

ALBURY & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC BULLETIN

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541

REPORT ON NOVEMBER MEETING (13.11.2013)

Members and guests filled Banksia B room at the Commercial Club to capacity and were treated to a full and varied program of presentations by Joe Wooding, Michael Browne and Chris McQuellin ably supported by interesting items from Ann Brennan, Roma Freeman, David Eagles, Narda Read and Edward Dale. Among our guests were family members of Harry Flood. Captain Harry Flood was the subject of the talk by Joe Wooding. Captain Flood served with the 2/4th Independent Company behind Japanese lines on East Timor in 1942-3. Michael Browne brought to our attention the extraordinary effort required in 1945-6 to demobilize and return to civilian life the more than 600,000 men and women who were serving in the armed forces. Michael tendered a booklet which set out the assistance available to servicemen and women on discharge. The resolution of a task of this type and magnitude is quickly moving beyond living memory; the advent of regular forces does not present a similar problem.

Chris McQuellin again showed his skill in researching lesser known individuals in Albury's history. He spoke of Isobel Ormiston, born and educated in Albury, who qualified as a doctor and served in Belgium, France and Montenegro during the Great War. She then had a long and distinguished career with the Egyptian Ministry of Education.

HOLBROOK VISIT

Ann Brennan gave a resume of the recent visit of Society members to Holbrook beginning with lunch at the 100 year old Holbrook Hotel.

NEXT MEETING WEDNESDAY

11 DECEMBER 2013

7.30pm at Commercial
Club Albury

Speaker: Peter Whitbourn
"The beginnings of Ford in
Albury & District."

Members' Bring, Show &
Tell Night.

Meetings in the New Year:

No meeting in January

First meeting 12 February



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ALBURY & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC

PO Box 822 ALBURY 2640

<www.alburyhistory.org.au>

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Membership list & Bulletin dispatch: Ray Gear

Meetings: 2nd Wednesday of the month 7.30pm usually at Commercial Club Albury.

Committee meets 3rd Wednesday of the month 5.15pm at Albury LibraryMuseum.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION

Single: \$25

Family: \$33

Corporate: \$50

Subscriptions are due 31 May. *Bulletins* will not be sent to members who have subs outstanding as at 31 August.

Research undertaken \$25 first hour. Enquiries in writing with \$25

Arrangements regarding the meal were upset by the sudden departure of the chef who took the special meal arrangements with her. However a good meal was enjoyed. First venue was the Submarine Museum and the HMAS *Otway* half submerged in a lawn. The museum includes the 'insides' of a sub with fighting compartment and living quarters. The key attraction of the museum is a hologram presentation of the Commander Holbrook VC story narrated by his wife. Mrs Gundula Holbrook is now a very old lady and she has contributed very generously to the museum.

Next was the National Museum of Australian Pottery also housed in a 100 year old building. A surprise was the large heavy doors now operated by electric openers with sensors. Pottery was one of the earliest industries in colonial Australia. Some items were brought from England but home-grown manufactures were urgently needed.

The day ended with a visit to the Woolpack Museum housed in an old hotel and containing a huge collection of artifacts from the Holbrook district.

PTE WILLIAM EAGLES

In the Members' 15 Minutes segment, David Eagles showed the medals awarded to his grandfather 7632 Pte W H Robinson of the 36th Infantry Battalion who died of wounds in October 1917 and is buried at Rouen, site of a large military hospital complex in France. David also had the Memorial medallion issued to families of those killed.

FUND RAISING BUTTONS

Narda Reid brought a collection of war literature and a collection of fund raising buttons and spoke of the constant demands on the civilian population to support Australian Comforts Fund, the Prisoner of War Fund, Tin Hat Day, the Red Cross, the YMCA and Salvation Army appeals for recreation huts in camps, and a host of other war related causes. "People always had their hands in their pockets," she said.

L/CPL THOMAS McCLURE

Roma Freeman spoke about her grandmother's youngest brother 458 L/Cpl Thomas Albert McClure, 38th Infantry Battalion, who was killed in action 13 October 1917 in Belgium. She read a Red Cross report from a soldier in hospital who had seen him seriously wounded on the battlefield at Passchendaele. His body was never found. Roma's uncle Tom Jelbart, well known to Society members was named after L/Cpl T A McClure.

