

Remembrance Day, the 1st soldier to enlist in WWI from Dubbo, & Convoy 1

Tuesday, November 11, 2014

Today is Remembrance Day, and the 96th anniversary of the Armistice which ended the First World War. At 11 am on the morning of the 11th November 1918, after more than four long years of war, the guns fell silent on the Western Front. The Germans had agreed to the Allied terms for an unconditional surrender, and sought a peace settlement.

At 11 am one minute's silence will be held in ceremonies around Australia today in remembrance of those who have died in the war, and wars since.

On this day one hundred years ago, the first troop convoy of 38 Australian and 10 New Zealand troop ships, carrying approximately 30,000 Australian Imperial Force (AIF) and the New Zealand Expeditionary Force (NZEF) troops, and 8000 horses, was making its way to the Middle East. This convoy was escorted by three naval cruisers including the HMS Sydney, triumphant after its successful sea battle against the German cruiser SMS Emden near the Cocos-Keeling Islands only two days before, on the 9th November 1914. The convoy arrived at Alexandria in Egypt on the 3 December 1914.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

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AWM Photograph: 'The fleet for the first convoy transporting AIF troops assembling in King George's Sound, near Albany, Western Australia, prior to their departure for overseas'.

Our research on Dubbo's Fallen WWI Soldiers Project has identified the following 18 men who had an association with Dubbo who were included in this convoy, and who died overseas during the First World War:

On the HMAT A14 Euripides:

- **1519 Hugh Cooper** (labourer, born Dubbo, enlisted 29/8/1914, address: Bradley Street, Cobar, DOW 31/8/1915, Gallipoli)
- **122 Reginald William Hardcastle** (clerk, born Dubbo, enlisted 17/8/1914, address: Koramba, Adelaide Parade, Woollahra, KIA 20/9/1918, France)
- **603 Norman Elton Harris** (stationhand, born Dubbo, enlisted 27/8/1914, address: Willandra, Bogan Road, Parkes, KIA 19/5/1915, Gallipoli)
- **1539 Joseph Herbert Hillier** (Locomotive fireman, born Ipswich, enlisted 28/8/1914, address: Walsh Street, Newtown Ipswich [in Dubbo area on outbreak of the war], DOW 31/8/1918, France)
- **303 Robert Randolph Holl** (shop hand, born Dubbo, enlisted 17/8/1914, address: Blairgowrie, Oberon Street, Randwick, KIA 6/11/1916, France)
- **349 Robert Munckton** (student, born Dubbo, enlisted 17/8/1914, address: Hopetoun, Dubbo, KIA between 6-12/8/1915, Gallipoli)
- **369 James Rhodes** (Wederell) (labourer, born Timaru NZ, enlisted 26/8/1914, address: [Dubbo, working at the Court House Hotel], KIA between 7-12/8/1915, Gallipoli)
- **1383 Richard Clyde Simons** (baker, born Mittagong, enlisted 29/8/1914, address: Kensington, NSW, former student at Dubbo District School, KIA 29/4/1915, Gallipoli)
- **1588 John James Turner** (sleeper cutter, born Dubbo, enlisted 29/8/1914, address: Gipps Street, Dubbo, KIA between 7-12/8/1915, Gallipoli)
- **958 Isaac Walls** (sleeper cutter, born Dubbo, enlisted 3/9/1914, address: Dubbo, KIA 21/4/1918, France)

- **1497 Alfred Henry White** (labourer, born London, enlisted 28/8/1914, address: Kennedy, Trabragan Street [sic], Dubbo, KIA 30/10/1916, France)
- **1590 Robert Victor Worthington** (blacksmith, born Dubbo, enlisted 29/8/1914, address: Orange Grove, Dubbo, KIA 27/7/1915, Gallipoli)

On the Transport A19 Afriq:

- **612 William Henry Reid McDonald** (labourer, born Dubbo, enlisted 2/9/1914, address: Portland PO, NSW, KIA 6/8/1915, Gallipoli)
- **[Major] Philip Sydney Soane Woodforde** (wool buyer, born Dubbo, enlisted 27/8/1914, address: 17 Lennon Street, Mosman, DOW 6/5/1917, France)

On HMAT A16 Star of Victoria:

- **448 Norman Beresford Lovett** (public school teacher, born Dubbo, enlisted 23/8/1914, address: Public School, Bearbong, Gilgandra, KIA 9/4/1918, France)
- **549 Archer Gibson Manning** (stockman, born Tumut, enlisted 1/9/1914, address: Chelsea, Dubbo, KIA 7/8/1915, Gallipoli)

On HMAT A23 Suffolk:

- **1086 Joseph Albert Lockwood** (chauffeur, born Dubbo, enlisted 16/10/1914, address [not listed on embarkation roll], KIA 8/8/1915 Gallipoli)
- **808 Sydney Willumsen** (farm labourer, born Denmark, enlisted 22/8/1914, address: Ellwood via Dubbo, KIA 2/5/1915, Gallipoli)

Of these 18 men who rushed to join up to fight in the war, 11 died at Gallipoli, and 7 survived Gallipoli, but died later in the war in France.

8 of these 18 men had a Dubbo address on their enrolment, and 4 of these 8 men were born in Dubbo. The other 4 of these 8 men were born elsewhere, including 3 of them overseas.

Of the 12 men listed who were born in Dubbo, 8 had moved away by the time that WWI had started, and were living elsewhere when they enlisted.

Robert Munckton was the first from Dubbo to enlist in the AIF, on 17th August 1914. (Reginald William Hardcastle, and Robert Randolph Holl also enlisted on the same date, but they had moved away from Dubbo and were living elsewhere when they enlisted).

According to an article in the Dubbo Liberal on 28th January 1916 in which Robert Munckton was reported missing in action, 'War had only three days been declared against Germany when he arrived home one evening, and in a serious manner asked his mother to allow him to "do his bit" for the Empire – he was then just 19. The wish was granted, and the boy, heartened by the sanctioning and stimulating words and admiring looks of his best friend, as well as the commendation and encouragement of his aunt, Nurse McCready – though it cost her dearly – went off the Sydney next day, and was the first Dubboite to answer the call'. The Dubbo Liberal reported on 25th December 1914 in an article about two letters it had received that 'The Emden sunk and the coast clear, the censorship embargo was lifted as the First Australian Contingent passed for Columbo. ... "Bob" Munckton writes a fine description of all that happened on the voyage – quite a literary effort – to his mother. His word pictures of life on board, of the assembly of the transports and cruisers off Albany prior to leaving Australians waters, of the excitement, but no fear because of the very possible assault from the predatory Emden of the ringing cheers that greeted the "Sydney" as she dashed passed his ship to Cocos Island on her death dealing mission, and of the wild joy that followed the wireless message that the "Sydney" had accomplished her purpose, and rid the seas of the pirate, and the last cause for anxiety in the Indian Ocean – all this is very vivid word painting, and quite worthy of a Munckton'.

Personal letters, such as the one written by Robert Munckton described in this article, have much to offer in recording historical events, and people's feelings about these events, and are a very valuable source of information.

Macquarie Regional Library would like to hear from any family members who have letters, diaries, or photographs from Dubbo WWI soldiers in their possession that would be willing to allow the Library to make a scanned digital copy for the Local Studies Collection, so that we can learn more about the life stories of these soldiers, and put a face to their names, so that the Dubbo community can better remember them.

[1] 'Missing', *The Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate*, 28 January 1916, p. 4,

[1] 'Cheery and interesting letters', *The Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate*, 25 December 1914, p. 4,