

ANZAC DAY

25 APRIL 2025



REMEMBERING AND COMMEMORATING
LOCAL SERVICE PERSONNEL WHO
HAVE SERVED OUR COUNTRY



A BRIEF MESSAGE FROM CLAYTON

As we gather to commemorate Anzac Day 2025, we reflect on the legacy of what Anzac means to us as Australians. This year we mark the 110th anniversary of the Gallipoli campaign. The campaign holds significant meaning for both Australians and New Zealanders and is seen as a defining moment which has shaped our national identities.

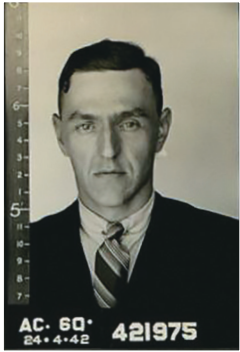
Throughout this booklet I have shared the stories of local people, so that we may remember and pay tribute to those who have served as well as the families and friends who endured alongside them.

Our local RSL sub-branches, Anzac service committees, and historical societies work tirelessly every year to help us commemorate this important occasion. Thank you all for your efforts.



Clayton Barr, MP
State Member for the Electorate of Cessnock

PAXTON'S JOHN HARPER



Above: Flight Sergeant John Harper.

Born in East Murton, County Durham, England, during World War I on 14 June 1915, Flight Sergeant John Harper emigrated to Australia as an 11 year old with his parents Matthew and Margaret Harper, eventually settling at Paxton.

After completing his schooling at Cessnock High School, Flight Sergeant Harper worked at Stanford Main No. 2 Colliery, before he obtained an apprenticeship with NSW Government Railways.

Flight Sergeant Harper eventually went on to work as an electrical fitter at Elrington Colliery. He married Edythe Harper in September 1936 and their son Francis was born in 1937.

Enlisting in the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) on 24 April 1942, he worked his way through the ranks, and was awarded his air gunner badge in February 1943. After completing his training he arrived in England, on 16 April 1943.

Flight Sergeant Harper was part of the Halifax Bombers Squadron, which had engaged in many operational flights over Germany. It was on a return trip that he would meet his end.

On the afternoon of 19 November 1943 the crew including Flight Sergeant Harper and six others were flying in aircraft Halifax HX181 returning to England from an operation in Leverkusen, Germany when the aircraft crashed into a hanger at Tangmere Airfield.

All on board the aircraft were killed and a number of aircraft were also destroyed. Flight Sergeant Harper was buried in the village of his birth in County Durham, England.

GALLIPOLI: A BAND OF BROTHERS

110 years ago the landing at Gallipoli marked the beginning of the Anzac spirit and legacy. For the soldiers who were part of the Allied forces attempted to take control of the Gallipoli Peninsula in Turkey. This campaign, while not successful was a major turning point in shaping Australia's national identity. On 25 April 1915, Australian soldiers landed at what is now named Anzac Cove on the Gallipoli Peninsula. For the vast majority of the 16,000 soldiers who landed that day it was their first experience of combat.

The goal was to open up the Dardanelles for the Allies and weaken the Ottoman Empire. The campaign, however, turned into a brutal stalemate, with soldiers facing harsh conditions, difficult terrain and relentless enemy fire. Despite the challenges they faced the Anzac soldiers battled on. They are remembered not just for their courage in battle but for the incredible bond they shared. A bond which is often referred to as "band of brothers,"- an unbreakable camaraderie, forged through shared hardships and mutual sacrifice - this has become the defining quality of the Anzac spirit.

Mateship is central to the Anzac legend in the face of overwhelming adversity; our soldiers supported each other through the horrors of trench warfare, showing courage, loyalty, resourcefulness and an unbreakable bond of brotherhood.

The landing was a military disaster and what followed was a series of unsuccessful attempts to break the stalemate that lasted until the end of 1915. The whole Gallipoli operation cost 26,111 Australian casualties, including 8,141 deaths. While not successful the campaign brought us what we refer to as the Anzac legend of brave, resilient and self-sacrificing warriors. **"Lest we forget."**

WEST WALLSEND'S ARCHIBALD HARDEN

Private Archibald Gracie Harden was born at West Wallsend in 1895 to Robert and Christina Harden of South Cessnock. He enlisted as part of the 20th Battalion as an 18 year old in October 1916, having previously served 4 years in the Citizens Forces.