The report of his death was collated by a Red Cross searcher who interviewed soldiers in the same battalion to gather information about men who were listed as missing. Roma's grandfather George Griffith had served in England as a searcher.

HENTY HONOR BOARD

Edward Dale told the story of the Henty Honor Board which has now found a permanent home on the wall of the Henty & District Historical Society room at the old School of Arts Memorial Hall.

Edward is also seeking additional information on the emergency landing of the Vickers Vimy aircraft piloted by Sir Keith and Sir Ross Smith at Henty on 24 February 1920.

VX48323 CAPTAIN HARRY FLOOD

By Joe Wooding

EARLY LIFE

Academic achievement and sporting ability, especially cricket and football, came easily to Harry Flood. Born in Albury on 28th November 1914 to Harry and Euphemia Flood, well known hoteliers being at various times mine hosts of the Criterion (later the Gloucester), Terminus and Star Hotels, his early schooling was at the Christian Brothers College Albury. Matriculating at 14, Harry had to tread water for 4 years until he was old enough to enter university

In 1932 he began a law degree at St. Johns College, Sydney University, gaining honours in mathematics in his first year. In 1933, he was dux of the college winning the Fred Blackall Bursary as well as a public exhibition. Sport was not overlooked, trying his hand at rugby union for University but was far more at home playing several seasons of Australian Rules with the Sydney Football Club. He played cricket with University



Lieutenant Harry Flood

in Sydney's 1st grade competition, as well as inter varsity matches. In one match in Brisbane, he took 6/31 from 13 overs, being the 6th bowler used, wrecking Brisbane University's innings.

On three occasions, 1936, 1937 and 1939, Flood played with Albury in that very competitive annual competition, Melbourne Country Week. To this day, he is the only Albury batsman to have scored three centuries in that competition.

In 1939, Flood played for Albury Tigers in a hard fought three point win over Wodonga for the O & M premiership, scoring two goals. Ironically, a few days prior to the match, Hitler had invaded Poland, triggering WWII, which was to consume 6 years of Harry's life, although at the time matters closer to home would have far more relevance. He informed team mate Jack Perry that he was very keen on his sister Eileen and intended to marry her.

JOINING UP

On 22 July 1940, 27 year old Flood enlisted in Albury giving his occupation as law clerk and two days later he entered camp at Caulfield, Victoria. In August he contracted mumps and spent two weeks in Fairfield Quarantine Hospital. In December Harry was sent to Officers Training School at Albury and Bonegilla and in May 1941 was promoted to lieutenant. He was posted to the 2/4th Independent Company one of a number of units being trained for special operations.

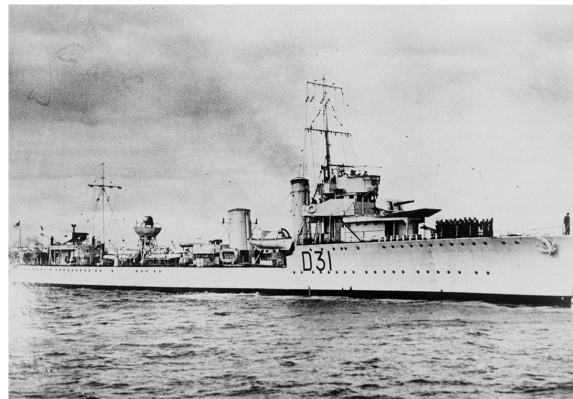
Following months of intensive training at Wilson's Promontory, the 2/4th Ind Coy was stationed in the Northern Territory between April and September 1942. Headquarters was at Katherine with platoons at Victoria River, Daly River and Roper River. They were spread over thousands of square miles. Crocs proved more troublesome than the threat of the expected Japanese invasion.

In September 1942, the Company was assembled in Darwin with the coming deployment to Timor known only to a very select few.

To understand this deployment, a little background is necessary. On 5 December 1941, two days before Pearl Harbour, two battalion groups of about 1200 men each were deployed to Ambon and Dutch West Timor. At that time East Timor was Portuguese and neutral, however on 22 December 2/2nd Ind Coy moved to Dili to defend the airfield. The Portuguese did not resist.

Darwin was bombed on 19 February 1942 and next day, West Timor was invaded by a Japanese force of 23,000 men. The Australians were overwhelmed and forced to surrender after four days of fighting. Portuguese East Timor was given Japanese 'protection' and Japanese troops arrived at Dili.

