

ANZAC Day – Monday 25 April 2016



THE SPIRIT OF



ANZAC



APRIL
2016

BROUGHT TO YOU BY
THOMAS GEORGE MP
MEMBER FOR LISMORE



Stories of families farewelling their loved ones for the last time as they sail off to a foreign land really does highlight the pain and sadness of war. But it also makes you appreciate even more the freedom and quality of life we all enjoy today.

It's been 100 years this year since the Battle of Fromelles which has been described as Australia's worst 24 hours in its entire history. The loss of

thousands of men was a military disaster.

The discovery of a mass grave of 250 Australian and British soldiers at Fromelles and the subsequent identification of 144 of those men is a fantastic outcome for those soldiers' descendants all these years later.

Four of those identified come from the Lismore region. They were all young men when they waved goodbye to their parents, brothers and sisters, never to return. More is written about them inside this publication.

There are thousands more stories like theirs – of families torn apart by a war.

But our young Australians 100 years ago – and in wars and conflicts ever since – answered the call to help defend this great country and keep our freedom intact.

Tenterfield's Frank Curran (whose story appears opposite) was a fine example of the courage and commitment our soldiers have shown in the face of adversity.

ANZAC Day this year will have a special feel. It is the 100th anniversary since the very first ANZAC Day – 25 April 1916, exactly one year after the Gallipoli landings.

Attending an ANZAC Day dawn service, commemoration or march is one of the best ways we can honour the memories of all our fallen. Recognising the men and women who have fought and died for Australia will help keep the ANZAC Spirit brightly burning. Lest We Forget.

Thomas George MP
Member for Lismore

COVER PICTURE: At the Australian Memorial Park, VC Corner Australian Cemetery and Memorial in Fromelles, France, is a statue called 'Cobbers'. It depicts Sergeant Simon Fraser of the 57th Battalion, carrying a wounded man. In a letter in 1916 Sgt Fraser described his rescue of two men: 'Then another man about 30 yards out sang out, "Don't forget me, cobber". I went in and got four volunteers with stretchers, and we got both men in safely.'



His citation for the DCM read:

"For conspicuous gallantry from 6th August to 1st September, 1915, at Anzac, as a bomb thrower. On one occasion he stopped a Turkish bomb attack single handed. He displayed the greatest bravery and skill, fully exposing himself regardless of all danger."

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Tenterfield ‘bomber’ earned medal for bravery and skill

Tenterfield Digger Frank Curran was a keen sportsman who could catch and throw a ball, and play football with the best of them. He loved a contest and gave it his very best every time when challenged.

Nothing changed when he signed up for duty in January 1915 and sailed off to war. His strong character and competitive spirit would ensure – 100 years later – we are remembering and paying tribute to a true hero.

Corporal Francis Patrick Curran landed at Gallipoli with the 7th Light Horse Regiment in May 1915 and soon found his niche in the trenches as a bomb thrower.

He never expected his skills on the sports field would prove so valuable on the battlefield.

The Turks would lob bombs into the Australian trenches and, with unbelievable daring and courage, Frank Curran would catch them ... and throw them right back! He had

just seconds to react.

His bravery became legendary across the peninsula for a skill and task laced with such danger. When bombs were not caught, he would sandbag them or flick them over the parapet.

Frank was awarded a Distinguished Conduct Medal for his unique work at Gallipoli – earning him the title “The Bomber” with his comrades.

Frank and the 7th LHR were not going to be part of the Western Front war in Europe, instead taking part in the Sinai and Palestine campaign.

He was not satisfied with this and left his unit to join a regiment headed for action on the Front. Initially taken under escort for “illegally leaving his post”, Frank returned to the Light Horse and sadly met his fate in the Battle of Romani.

He was killed in action while heroically rescuing several wounded soldiers on 5 August 1916 (see story below).

A TRUE HERO

Frank Curran just wanted to be where the action was. So when the 7th Light Horse was overlooked for the Western Front battlefields, Frank had other ideas.

He managed to stow away on the transport to France but was quickly discovered by authorities who reported him as a deserter.

