. Between 30 January and 19 February 2010, the remains of 249 soldiers were reinterred with full military honours in Fromelles (Pheasant Wood) Military Cemetery, newly constructed by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. Over 90 Australian soldiers were identified by name and more may still be identified.

On 19 July 2010, the 94th Anniversary of the Battle of Fromelles, the last of 203 Australian soldiers recovered from the excavation were buried in a solemn ceremony

with full military honours. Later that day, a private ceremony was held for families of identified soldiers to dedicate the named headstones within the cemetery.

Ashley Elkins, Head, Military History Section, Australian War Memorial
<https://www.awm.gov.au/encyclopedia/fromelles/?query=fromelles>

The Wilson brothers were to be amongst those men whose remains were identified in 2010 using DNA techniques. Their remains lay in an unknown mass grave pit for over ninety years with almost 250 other Australian and British soldiers who died at the Battle of Fromelles.



Samuel Wilson



Eric Wilson

While many of the young men that went away to war did not return, the majority did return but with broken bodies or shattered minds to forever remind them of their inhuman experiences. But for some, like 22 year old Private Stanley Latham of Port Macquarie, the war brought joy as well as suffering.

Stanley left Port Macquarie in 1916 as a 22 year old blacksmith, working in the Bellinger Valley, and returned in December 1919 a battle weary but married young man. Stanley met Doris Bottomley in England and married four months prior to returning to Australia.

Private Oswald Dykes, a horse trainer from the Macleay Valley, whose father lived at Rollands Plains, embarked for Europe in May 1916. He was invalided to England in 1918 and also received the Military medal. The details of his meeting with Alma Aldhons, aged 26 of Swaffam Prior, Cambridgeshire are not known, but her father was a veterinary surgeon and

Swaffam Prior is close to the horse breeding centre of Newmarket. An active imagination can see Oswald, with his interest in horses, visiting the area and meeting Frederick Aldhons, Alma's father, and through him, Alma. They married on the 9th April, 1919.

Twenty-two year old policeman Edgar Miller Dennis embarked in March 1916 for the front. His two younger brothers embarked either side of him in February and April 1916. In August 1919 he married 23 year old Daisy Stephens of Newbury, Berkshire. Edgar and Daisy, together with their son, sailed for Australia in 1920 after having to wait for a family ship. Others too married overseas and returned to their families in Australia with new brides.

CERTIFIED EXTRACT OF A MARRIAGE CERTIFICATE RELATING TO:-

6651	Dvr.	DENNIS	E.M.	14th PCB. A.I.F.
	BRIDEGROOM		BRIDE	
Surname.....		DENNIS		Maiden Surname.....
				STEPHENS
Christian Names.....		Edgar Miller		Christian Names.....
				Daisy
Address (at time of Marriage)		Address (at time of Marriage)		
North Villa, King's Road,		Same		
Newbury				
Occupation.....		Civil Servant and Soldier in A.I.F.		Occupation.....
				Nil
Age.....		26		Age.....
		Condition.....		23
		Bachelor		Condition.....
				Spinster
Name, Address and Occupation of Father		Name, Address and Occupation of Father		
Josephine Dennis (Dec)		Joseph William James Stephens		
Store-keeper		Oil Merchant		

Marriage Certificate of Edgar Miller Dennis and Daisy Stephens

The experiences of the local men and boys who enlisted and served in Europe or the Middle East, and the impact of their absence and, tragically in some cases, their non-return to Australia, was mirrored in many hundreds of towns and villages across the country. Indeed across large parts of the European Empires. Life in 1914 in the Hastings Valley and surrounding districts was quiet and relatively isolated with major population centres being accessible only by a long road trip or, usually, by sea. The railway was coming but was not yet a mass transport option.

The issues and concerns for most people were similar to today: the fortunes and fluctuations of the agricultural cycles, finding a job, somewhere to live and establishing a family. But the Hastings in 1914 was a world without radio, television, the Internet and

instant news from around the world. News travelled slowly and it was only the imagination that translated cabled reports of European tensions into some sense of reality.

For many young men the pay offered by the Army was more than they were earning as labourers or farm workers. The chance to travel to Europe, the Middle East or "the old country" was alluring as most would never be able to go otherwise. So many of these young men had never experienced life away from home, or much of life itself for that matter, and to be thrust into exotic Middle-Eastern towns or European cities that were so culturally different to Beechwood, Wauchope, Rollands Plains, Laurieton, Kendall or Port Macquarie was "the experience of a lifetime". After all, the war was expected to be over in a few months and they could return home as heroes.

The Great War was a major turning point in world history. It involved more nations, in a vaster and more deadly conflict, than the world had ever seen before. The map of Europe was radically changed, monarchies tumbled, and social barriers and class systems were challenged. The war also ushered in significant social changes that may have taken many more decades to achieve.

Australia as a nation had never experienced armed warfare on such a scale before. Contingents from the colonial states had been previously despatched to the Maori Wars, the Boer war and the Boxer Rebellion. And, of course, there were the armed clashes between the traditional owners of the land and the European settlers. Never before, however, had the European population of Australia been subjected to such widespread and personal losses as families experienced due to the Great War.

The scars of war, and the loss of a significant number of men of that generation, would profoundly impact upon the national psyche. It's impacts would similarly affect the people of the Hastings Valley.