All was lost, or so it seemed, in Australia, but on 20 April 1942, 59 days after the Japanese landings, faint radio contact was made with an



Destroyer HMAS *Voyager* lost during the unloading of 2/4th Independent Company at Betano Bay Timor, 23 September 1942.

unbelieving Darwin. "Force intact. Still fighting. Badly need boots, money, quinine, ammunition" read the message.

Following the loss of West Timor and the arrival of Japanese troops in Dili, the 2/2nd Ind Coy had withdrawn to the hills and, joined by remnants from West Timor, conducted sabotage, ambush and guerrilla raids with remarkable success. It is fair to say this could not have occurred without considerable assistance from many of the locals whose villages were dotted around the countryside and who paid an enormous price for their help with rape, pillage, torture and murder an ongoing nightmare.

With 300 men still fighting on Timor, Army command had to act. Options included evacuate, reinforce or invade. General Macarthur saw great mileage in having thousands of Japanese troops chasing a few hundred shadows so the reinforce option was chosen.

TIMOR

Flood's 2/4th Ind Coy was chosen and embarked at Darwin on 21 September 1942, but landing at Betano Bay after dusk was not without incident. While unloading was in progress HMAS *Voyager* drifted aground and could not be refloated. The skipper, Lieutenant Commander R C Robinson, faced a dreadful dilemma. Two barges crammed with troops were alongside the port propeller. Ordering 'Full Astern' on the port screw might have saved the vessel, but meant almost certain death for the men in the two barges. He chose to save the men. After daylight, Japanese planes found the ship; one was shot down but the other escaped. The ship was scuttled and in the early afternoon was bombed and strafed along with stores remaining on the beach. The *Voyager* crew numbering 119 were rescued by the corvettes *Warrnambool* and *Kalgoorlie*. Oddly, one seaman was given permission to remain with his

brother who was serving with the 2/2nd Ind Coy.

In November 1942, 2/2nd Ind Coy was evacuated, leaving 2/4th Ind Coy now codenamed Lancer Force, to continue to harass, ambush and disrupt the Japanese. All the while, a sinister change was taking place. The Japanese began to harness the enmity between the natives of the west towards those from the east and paid armed gangs to kill both Portuguese officials, Australian troops and those suspected of assisting them. The Australians began killing more armed Timorese than Japs.

A message marked 'Secret' dated 1 January 1943 to General HQ, SWPA, best describes the situation: "our Troops Timor are rapidly being driven into a restricted space with few available anchorages for evacuation - food is practically unavailable in forward areas - lack of transport facilities (ponies) is acute - natives are either hostile or friendly but wavering. There appears to be no great utility of retaining this force in Timor." The order to evacuate was made the next day and the night of 9/10 January chosen.

The men, numbering around 300, were in small groups spread over hundreds of square miles and given five days to get to the evacuation zone. Utmost secrecy was paramount, if the natives knew of an evacuation, the Japs would almost certainly have been informed. They were told the Australians were moving operations further to the east. Amazingly, all but four men reached the beach. "A" Platoon and Lieutenant Flood arrived the previous night. A fierce tropical storm raged and was probably the main reason aerial patrols did not discover the preparations for the evacuation.

The midnight embarkation was diabolical, with several smaller craft being overturned in the raging surf. Much equipment was lost. The men and 50 Portuguese refugees managed to board the destroyer HMAS *Arunta*, getting away safely but closer to dawn than planned. The story however takes a twist. HQ asked for volunteers to stay behind to clear the beach and then to continue to report on Japanese activities, but as far as possible not to engage the enemy. No exit plan or duration of stay was given. Harry Flood, the only unmarried officer volunteered and was joined by 13 soldiers. The group was known as 'S' Force.

'S' FORCE

Clearing the beach was a nightmare. Several hundred Timorese porters, known as criados, who had been invaluable to the Australians realised they were now on their own and fought over what was left. S Force worked all day burying what they could and at nightfall headed exhausted for the safety of the hills. It was not long before the Japanese were alerted and pursued the group relent-

lessly.

On 21 and 26 January the group was discovered by a large Japanese force. The group split up and escaped but lost their wireless when the pony carrying it was shot while crossing a swollen river and swept away. Malaria, tropical ulcers, hunger and lack of sleep added to their woes. One man, Pte Dennis Fitness, was left with a Portuguese missionary and was later reported to have died from malaria.

