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# ANZAC DAY

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**25 APRIL 2020**

REMEMBERING AND COMMEMORATING  
LOCAL SERVICE PERSONNEL WHO  
HAVE SERVED OUR COUNTRY



# A BRIEF MESSAGE FROM CLAYTON



We have an unusual, but not unprecedented, Anzac Day ahead of us this year, with no services to take place because of COVID-19. The last time that Anzac Day services were cancelled were during World War II.

Given the situation that we are in this year, with an international pandemic spreading through us, my Anzac Day message this year is quite simple – look after each other, like our diggers did.

As we fast forward to 2020 and this current strain of Coronavirus that has sent panic through the community, I wonder what those that have served our country would make of the selfishness of our shopping habits today.

I am certain that we can all do better in facing this global health challenge. I am certain that we can be fair and reasonable with our neighbours, friends and strangers. I am certain that our shelves can provide the food and materials that we all need to go about our lives, without any need for panic buying.

For the sake of those who fought for our freedoms, I suggest that in 2020 let's celebrate Anzac Day by looking after each other in the face of this health pandemic.

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

## MIGHTY PAXTON MAN

Victor Harry McCrohon of Paxton was known by many in the Police Force and RSL as a “mighty man”. McCrohon was a steam engine driver when he enlisted at the age of 22 on November 4, 1939 with the 6th Division Reconnaissance Regiment, where he saw his first Middle East Desert Campaign. His second campaign was with the Long Range Desert Patrol before serving in the Syrian campaign where he was promoted to Sergeant.

The 6th Division Regiment members were admired for their courage, leadership and down right common sense which McCrohon displayed in spades.

In 1942 McCrohon was involved in the Burma Campaign. Just prior to the campaign he had been an instructor within the 2/6 Armed Regiment.

McCrohon was then posted to the combined infantry and tank instruction at Canungra and in 1943, 5 miles from Buna, Papua New Guinea McCrohon, commanding a thirteen ton General Stuart tank, destroyed 23 steel and concrete pill boxes in the grim battle for Cape Endaladers.

Later he was posted to Western Australia, then Richmond where he was promoted to Captain before going to Timor on special service. At Puckapunyal he was promoted once again, this time to Major in charge of the Tank Gunnery Wing, until his discharge from the Army in 1946.

After the war he became a decorated policeman serving at Raymond Terrace and the north coast before being sent to Griffith where he retired. McCrohon, nicknamed “Digger” died in 1981.

# FIELD OF HONOUR/LOST DIGGERS

Coalfields Heritage Group along with Kurri Kurri Towns with Heart have been working tirelessly for over 2 years to restore, digitise and identify portraits of World War 1 soldiers from more than 400 glass plate negatives, that were found during renovations of a Weston home in 2011.

The negatives were produced over 100 years ago by Scottish migrant photographer Alexander Galloway.

The collection of negatives includes many portraits of soldiers, both local and non local, taken just prior to their departure to serve in Europe. It was these portraits that the *Lost Diggers of Weston* exhibition organisers were interested in.

The two groups set about researching and collating biographies of these soldiers. The exhibit consists of photos of 70 soldiers with 26 of the photos having been named, identified and have stories attached.

Towns with Heart and Coalfields Heritage Group will continue to try and identify the images with the goal being able to name all soldiers and give each a story.

The exhibition was scheduled for Anzac Weekend but is currently on hold due to Government Regulations as a result of the Coronavirus.



**Above: The exhibition  
Front Cover: Field of Honour Kurri Kurri**

## WEST WALLSEND CLERK TO SOLDIER

James Oliver Cherry of West Wallsend was a clerk with Harry Smith Limited when he enlisted in World War 1 on December 30, 1915. At 30 years old Cherry was first sent to France on November 21, 1916 with the 35th Battalion and was eventually promoted to (RMQMS) Regimental Quarter Master Sergeant (Warrant Officer Class II) L/C on April 20, 1917.

Cherry was wounded in action in France on April 1, 1918 and he was transported to 2/3 South Midland Field Ambulance with a gunshot wound to the forehead. On April 2 he was transferred to the tent wards at the 1st Australian General Hospital in Rouen, in the French region of Normandy which dealt with general battle casualties.

