

REMEMBRANCE DAY



11 NOVEMBER 2018

Private John Barker

HONOURING THEIR SERVICE

At 11am on 11 November 1918, the guns fell silent on the Western Front and after four bloody years of brutal conflict, World War I came to an end. The 100th anniversary of the signing of the Armistice is an important occasion for our country as it allows each of us to commemorate those who served.

Our area committed thousands of men during the four years of World War I. This booklet shares just a few stories of these local men, but is intended as a tribute to all who served as well as family and friends who endured the pain of this time.

Clayton Barr MP
State Member for the Electorate of Cessnock



INNOCENCE OF OUR BOY SOLDIER

A young boy, Private John Barker, is pictured staring innocently from the front cover of this booklet. His innocence and youth represents the tragedy of World War I, where millions of young men, barely having reached adulthood, gave their lives to the Allies efforts.

Considered a journey of a lifetime, young men from across Australia enlisted with enthusiasm. Despite the Australian Army's enlistment age being 21 years or 18 years with parental permission, many boys between the ages of 14 and 17 accepted the call to duty.

One of these was Private John Barker of Abermain. Encouraged by the patriotism of his father and three brothers who were serving on the Western Front, Private Barker enlisted when he was just 16 years old in July 1916. In order to be eligible, he falsified his age as 18 years and 7 months. Despite his boyish looks, the recruitment officers gladly accepted his enlistment papers.

A member of "Newcastle's Own" 35th Battalion, Private Barker arrived in England in late 1916 where he undertook training before proceeding to France in March 1917. No amount of training would have prepared Private Barker for what he was to experience on the Western Front. The sleepless nights, continual bombardment and death of soldiers on both sides would have been a distressing existence.

In his 17th year, Private Barker was killed during the Battle of Messines in June 1917. Buried in the Toronto Avenue Cemetery in Belgium, the boy from Abermain rests a long way from his home. Tragically, 6 weeks after Private Barker's death, his father, Private James Barker was killed in action in Belgium at the age of 54. One can only wonder at the pain and grief of Mrs Barker who lost her husband and young son in such a short period of time.

A LARRIKIN AT HOME AND AWAY

The commencement of operations at the Aberdare South Colliery in 1913 was an important milestone in the early life of Abernethy. It saw the local population explode as families and young men were drawn to the village in search of work. As conflict progressed and many young men set off for the war front, the teenaged-horsebreaker, Leslie Hines, waited in anticipation to join them.

Initially, he attempted to enlist in December 1917 by falsely claiming that he was 21. When recruitment officers determined that he was only 17, they rejected his application and told him he was too young. Undeterred, and with the approval of his father, Hines enlisted in the 10th General Service (NSW) Reinforcements in April 1918 as a Gunner.

Gunner Hines' time in the Australian Imperial Force was marked with controversy. Within days of embarking from Sydney enroute to Europe, he received 120 hours of detention for stealing a fellow soldier's boots. Unfortunately, his behaviour did not improve throughout the remainder of his service, with Gunner Hines often being disciplined for unapproved absence, failing to obey orders and not boarding his ship home.

Gunner Hines never saw frontline service and returned home to Australia in 1919.



Gunner Leslie Hines

DEVOTION TO DUTY UNDER FIRE



Sergeant William Taylor MM

As the Gallipoli campaign entered its final months, a Cessnock storekeeper decided it was time to join his fellow Australians on the frontline. Enlisting in the 35th Battalion at the age of 40, Sergeant William Taylor was drafted to the machine gun section.

Arriving in France in late 1916, Sergeant Taylor moved into the trenches of the Western Front during the terrible winter of 1916-17.

He did not see any major action until the Battle of Messines in June 1917. Sergeant Taylor's action during the battle saw him awarded the Military Medal for bravery by King George V.

His age was no impediment to his contribution during World War I.

A MOTHER'S PRAYERS ANSWERED

Most nights Lucy Cotton would sit in her home in Highworth, a small town in south-west England, praying that each of her sons would return home from the war safe. She had witnessed the suffering of other Highworth mothers and hoped that each one of her eight sons serving on the frontline would make it home.