Nothing could have been further from the truth. He was a proven soldier at Gallipoli who had won a Distinguished Conduct Medal as a “bomb thrower” for much of that campaign. He wanted to single-handedly take the war on and make a difference.

The General Officer in Command later decided to take no action for “illegally leaving his post”. Frank was cleared.

Nevertheless, he was returned to Egypt

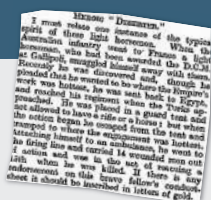
and returned to his regiment under guard with no access to a rifle or horse.

When fighting resumed, Frank escaped his confines and attached himself to a field ambulance to start the rescue of wounded soldiers in the field.

He had rescued 14 comrades when a Turkish sniper shot him in the chest and Frank fell dead while tending to a 15th victim. He was Mentioned in Despatches for this feat of bravery.

A newspaper article in the *The Times*, dated 10 August 1916 wrote the following about Frank Curran:

“If there is any endorsement on this brave fellow’s conduct sheet it should be inscribed in letters of gold”.





FROMELLES: The blackest day in

“Today I lead my battalion in an assault on the German lines and I pray God that I may come through alright and bring honour to our name. If not I will at least have laid down my life for you and my country, which is the greatest privilege one can ask for. Farewell dear people, the hour approacheth!”

– Major Geoffrey McCrae, 60th Battalion, 19 July 1916. McCrae went “over the top” with his battalion and was killed, shot through the neck, early in the battle.



Australian stretcher bearers bringing a casualty from the front line.

The battle of Fromelles 100 years ago this year was the first major operation for Australian troops on the Western Front.

The battle on 19-20 July 1916 was a brutal initiation to warfare in Europe for soldiers of the inexperienced 5th Australian and the British 61st Divisions.

This battle, near the small French village of Fromelles, has been called the most tragic event in Australian history.

Australian and British soldiers attacked at 6pm on 19 July over open ground in broad daylight on a summer’s evening and were cut down by extremely heavy machine-gun fire.

It is recorded that 5533 Australians were casualties. Almost 2,000 of them were killed in action or died of wounds and some 400 were captured. British casualties numbered 1547 – the attackers suffered more than 7000 killed or wounded.

By 8am on 20 July the battle was over. Enemy casualties of the 6th Bavarian Reserve Division were a little more than 1000.

One of the soldiers in the 6th Bavarian was an Austrian corporal named Adolf Hitler.

The attack was intended primarily as a diversion to draw German troops away from the Somme offensive. It was a disastrous failure.

Local lads made the ultimate sacrifice

William Kenyon got his first real lesson in warfare late in the 1915 Gallipoli campaign when the 25th Battalion reinforcements landed at the peninsula.

It gave him some preparation into what lay ahead when his battalion was sent to France in 1916 and prepared for the Battle of Pozières which would ultimately claim thousands of Australian lives over a two-week period.

Corporal Kenyon was a labourer at Condong and enlisted at

Murwillumbah on 23 February 1915. He turned 28 in July 1916 – around the same time he was on the Western front. Will Kenyon was killed in action on 29 July, about halfway into the Pozières attack.

Private Nesbit Black, like many of his comrades, had no battlefield experience when sent to the frontline.

He became a casualty on the first day of fighting with the 9th Battalion at Pozières, killed in action on 23 July 1916. Pte Black has no known grave.

OF ANZAC

Australian history



Marching in a wounded comrade, pass the old cemetery of Pozières, front line near Mouquet Farm on 28 August 1916.

The Pozières ridge “is more densely sown with Australian sacrifice than any other place on earth.” – war historian Charles Bean

The Battle of Pozières was a two-week struggle starting on 23 July 1916 for the small French village of Pozières in the Somme valley, the highest point in the area.

Pozières is primarily remembered as an Australian battle and massive casualties decimated their forces.

The 1st Division suffered 5285 casualties while the 2nd lost almost 7000 in 12 days. They held the village and ridge at enormous cost.

Mouquet Farm, north of Pozières, was attacked by the 4th Division and then the 1st and 2nd Divisions. Canadian troops relieved the Australians and finally won the battle on 26 September. These two battles resulted in 23,000 Australian casualties.

ice

Before he enlisted, just a few months shy of his 21st birthday, Nesbit Black worked as a bank clerk in Murwillumbah before transferring to Sydney. His family lived at Dunoon and later Boat Harbour in the Lismore district.



