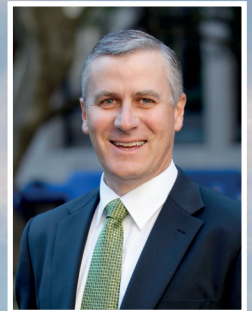




25TH APRIL 2013



Commemorative booklet proudly presented by  
**Michael McCormack MP**  
Federal Member for Riverina



# GRIFFITH HALL THROUGH TIME



ABOVE: Opening day (picture courtesy Griffith Genealogical and Historical Society).

BELOW: Way back then.



ABOVE: The hall today.

COVER: Darlington Point's war monument in Carrington Street (Kidman Way).

## MIA STORY LINKED TO WARS

THE remarkable story of the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area has almost its entire plot interwoven with the two World Wars.

Diggers returning from The Great War of 1914-18 became soldier settlers in this relatively new farming district.

These were harsh, unforgiving times.

There was much to be done. The water to the MIA had been turned on only two years before the imperialistic foreign policies of the great powers of Europe descended into madness and bloodshed on a scale previously unknown to mankind.

Great Britain's declaration of war against Germany meant Australia, as part of the Empire, was also at war and we were quick to enlist our services to "God, King and Country" – volunteers eagerly signing up for what seemed a great adventure.

Gallipoli sparked the ANZAC legend and the Western Front reiterated the courage, tenacity and valour of our troops.

A young nation with a population of not quite five million at the outbreak of World War I lost 59,341 of our finest and a further 39,649 died on active service in World War II. When the

six years of that unprecedented global killing ended in 1945, a surge of humanity escaping the devastation and troubles of Europe sought a new beginning. Australia – and the MIA – offered that hope.



The MIA has proven a haven for those seeking a new life and the development of this outstanding Riverina district exemplifies the hard work of those early soldier settlers and grateful immigrants who followed.

Through perseverance and perspiration, they eked out an existence and turned a seemingly worthless, inhospitable region into a fertile, bountiful landscape.

The nation should always remember what these people have done for the growth of inland Australia and our ability to feed and clothe ourselves and others with Riverina food and fibre – just as we should and will never forget what 25 April and the ANZAC spirit mean to us all.

*Michael McCormack*

MICHAEL McCORMACK MP  
Federal Member for Riverina

## MIXED EMOTIONS AT OPENING

THE opening of the Returned Soldier Settlers' Hall on 30 September 1939 was a grand occasion for Griffith.

The flag fluttered proudly in the breeze and townsfolk dressed in their finest yet a sense of both dread and uncertainty filled the air.

That same month, just 27 days earlier, Prime Minister Robert Gordon Menzies had announced the beginning of Australia's involvement in what would become the deadliest conflict in history.

Almost a million Australian men and women would serve in World War II and our country's mainland would come under attack for the first time, with sustained Japanese air raids in the north-west and midgeet submarines entering Sydney Harbour as well as shelling Newcastle.

Griffith and the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area would play their part, with thousands actively engaged in the war effort both here and abroad.

The RSS Hall became a focal point of activities during WWII and beyond.

Today, it houses the office of the local sub-branch and a military museum since 2009 as well as the Regional Art Gallery and continues to be an important community building in Banna Avenue.

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# YENDA'S BRAVE POOLE BROTHERS

THE Poole family of Yenda endured harrowing heartbreak in World War II, losing two of four sons who went to serve the Australian Army.

Gordon and Ralph Poole, sons of Frederick, both died of illness as Prisoners of War.

Fittingly, their names are memorialised on Yenda's war monument (pictured) with the 22 other brave locals who made the ultimate sacrifice to defend our country's freedom.

Ralph was 25 when he died on 14 June 1943 in Malaya whilst Gordon, 34, succumbed on 1 October the following year in Japan.

Both had enlisted at Wagga Wagga within two days of one another in late June 1940 and served as Privates with the 2/20 Australian Infantry Battalion.

The Poole boys' brother Jack fortunately survived the war.



Gordon Poole



Ralph Poole





(Above) REST IN PEACE: L/Cpl Peter McDuff's headstone in the Darlington Point Cemetery.

(Below) TRAGIC NEWS: The Daily Advertiser report on the awful event which claimed Peter McDuff's life in Vietnam.

(Below right) WE REMEMBER: His inscription on the Darlington Point cenotaph.

# PETER McDUFF: ONE OF THE RIVERINA'S FINEST

IN THE words of his brother, 2nd Battalion soldier Peter McDuff of Darlington Point was "happy-go-lucky" ... a young man who lived life to the fullest until his tragic death in South Vietnam in 1967.