Private Harden was a colourful character, a butcher by trade who got into his own share of trouble during his service. He was frequently fined and disciplined for being absent without leave and on one occasion, was charged with breaking ship (meaning he left the ship at a port) resulting in him receiving 168 hours of detention.

During his service he had several injuries. On 18 May 1917 he was accidentally wounded in the right shoulder by a bayonet while cleaning his rifle. After healing from this wound he was transferred to the 35th Battalion.

In August 1918 he was wounded in the Battle of Amiens, France. He suffered a gunshot wound to his right buttock and left thigh, after which he was invalided to the UK and eventually sent home in May 1919.

Private Harden married Lillian Short in 1921, eventually taking over as the licensee of the Royal Standard Hotel in Adamstown. Private Harden died tragically in November 1928, when he fell from the balcony of the hotel.



Above: DIY 'dog tag' on French Franc coin, featuring Private Harden's name.

REMEMBERING AND HONOUR

PRIVATE THOMAS BELL



Miner and father of four, Private Thomas Bell of Greta was 32 years old when he enlisted on 6 September 1915.

A miner prior to his enlistment, Private Bell was a stretcher bearer in the 20th Battalion. Despite suffering from a displaced cartilage of his left knee, he continued to do his duty until his death on 8 April 1918 when a shell hit the dugout in which he was sleeping, killing him immediately. According to records he was buried in Hangard Wood, Villers-Bretonneux, France.

In October 1919 a house was built by volunteers for Private Bell's widow Beatrice and their children in Merewether which was fittingly named 'Hangard Wood'.

PRIVATE WILLIAM ARMSTRONG

The Battle of Lone Pine was one of the most famous assaults of the Gallipoli campaign. The battle originally a diversion attempt, led to intense hand-to-hand fighting resulting in over 2,000 Australian casualties.

Private William Armstrong of Cessnock was one such casualty. A cordial maker, Private Armstrong enlisted with the 4th Infantry Battalion on 26 October 1914. He left Australian shores on 11 February, 1915 aboard HMAT *Seang Bee*.



Private Armstrong was killed in action at Lone Pine, Gallipoli on 6 August 1915.

PRIVATE KENNETH FOSTER



Private Kenneth Foster was one of five children born to Thomas and Sophie Foster of Mount Vincent. As an 18 year old student he enlisted in the 1st Pioneer Battalion on 15 January 1917.

Leaving Australia aboard HMAT *Beltana* in June 1917, he spent a major part of his service in France on the Western Front. He returned home in May 1919 after being discharged as medically unfit having suffered a fractured fibula.

Private Foster died of natural causes on 27 January 1922 aged 23 years.

SERGEANT HARRY SHOOTER

The second eldest of five children Sergeant Harry Shooter had emigrated to Australia from Mansfield, England when he was 21 years old.

He settled in Greta to work as a miner. Prior to his immigration Sergeant Shooter had been a miner and a professional soldier in the British Army serving two years. In August 1914, he enlisted in the Australian Army.

Sadly, Sergeant Shooter was killed in action during heavy fighting just over a month after landing in Gallipoli on 19 May 1915. He is buried at the 4th Battalion Parade Ground Cemetery, Turkey.



ING OUR LOCAL WWI HEROES

PRIVATE JAMES BALSDON

Private James Balsdon of Weston known affectionately to his fellow soldiers as "Joe" enlisted in the 1st Battalion on 27 September 1915 at the age of 26.

Private Balsdon was reported missing after intense fighting at the Attack at Fromelles in July 1916. Causing confusion and heartbreak for his family he was initially marked as a prisoner of war in Germany, however later eye witness reports from fellow soldiers confirmed he had died in the field.



PRIVATE JOHN BAINBRIDGE

Private John 'Jack' Bainbridge was the youngest of seven children, after his parents' deaths he was raised by his maternal aunt Elizabeth at Edgeworth.