Pte Nesbit Black



Cpl William Kenyon

Two of the district’s finest were among the 23,000 casualties listed in the Battle of Pozières.



LEST WE FORGET

1916 was the halfway point in World War I. The Battle of the Somme inflicted huge casualties on all sides. Commonwealth casualties from this fighting totalled 420,000, and the French lost 204,000. Combined with the German losses, there were more than a million battle casualties on the Somme. Other significant dates in Australia’s military history include:

1916 – 100 YEARS – WWI

- 25 April: First ANZAC Day
- 1 July: Battle of the Somme
- 19 July: Battle of Fromelles
- 23 July: Battle of Pozières
- 4 August – Battle of Romani
- 10 August – Attacks on Mouquet
- 19 November – Somme Offensive ends

1941 – 75 YEARS – WWII

- 3 January: Battle of Bardia
- 21 January: Capture of Tobruk
- 25 January: Battle of Derna
- 21 March: Battle of Giarabub
- 28 March: Battle of Cape Matapan
- 4 April: Battle of Er Regima
- 6 April: Battle of Greece
- 10 April: Siege of Tobruk
- 20 May: Battle of Crete
- 11 June: Battle of Merdjayoun
- 19 November: Sinking of HMAS Sydney
- 7 December: Japanese attack Pearl Harbor
- 8 December: Allies declare war on Japan

1951 – 65 YEARS

- 24 April: Battle of Kapyong (Korea)

1966 – 50 YEARS

- 11 August: Indonesian Confrontation ends
- 18 August: Battle of Long Tan (Vietnam)

1991 – 25 YEARS

- 17 January: First Gulf War (Iraq)

2001 – 15 YEARS

- 7 October: War in Afghanistan

2006 – 10 YEARS

- 27 May: Indigenous Veterans Commemoration Service



Lismore boy signed up for the great adventure

Lismore Digger John “Jack” Parker had the blessing of his mother and father when he signed up for the “great adventure” to fight in World War One.

Edwin and Sarah Parker both wrote separate letters of consent for 19-year-old John who needed a parent’s letter to join if aged under 21. He won the support of his family as he marched off to war.

It would be the last his family saw of Jack, an assurance clerk in Lismore who joined up on 9 May 1915 – just weeks into the Gallipoli campaign which raged in the Dardanelles involving the original ANZAC soldiers.

Promoted to 2nd Lieutenant in March 1916 with the 30th Battalion, Jack would see fierce action on the Western Front in France before taking part in one of the most horrendous battles in Australia’s military history.

Lieutenant John Parker was killed in action during the Battle of Fromelles on 19-20 July 1916. His place in history would not be fully realised for more than 90 years later when a mass grave was uncovered near Pheasant Wood,

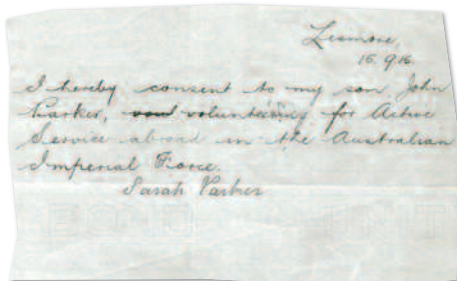
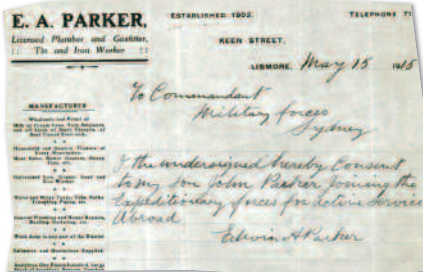
France, containing the remains of 250 Australian and British Soldiers.

In 2010, Jack was identified through DNA technology as one of the missing soldiers of Fromelles.

Jack was one of eight children. His family descendants still have ties with Lismore, and the Fromelles Manor nursing home has named a lounge area after him.

