

ANZAC DAY

25 APRIL 2022

**REMEMBERING AND COMMEMORATING
LOCAL SERVICE PERSONNEL WHO
HAVE SERVED OUR COUNTRY**



A BRIEF MESSAGE FROM CLAYTON



As I prepare this year's ANZAC booklet, my mind quickly turns to the current conflict between Russia and Ukraine. My thoughts also reflect on other authoritarian regimes that control various countries around the world.

With great sadness I think about what the former US President is trying to do to America at the moment, and that is to turn America into a dictatorship by coming up with crazy and unbelievable schemes to undermine the democratic process of voters and voting.

At times wars are fought over land, oil or religion. Many times wars are also fought over ideology – the most common battle in recent times being the war between democracies and dictatorships.

Our Australian armed men and women have always fought for democracy. They have fought for a belief and love of our country that is based on each person getting a vote and each person getting a fair go in life.

Democracy is worth saving and cherishing. Our diggers certainly thought so.

**Clayton Barr, MP
State Member for the Electorate of Cessnock**

WOLLOMBI'S PRIVATE STAPLEFORD

Samuel Francis Stapleford of Wollombi was the son of a well known local family of Henry and Louisa Jane Stapleford. Samuel was working as a labourer prior to his enlistment into WWI.

Growing up he attended Wollombi Public School. He was an energetic and popular young man. He enlisted with the AIF on 15 March, 1916, travelling overseas on-board HMAT Port Sydney on 4 September, 1916 as part of the 34th Battalion. The Battalion arrived on the shores of Plymouth, England 48 days later on 22 October, 1916.

Private Stapleford was serving on the Western Front on 7 June, 1917. The Battalion was at Houplinen, Armentières, France holding the line. They were there as part of the assault on the Messines-Wytschaete Ridge, a strongly held strategic position of the Western Front.

Private Stapleford had just finished digging in while under heavy bombarding from the Germans at about 7pm, when one of his fellow soldiers saw him being carried away from the battlefield. He had been shot through the forehead by a sniper. The medics bandaged him up in the trenches but he never spoke after being hit. He was buried in a shell hole at Messines. As the place had not been marked at the time of burial, they were unable locate his grave again.

His fellow soldiers described him as a "big and fair farmer's son" and a "well liked chap" who was mates with everyone.

Private Samuel Stapleford is commemorated on the Menin Gate Memorial, Ypres, Flanders, Belgium. He was 23 years old.

THOMSON BROTHERS WEST WALLSEND

West Wallsend brothers James John and William Lily Thomson were as thick as thieves. The brothers could not have been closer. They enlisted together on 10 January, 1916 receiving the service numbers of 206 and 207 respectively. The brothers were well known identities in the West Wallsend area. James was a member of the West Wallsend Band and played the cornet. He was also once a member of a well known rugby team called 'Black Diamonds' which had toured the country.



Above: Sergeant James John Thomson and Private William Lily Thomson.

William had success in boxing. He had proven himself as such a strong fighter that no one in the West Wallsend district would face him. Prior to his enlistment he had also won several bouts in Sydney.

The brothers would leave Australian shores aboard the HMAT Hororata on 2 May, 1916 as part of the 34th Battalion also known as "Maitland's Own". The Battalion would arrive in Plymouth, England for training prior to their deployment to the front line in France.

Despite the seriousness of conditions at the front, on occasion the cheekiness of the Thomson brothers came to the front with both men getting reprimanded on different days in May 1917 for drunkenness. The brothers also had a serious side and on 12 September, 1917 James Thomson was promoted to the rank of Sergeant due to his leadership in the field.

One month later on 12 October, 1917 the brothers would be part of the attack to gain ground around the town of Passchendaele. However heavy rain and mud made movement difficult and limited artillery was able to be brought closer to assist.

Sergeant James Thomson was fighting on the frontline when he was hit on the left arm and side and was in a pretty bad way. A fellow soldier helped him out of his equipment then turned to help others wounded nearby. In the meantime Sergeant Thomson had started to walk back to the first aid post.

Private William Thomson had also been injured on the frontline. Reports from fellow soldiers said as the two brothers were being taken out of the line together, they were hit by a shell and blown up. As there were no bodies, both brothers were listed as missing.

For those at home it was a trying time, especially for their mother Elizabeth who held hope they had been taken prisoner or not yet identified in hospital. The idea of losing both of her sons was too much to consider. Miscommunication from authorities also didn't help, as the family had been informed of James' missing status but had to learn about William being missing from a newspaper.

Sergeant James John Thomson and Private William Lily Thomson were declared killed in action by a Court of Enquiry which sat to determine the West Wallsend brothers' fate. Despite searches their bodies were never found.