Of Mrs Cotton's eight sons, it was only Corporal Benjamin Cotton who did not serve with the British Army. At the age of 19, he emigrated from England with the plans of making his fortune in Australia. His search for work brought him to Branxton where he was a Night Officer of Railways.

Wishing to make a contribution to the war effort, he enlisted in the 34th Battalion in February 1916. Arriving in Europe later that year, he joined his seven brothers in defending the Empire's place in the world.

During the last months of conflict, Corporal Cotton was transferred to the Australian Army Postal Corps where he was responsible for managing correspondence to and from the trenches.

In a stroke of good fortune, Mrs Cotton's prayers were answered with each of her eight sons returning home without serious injury. This was an unusual occurrence as most families suffered some loss throughout World War I.

Following the Armistice, the British War Office arranged a special family gathering to celebrate the safe return of the eight Cotton boys. Their parents also received a letter of commendation from King George V and Queen Mary.

Despite the carnage inflicted across the globe, the end of conflict was a time of celebration for the Cotton family.

Following time with his family, Corporal Cotton returned to Branxton and served in the Voluntary Defence Corps during World War II.

The lucky experience of the Cotton family is a reminder of the sacrifice so many families made during World War I with many fathers, sons and brothers lost to conflict.



Corporal Benjamin Cotton (seated on the left) with his family

KURRI KURRI'S PRISONER OF WAR

When Kurri Kurri's Sapper Tom Green enlisted with the Tunnelling Companies Reinforcement unit in April 1916, he anticipated he would use his skills as a miner to dig attacking tunnels under enemy lines. There was no expectation that he would become a prisoner and spend World War I at the whim of his German captors. Unfortunately for Sapper Green, this was his experience.



Sapper Tom Green

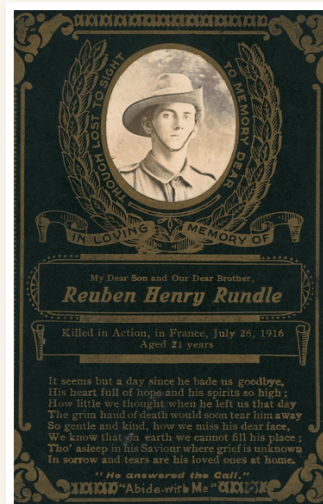
While serving in Nieuwpoort, Belgium, in July 1917, he was captured by German forces and held as a prisoner of war at Limburg in Germany until the end of 1918.

Life in the camp for Sapper Green was not as humiliating or restrictive as German propaganda had illustrated. He was permitted to write home to his wife twice a month and received incoming correspondence. This was important for his mental health given his circumstances.

Following the Armistice, Sapper Green was repatriated to England where he recovered from exhaustion before returning to Australia in mid-1919.

For the last century, many of the 4,000 Australians who were taken as prisoners of war during World War I have not been recognised or commemorated. Their stories and experiences are an important part of our nation's history and it is important that we also reflect on their sacrifice.

THE BOY FROM EDENVILLE



Memorial card to commemorate Private Reuben Rundle

The Abermain No. 2 Colliery at Edenville gave many of its young men to the war effort. Some returned, albeit scarred by their experiences, while others never made it home.

One of these was Private Reuben Rundle who lived in the "bag town" near the mine before he enlisted in the 19th Battalion in 1915.

After several months of basic training and preparation, Private Rundle arrived on the Western Front in June 1916. Demonstrating strength, focus and commitment beyond his years, Private Rundle was an asset on the front line. A month later, on 26 July 1916, he was killed during the Battle of the Somme at just 21 years of age.

His body has never been recovered and has no known grave. Private Rundle is remembered at the Australian National Memorial at Villers-Bretonneux.

REMEMBERING AND HONOURING THE

Following the end of the Gallipoli campaign in January 1916, the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) undertook considerable expansion in order to meet the call for an increased Australian presence on the Western Front. In response to this push for more men, the 34th Battalion was formed at a camp established at Maitland's Albion showground in January 1916. Young men from across the Hunter travelled to the camp to register their interest and volunteer their services to the AIF. As a result of the large number of local men who enlisted, the unit became known as "Maitland's Own".

Throughout 1917 and 1918, the battalion was engaged in a number of conflicts across Belgium and France, including the Battle of Messines, the Battle of Passchendaele, the Battle of Amiens and the Battle of Mont St Quentin.