The identity discs of the soldiers were collected by the Germans and later handed over and then forwarded to the grieving families. The Parker family received Jack’s disc on 14 March 1917.

Jack’s record states briefly what may have unfolded in the final moments of his life on that fateful night: “The officer was killed in enemy front lines during the attack on Fromelles. His body was not brought to our lines for burial owing to the enemy counter attack. The nature of wounds that caused death are unknown.”



Battle of Long Tan claimed 18 Aussie lives

One of the best-known Australian battles of the Vietnam War was at Long Tan on 18 August 1966 – 50 years ago this year.

The battle saw the action of 105 Australians and a three-man New Zealand artillery team against a Viet Cong (North Vietnamese) force estimated between 1500 and 2500.

The Battle of Long Tan was one of the



Four 'lost Diggers' identified

There have now been four Lost Diggers of Fromelles identified with links to the Lismore district.

The latest identification of 20 Diggers in also revealed Archie McDonald of Wyrallah was a member of this unique group of men who are so significant to Australia's war history. All of the remains of the 250 Australian and British soldiers were reburied in the newly created Fromelles (Pheasant Wood) Military Cemetery, with 144 now identified.

ARCHIE McDONALD

Three McDonald brothers were farewelled by their family at Wyrallah in 1915.

Archie and Ronald joined on the same day, attached to the 31st

Battalion, and elder brother Duncan six months later with the 4th Pioneers.

Archie, 19, and Ron, 21, were both took part in the Battle of Fromelles. Ron was wounded in the arm but Archie was hit by a shell blast and was later confirmed killed in action. Both were casualties on 20 July 1916. Archie was identified as a Lost Digger in 2014.

Ron and Duncan both returned to Australia at the end of the war. Duncan, 25, won a Military Medal for "great courage and devotion to duty" during battle at St Quentin in France on 18 September 1918.



The McDonald brothers Ronald, Archie and Duncan.

WILLIAM RYAN

William Ryan had just celebrated his 19th birthday when he in the Australian Imperial Force and joined the 31st Battalion. He was first reported wounded and missing at Fromelles and not until early 1917 did a court of inquiry declare him killed in action. He was identified as a Lost Digger in 2010. William was born at Dunbible in northern NSW and when he was four the family moved to Upper Crystal Creek. He was one of three brothers who served overseas. John and Edmund returned to Australia.



WILLIAM HOWARD

William John Howard, 31st Battalion, from South Woodburn, was desperate to join the war effort and enlisted under the alias of John Morley. He listed his place of birth as Calcutta, India, and his age as 44 years. He was 46 years old and in 1915 the age requirements for enlistment were 18-45 years. A painter by trade, Pte Howard embarked from Melbourne on 9 November 1915 aboard HMAT *Wandilla*. He arrived in France for service on the Western Front on 23 June 1916.

Pte Howard was killed in action on 20 July 1916 at Fromelles. He was identified as a Lost Digger in 2010.



heaviest engagements of the war and remains one of the few battles in military history to be won against such odds.

D Company, 6 RAR Battalion, was sent into the Long Tan rubber plantation and came under heavy machine-gun fire and mortar attacks.

After almost three hours of fighting, reinforcements from A Company arrived

in armoured personnel carriers (APC), then B Company also arrived and engaged. Seven APCs arrived and the extra fire-power finally stopped the enemy.

There were 18 Australians killed – 17 from D Company and one from the 1st APC Squadron – and 21 wounded.

The Viet Cong insurgents left 245 dead and many more wounded.



THE SPIRIT OF ANZAC

2016 ANZAC Day activities in the region

BONALBO

- 5.30am: Dawn Service at the Cenotaph. Breakfast afterwards.
- 9.30am: CWA service at Old Bonalbo Soldiers Memorial Hall.
- 11.00am: ANZAC Commemoration Service.

CLUNES

- 9.00am: ANZAC Commemoration Service at the Village Park.

DRAKE

- 6.00am: Dawn Service in the Drake Community Hall followed by breakfast.

KYOGLE

- 5.30am: Dawn Service at the Cenotaph.
- 10.30am: March steps off from the Memorial Baths to the Kyogle Memorial Institute. Assemble at 10.15am.
- 11.00am: ANZAC Commemoration at the Memorial Institute.
- 11.30am: Wreath Laying Service at the Cenotaph.