PRIVATE GEORGE CHIPPENDALE

North Rothbury's George Chippendale was born at the tail end of WW1 on 11 May, 1918. He would enlist as a bright eyed 22 year old on 17 June, 1940 to serve in the Australian Army during WWII as part of the 2nd/18th Battalion. The Battalion was part of the 8th Division, however instead of being sent to the Middle East as expected, they were sent to Malaya.

There they would undergo training with an emphasis on jungle warfare. After the outbreak of war with Japan in December 1941, the Australian soldiers faced continuous fighting. With the fall of Singapore, the Battalion were taken into captivity as prisoners of war (POW). The men were divided according to labour needs and moved around to different labour camps including labouring on the Burma-Thai railway and Saigon docks.

Private George Chippendale was one of those who had been captured and taken prisoner. Private Chippendale along with 1,317 other POWs were loaded onto the *Rakuyō Maru* to transport the POWs and supplies from Singapore to Japan on 4 September, 1944. They would also be travelling with another transport ship *Kachidoki Maru* with about 900 POWs on-board. Once on board the ship dropped anchor just out of the harbour and those on-board had to wait for 36 hours for the ship to move again with very little food and under cramped conditions.

Once they were underway the convoy was joined by 2 tankers, a further 3 transport ships, 2 destroyers and were followed by a corvette as they sailed away from Singapore. For those POWs on-board that knew the danger that they could potentially be sailing into, having the extra ships around was seen as a good thing as those vessels would be attacked first.

In the early hours of 12 September, 1944, the convoy was attacked by American submarines in the South China Sea. The Americans had first attacked the vessels surrounding the transport ships before torpedoes were launched at the *Rakuyō Maru* which carried many POWs including Private Chippendale. The Americans did not know until much later what the Japanese ships had been carrying.



Above: Transport ship *Rakuyō Maru* built in 1921 by Mitsubishi Company at Nagasaki.

As the ship began to sink some prisoners were able to jump overboard and spent the following days in the water. They used whatever they could to help them float - including chairs, tables, oil drums, even the cook-house stove. For many their already poor health and the conditions in the water, including oil from the ships as they sunk, would prove too much and many would die in the South China Sea.

About 150 Australian and British survivors were rescued by American submarines, who came upon the wreckage several days later. A further 500 were picked up by Japanese destroyers and continued as POWs in Japan. Private Chippendale was one of those unfortunate souls who perished at sea aged just 26 years old. A total of 1,559 Australian and British POWs were killed in the incident with 543 from Australia (503 from AIF, 33 RAN, 7 RAAF).

ELLALONG'S PRIVATE LING

Harold Bliss Ling, son of Jacob and Elizabeth Ling of Congewai was only 24 years old when he heard the call to take up arms and enlisted with the 4th Infantry Battalion on 29 August, 1914.

Private Ling, a labourer from Ellalong, left Australia on-board the HMAT *Euripides* on 20 October, 1914 sadly never to return. The 4th Battalion, like the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Battalions was recruited from NSW and was one of the first infantry units raised for the AIF during WWI.

The Battalion was put together within a fortnight of the declaration of war and embarked just 2 months later. The Battalion briefly stayed in Albany, WA, before leaving for Egypt arriving on 2 December, 1914.

They then took part in the Anzac landing on 25 April, 1915 as part of the 2nd and 3rd waves. Private Ling survived the landing only to be killed in action at Gallipoli on 19 July, 1915 aged 25 years. He is buried at Shrapnel Valley Cemetery, Gallipoli.

Photo: Private Harold Ling



HEROIC NURSE THOMAS

Nurse Catherine Bevan Thomas, daughter of Francis and Hannah Thomas of Hebburn Street, Pelaw Main joined the Australian Army Nursing Service (AANS) on 19 September, 1917. She had just turned 24 and had trained as a nurse at Maitland Hospital.

For the first year of her service she was stationed in Australia, before embarking for service overseas. On 14 October, 1918, she left Sydney aboard SS *Wyreema*. While on their way to provide support in Salonika, Greece, the SS *Wyreema* with a group of 40 odd nurses on-board was turned around as the Armistice had been declared so they were no longer needed in Salonika.

Meanwhile the HMAT *Boonah* carrying over 1,200 soldiers on their way to the battlefields of WWI received a wireless communication just outside of Durban, South Africa informing them of the armistice and to return home. They would need to dock in Durban for 3 days for supplies. This would prove deadly as dozens on-board would become infected with the "Spanish Flu". The infection spread like wildfire through the cramped conditions on the ship.