During the war, 481 men from the battalion were killed and 1,727 were wounded or gassed. Many of these men were from local villages and towns. During this centenary of the Armistice, we reflect on the sacrifice of eight of these men by sharing their stories.

Lance Corporal John Young

Adventure and excitement was at the heart of Lance Corporal John Young's short life. Born in New Zealand, he lived in Weston before he enlisted in 1916 at the age of 19. During the Battle of Messines, Lance Corporal Young was killed in action. The AIF was unable to determine the exact date of his death. His body has never been recovered and has no known grave.



Lieutenant James Snedden

Enlisting in January 1916, Lieutenant James Snedden of Cessnock was a member of the Battalion's machine gun section. He was 'Mentioned in Despatches' by Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig for manning a trench single-handedly against the enemy during action at Villers-Bretonneux. In the last months of conflict, he was wounded in action after being shot in the hands and leg. He returned home in 1919.



Private George Farmer

Branxton's Private George Farmer enlisted during the camp at Albion showground. Following a transfer to the 4th Battalion, the 19-year-old spent a bitterly cold winter in the trenches near the village of Flers in France. On 3 January 1917, a German artillery shell landed on the battalion headquarters, killing ten men, including Private Farmer. He was laid to rest in the Bulls Road Cemetery in Flers.



LOCAL MEN OF THE 34TH BATTALION



Lieutenant Thomas Britton MC

Lieutenant Thomas Britton of East Greta enlisted in early 1916. His commitment and bravery during service was recognised in May 1918 when he was awarded the Military Cross for devotion to duty during a counter attack on the Marcelcave-Aubercourt line. Tragically, he later died of wounds received in action. He is buried at St Sever Cemetery in France.

Private Albert Greenfield

West Wallsend miner, Private Albert Greenfield's service in the Citizens Military Forces gave him the skills to make an essential contribution to the 34th Battalion on the Western Front. His knowledge of strategy and technique was valued during training in England. However, the 20-year-old spent only 3 weeks in the trenches before he was killed by German artillery. He is buried at the Cite Bonjean Military Cemetery in France.



Private Herbert Cherry

As the Gallipoli campaign came to an end and attention shifted to the Western Front, 22-year-old Private Herbert Cherry of Barnsley answered the call to duty. As the trenches became infested with vermin, lice and water, his health deteriorated rapidly. Just days after the Armistice, he was struck down by pneumonia and passed away on 15 November 1918.



Private Kenneth McDonald

Responding to the call to duty, Private Kenneth McDonald of Abermain left behind his job as a timber cutter and enlisted in early 1916. During his time on the Western Front, Private McDonald lost his left eye after it was hit by shrapnel that had ricocheted off his rifle. He was transported to the King George Hospital in London and returned to Australia in early 1918.



Private Bert Poole

Private Bert Poole spent his early years in Bulga before moving closer to Newcastle in search of work in the local coal mines. Enlisting within days of the camp being organised at Maitland, Private Poole spent more than a year in Europe before being killed in May 1917. Tragically for his wife, Effie, Private Poole's remains were never recovered.



THE COURAGE FORMED BY MATESHIP



Private Hope McAlpin and Private Thomas Gibbs

As conflict ravaged Europe and brought unimaginable pain to families across Australia, a mateship emerged between two Hunter men of the 36th Battalion which helped them cope with the devastation that surrounded them.

Private Hope McAlpin, a grazier from Bulga, was joined by the 20-year-old butter maker from Branxton, Private Thomas Gibbs on the HMAT *Benalla* as they made their way to Europe. During the two month trip, they bonded over a number of mutual interests and became inseparable.

It was this bond that brought a sense of courage to both men as they served in the trenches. The support and care that emerged during this friendship would have been heartening for both men. They both returned to Australia.

THE HORSEMAN WITHOUT A HORSE

Within weeks of the outbreak of World War I, Cessnock's Lieutenant Garnet Tinson had enlisted with the 1st Light Horse Regiment. Drawing on his six years of service with the 6th Light Horse Regiment of the Citizens Military Forces, Lieutenant Tinson was well prepared for the demanding lifestyle he would experience while on the Gallipoli peninsula.