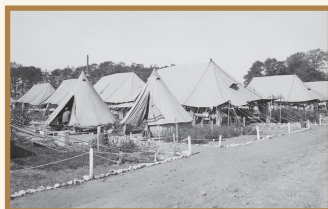
Back home in Australia Cherry's wife Ethel was notified on April 19, 1918 of her husband's wounding.

Cherry left England on the Hospital Transport ship "Karagola" on April 20, 1919 finally arriving in Sydney on June 14, 1919.

Upon his homecoming to West Wallsend he was met at the tram and escorted to the School of Arts building where the band and a large number of people had gathered to welcome him home.

Warrant Officers Class Two (WO2) act as a senior advisor to the commander of a sub-unit and are employed in more senior logistics and technical trades across most army corps with a focus on training, welfare and discipline of up to 200 soldiers.

**Below: 1st Australian General Hospital**



# TOP WOLLOMBI MARKSMEN

Henry John Diplock, a World War II soldier known by the nickname “Jack” was from a prominent Wollombi family whose origins in Wollombi date back to about 1830. Henry John “Jack” Diplock was born in 1917 and was only 22 years old when he enlisted in August 1940 and was called up for full time duty in October 1941.

Diplock served under the Citizens Military Force and the Australian Imperial Force. Diplock was able to advance through the ranks becoming a Sergeant in October 1941 and by March 1942 he was appointed a Lieutenant. This was partly due to the number of courses he undertook including an anti-gas course, musketry, unarmed combat, jungle defence and camouflage combined with his natural leadership abilities.

In the opinion of the Army what made Henry John Diplock stand out was that he was a “top marksman.” He spent a great deal of time during the war teaching soldiers how to fire rifles and L.M. Guns.

In 1944 Diplock transferred to the 20th pioneer battalion and served in Papua New Guinea until the end of the war. Overall Diplock served 1,078 active service days in Australia and 240 days overseas.

During his service Diplock moved between Greta, Rutherford and Port Stephens teaching his fellow countrymen and even trained snipers. As a result of many years on the firing range Diplock was deaf in later life.

He married Joyce James in Cessnock in 1941, after the war he lived and worked in Sydney for many years before retiring to the Central Coast eventually coming home to Cessnock until his death in 2013.



**Photo: Lieutenant Henry John Diplock**



**Photo: Captain Alick Husband**

## BROTHERS IN BATTLE

Captain Alick Husband was born in Ayr, Scotland in 1904 eventually settling in South Cessnock with wife Catherine and working as a miner. He enlisted on July 27, 1942 with the 2nd Infantry Battalion serving until January 14, 1944. The 2nd Battalion was part of the Citizens Military Forces Eastern Command. His unit based in Newcastle, where the battalion was responsible for manning the Fort Scratchley Battery, the Newcastle Harbour and Williamtown airfield. During his service Alick Husband worked as a troop militia training officer and was stationed for a time at Greta Army Camp.

Alick's brother Andrew Stewart Husband was born September 1908 and also served in World War II as part of the 8 Reinforcement 2/13th Battalion. The Battalion soldiers were among those nicknamed “Desert Rats” or “Rats of Tobruk.” During and after the siege of Tobruk they held the Libyan port against the Germans and became a noteworthy and hard fought winning campaign for Allied soldiers.



# WOMEN OF WORLD WAR II



**Photo: Aircraftwoman Jane Elizabeth Knowles (nee Hinds)**

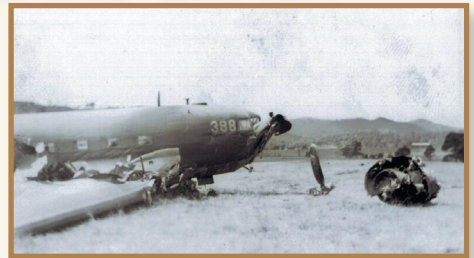
During World War II women joined the services in significant numbers. Many of them served in roles traditionally seen as women's work including nursing. While others found themselves working as drivers, signallers, in search light crews and anything in between which was to released men to fight on the front lines.

Many of our local women joined up to help in many different fields including sisters Eileen and Leila Gall from Neath who joined within weeks of each other in 1943 and both went into service in hospitals. Eileen as a Lance Corporal and Leila as a Private.