Once the ship was within Australian waters, authorities panicked not wanting the ship to dock. For weeks the ship was diverted from one port to another until authorities, under public pressure, established a quarantine station at Woodman Point in WA. Nurses from SS *Wyreema* were asked to volunteer to nurse the 300 odd sick soldiers, at great risk to themselves. Nurse Catherine Thomas was one of the brave nurses to volunteer. 27 soldiers and 4 nurses would die at Woodman Point of influenza.

Nurse Thomas would continue to serve in the AANS until 22 January, 1920. She was a dedicated nurse both in the war and after. Catherine Thomas died 2 January, 1981. She was 87 years old. Her bravery is remembered on the Pelaw Main Public School Memorial Gates.

HOLMESVILLE'S PRIVATE MOYLAN

Private John Moylan, son of Stephen Moylan of Holmesville, enlisted as part of the 15th Reinforcement 2nd Battalion on 15 August, 1915. He was 18 years old.

A labourer by trade, Private Moylan travelled from Sydney on-board the HMAT *Star of England* on 8 March, 1916. He was moved from the 2nd Battalion to the 54th Battalion in late April 1916 while training in Egypt.

The 54th Battalion travelled to Marseilles, France on 29 June, 1916. Over the course of the next 16 months Private Moylan would go through a cycle of being sent to the front to fight only to be returned to hospital every few months with severe bronchitis to get well and be sent back to the front to fight again.

On 23 November, 1917 Private Moylan was back in the field when he was shot in both legs. After treatment his left leg had to be amputated, however, he did not recover from his injuries and died from his wounds in late November 1917. He was 20 years old. He was buried at Trois Arbres Cemetery, Steenwerck, Nord Pas de Calais, France.

PRIVATE HENRY ALLPORT



Photo: Menin Gate Memorial is dedicated to those who were killed and have no known grave.

Edenville was the forerunner for the modern-day village of Kearsley and was a communal hub for those working at the Abermain No. 2 Colliery (around the area of Kearsley dam).

One of those to live and work in Edenville was a young labourer, Henry Albert Allport.

Stories of heroic deeds of soldiers had reached the home front and Henry Allport decided to enlist with the 55th Battalion in October 1916.

Private Allport spent the first half of 1917 in England undertaking necessary training. He was eventually sent to France in August and within weeks was transferred to the 35th Battalion.

He saw action for the first time during the Battle of Passchendaele that commenced on 12 October, 1917. His Abermain No. 2 Colliery colleague, Captain Clarence Jeffries joined him along the line.

The mud of the rain-soaked battlefield significantly affected the progression of the Australian troops. The fighting was horrific. Of the 508 men of the 35th Battalion that had been fit at the start, only 90 remained at the end.

Like Captain Jeffries, Private Allport became one of several men from the Hunter listed on the casualty list at the end of the day. He was reported as missing.

Six months later, a Court of Inquiry made the determination that Private Allport had been killed in action during the Battle of Passchendaele. His remains were not recovered and he has no known grave. His name is listed on the Menin Gate Memorial, Ypres, Flanders, Belgium and he is honoured at the Crookwell War Memorial.

ROBERTSON BROTHERS OF KURRI KURRI

The Robertson brothers from Kurri Kurri both heard the call to take up arms and fight in WWI. Herbert John Robertson, the younger of the two brothers was the first to join up at Newcastle on 3 September, 1915. Herbert was working as a Locomotive Fireman employed at the John Brown Colliery at Kurri Kurri.

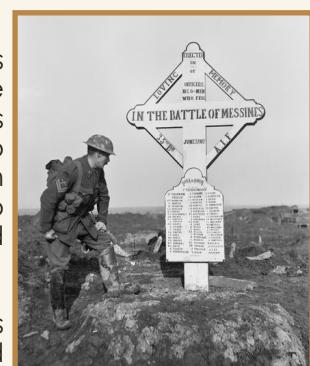
He departed Sydney as part of the 30th Infantry Battalion on the HMAT Ballarat on 16 February, 1916. After arriving in England the Battalion was sent to Egypt before proceeding to France. The Battalion's first major battle was at Fromelles on 19 July, 1916. They had been tasked with providing carrying parties for supplies and ammunition but were soon drawn into vicious fighting. Following this battle they would continue to be rotated in and out of the front line.

Over the next several years Private Herbert Robertson would need medical treatment in hospital for his injuries and health conditions caused from being in the trenches. On 23 September, 1918 he was admitted to hospital in Birmingham, England suffering a sprained left ankle. Due to his injuries he was discharged and returned home on 18 March, 1919 to his wife and 2 children. Herbert Robertson died in Kurri Kurri on 28 January, 1960.