While waiting in Egypt for his orders to proceed to Gallipoli, Lieutenant Tinson was informed that horses were unsuitable for the Gallipoli landscape. Without his beloved horse, he was deployed to the Gallipoli peninsula in May 1915, tasked with reinforcing the infantry as they attempted to defend the Australian trenches from the Turkish artillery.



Lieutenant Garnet Tinson (second from left) with soldiers from the 1st Light Horse Regiment in Egypt

On 7 August 1915, Lieutenant Tinson was in charge of a bombing party from Pope's Hill, when he was shot in the leg as he crossed "No Man's Land", where he laid for close to 12 hours in agony.

Under the cover of darkness, he was stretchered to the beach at Anzac Cove to be transported to the hospital ship HMAT *Dunluce Castle*. Despite the best efforts of doctors who amputated his leg, he passed away and was buried at sea off the coast of Turkey on 9 August 1915.

THE BROTHERS FROM BRUNKERVILLE

The rolling hills of Brunkerville offer residents a peaceful and tranquil existence, away from the hustle of major cities. This stillness was shattered during World War I when William and Elizabeth Osland's two sons answered the call to duty and enlisted to fight on the Western Front.

Encouraged by the reports of Australian bravery at Gallipoli, Private Henry Osland enlisted in the 30th Battalion at the age of 23. He arrived in Egypt in early 1916 and underwent further training as his battalion awaited directions to proceed to the Western Front. This order finally came in June 1916, when his battalion was sent to northern France for the Somme Offensive. Within weeks, Private Henry Osland was in the trenches during the Battle of Fromelles. Considered the worst night in

Australian military history, more than 5,500 Australians were injured or killed in a matter of hours. One of these was Private Henry Osland. After no more than 24 hours on the frontline, he received several gunshot wounds to his arms and buttocks and was hospitalised for a number of months in England.

As his brother recovered from the injuries sustained at Fromelles, 20-year-old Private William Osland took it upon himself to join his older sibling at the frontline. Attached to the 36th Battalion, the younger Osland arrived in France in late April 1917 and travelled to Belgium in preparation for the Battle of Messines.

During the first day of the battle, Private William Osland was killed in action after receiving a gunshot wound while standing in the trenches. It has been reported that he was spotted by the German forces as he lit his cigarette. It was a very tragic end to his service to our country.

Following his death, the Australian Imperial Force informed the Osland family that "The late soldier is reported buried approximately 1 mile due South of Messines. No photographs of the grave has yet been received". Despite this report, Private William Osland's remains have never been recovered. His name is listed on the Menin Gate in Ypres, Belgium.

Private Henry Osland returned to the frontline before being wounded in action on a further two occasions during 1918. He returned to Australia during the following year, no doubt deeply troubled by his experiences in France.

A century on from the tragedy inflicted on the Osland family, the small village of Brunkerville remains committed to honouring the service of Henry and William Osland.



Private Henry Osland



Private William Osland

AUSTRALIAN CYCLING CORPS

The evacuation of Gallipoli in December 1915 brought about a significant restructuring and expansion of the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) that saw the creation of different corps that would assist the Australian efforts on the Western Front. Out of this restructure emerged the Australian Cycling Corps.

Drawing on the experiences of the British and German armies, who had used cyclists throughout 1914 and 1915, the AIF instructed their soldiers to undertake necessary rider despatch work to ensure vital military messages were delivered between commanders and troops in the trenches. Over time they attracted more responsibilities on the frontline, including conducting reconnaissance, patrolling, laying communications cabling, traffic control, harvesting crops, and burying the dead.

Although knowing how to ride a bicycle was not a requirement to join the Corps, it was certainly an advantage to have some ability in keeping the bicycle balanced while riding it. It was this skill that attracted three local men to join the Corps in the months following its formation.

Private Stanley Coates of West Wallsend was an early recruit to the Corps. Upon his arrival in Europe in mid-1916, he was instrumental in ferrying important messages to and from the frontline. His service contributed significantly to Australian success in Belgium and France. Private Coates returned to Australia following the Armistice.