The group split into three parties and made their way east. They were able to link up again with aid from friendly natives and Portuguese hiding in the area. Then, at the end of January, a stroke of pure luck occurred. 'S' Force made contact with a detachment of Z Special Force who had been conducting coast watching operations. Supply drops were organised and the whole group went to ground until 10 February 1943 when they were evacuated on the USS *Gudgeon*.

After a cramped 8 day voyage 17 S Force, 6 Z Special Force and 5 Timorese and Portuguese reached Fremantle where their reception was underwhelming. The Australian 9th Division was arriving home from North Africa and Tobruk and Alamein were household names.

Lieutenant Flood's movements are unclear till August 1943 when he rejoined 2/4th Ind Coy at the Jungle Training Centre at Canungra in Queensland. Almost immediately he was posted to 2/5th Ind Coy then to the 2/4th Cavalry Commando Squadron. His role was probably a training one.

On 15 May 1944, Flood was promoted to captain and three days later he married Eileen May Perry in St Augustine Church Wodonga. In December 1944, Captain Harry Flood completed a course in military law in Sydney and transferred to the Australian Army Legal Corps. For a time he was stationed locally at Bandiana.

FAMILY

In February 1945, a son John was born, sadly his twin brother died at birth. Colleen and Harry V were to complete the family. A tragic accident in 1964 resulted in John's quadriplegia and for 38 years, Eileen showered a mother's love on her totally dependent son until her passing in 2002. John died in 2009.

RETURN TO CIVILIAN LIFE

Flood's military service ended on 30 August 1946. He had served his country for 2,228 days, 151 on active service outside Australia. Even then, he was short-changed; it is 161 days inclusive between departing Darwin on 12 September 1942, arriving Fremantle 18 February 1943.

Returning to civilian life, he practiced law with Tietyens, Angel & Jackling for 30 years before joining David Skinner. His quiet, yet efficient courtroom manner was greatly admired. He retired in 1979. He played several seasons of

cricket after the war without reaching his pre-war brilliance. Flood died on 23 March 1992.

His obituary 3 days later was to upset his family. While the story covered his life's journey, it began by sensationalizing his military service, particularly relating to an ability to kill and concluded with a reference attributed to his mother, telling her granddaughter that "all men are bastards, but you are better off with, than without one". In Harry's case, the trauma of Timor and following family tragedies would affect most men. It is for others to judge what it did to him. At 5 feet 8 inches, Harry Flood was not a giant, but every inch a man.

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Nicholas Cowell

My thanks to Chris McQuellin, and to Harry V Flood for family information.

DOCTOR ISABEL ORMISTON

By Christopher McQuellin

EARLY LIFE

Martha Isabel Ormiston was born in Albury 1882, the daughter of Andrew and Sarah Ormiston of Newtown. She attended the grammar school, and graduated as a doctor from the University of Sydney in 1907. She served her residency at the Sick Children's Hospital in Brisbane and later moved to become a Health Inspector of Schools in Tasmania for the period 1911-13. In 1913 she applied for a leave of absence from the Tasmanian Education Department to do a post graduate course at Edinburgh University for medical inspectors of schools.

SERVICE IN BELGIUM

When war broke out, she volunteered and joined the Wounded Allies Relief Committee (WARC), at Sardinia House, Kingsway London. WARC was established to co-operate with the Admiralty, the War Office and the Red Cross Societies for the relief of wounded allies. It worked in close co-operation with the Belgian and British Governments. The committee ran three hospitals in France and Belgium and two specialist units in the Balkans. The committee also arranged for wounded Belgians to be treated in English hospitals. By 1915 there were some 20,000 Belgian soldiers in these hospitals.

As early as October 1914 the Red Cross had organised a 60 Bed hospital at Ostend for Belgian refugee women and children and wounded Bel-



Dr Isabel Ormiston, born and educated Albury, qualified as a doctor at Sydney University. Served in Belgium, Montenegro and France in WWI. Later, Senior Lady Medical Officer, Egyptian Ministry of Education.

gian soldiers. The staff provided by Red Cross consisted of 14 nurses and included Dr Isabel Ormiston. Because of the numbers of refugees and wounded the Ostend Kursaal [a large Hydro facility] was converted to accommodate 3000 women and children and wounded soldiers. Ormiston was reported as being responsible for the health of these refugees- 'many of whom were suffering from various illnesses contracted whilst sleeping and living under circumstances which have prevailed since the Germans devastated their Belgian homes'

The German Army captured Ostend on 15 October 1914 and Isabel Ormiston together with the Matron Madame Patton-Bethune and Dr Emile van de Watte became prisoners. After a short period of detention, Ormiston was sent to Holland from where she was soon repatriated to England. It was during this period in Belgium Isabel was

mentioned in dispatches by the Belgian Army to King Albert.