A keen sportsman, Lance-Corporal McDuff was the unlucky victim of a training exercise which went horribly wrong and which cost him his life at the age of just 22.

Sadly, members of his family learned about his dreadful fate through media reports.

It was an awful way to find out and the heart-wrenching nature of L/Cpl McDuff's death made the loss even more difficult to bear.

L/Cpl McDuff and South Australian Privates Dennis Nelson, 21, and Stanley Radomi, 22, were killed when a rocket from an American Army gunship helicopter fell amongst them and exploded during a training exercise.

Ten other troops from 11 and 12 Platoons, 2 Royal Australian Regiment, were injured in the incident, some severely, and were flown to the American 36th Evacuation Hospital at Vung Tau.

Allan McDuff has fond memories of his brave brother, who was in just the fourth month of his tour of duty when the fatal accident occurred.

"He was my big brother ... I was 20 when Peter died and I still remember his smile, his easy-going manner and his great love of the outdoors," Allan reminisced.

Allan still lives in Darlington Point, where Peter's body was returned to be buried with full military

honours in the local cemetery.

His funeral was one of the district's saddest days.

A street in the town's new residential subdivision will bear the family name in Peter's memory and his sacrifice is remembered on the local cenotaph in Carrington Street as well as at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra.

Peter McDuff, eldest of the five children of World War II Royal Australian Air Force Veteran Edward and his wife Lorna, was born in Wagga Wagga, spent part of his youth at Rankins Springs where he worked in the family sawmill before moving to Darlington Point.

The McDuffs had a rich military heritage as Peter's uncle Leonard, from Yalgogrin North, served in the Army in World War II.

"Peter was keen to serve," Allan said. "He was proud of the Army uniform and he wore it with distinction.

"We were terribly shaken when the news of his death came through and we still miss him and remember him to this day."

Almost 60,000 Australians were involved in Vietnam from July 1962 until ANZAC Day 1975 during which time 521 – including stout-hearted Peter Edward McDuff – died as a result of the war and more than 3000 were wounded.



(Above) MEMORIALISED: Peter McDuff's name on the Australian War Memorial Roll of Honour in Canberra.

(Below) FRESH FACE: Peter McDuff, 22 years young when tragically killed in Vietnam.





## PLAYING THEIR PART



**ALL ABOARD!:** Land Army members outside their living quarters at the Leeton Showground pavilion (from left) Mary Vidler, Janet Burr, Stella Edwards, Peggy Williams (from whose personal collection the photo comes) and Jean Harrison.



**HARVEST TIME:** Reaping rice near Leeton with Enid Gorman driving the header team and Ethel Hall overseeing the filling of the bags.

**CABBAGE PATCH GIRLS:** Proudly showing the results of a crop of cabbages grown at Leeton, circa 1943.



# LEETON FEATURES IN NEW BOOK

A NEW book extols the virtues of the Australian Women's Land Army and the critical farming role they played to help feed the nation during the Second World War.

Jointly produced by the Australian War Memorial and the Commonwealth Department of Veterans' Affairs and written by Robyn van Dyk, *Serving on the Home Front* tells how city women were called on to replace male rural labour.

The 32-page publication includes three photographs taken at Leeton, which have been reproduced on this page.

Land Army recruits were aged between 18 and 50 and were usually drawn from metropolitan areas, often being unskilled in rural work.

Women on the land who were farmers or employees or relatives of land-holders were not eligible to enlist.

These new workers had to be heavily promoted to rural employers who were at first resistant to the use of female labour, according to the book.

"However, over time, their scepticism generally gave way to praise and respect," van Dyk wrote.

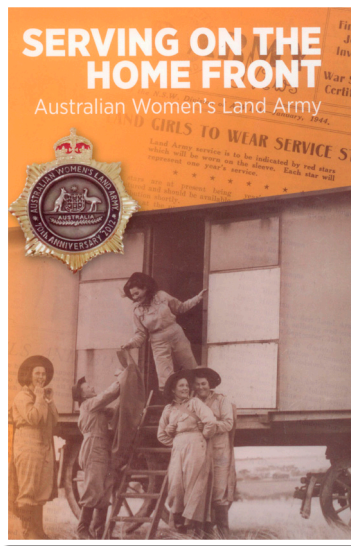
It was a tough slog, with the average working week 48 hours and pay starting at the minimum Land Army wage of 30 shillings a week.

A total of more than 6000 members served during the war years with peak enrolment of 2382 permanent and 1039 auxiliary members in December 1943.

In her foreword to the book, Governor-General Quentin Bryce, praising the AWLA, wrote of the "range of physically demanding tasks including fruit picking, crop harvesting and wheat, sheep and dairy farming" performed by members which was done with "wonderful moments of camaraderie, strength, determination and fun".