A labourer by trade he enlisted on 25 January 1915. During fighting at Gallipoli in August 1915, Private Bainbridge suffered a gunshot wound to the right thigh. After nearly 8 months in hospital and convalescent camps he was transferred to the 53rd Battalion on the Western Front.

On 19 July 1916 Private Bainbridge was badly wounded in the leg and head during the Battle of Fromelles, France. He was initially reported as missing, however a Court of Inquiry later confirmed he had been killed in action.



PRIVATE THOMAS KINNEARD

Born John William Eckford on 9 April 1897 to a single mother Jessie, Private Thomas Kinneard enlisted under the name given to him by his foster family Thomas and Sarah Kinneard of Abermain.

A wheeler by trade, at 18 years old he left Australia on 2 May 1916 aboard HMAT *Hororata*. Sadly, he would never return home.

Private Kinneard was killed in action when he was hit by an artillery shell at the First Battle of Passchendaele in Belgium on 13 October 1917. He was only 20 years old.



PRIVATE GEORGE CROFT

West Wallsend's Private George Croft known as "Darby" enlisted on 10 September 1915. Prior to his enlistment Private Croft worked as a mental hospital attendant in Newcastle.

Initially reported as missing and wounded in July 1916, after months of his mother Sarah writing to authorities, a Court of Inquiry found he had been killed in action. Witness reports stated he was carrying ammunition in "No Man's Land" and was killed by a shell at Fleurbaix, France on 19 July 1916.

Due to the need to retreat his body had to be left. It was not until more than 90 years later that Private Croft's body was found in a mass grave of 250 soldiers. He now rests at Pheasant Wood Military Cemetery, France.



KEARSLEY WON'T FORGET

While serving at Gallipoli in 1915, Edenville miner, Private Patrick Egan suffered gunshot wounds to his head and stomach. He was evacuated to the hospital ship *SS Soudan*, where he died of his wounds and was buried at sea off Gallipoli.

Private Egan was the first man from the broader Kearsley community to be killed in action. In December 1919, employees of the Abermain No. 2 Colliery gifted Kearsley Public School with a large framed photograph of Private Egan to display in the school to ensure his memory would live on. The photograph was still on display in the 1960s.



At some point it was taken down and the original could not be located.

As part of their commitment to preserving local military history, the Kearsley Community Dawn Service Committee acquired a new portrait of Private Egan and gifted it to Kearsley Public School to be put on display.

This ensures that Private Egan will not be forgotten again.

HEDDON GRETA'S PRIVATE RENNIE

Heddon Greta miner Private Frederick Peter Rennie known as Fred enlisted as part of the 2nd Battalion on 19 August 1914, at the beginning of World War I. His previous service had included 3 years as part of the 4th Infantry.

He left Australia in October 1914 and would never return home. He was wounded in the foot at Dardanelles in early May 1915, however, he rejoined his unit on 27 June 1915. By August Private Rennie was treated for injuries including sepsis of the hand at the No. 3 Field Ambulance dressing station before once again rejoining his unit on the Gallipoli Peninsula.

Private Rennie was killed during the Gallipoli campaign on 15 November 1915. He was 29 years old.

STAFF NURSE MABEL WOOD



Above: Staff nurse Mabel Wood of the AANS service 1917-1919.

More than 3,000 Australian civilian nurses volunteered for active service during World War I. One such nurse was Staff Nurse Mabel Wood. Her father was the licensee of the Station Hotel at Kurri Kurri during the war years.

Staff Nurse Wood enlisted as part of the Australian Army Nursing Service (AANS). One of 11 girls, it was said she told her father she was joining AANS because the family had no boys to send to war. Enlisting in May 1917 for the duration of the war, she was stationed in Salonika, Greece.

Staff Nurse Wood returned to Australia in 1919 but went back to England in 1920 to marry British army doctor Dr John McInnes who had treated her for malaria.

VIETNAM VETERAN PRIVATE BAILEY

Born at Kurri Kurri District Hospital to William and Vera Bailey on 8 May 1945, Private Errol Bailey was a dedicated teacher, husband and new father when he was conscripted into the Australian Army during the Vietnam War in February 1967.