THE BALKANS

The British Journal of Nursing of 1 May 1915 reported that the WARC was sending Dr. Isabel Ormiston to Montenegro, another allied country. A report back to the WARC by Isabel Ormiston and Madame Patton-Bethune indicated that the Montenegrin Government required as an urgent request: a self supporting hospital unit, accompanied by vaccine, disinfectants and destructors [medical incinerators] to combat the typhus epidemic. WARC moved quickly to send such a unit to Montenegro.

The WARC unit was established in Podgoritza about 16 kilometres outside the then Montenegrin old royal capital of Citijne. Podgoritza was captured from the Turks in the 1880s. Dr. Ormiston reported that the Christian part of town was dirtier and poorer and that the areas infected with typhus were in the new provinces on the Serbian side and that as the weather gets warmer, the disease is tending to become milder. Podgoritza at the time was half Turkish and half Christian and there was only one local doctor [Turkish] and communication was very difficult. The newspaper reported that half of Ormiston's patients were Austrian prisoners and that it was impossible to house and feed them and as a result many died from typhoid and dysentery.

The report also went on to say that there was a great shortage of flour and other important food stuffs, and clothes of all kinds for men, women and children were urgently needed. While awaiting the Committee's decision to send a unit Dr. Ormiston inspected all the local hospital arrangements and Austrian prison camps, giving valuable help and advice. It was noted that the Austrian POWs hated dying in a foreign country and the fact that no one knew of their circumstances.

An interesting side light to her work in Podgoritza was that she was asked by the wealthy local Turks to see professionally the ladies in their harems. She commented that some of the women were perfectly beautiful; all had skin like babies and snow white in colour. The women never went outside their own quarters, and they envied her freedom.

The WARC hospital consisted of 2 units of 100 beds for Podgoritza and Nikschich and its initial work was to assist in stemming the typhus epidemic in the Ipek and the Djakora districts. It was thought that the typhus was transmitted by soldiers from artillery units returning from Serbia. Later, it was hoped the unit could be adapted for the reception of the wounded. However before this could occur, WARC and other foreign aid

groups had to leave Montenegro ahead of the advancing Austro-Hungarian armies.

FLIGHT INTO EGYPT

The *Hobart Mercury* of 20 November 1915 carried a report of the difficult overland journey by Dr Ormiston and Matron Patton-Bethune to Salonika in northern Greece. From Greece, the pair went to Alexandria for two weeks leave before returning to England. It is possible Ormiston met her future husband who was the assistant police commissioner in Alexandria at the time.

FRANCE

Back in England, Ormiston was sent to France to work in the WARC 225 bed military hospital located inside the Musée Nationale de Céramique in Limoges. This hospital was on a main rail line from the Western Front and wounded troops could be sent directly there for treatment and rehabilitation.

Also serving in France was Isabel's sister Margaret Ormiston who was a staff nurse at the Second Australian General Hospital (2AGH) at Marseilles and later at Wimereux on the north coast of France.

EGYPT & MARRIAGE

Ormiston returned to England in April 1918 and next year went back to Egypt as an inspector of schools. In January 1920 she married Captain Chudleigh Garvice DSO OBE, the Commandant of Alexandria police. Unfortunately he died unexpectedly 14 months later.

Captain Garvice had served in the South African War where he was awarded his Distinguished Service Order. In 1904 he was seconded to the Egyptian Army from the Royal Dublin Fusiliers and became assistant commandant of the Alexandria City police in 1916 and commandant two years later.

RECOGNITION

For her services in Montenegro, Isabel Ormiston was awarded the Order of Danilo and the Montenegrin Red Cross by the king, Nicholas 1.

For her war service, Isabel Ormiston was awarded the British War Medal and the Victory Medal and later for Services to Community as Senior Lady Medical Officer, Egyptian Ministry of Education, she was made a Member of the British Empire (MBE) in 1928 and admitted to the Order of the British Empire (OBE) in 1944.

