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NEWSLETTER

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FROM THE EDITOR

In this issue we commemorate our ANZACs. A database of service men and women of the various wars who had an association with the Yarra Glen district has been compiled by Eric Tetlow and myself. It includes people who were born here, attended one of the local schools, lived locally or who had relatives in the district. Some may have left the area by the time of enlistment. In this issue is a brief account of some of those who served in the Great War 1914–1918. The database so far lists about 125 people for the First World War, 36 of whom lost their lives.

Also in this newsletter is an article about a unique document held in the State Archives which records the names of some of the women who lived in our district in 1891. It is not often that one finds such an extensive list of women at a time when most did not hold any public office or employment outside the home.

The First World War and the people of Yarra Glen District

Life was proceeding as normal in the Yarra Valley although people were aware of the escalating conflict in Europe. In June 1914 Empire Day was celebrated at Steels Creek with an afternoon of games and races for children followed by refreshments. The young men of the district were well into their football season with Yarra Glen having some early successes against teams from Coldstream, Lilydale and Millgrove. They lost a hard and fast game against Healesville by 12 points. Many of those named in the teams would later appear in the newspapers as volunteers for war service: Carey, Clarke, Cliff, Cook, Flowers, Foley, Gourlay, Jewson, Kennedy, McLeod, McPherson, Ryan, Smedley, and Vogler. From the Junior League there was also Bickerton, Holding and Merritt. Arbor Day was celebrated in Yarra Glen on July 15th with tree plantings organized by the Progress Association. On the 7th August a surprise 21st birthday party was held for Ernest Hubbard at his parents' home in Steels Creek. Later that month members of the Horticultural Society rallied to prune the orchard of Ned Hargreaves who was suffering ill health.

England declared war on Germany on 4 August 1914. The following day Australian Prime Minister invited Australians to join up for overseas service. Volunteers had to meet high physical standards and were given brief training before leaving Melbourne by sea for a rendezvous of 38 Australian ships at King George Sound WA. Among the first to enlist from the Yarra Glen district were **Harold Bayliss, Charles Tonge, Leo Cavanagh, Arthur Hunt, Sydney Pitcher, Donald Shillito, Neil Christensen, Jack Wilson, Frederick Conradi, John Dinsdale, Charles Jell, Percy Downer and Charles Sands. Jessie White** (nee Williamson) enlisted in the Australian Army Nursing Service and was with the first convoy which left in October 1914.

Various patriotic funds were established and local activities were organized to contribute to the Lord Mayor's Fund, Madame Melba's Patriotic Fund, the Red Cross and many others. The Yarra Glen & Lilydale Hunt Club voted £50 be given to the Lord Mayor's Fund. On the 2nd September a meeting was held in the Victoria Hall chaired by George Maxwell, a Liberal candidate for the forthcoming State elections in the seat of Evelyn. He made a 'very stirring patriotic address' and other speeches were given by Mr Samuel Scott and Mr James Holden. A Committee was formed and a subscription was commenced towards the Lord Mayor's Fund. A special collection of £5 was also taken for the tobacco fund. A Ladies Committee was appointed and they organized a social to raise funds for the Red Cross Clothing Fund for the expeditionary forces, as the first overseas contingents were called. In November they sent a parcel of 76 articles to Red Cross Headquarters including hospital shirts, flannel shirts, woollen socks, scarves, nightingales (sic) and cholera belts.

In November 1914 the transports left Australia for Egypt where the troops spent at least four and a half months in training camps near Cairo. At the end of March 1915 they boarded a flotilla of boats to cross to Mudros Harbour (Lemnos) to prepare for the assault on Gallipoli. Among those who landed at Ari Burnu (now known as Anzac Cove) on 25 April were several young men from the Yarra Glen district. **Donald Robert Shillito** of Steels Creek was in the 3rd Brigade

(12th Battalion) which was the first ashore at around 4:30 am. The Brigade was heavily involved in establishing and defending the front line of the ANZAC position. Donald Shillito was one of the hundreds who lost their lives that day. **John Valentine (Jack) Wilson** lived at Christmas Hills with his family. He was among the first to enlist, on 17 August 1914, and sailed from Melbourne in October with the 8th Battalion. This Battalion was part of the second wave landing at Gallipoli. Ten days after the landing, the 2nd Brigade, of which it was a part, was transferred from Ari Burnu to Cape Helles to help in the attack on the village of Krithia. Then the Victorian Battalions returned to ANZAC to help defend the beachhead. Jack Wilson was killed at Gallipoli on 3 Jun 1915. **Arthur George Hunt** also lived at Steels Creek. He enlisted in October with the 3rd Light Horse Regiment Field Ambulance. His unit embarked from Melbourne in February 1915. The 3rd Light Horse Regiment played a defensive role throughout the ANZAC campaign and was in reserve when its sister regiments attacked as part of the August offensive. Arthur was killed at Gallipoli on 7 August 1915 and is buried in the 7th Field Ambulance Cemetery. These three young men were 23 years old. **Jessie McHardy White** was attached to a British Hospital in Egypt and during the Dardenelles campaign she worked on a hospital ship which carried patients from Gallipoli to hospitals on Lemnos Island.