Chelmsford Hotel barmaid Jane Elizabeth Knowles (nee Hinds) from Weston entered the service as an Aircraft woman enlisting on October 15, 1942 at the age of 22. Jane Elizabeth Hinds was part of the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) which set the precedence for the formation of other women's service organisations such as The Australian Women's Army Services (AWAS) and Women's Royal Australian Naval Service (WRANS). Approximately 27,000 women enlisted in the WAAF between 15 March 1941 and 24 August 1945. The WAAF was the first and largest of the WWII Australian Women's Services.

## LAGUNA AIR PLANE CRASH

On the March 6, 1944 Mrs Greg Andrews (formerly Ellen Harris) was at her post scanning the skies as a member of the Volunteer Air Observers Corp. As she was watching a Douglas troop plane flying over the skies of Laguna she noticed the aircrew come off and smash into the wing of the plane. The plane was carrying American fighter pilots coming to Sydney for leave from their assignments in Papua New Guinea.



**Photo: USSAF Douglas Dakota Crash Laguna**

The American airmen on board were reportedly enjoying a game of poker when the incident happened. Metal started dropping from the plane and smoke began to billow from the engine. The airmen began to jump from the plane using parachutes. When they began to jump they were at approximately 3,000 feet. Of the 15 men who jumped, two of the last three crashed with unopened parachutes. One came down at the back of Laguna wine shop. One of the surviving airmen struck a Poplar tree and was catapulted into the creek where there was a great depth of water. He became entangled in his parachute, but was rescued by Mr A. Brown of Laguna. Another became stuck in a tree which was cut down thanks to Laguna local Mr A. Forbes. Incredibly only two men were killed. The pilot and co-pilot managed to remarkably crash land the plane. All of the men were taken to Cessnock Hospital where they were treated for minor injuries and a couple of broken bones. Several souvenirs were kept by locals including some of the parachutes which were made of silk. The valuable silk which was rationed at the time was then made into petticoats, underwear and even a ball gown.

# CESSNOCK HIGH FLYER

Flying Officer Richard Woodgate was the son of local Cessnock Solicitor Sidney Woodgate. The Woodgate family were all involved in the war effort, Sidney was the leader of the local War Finance Committee and his mother was the President of the local Red Cross Society.

After finishing school at Cessnock High, Richard Woodgate worked as an Article Clerk at his father's firm before enlisting at 18 years old as a member of the 30th Squadron of the RAAF.

During his service Woodgate flew Beaufighters nicknamed "whispering death" because of their swift, silent drop onto targets firing "rocket projectiles."

After the war Woodgate went to law school, married and practiced law in the Hunter Valley. As an early conservationist he was among those responsible for saving Blackbutt Reserve area from a freeway development in the 1960's.

Woodgate passed away in 2003 but his legacy lives on.



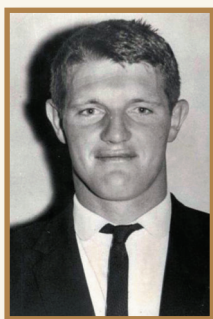
Photo: Flying Officer Richard Woodgate

# PELAW MAIN SPORTSMAN

On November 24, 1964 the National Service Act 1964 was passed. Under the National Service Scheme men aged 20 years old were required to register with the Department of Labour and National Service (DLNS), a ballot was drawn twice a year. If their birth date was drawn, they might be subject to 2 years of continuous service in the Army, followed by 3 years in the Army Reserve, this included overseas service in Vietnam.

The ballot was like a lottery draw with ballot balls, some ballots were even televised. Numbered marbles representing birth dates were chosen at random from a barrel. The men were then told if they were required for service.

Eligible men who did not register were automatically considered for call-up as well as fined.



Above: Private Richard Lloyd

Pelaw Main's Private Richard Edward Lloyd was one of the young men who were called up for service after his birth date was selected in the National Service Ballot of 1965. This service was deferred until he completed his boilermaker apprenticeship.

Lloyd a talented sportsman excelled at rugby league and cricket prior to his enlistments. He played for the Kurri Kurri Bulldogs and he was part of the Bulldogs A-Grade premiership 1966 team before he commenced training with B Company 5th Battalion.

Private Lloyd left for Saigon in December 1966 and was killed less than six months later by a landmine at the notorious Barrier Minefield outside the village of Dat Do, he was only 21.