Isabel Ormiston passed away in July 1958 in Sydney. She was a truly remarkable lady and one of whom her family and the Albury community can be justly proud.

RETURN TO CIVIL LIFE

By Michael Browne

At the beginning of the Second World War in 1939, Australia's population was a little under 7 million. Of those, 993,000 men and women served in Australian and Commonwealth forces. Demobilisation in Australia began on 1 October 1945 and its rapidity brought with it some problems for re-establishment authorities. Training facilities were strained and there was a considerable shortage of instructors and equipment; a grim reminder of inadequate educational facilities in pre-war years.

The plan for re-establishment was part of a major plan for full employment and it was the aim of the Government that at the end of vocational training, there would be a place for all in the community which could be filled with happiness and security.

By June 1946, 200,000 servicemen and women had returned to their old jobs; 7,529 had resumed their apprenticeships; 60,000 had taken up full or part time training; and 150,000 had been assisted into new jobs.

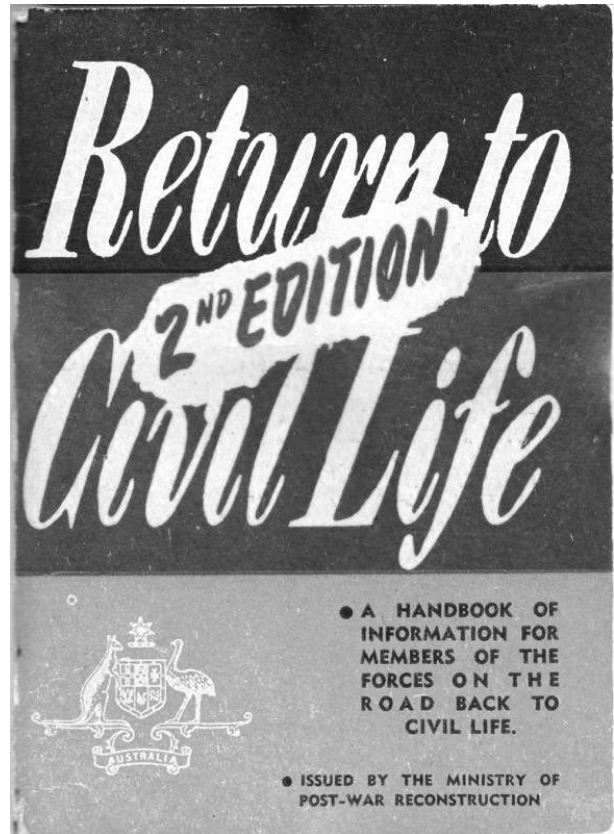
Discharge was on a priority basis and a scoring system was used to determine who went first. Priority was based on length of service, age on enlistment and family responsibilities.

The method of scoring differed for men and women. Men with no dependants – double their completed months of full time service until September 1945 and double their age in years at time of enlistment. Men with dependants – followed the same rule, but multiplied their completed months of service by 3 therefore gaining a bigger score than a single man. The higher the score, the higher the priority rating.

For women it was a lot simpler. First to be released were those with dependent children, then married women followed by those with adult dependants and lastly other women. Within each group, a similar scoring system to the men was followed.

To complete discharge, members were required to attend the Dispersal Centre. Here, discharge was processed quickly. Medical examinations were sometimes required and from there assessment was made to see if the disability was war caused or not. All members were medically examined and had a chest x-ray.

Next step was the Service Rehabilitation Section where the 'Demob 1' form was completed, listing training and experience gained during service. If a person was unsure about what type of work they wanted to do or required more training, they then were passed on to the Vocational Guidance Officer for assistance. While there, members were also required to complete the electoral enrolment card, were issued with a civilian food



Booklet produced by the Ministry of Post-War Reconstruction with information for members of the forces on the road back to civil life. There were three editions: 1945, 55 pages; 1946 105 pages and 1948 116 pages.

ration book, clothing coupons and a tobacco voucher for their monthly civilian entitlement of cigarettes and tobacco. The amount of coupons received again depended on amount of time served and marital status.

Commonwealth laws were passed to protect the rights of returning servicemen and women particularly in the area of employment and training. Workers had a right to resume their original employment and they had the security of pay increases as if their employment not been interrupted. Similar conditions applied to those renewing an apprenticeship. Sometimes, duties carried out in service could be credited towards the apprenticeship. In order to apply for their old job, members had to request the position in writing within 14 days of discharge. The employer had an obligation to provide the original position if it was practicable and reasonable to do so.