Alexander McLeod was a police officer stationed at Yarra Glen prior to the War. He and his family had moved to Yarram by the time his sons enlisted in 1915 but they were well known in Yarra Glen. **Alexander John McLeod** was only 19 but held the rank of Lance Corporal in the 7th Battalion when it left Melbourne in April 1915. He was killed in Shrapnel Valley on 16 August 1915. His younger brother **Leslie John McLeod** enlisted in July 1915 and was a trooper in the 9th Light Horse Regiment which embarked from Melbourne on 20 August. Leslie contracted a disease while the ship was sailing to Western Australia. He was taken off the ship at Fremantle but died aged 17 on 29 August and is buried in the Fremantle Cemetery; he had raised his age to 18 when he enlisted! The McLeods, together with another brother who served in WWII, are commemorated in memorial windows in the Anglican Church.

There were many more from the district who survived Gallipoli and other battles to return to Australia. In July 1920 Gallipoli stars were awarded at Yarra Glen "...to H. Bayliss, A. Hunt, W. Plunkett, P. Downer, R. Morris, S. Harris, J. McKenzie, C. Tonge, A. Jackson, P. Muir, W. Parker. P. Downer and C. Tonge also awarded the Princess Mary Christmas Gift of 1914. More stars yet to be presented." (EWSA 30 July 1920). [In the transcription of names from military records to newspaper reports there has been some discrepancy in names, particularly initials, therefore it has not been possible to positively identify all the persons listed in this report]

The British attack on Gallipoli failed and eventually evacuation was ordered and was completed on 20

December 1915. The Mounted Division stayed in the Middle East but the Infantry were sent to the Western Front. Nurse Jessie White was transferred to England where she was appointed Principal Matron of the Australian Army Nursing Service.

In the European theatres of war many more men from Yarra Glen were among the casualties. Killed in France were **Reginald Norman Waight** of Dixons Creek) who died at the Somme 13 August 1916; **Alfred Clarence Hubbard** (born 23 March 1889 at Steels Creek but living in NZ at time of enlistment) was killed on 15 Sep 1916; **Leslie Edward Ayres**, born in Yarra Glen, lost his life at the age of nineteen in Armentieres on 2 January 1917. **William Charles (known as Son) Holding** died on 16 January 1917 of wounds sustained at the Somme, and **Charles Thomas Chandler** who farmed at Tarrawarra was also killed at the Somme on 13 March 1917. **Stanley Stewart Smedley** whose family lived at 'Happy Valley' near High Bow was killed on 11 April 1917 at Bullecourt as was his close friend **John (Jack) Frederick Irvine**. **George Stephen Mills** who had attended Yarra Glen State School also died at Bullecourt on 3 May 1917, and **Joseph Pickering** of Steels Creek was killed on 8 May 1917 – both are commemorated at Villers-Bretonneux

Herbert Stanley Marshall who was living at Yarra Glen when he enlisted in 1915 was killed in Belgium on 20 September 1917. Two weeks later **John Jell** also died in Belgium on 3 October 1917. He is the only one from Yarra Glen commemorated on the Menin Gate (Panel 23). **Ernest Albert Hubbard** who was born in Yarra Glen in September 1894 was killed in action at Polygon Wood, Ypres on 16 October 1917

In 1918 **Harry Conway**, a labourer of Christmas Hills, died of wounds in France on 28 April. **Claude Gedye**, the son of the publican of the Grand Hotel Yarra Glen, also died of wounds on 8 July 1918. **Stanley Ayres** lost his life in France on 10 August 1918. He was the younger brother of Leslie who had died at Armentieres. The boys had attended Dixons Creek school but their parents, Robert and Elizabeth Ayres, had moved to Drouin West before the young men enlisted in January 1916.

Among the enlisted were eleven men and two women who are registered as having been born in Yarra Flats or Yarra Glen. Six of them lost their lives in the war: Stan and Les Ayres, 'Son' Holding, Ernest Hubbard, John Jell and Jack Armstrong. **Mary Farrell** was the thirty year old daughter of William Farrell. She joined the Australian Army Nursing Service in August 1915, returning to Australia in February 1918.