Her Excellency wrote of the AWLA's "vital importance to the Australian war effort".

The scheme was based on a similar one in Great Britain during the World Wars. The AWLA began on 27 July 1942 and was disbanded on 31 December 1945.



**GREAT STORY:** The fantastic work done by city girls in country places is told in this outstanding little publication.

The AWLA marked 70 years since its formation with surviving former members receiving a superb commemorative brooch featured on the cover of the book.

A limited number of copies of the book are available, free of charge, from my Griffith electorate office for anyone who would like one.

## LEETON LADY GAVE HER ALL

ROBINA Guild Kirk was doing her best for the war effort when struck down with illness whilst serving with 5 Service Flying Training School at Uranquinty.

Sadly, Corporal Kirk passed away on 1 March 1944 aged 26 and was buried in the Wagga Wagga War Cemetery on Koorlingal Road.

Born in Dundee, Scotland, she enlisted at Leeton for service with the Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force on 5 March 1942.

Her name is etched into Leeton's memorial obelisk (pictured).

C. C. JONES  
I. M. KING  
W. A. KINLOCH  
ROBINA KIRK  
C. J. LONGOARDI  
G. N. LUCAS  
E. T. LYNCH  
P. P. MAREN

# 2013 ANZAC DAY SERVICE TIMES AND VENUES

## CARRATHOOL

6am Dawn service, cenotaph in Memorial Hall grounds, Wade St.

## COLEAMBALLY (Includes Darlington Point)

5.45am Dawn service at John McInnes Square.

3pm Main service at John McInnes Square.

## GOOLGOWI

3.15pm March from Goolgowi Hall to the cenotaph outside Ex-Servicemen's Club, corner Combo and Napier Streets for commemoration service.

## GRIFFITH

5.45am Dawn service, Memorial Park.

10.30am March from War Memorial Museum (RSL Sub-Branch Hall), Banna Avenue.

11am Main service, Memorial Park. Address by Royal Australian Navy's Rear Admiral Michael Uzzell, Head of Engineering.

## HILLSTON (Includes Merriwagga and surrounding districts)

10.30am March from Ex-Servicemen's Club, High Street.

11am Service, cenotaph in Hillston Memorial Park.

## LEETON (Includes Gogeldrie, Murrumbidgee, Stanbridge, Wamoon)

6am Dawn service, short march from Church Street corner to cenotaph.

10am March from Leeton Courthouse to cenotaph.

11.15am Leeton Soldiers' Club, corner Yanco and Acacia Avenues, RSL Shrine, small service and wreath laying.

## MORUNDAH

10am Service starts with a march from railway line.

## NARRANDERA (Includes Grong Grong)

6am Dawn service, Memorial Gardens, corner East Street and Victoria Ave.

9am Service, Air Force war graves at Narrandera Cemetery, Douglas St.

10.30am March from Narrandera Ex-Servicemen's Club, Bolton St.

11am Main service, Memorial Gardens.

## RANKINS SPRINGS

8am Start of march after assembling at Allan James Park. Service to follow at cenotaph.

## WAGGA WAGGA

5.45am Dawn service arranged by Legacy at the cenotaph, Victory Memorial Gardens, Baylis Street.

6.30am Pilgrimage to Wagga Wagga War Cemetery, Koorlingal Road.

10.30am Baylis Street march begins.

11am Wreath laying at Victory Memorial Gardens cenotaph. Address by 93-year-old World War II Veteran Jack Calder, a Rat of Tobruk and Prisoner of War.

## WHITTON

3pm March from Rice Bowl Hotel, Benerambah Street, to Memorial Gates.

## YANCO

Noon Service, Yanco Hall, Trunk Road 80.

## YENDA

6am Dawn service, Yenda Diggers' Club, East Street, corner Mirrool Avenue.

10.45am March from Yenda Diggers' Club.

11am Main service, Yenda Memorial Park.

## CAPITAL CITY SERVICES: CANBERRA

5.30am Dawn service at the Australian War Museum (suggested arrival from 4.30am onwards).

6.30am The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander commemorative ceremony at the Aboriginal Memorial Plaque on the side of Mount Ainslie.

10.15am National ceremony at the Australian War Memorial and Veterans' march (suggested arrival 9.45am).

## SYDNEY

4.15am Dawn service at the cenotaph, Martin Place.

8.30am Wreath-laying ceremony at the cenotaph, Martin Place.

9am ANZAC Day march starting at Martin Place/George Street/Bathurst Street/Hyde Park.

12.30pm Commemorative service, ANZAC Memorial Park, Hyde Park South.

1pm Aboriginal ANZAC Day march in Redfern.

5pm Sunset service at the cenotaph, Martin Place.