LEGUME

- 8.00am: ANZAC Service at Legume Cemetery.

LISMORE

- 5.00am: Dawn Service at the Lismore Memorial in Molesworth St. Form up at the Old Post Office at 4.45am.
- 7.00am: Cemetery Parade to gather in foyer Lismore and District Workers' Club.
- 9.00am: March steps off from Browns Creek Car Park to the Lismore War Memorial at the Memorial Baths for ANZAC Commemoration and Wreath Laying Service. Form up at 8.30am.

LISTON

- 5.30am: Dawn Service at the Liston War Memorial followed by breakfast at the Liston Community Hall.

MALLANGANEE

- 10.45am: March from Mallangane Memorial Hall to Memorial Park will be followed by a service. Barbecue afterwards at the hotel.

MUMMULGUM

- Dawn Service. Time still to be confirmed at time of printing.

MURWILLUMBAH

- 5.20am: Dawn Service at War Memorial. Breakfast in the club at 6.15am. Veterans and children under 12 no charge others \$5.
- 10.30am: March steps off. Main Service marchers assemble Brisbane St. Schools and other organisations assemble Main St opposite Post Office at 10.10am.
- 10.45am: ANZAC Service at the Cenotaph. March off at 10.30am. Transport available for non marchers at the assembly area. There will be a short session in the club at 12.15pm for veterans, finger food and refreshments.

NIMBIN

- 5.15am: Dawn Service at the Cenotaph.
- 10.50am: Assemble at the Cenotaph for the ANZAC Commemoration Service. March to form up at the Nimbin hospital at 10.40am.

Refreshments afterwards at the bowling club.

TENTERFIELD

- 5.30am: Dawn Service at Tenterfield Memorial Hall, followed by a service at the Tenterfield Cemetery.
- 6.30am: Gunfire Breakfast at Tenterfield Memorial Hall (RSL Pavilion).
- 10.30am: ANZAC Day March from Telegraph Hotel to the Tenterfield Memorial Hall.
- 11.00am: Commemoration Service at Tenterfield Memorial Hall.
- 12.30pm: Luncheon at the Tenterfield Bowling Club followed by Two-Up at the Royal Hotel from 1.30pm.

TORRINGTON

- 5.00am: Assemble at Torrington Hall and march to Torrington War Memorial Park for the Dawn Service at 5.30am.
- Following the Service, breakfast in the Torrington Hall followed by Two-Up.

TYALGUM

- 5.15am: Dawn Service at the Memorial. Breakfast in the hotel after the service.

UKI

- 4.20am: Dawn Service at War Memorial. Breakfast in the Hall after the Service.

URBENVILLE

- 9.30am: Church service at St Mark's ANZAC Memorial Church.
 - 10.45am: March steps off from outside Memorial Hall, proceeds along Beaury St then onto Clarence Way to the Memorial Gates at the Showground.
 - 11.00am: ANZAC Service at Memorial Gates. Guest Speaker, Tenterfield Shire Councillor, Gary Verri.
- Luncheon at the Urbenville Bowling Club at approximately 12.30pm. Bookings essential.

WALLANGARRA-JENNINGS

- 5.15am: Dawn Service at RSL Hall, Barrawell St, Wallangarra, followed by pilgrimage to Wallangarra Cemetery.
- 11.30am: March commences at the RSL Hall and proceeds to the Wallangarra School of Arts Hall.
- 12 noon: Commemoration Service at Wallangarra School of Arts Hall. Following the Service, a light luncheon at the RSL Hall.

WOODENBONG

- 10.30am: March from the NAB to the Woodenbong Public Hall followed by the ANZAC Service. After the service a march will step off from the hall to the Lest We Forget Gates for a Wreath Laying Service. RAAF flyover will take place during the service. Bookings needed for luncheon.

PLEASE NOTE: All times and venues have been supplied by various RSL Sub-branch officials. Care has been taken to ensure as many Electorate services as possible have been included and were correct at the time of publication. For verification of other services please contact your local RSL Sub-branch.