Pokolbin's Private John Wilkinson MM was an engineer prior to his enlistment in April 1916. Initially, he served in the Corps and played a key role in fulfilling the additional responsibilities imposed on him, including patrols and reconnaissance. This experience saw him later transferred to the 1st Battalion, where he saw active service and was awarded the Military Medal for "courage and devotion to duty" during fighting at Hargicourt in France. Private Wilkinson returned home to Australia in 1919.

At barely 18 years of age, Sapper Annaniah Pellow, a surveyor's assistant from North Rothbury, enlisted with the Corps in 1917. Drawing on his riding skills, he played a key role on the Western Front before he was transferred to the 9th Field Company Engineers. Sapper Pellow returned to Australia in September 1919.

Each man's service with the Australian Cycling Corps was crucial to the Allied victory in November 1918.



Members of the Australian Cycling Corps

WANTING ACTION AT THE FRONT

When 22-year-old Private John Peachman of Kurri Kurri enlisted in the 31st Battalion during the height of the Gallipoli campaign, he thought his time in Europe would be spent in hand-to-hand combat with the Germans. Despite his best efforts to achieve this, Private Peachman's reality was far different to his expectation.



Private John Peachman

Arriving in Europe in April 1916, Private Peachman was only on land for a matter of days before he was transferred to hospital for the treatment of influenza. No doubt the cramped conditions on the HMAT *Ballarat* (A70) had affected his immune system. After a period of recuperation, he rejoined his battalion to undergo further training.

However, Private Peachman was not to remain in good health. Within weeks he was wounded in action after receiving a gunshot wound to his left arm. Transferred to the Wharnccliffe War Hospital in England for further treatment, he remained hospitalised for close to three months before being released.

The extent of his injury prevented Private Peachman from returning to the frontline. He was subsequently transferred to the 2nd Australian Auxiliary Hospital where he supported the nurses in treating injured Australian soldiers.

When he enlisted, Private Peachman expected that he would join his fellow Australians in the trenches. Despite his courageous intentions, the reality was most of his service was spent in hospital. He returned home in July 1919.

A LONG WAY FROM ELLALONG



Private Harold Ling

There are very few similarities between Ellalong and Gallipoli, but for Private Harold Ling, they are the places of the two most significant events in his life - his birth and his death.

Enlisting following the declaration of war, Private Ling arrived in Gallipoli with the 4th Battalion and saw active service for close to three months until he was killed in action on 19 July 1915 on the Gallipoli peninsula.

Private Ling is buried at the Shrapnel Valley Cemetery at Gallipoli. His premature death had a profound effect on his family, who never had the opportunity to visit his grave.

A PASSION TO SERVE OTHERS



Corporal William Diplock

Corporal William Diplock of Wollombi was driven by a desire to help and support others in the community. It was this passion that attracted him to teaching, where he excelled in providing local students the education they needed to make a positive contribution to their community.

The outbreak of conflict in Europe halted Corporal Diplock's teaching vocation and within months he had stormed the beaches at Gallipoli as part of the 1st Battalion. Despite suffering a gun shot wound to his arm, he survived the nine month Gallipoli campaign and was transferred to the Western Front.

It was here that Corporal Diplock's health began to deteriorate and he spent considerable time in hospital. Returning to the frontline, he died of wounds received in action in October 1917. Corporal Diplock is buried at the Mont Huon Military Cemetery in France.

MINING SKILLS DELIVERED SUCCESS

West Wallsend provided Sapper John Mutton and his young family with the secure lifestyle that many families hoped for during the tumultuous period of conflict between 1914 and 1918. Arriving from England, Sapper Mutton was drawn to the coal mines of West Wallsend. It provided him with the two things he so desperately needed - a job and a home.

As conflict raged across Europe, it became apparent to Sapper Mutton and his family that he too would need to enlist and make a contribution to the war effort. Reluctant to leave the community that had given him so much, Sapper Mutton enlisted in the 3rd Tunnelling Company in May 1916.

Employing the strong work ethic he developed during his time in the West Wallsend coal mines, Sapper Mutton played an important role in the placing and maintaining of mines under German lines across the Western Front. For the next two years, this was his daily routine. His efforts were instrumental to the success of the Australians on the Western Front. Following the Armistice, Sapper Mutton returned home to his family and the community that he loved dearly.



Sapper John Mutton