The youngest recruits were only eighteen years old, and some like Leslie McLeod and Harry Conway appear to have raised their age at the time of enlistment to qualify. The other 18 year olds were **James Betts, Stephen Fletcher, Patrick Kelly, Roy Merritt, John Nairne, Walter Parker** and **Norm Partington**. The oldest recruit was **James Wilson** who was fifty-four when he joined up in 1916. Those

40 years and over included **Edward Kearney** and **William Hogg** of Tarrawarra and **Alan Cliff**. **Jack Armstrong** was 39 when he enlisted in 1915. He saw service on the Western Front but contracted a disease and died at a hospital in England on 23 January 1918.

Some served in more than one war. Stephen Fletcher was a private in the 23rd Battalion in WW1. He enlisted as an 18 year old and saw service overseas. In the Second World War he was a private in the 11th Battalion Volunteer Defence Corps. His brother John also enlisted in 1915 for the First World War. There were many families who were represented by more than one member. **William, Mark** (known as Bon) and **Leslie Cook** of Croydon were well known in Yarra Glen where their mother, Ellen Fletcher, had been born. Charles Jell enlisted in November 1914 and returned home safely in December 1918. His younger brother John enlisted in March 1915 and saw service in many of the war zones including Gallipoli but died in France in 1917. **Walter** and **Bill Parker** enlisted together on 13 July 1915 and were assigned to the same unit and battalion. They left for Europe on HMAT Ceramic in November 1915. Walter was discharged on 26 July 1917. Bill returned to Australia on 12 June 1919 as a Corporal. **Edward Johnston Kearney** enlisted in July 1915 and his son Albert in August 1915. They both served overseas, Edward in the 51st Battalion and Albert in the 29th Battalion. Albert's son John (born in 1926) enlisted in May 1945 in the Australian Field Ambulance.

The Yarra Glen Branch of the Returned Sailors & Soldiers Imperial League was formed on January 19 1919. A welcome home for returned soldiers was held on 14 March 1919. Those attending included Lieutenant Albyn Vogler, Corporal Vincent Lacon, Bombadier Charles Tonge, Private Michael Keating, Private Charles Jell and Private Alan Cliff. (*EWSA 21 Mar 1919*)

James Herbert donated a block of land on the corner of Bell and Rudolph Streets (now Anzac Avenue) and money for RSSIL Club Rooms was raised by donations. A fundraising concert was organized by the RSSIL in April 1919 and held in the Victoria Hall. Mrs Woolcott of Tarrawarra donated a billiard table.

On 15 July the *Evelyn & Whittlesea Shires Advertiser* reported that the Memorial Club Rooms at Yarra Glen were nearing completion. 'It has the only tiled roof in town other than the Railway Station...the barge boards and framing are a rich everglade green and contrasts with white well'. (*EWSA 15 July 1920*). These rooms were located on the site of the current Memorial Hall. They were opened by Mr Everard, MLA, on 11 December 1920.

On Saturday 8 October 1921 a Soldiers Memorial was unveiled in a small reserve near the railway crossing between the Tarrawarra Road and Bell Street. It stood opposite the entrance to the Victoria Hall. A poem written for the occasion was published on the Programme:

*O pause for a moment wheree'r you may be
Who breathe the sweet air of this land of the free
And ponder the question; What more could they give,
Whose fate was to die that the Nation should live?
To-day, where the Yarra flows down from the Glen
And spreads its wide waters o'er moorland and fen,
In honor of those whose brave spirits are flown
The people unveil their memorial stone,
Its tapering finger that points to the sky
Shall carry their names to the Throne up on high,
And - firm as their hearts when they fronted the foe-
Shall tell of their deeds through the ages below
So think of the hearts that are mourning to-day
For heroes who sleep in a land far away,
And stand for a moment with uncovered head
While Yarra Glen district pays court to its Dead*

G.D.N

The Soldiers Memorial was moved to its current location in front of the Memorial Hall in 1998.

Further information about the Yarra Glen RSL, the Honour Boards and War Memorials are available on www.yarraglen.com/RSL/

Information about servicemen & women is available at the Australian War Museum website <http://www.awm.gov.au>

Further source:

A. J. McAleer, *The Shire of Lillydale and its military heritage*, 1995

VERA MARY ADAMS

1919 – 2006

Vera Landrigan arrived at Dixons Creek in 1946 as a young teacher. A few weeks later she met Ron Adams of Steels Creek. The second World War had ended in 1945 and Ron and his five brothers had just returned from overseas service. Ron and Vera married on Christmas Day 1947 and Vera settled in as a resident and teacher at Steels Creek. When her two sons, Stephen (1949) and Denis (1951) had reached school age Vera took up a post as sole teacher at Steels Creek in 1955. She soon established a reputation as a skilled and caring teacher, respected by the students and parents alike. Sadly Ron died as the result of an accident on Anzac Day 1963 at Croydon but Vera and her boys remained at Steels Creek, an integral part of the close knit rural community.