## HEROES AT YANCO

THERE are two polished wooden plaques containing names etched in gold lettering in the Yanco Community Memorial Hall.

The larger and more ornate scroll (pictured) is dedicated to those who served the Empire from the district in World War II, with the Korean and Vietnam campaigns added later.

Of the 228 men and 19 women from Yanco who served in WWII, 22 died - "They walk in honour down the deathless years" is the board's tribute.

Amongst the many heroes listed is Ganmain-born Private Ronald George McGregor, awarded a Military Medal for "great courage regardless of danger" at Tel el Eisa, north-west of Alamein, Egypt, on 22 July 1942.

Pte McGregor was with the 2/2 Machine Gun Battalion.

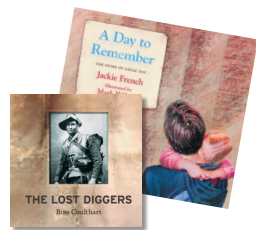
**PLEASE NOTE:** All times and venues have been supplied in good faith by various RSL Sub-Branch officials and were correct at the time of publication. Every care has been taken to ensure as many services as possible have been included. For verification of other services please contact your local RSL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



# RECORD WRITING ENTRIES

BY FAR the most entries for the Riverina school students' ANZAC Day writing competition were received this year. Hundreds of poems and short stories were submitted from right across the region in the third annual competition.

Authors of the best secondary and primary entries received book prizes from the Australian War Memorial with Ross Coulthart's superb *The Lost Diggers* on offer for the senior students and the splendid picture book *A Day to Remember* by Jackie French with illustrations by Mark Wilson presented to the younger winners.



Each student who sent in an entry will receive a commemorative signed certificate. Winning entries from the irrigation areas and western Riverina feature below.

## NARRANDERA REMEMBERS

FEW country war memorials could rival Narrandera's Great War monument (pictured) for the number of names chiselled thereon.

Sadly, many of those are listed "In memoriam", indicating a serviceman who did not return.

Narrandera district gave mightily to the nation's call to arms in 1914-18.

The town's Memorial Gardens bordered by East Street and Victoria Avenue, is one of the Riverina's finest parks commemorating the local sacrifice made.

The World War I circular granite shrine was dedicated by Gallipoli and Western Front hero Major General Sir Charles Rosenthal KCB, CMG, DSO, VD (1875-1954) on 21 November 1923.



## MEMORIES OF HARRY

*Bill Ryan, 11, Year 6, St Joseph's Primary School, Hillston (Pictured right)*

ANZAC Day for me in the Riverina is about the important men and women who served our now free country ... Australia.

One of those heroic people I was lucky enough to meet was a gentleman named Harry Bruce, who sadly passed away late last year.

Harry was a wonderful man who lived a magnificent life with many great achievements such as the league's highest award, the Meritorious Medal for his service in the RSL.

Two hundred and fifty words are definitely not enough to describe the person Harry was or the life he lived, but I will share the moments I most treasure.



Harry and his wife Olive would come to our school for our Remembrance Day ceremonies and sell

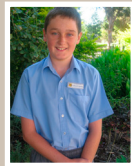
Legacy badges. Harry would tell us stories of his time at war and we would listen in awe, imagining what it would have been like for him.

My favourite story Harry told was a time when he was on the HMAS *Hobart*, manning the ship's major guns, when a Japanese torpedo struck the ship. The ship was severely damaged and Harry was trapped inside the turret. While he was trapped, Harry hoped and prayed that he would see his Mum and Dad again.

ANZAC Day in the Riverina will always be special to me. I love watching men like Harry march proudly wearing their medals of bravery and raising the Australian flag with pride.

ANZAC Day in the Riverina won't be the same this year without Harry, but we will remember him!

*(Pictured left) Arthur Henry "Harry" Bruce, 1921-2012, Rest In Peace.*



## WE WILL REMEMBER

ON THIS day we will remember them, Australia and New Zealand Army Corps, Soldiers, bullets, explosions, death, Mates leaving mates to rest.

People line the streets of Banna Avenue, The march begins and continues down the road, Poppies, medals and sprigs of rosemary, Young and old, with heads held high, Proud to represent the Diggers who have fallen.

On they march to Memorial Park, A touch, an embrace, is seen in the crowd, As past Diggers, men and women, fight

back tears, A huge crowd has formed in the park, The cenotaph stands tall with the marble stones carrying the names of the fallen.

Speeches are read which takes us back, Reliving moments and remembering the Diggers, "They fought to give us the best."

The bugle plays the Last Post, This triggers the utmost emotion, We stand, silent for a minute.

We will remember them.



*(Pictured above) Jorja Waring-Bryant, 13, Year 8, Griffith High School*