# CESSNOCK MINER TO WAR HERO

Cessnock miner Private James Germyn was 21 years and 10 months old when he joined the Wallaby Marchers when they came to town recruiting young men through the Hunter Valley at the beginning of 1916. The men that joined would eventually become the 34th Battalion. When Germyn enlisted he joined nine other miners from the same colliery and by the time the march had reached Maitland, more than 30 miners had joined their ranks. These men would be called upon, later in the conflict, to form the specialists tunnellers companies that made such a difference to the outcome of the war.



Above: Private James Germyn

After training at first Rutherford then Liverpool, Germyn embarked on board the "Hororata" arriving in Plymouth, where he was admitted to hospital with 'septic neck'.

This would be recurring over the next few years. James Germyn's playful, fearless some would say 'reckless' behaviour was both a blessing and a curse with Germyn frequently going absent without leave (AWL) costing him several weeks pay over the course of the war. It also led to what was ultimately an amazingly heroic action which he is remembered for.

With his unit he saw action in the Battle of Passchendaele and the Battle of Messines. During this time, there were examples of his fearlessness. "On the night of the 15th/16th July 1917 Germyn and fellow soldier Lance Corporal Herbert went out into No Man's Land in the face of hostile bombing, rifle and machine gun fire and brought in three of our assaulting party who were casualties. They made three trips to get in the wounded men who were lying close to the enemy posts. On the morning of the 26th July 1917 these two stretcher bearers during daylight in a full view of the enemy carried a severely wounded man (in urgent need of medical aid) over the top from our front line to the Aid Post. Their courageous action on the night of the 15th/16th and on the morning of the 26th July had made a strong impression on their comrades..."

It was this selfless action which saw Germyn awarded the Military Medal on the September 28, 1917 at Polygon Wood. In May 1918 he was wounded in action. Through gassing and was unable to return to duty for 10 days. He was wounded again on August 8, 1918 when he was shot in the right arm which was a severe wound.

On Christmas Day 1918, Germyn and his fellow soldiers embarked on the "Takada" for their return to Australia, which would take 7 weeks. They arrived home to huge welcoming crowds awaiting them.

Over the course of the war he was involved in battles on the Western front including The Somme, Fromelles, Pozieres, Messines, Ypres, Menin Road, Polygon Wood, Poelcappelle, Passchendaele, Villers-Bretonneux, Amiens, The Hindenburg Line and Mont St. Quentin.

James Germyn died November 22, 1922 due to poor health, especially his lungs which never fully recovered from the gassing.

# LOCAL ANZAC DAY SERVICES 2020

## 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.  
*Town March*

**11:30AM** - 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.  
*Morning Service*

**10:00AM** - Service at Broke War Memorial.

## BRUNKERVILLE

**3:00PM** - Uniting Church in Memorial C

## BULGA

**10:45AM for 11:00AM**

Gather at Bulga Recreation Centre, Bulga Street, Bulga

Closest Service is at West Wallsend.

## CESSNOCK

**11:00AM** - Dawn Service at the Cessnock Cenotaph, which is located in the grounds of TAFE, North Avenue, Cessnock.  
*Morning Service at Veteran's Park, Aberdare Road, Aberdare.*

**11:00AM** - March from the former Cessnock Ex-Services Club, along Vincent Street to the Cenotaph for the Service 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.

## HOLMESVILLE

Closest Service is at West Wallsend.

## KEARSLEY

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

**5:30AM** - Service at the Cenotaph. Breeds will follow inside the Hall.

## KURRI KURRI

**5:00AM** - Dawn Service at Kurri Kurri Rotary Park, corner of Cessnock and Cessnock Streets, Kurri Kurri. Breeds will follow inside the Cenotaph.

**9:45AM** - March from the corner of Cessnock and Cessnock Streets to the Cenotaph.

## NEATH

**11:00AM** - Service at the Miner's Lamp at the corner of Cessnock and Cessnock Streets, Neath.

## MILLFIELD

**11:00AM** - 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.

## PUTTY

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

## WESTON

**9:00AM** - March from Weston RSL sub-Branch Hall, Cessnock Road, Weston to the Cenotaph in Weston Memorial Park.

**9:20AM** - Service at the Cenotaph.

## WEST WALLSEND

**10:00AM** - Service at West Wallsend Soldiers Memorial Park, corner of Carrington and Hydes Streets, West Wallsend.

## WOLLOMBI

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

Services for 2020 have been cancelled