

World War Two & the Hastings 1939-1945

**Service details of the men and women
listed on the Port Macquarie War Memorial**



WORLD WAR II 1939-1945
EGYPT, LIBYA, GREECE, CRETE, SYRIA, PAPUA NEW GUINEA,
BOUGAINVILLE, BORNEO, MALAYA, SINGAPORE,
ON ALL THE OCEANS AND IN THE AIR.

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Compiled by Port Macquarie Hastings Library
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Preface

The concept of a memorial to commemorate those who served in times of war came in the aftermath of the Great War, now known as World War One. Memorials or honour boards were erected in towns, villages, cities, schools, halls, places of work, churches and in private locations. On them were inscribed the names of those who lost their lives during the war. Some memorials, like the one in Port Macquarie, also listed the names of those who served and were fortunate to return.

The Port Macquarie War Memorial, then located at the intersection of Horton and Clarence Streets, was officially unveiled by the Mayoress, Mrs Hill, on the 30th March 1921 at 3:30 in the afternoon. It was a rainy blustery day and the large crowd that had gathered to witness the ceremony heard a number of speeches by local dignitaries and members of parliament. No one present that afternoon could have known that the 'war to end all wars' was soon to be surpassed by an even longer, more global, and costlier war in terms of lives and property destruction.

Many of the young boys who witnessed the unveiling of the War Memorial would find themselves in uniform only two decades later. Indeed, a number of the men who returned from the Great War would enlist again for the Second World War. And as with the first war some men lied about their age, making themselves either younger or older, to meet the current enlistment guidelines.

The age limits set for enlistment in the Second Australian Imperial Force (AIF) in 1939 were 20 to 35 for recruits, higher for officers and some NCOs. The maximum was raised to 40 in 1940, and the minimum lowered to 19 in 1941, and 18 in 1943; written parental consent was required for anyone under the age of 21. Even when the limit was lowered to 18, men of that age were not permitted to go to New Guinea or the Northern Territory.

Port Macquarie had a population in 1936 of around 1,300 people. The names of World War Two service personnel inscribed on the memorial number nearly 500. Many of the names are of people who enlisted from surrounding areas, or who were connected in some way to Port Macquarie but may not have been born here or resident at the time.

After the First World War a committee was formed to find, and inscribe, the names of those who had served. However, at the end of the Second World War there was no such sentiment. It was only in the 1990s that a bronze plaque was affixed to the Memorial simply engraved:

“World War II 1939-1945, Egypt Libya Greece Crete Syria Papua New Guinea Bougainville Borneo Malaya Singapore on all the oceans and in the air”

However, in 1997 the Commonwealth Government initiated a grants program to allow local communities to apply for funding to commemorate those who served the country in all conflicts. A Citizens War Memorial Committee was formed and a notice was placed in the Port Macquarie News of January 5th 1998 calling for people to come forward with names *“to recognize everybody in the 2444 postcode area who has given service to this country”*.

By January 16 between 700 and 1,000 names had been submitted, but as Colin Purbrick of the memorial sub-committee of the Port Macquarie RSL sub-branch said *“We’ve received lists from the Historical Society, Vietnam veterans and old time Port Macquarie residents, and with all of that there has to be a few duplications (of names)”*. [PMN 16.01.1998 p.4]. The final list of names was expected to be much shorter.

The method in which the names were compiled has presented difficulties in researching details of the men and women whose names have been inscribed on the plinths that now surround the old war memorial. With only a surname and initial to go by, exhaustive research into online records and newspaper archives has enabled the vast majority of these names to be identified and their service records to be recorded.

However, there were several service personnel who shared a common surname and initial, while others were known by a nickname or a name that was not their birth name. Misspelling was sometimes an issue, while there were a number of names too that bore no obvious connection to Port Macquarie, but research was able to provide that ‘missing link’ to the local area. Some of the names inscribed, unfortunately, were unable to be identified.

This publication was compiled from publicly available sources and does not claim to be definitive in its coverage or detail. The difficulties presented in researching from just a surname and initial mean that some information may contain errors. Every effort has been made to ensure accuracy in the entries but the Library will be pleased to hear from any person who can supply further information.



Acknowledgements

The initial research into identifying the people behind the names on the memorial plinths was done by ex-library staff member Sue O’Brien. Subsequent research to give detail to the records was conducted by current library staff Karen Rowan Hodges and Jeff Stonehouse.