Older brother George, a miner by trade enlisted on 4 December, 1915 as part of the 35th Battalion. The Battalion was formed in Newcastle and a bulk of the recruits were drawn from the Newcastle region and were nicknamed "Newcastle's Own". George departed on-board the HMAT Benalla on 1 May, 1916 and disembarked in England. The Battalion spent 4 months training before proceeding to France to be faced with blistery winter conditions. The Battalion would spend a majority of the war fighting on the Western Front suffering heavy casualties.

The first major battle the Battalion took part in was the Battle of Messines launched on 7 June, 1917. The Messines Ridge which had been held by the Germans since 1914 was of great strategic importance. Central to the Allies' plan was a series of tunnels under the German defences where highly explosive mines were placed to devastating effect. The blast from the explosions could be heard in London, some 209km away.

The Battalion's tunnelling experience here was invaluable as many of "Newcastle's Own" had come from mining backgrounds. Their story was told in the movie "Beneath Hill 60". When the mines were detonated the German soldiers were disorientated and the infantry were able to use this to push forward to capture the ridge. However, it was not without losses as well. Private George Robertson was killed in action during the attack leaving behind his wife, Elizabeth and their 5 children. Private George Robertson's remains were not recovered. His name is listed on the Ash Crater Memorial and at the Menin Gate Memorial, Ypres, Flanders, Belgium.



Above: A soldier from C Company 35th Battalion at a memorial erected near Ash Crater dedicated to members of the 35th Battalion who fell in the Battle of Messines on 7 June, 1917.

LOCAL ANZAC DAY SERVICES 2022

ABERMAIN

8:30am - March from the corner of Bathurst Street and Cessnock Road to the Jeffries Park Cenotaph for the Service.

BRANXTON

5:30am - Dawn Service at the Branxton Rotunda, John Rose Avenue, Branxton.
6:30am-7:30am Gun Fire Breakfast Miller Park Hotel

11:30am - Town March Form up 11:15am in front of old Branxton Inn and Paper shop

11:45am - Main Service Branxton Rotunda for the Service.

BROKE

5:30am - Dawn Service at Broke War Memorial, Broke Street, Broke.

10:00am - Morning Service at Broke War Memorial.

BRUNKERVILLE

3:00pm - Uniting Church in Memorial Garden

BULGA

10:45am for 11:00am Service gather at Bulga Recreation Ground, The Inlet Road, Bulga

CAMERON PARK

Closest Service is at West Wallsend.

CESSNOCK

5:30am - Dawn Service at the Cessnock Cenotaph which is located in the grounds of Cessnock TAFE, North Avenue, Cessnock.

9:30am - Morning Service at Veteran's Park, Aberdare Road, Aberdare.

11:00am - March from the Vincent St Kitchen + Bar, along Vincent Street to the Cenotaph for the Service at **11:40am** in the TAFE grounds.

EDGEWORTH

Closest Service is at West Wallsend.

GRETA

5:30am - Dawn Service at Greta War Memorial Cenotaph, New England Highway, Greta.

9:30am - March from the corner of Nelson Street and the New England Highway to the Cenotaph for the Service.

10:00am - Main Service commences.

HOLMESVILLE

Closest Service is at West Wallsend.

KEARSLEY

5:15am - March from Kearsley Tennis Court to the Cenotaph at Kearsley Community Hall, Allandale Street, Kearnsey.

5:30am - Service at the Cenotaph. BBQ breakfast will follow within the grounds of the area of remembrance.

KURRI KURRI

5:00am - Dawn Service at the Cenotaph in Col Brown Rotary Park, corner of Lang and Hampden Streets, Kurri Kurri.

9:45am - March from Mitre 10 to the Cenotaph.

10:00am - Service at the Cenotaph.

NEATH

10:30am - Lighting of the Miner's Lamp at Neath Hotel, Cessnock Road, Neath.

MILLFIELD

5:15am - Gather at St Luke's Anglican Church, Wollombi Road, Millfield and march to Millfield Public School for the Service.

PAXTON

5:25am - Gather at the corner of McDonald and Anderson Avenues, Paxton and march to Paxton Public School for the Service.

POKOLBIN

7:00am - Service at Pokolbin Public School Memorial Gates 126 McDonalds Road, Community Hall and Rural Fire Service, Pokolbin (opposite Ben Ean).

PUTTY

10:00am - Service at Putty Community Hall, Putty Valley Road, Putty.

WEST WALLSEND

9:50am - Short march from West Wallsend Worker's Club car park. Form up from 9:30am.

10:00am - Service at West Wallsend Soldiers' Memorial Park, corner of Carrington and Hyndes Streets, West Wallsend.

WOLLOMBI

5:45am - Service at Wollombi Anzac Reserve, corner of Wollombi and Narone Creek Roads, Wollombi.

Please note times may be subject to change.