

Anzac Day Marches in Albury

Doug Hunter

Anzac Day 2020 was different. COVID placed severe restrictions on how we could observe the commemoration of the landing at Gallipoli. This year, 2021 will also be different with a much-reduced number marching.

Albury's first Anzac Day, 25 April 1916, was a late morning gathering in Dean Square arranged by clergy of the Anglican, Presbyterian, Methodist, Congregational and Salvation Army. As the Post Office clock struck 12, a minute's silence was observed. The Presbyterian minister led in prayer and the Anglican minister delivered a stirring address. Cadets raised the flag and fired a salute. The Town Band played the Recessional, and the gathering sang lustily ending with a resounding 'Lest we forget, Lest we forget'.

Community discussion began early the following year. Ideas swirled: should it be a grand affair, a floral cross where tributes could be laid, a mega recruiting effort perhaps? After due consideration it was decided to replicate the previous year with the addition of floral decorations at the Dean Square Rotunda and a procession of civic dignitaries and clergy from the Town Hall to the Square.

Roman Catholic clergy were unable to take part in ecumenical services; however, at the Christian Brothers' College special lessons were conducted telling the story of Gallipoli. The principal, Brother Coman Seery, who had two brothers serving with the AIF, then addressed the assembled school. He spoke in glowing terms of the wonderful bravery of the 'untried



A guard from the local 8th/13th Victorian Mounted Rifles including members with former service in RAN, Army and RAAF leading a post-WWII Anzac Day march in Albury.

Australians' at the landing. He reminded his listeners that Irish troops too, were fighting alongside the Australians.

Anzac Day commemoration in 1918 differed markedly from the two previous years. Rather than hold a combined memorial service on 25 April, the NSW branch of the Returned Sailors and Soldiers Imperial League recommended that 29 April be designated Anzac Sunday and that returned servicemen join with their own congregation to observe the day. This was done. On the 25th St Matthew's Church was open in the evening for united prayer.

In 1919, the churches revived the 1916 and 1917 practice of holding a service at noon in Dean Square with the Town Band playing sacred music and accompanying the hymn singing. Attendance was down on previous occasions, many ex-servicemen preferred to support stalls on Mate's and Globe corners raising funds for the Returned Soldiers Club.

Following World War Two, ex-servicemen and women supported Anzac Day marches and services and continue to do so.