In Australia, 15,300 men were conscripted into the Australian Army during the Vietnam conflict. More than 200 died and at least 1,200 were wounded on active duty.

Servicemen conscripted under the scheme became known as 'Nashos'. Names of potential conscripts were selected by a birthday ballot, where numbered wooden marbles were drawn by lottery from a barrel. The numbers of the marbles matched a list of birthdays.

Private Bailey joined the 1st Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment on 27 March 1968. He would serve a total of 48 days. Private Bailey died at the 24th US Evacuation Hospital Long Binh of wounds he received in the Battle of Coral-Balmoral, Bien Hoa Province on 13 May 1968, just shy of his 23rd birthday.

Private Bailey was survived by his wife Julie and son Richard. Bailey Park in Abermain is dedicated to Private Bailey and his service to our country.



Above: Vietnam Veteran Private Errol John Bailey of Kurri Kurri.

A STORY OF SURVIVAL



Above: Lance Corporal Lindsay Matthews of Pokolbin.

Enlisting in the Australian Infantry Forces (AIF) as a 21 year old in July 1940 was Pokolbin vigneron Lance Corporal Lindsay Matthews.

Lance Corporal Matthews, known as "Meggs" due to his red hair and freckled skin, served with the Field Ambulance Unit, with the first year of his service being spent in Australia. He left Australia in July 1941 for Malaya where he was appointed as a Lance Corporal on 10 January 1942.

In early April 1942 he was reported missing and was later declared a prisoner of war (POW). For the next 3 years he was held in Japanese imprisonment and work camps.

Australian soldiers who were captured and kept in these camps had a tough time in harsh living conditions, were made to do hard labour, were beaten, had no access to proper medical care, and had very little food.

His time in these camps had a profound affect on Lance Corporal Matthews who was diagnosed with solar keratosis due to his overexposure to the sun. He returned home via Darwin on 22 September 1945 spending time in hospital before being discharged and returned to the care of his family.

Helping him return to civilian life was his father Clarence Matthews who had served, was wounded and suffered from shell shock in World War I. After the war Lance Corporal Matthews returned to his work as a vigneron, married and raised a family.

LOCAL ANZAC DAY SERVICES 2025

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.

11:30am - Town march form-up 11:15am in front of former Branxton Inn and Paper shop, **11:45am** - Main Service Branxton Rotunda for day Memorial Service.

BROKE

5:45am - Dawn Service at Broke War Memorial, Broke Street, Broke.

10:00am - Service at Broke War Memorial.

BRUNKERVILLE

3:00pm - Uniting Church in Memorial Garden.

CESSNOCK

5:45am - Dawn Service at the Cessnock Cenotaph which is located in the grounds of Cessnock TAFE, North Avenue, Cessnock.

9:00am - Morning Service at Veterans 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.

GRETA

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

9:30am - March from the corner of Nelson Street and New England Highway to the Cenotaph for the service at **10:00am**.

KEARSLEY

5:20am - March from Kearsley Tennis Court to the Cenotaph at Kearsley Community Hall, Allandale Street, Kearsley.

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 Rotary Park, corner of Lang and Hampden Streets, Kurri Kurri.

9:45am - March from 139 Lang Street Kurri Kurri (former Mitre 10) to the Cenotaph. **10:00am** - Service at the Cenotaph.

KURRI KURRI continued

From Dawn Service Lost Diggers tribute at Col Brown Rotary Park.

7:00am to 4:30pm - Field of Honour at Kurri Kurri Cemetery.

NEATH

From 11:30am - 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 Memorial Gates, 126 McDonalds Road, Pokolbin.

PUTTY

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

WESTON

5:30am - Dawn Service at Cenotaph, Cessnock Road, Weston.

WEST WALLSEND

9:40am - March commences from corner of Withers and Carrington Streets, West Wallsend.

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

Front cover: Pelaw Main Public School First World War Memorial Gates. The gates were installed in 1917 to commemorate former students and volunteers from the town who served in World War I.