Vera's keen observations of the people and activities that made up the community were published by the Yarra Glen & District Historical Society in 2005: *Steels Creek – a social history, 1946–1995*.

The Steels Creek community is inviting her friends to celebrate Vera's life at an afternoon gathering at her old school, now the Steels Creek Community Centre. It will be held on Sunday 7 May at 2pm.

Yarra Glen Roads & Streets

a series about their history

Rudolph Street/Anzac Avenue

This street runs east-west between Bell Street and Yarraview Road. It was originally called Rudolph Street. An educated guess has been made that it was named for Rudolph Aloys de Castella (1859–88), the son of Paul de Castella of Chateau Yering. He was only 29 when he died as the result of a fall from his horse in Dixons Creek, believed to have been caused by an epileptic fit. The Municipal Directory 1886 & 1888 lists him as a Justice for the Eltham Shire and it is possible that the street was named to honour his memory.

At the Bell Street end the Anglican Church stands on the southern corner and opposite it is the Memorial Hall. Until the 1970s the gravel road was primarily bordered by paddocks. It was sealed with bitumen in February 1985. At the western end, when Yarraview Road was known as School Lane, Mrs Evelyn Lithgow had a small cottage on the south west corner. It was moved from Tarrawarra where it had once been the schoolhouse. Mr L.R. (Mac) Mackenzie purchased the property next to hers in 1948. It extends through to Sayle Street and he built a country residence on it – the house still stands at 5 Anzac Avenue.

Mr and Mrs Bill Herkes built on the northwest corner when they retired from their teaching posts at the Yarra Glen Primary School in the early 1970s. Most of the houses built along the southern side of the road date from the early 1970s.

The Tennis Club was moved to its current site in 1954. It had three courts and the small clubhouse which had been part of the Yarra Flats Hotel in an earlier life.

On Sunday 2 May 1948 a Commemoration Service was conducted by the Yarra Glen & District Tourist and Progress Association and the RSSILA at which the avenue of oak trees was dedicated as a memorial to those who lost their lives in the two world wars. The trees were donated by Major E Lang.

The street was re-named Anzac Avenue at some time between 1948 and 1968. *(If anyone knows the exact date we would be pleased to hear from you.)*

1891 Womens Suffrage Petition

From the web site:

www.parliament.vic.gov.au/womenspetition

“In an extraordinary effort to gain the right to vote for all Victorian women, a handful of dedicated women took to the streets in 1891 to collect signatures for a petition to present to the Parliament of Victoria. The result was an impressive collection of close to 30,000 signatures from women from all walks of life.

Tabled in Parliament in September 1891, with the support of then Premier James Munro, the petition

sought that ‘Women should Vote on Equal terms with Men’.

Now one of the State's archival treasures, the Women's Suffrage Petition (1891) reflects the dedicated work of those women, who went from door to door across Victoria to collect the signatures. Its tremendous length earned it the name of the ‘Monster Petition’.



Women's Suffrage Petition, 1891
(Photograph: Laura Daniele)

The original petition is approximately 260 metres long and 200mm wide and is made of paper pasted to cotton or linen fabric backing, rolled onto a cardboard spindle which rests on a Perspex stand. It takes three people three hours to unroll the petition from one spool to another – a slow and careful process. The approximate 30,000 signatures vary in quality and colour inks, even pencil.”

The website was launched on 14 November 2005 as part of the Victorian Parliament 150th anniversary. You can search the list of thousands of transcribed names and then view an image of the signature/s.

Yarra Glen women who signed the petition:

Alice Albert	Amy Lord
Mrs H Armstrong	Mrs J Masters
Mrs H Arnold	M Mitcheson
M Barfields	Mary Morris
Ellen Borg	Mrs W Pirie
Mary A Fleming	Mrs J Pretty
Mary E Gurney	Mrs A J Smedley
Mrs A J Hansen	Ellen Smedley
Mrs Hargreaves	Mrs H Smedley
E J Hargreaves	Mrs I Smedley
Urina Hargreaves	H Smith
Mary Jell	Mrs R Sutton
M Laisburry?	Mrs J(ohanna) Tonge
	Emily M Wilson

Dixons Creek

Elizabeth Taylor

Pauls Creek

Sarah Lorimer

Steels Creek

Mrs Brudenell	Mrs M B Hubbard
Miss Nellie Brudenell	Mrs A Hunt
Miss A Hargreaves	Mrs Reiley
Mrs T K Hargreaves	Miss E E Reiley