A gift of tools to the value of £10 was given to those who had to provide their own tools and in some circumstances a £40 interest free loan was provided. A War Service Land Settlement Scheme was undertaken together by the Commonwealth and State. For the first year, a settler received an allowance under the Commonwealth

Reconstruction Training Scheme. During this time, the settler did not need to pay rent or any interest in respect of the holding or any payments in advance for purchase of livestock and equipment.

Special rates of pension were given to those who were incapacitated as a result of war service. Where the general pension did not exceed 19 shillings, an extra pension of £2/10/0 was given each week. This increased to £3/8/0 if the basic pension exceeded 19 shillings. A pension of £4/16 per week plus an extra £1/4/0 for the war blinded and for those who required permanent assistance was given. Those suffering from pulmonary fibrosis also received special consideration. Wives, children and in some circumstances, other people, were also considered for pensions in these cases.

A Soldier's Children Education Scheme was established to ensure the children of deceased or blinded service men and women were adequately educated from a very young age. The scheme was also extended to include those suffering from tuberculosis. Free tuition, books, equipment and the payment of living expenses were some of the benefits.

Funeral expenses were covered with a grant of no more than £15 being made available.

After WW1, the Commonwealth War Service Homes Act was established and this continued post WW2. Those eligible for assistance included the usual Army, Navy and Air force members but also included nurses, mercantile marines, widows and widowed mothers of those previously mentioned.

War gratuities were offered but applicants needed to apply. It was a free gift from the Commonwealth in recognition of honourable service during the war and it could be withheld, deferred or made subject to such terms and conditions as authorities thought just and proper. There were two rates available. One was for service overseas and certain periods after return and the second was for Australian service after Japan entered the war. Both rates were payable without distinction as to rank or sex. The overseas service rate was £3/15/0 and covered each 30 day period spent overseas including time as a POW. The service in Australia rate was 15 shillings per month and relates to the period following the outbreak of war with Japan on 7 December 1941. Both gratuities ceased at the date of discharge or on 2 September 1946, whichever was earlier.

All this information and more was set out in the booklet *Return to Civil Life*, published by the Ministry of Post-War Reconstruction. However, the entire demobilisation process could be a sticky mess and so free legal advice was also on

offer. This service did not generally represent people in court. If required, more experienced representation was obtained and all costs covered. Many brave Australians went away to war, a considerable number made the ultimate sacrifice. Reading this booklet, it was pleasing to see the level of support those that returned received to resettle in society.

ANOTHER TALK FROM THE CEMETERY WALK MIGRANT CHILDREN'S GRAVES

By Bruce Pennay

Twenty-two infants newly arrived at Bonegilla died from the effects of malnutrition in late 1949. After autopsies at Albury Base Hospital, they were buried near the babies' section on the northern edge of the cemetery. Only a few of their burial sites have name markers.

The hospital, reception centre, immigration and government agencies declined to take blame for the deaths, but conditions for young children at Bonegilla were subsequently improved. Newspapers nation-wide made much of what seemed a national health scandal. Many blamed the parents who, as displaced refugees from Europe, not only did not have English, but, they said, also lacked common sense about childcare.

A consensus emerged that perhaps the children were not fit to travel and they certainly did not endure the shipboard diet of boiled water if they contracted gastroenteritis. Perhaps the parents were in a hurry to leave hungry Europe and did not want to relinquish the offer of berths that would bring their families to Australia.

The newspaper reports dwelt on the pathos of the young deaths. The *Border Morning Mail* likened the cluster of small grave mounds to the sand castles where young children more usually played. Reporting one burial, it described the grey skies and the anguish of distressed parents as light rain fell while the dainty pale blue coffin was lowered into the ground. It found one grave where a parent had sprinkled broken biscuits, barley and raisins - all the things a hungry child might have craved.

The deaths and the graves are solemn reminders of the impact of the Second World War and the subsequent Cold War, on the lives of civilians, many of whom survived armed conflict, but not the hunger that continued long after the fighting stopped.

**A&DHS Christmas Dinner
Commercial Club
Friday 6 December
6.30 for 7.00
Cost \$35 per person
RSVP Tuesday 3 December
June Shanahan 6025 1324
Bring present to value \$5 for Kris Kringle**
