



Altona-Laverton Historical Society Inc.

PO Box 236 Altona 3018

NEWSLETTER

April 2018

Our Local Heroes

Altona Laverton Historical Society presents 'Our Local Heroes'.

The Society has endeavoured to unearth the stories of military persons from our area, and celebrate our *LOCAL HEROES*.

From the Boer War to the war in Afghanistan, we have collected stories of war and peace-locals who answered the call to defend their country or to tend the wounded. People from diverse situations who displayed exceptional self-sacrifice and then settled in our community.

A display of objects, photographs and military information is being set up for display in The Homestead, 128 Queen Street Altona, and will be available for inspection during normal opening hours, for a limited period.





2018 will see the Centenary of the end of the First World War or Great War as it was known to some.

Remembrance Day November 11,2018 will have special significance as it marks 100 years since the ceasing of hostilities.

1914

In our previous newsletter we set out some information regarding the 8th Light Horse Regiment which was on bivouac in Altona Bay, in November 1914. A report in 'The Herald' Thursday 18 February 1915, stated:

Five Hundred Light Horse under Lt.Colonel A.H.White, have been enjoying a seaside change from the dusty Broadmeadows camp,Mr. W.H.Croker having placed the Altona Bay Estate, beyond the Williamstown racecourse at the disposal of the Defence Department.

The Regiment was formed in Victoria at Broadmeadows in September 1914 for the 3rd Light Horse Brigade, and departed Melbourne on *Star of Victoria* 25 February. 1915 for Egypt.



The regiment, without horses, were despatched to Gallipoli ,to assist the infantry, and were involved in a major battle on August 7,1915 at The Nek, an important position on the ANZAC front line, it was a narrow strip of land, which was dominated by the Turkish trenches.

As part of the 3rd Light Horse Brigade, the 8th Light Horse in three waves of attack were mowed down by Turkish fire suffering 234 casualties ,154 fatal, including the Commanding Officer Lt. Colonel Alexander White.

AWM Photo

Anzac Cove



The photo left, from the ALHS collection shows a view of Anzac Cove - date unknown.

1916

By 1916, there was a shortage of men to fight overseas, a referendum was held on October 26, 1916 to see if the public were in favour of compulsory conscription.

The proposition was rejected.

In 1917 Prime Minister Hughes put a second referendum to the Australian people.



The Society has in its possession a small badge which was circulated in order to promote the “yes” vote.

The answer was a resounding **NO**, and the issue of conscription was closed for the remainder of the war.

In September 1916 training for Citizen Forces was re-established at Altona Bay, in order to train senior cadets and others to a standard that could assist the A.I.F who were fighting overseas.

On Friday, September 1, 1916, the Governor General, Sir R. Munro Ferguson, and Senior Officers arrived to inspect the camp, and his Excellency said it was one of the best he had seen in Australia.

Pictured below is a photograph of the Official visit.



Photo Australian War Museum



Photo: ALHS Collection

The camp, which commenced operation on September 1, 1916 is pictured above, in the first week over 1300 trainees were on site.

The YMCA provided amenities on site for the trainees, the YMCA building is visible in the background of the photo.

1916 - RSSILA Formed

In 1916 it was recommended that the Returned Soldiers and Sailors Imperial League Australia be formed (RSSILA).

In 1940 the name was changed to Returned Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen's Imperial League Australia (RSSAILA), and in 1965 was renamed the Returned Service League of Australia (RSL).

The early days involved the organising the rituals for ANZAC Day Dawn Services and march, and Remembrance Day Celebrations.



LAVERTON

The building currently known as 'The Old Laverton School', originally the Laverton State School was a recruitment point for those wishing to enlist during World War 1, and a meeting venue for locals of the time.

The area had the distinction of four Newland Brothers enlisting, Alfred, James, Herbert and William.

James Newland (right), was a recipient of the **Victoria Cross**

Local residents Albert Victor Hyde (Pictured left) and his brother, Edward Ernest Hyde also enlisted.



An Honour Board listing the names of those who enlisted, was unveiled in 1922 and is still in place on site.



ALTONA MEMORIAL DRINKING FOUNTAIN



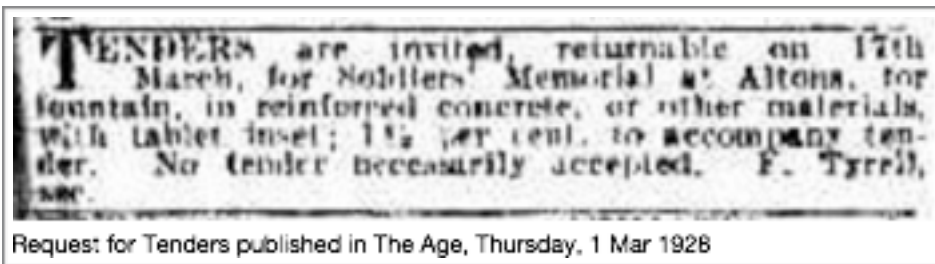
Image from Altona Laverton Historical Society collection, circa 1929

GIFT TO ALTONA

A memorial commemorating those who lost their lives while serving in the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) during World War I, 1914-1918, unveiled in 1928

Located at the northern end of Altona pier on the Esplanade, the memorial was a gift to the community from the recently formed Ex-Service Men and Women's Club, now better known as the Altona RSL (Returned Services League).

The memorial was unveiled on Monday, 4 June 1928 on the day when the King's birthday was celebrated, and 10 years after the end of WWI.



Request for Tenders published in The Age, Thursday, 1 Mar 1928

Jack Hopkins, treasurer of the Ex-Service Men and Women's Club, designed the memorial and carried out much of its construction starting on 1 May 1928, just one month before the unveiling. Constructed of

concrete, it had four alcoves, one on each side and when completed there would be a tap in each to supply unlimited quantities the world's oldest brew, "Adam's Ale." It was surmounted by a dome on top and would be further embellished as funds became available. The completed memorial stood eight feet high (2.4mt) with two drinking taps. A plaque had been mounted above the front opening bearing the words *Erected by Altona Ex-Service Men & Womens Club 1914-1918 "Lest We Forget."*

ALTONA MEMORIAL DRINKING FOUNTAIN (continued)

Opening Ceremony

Unveiling of the new memorial took place in a ceremony beginning at 3pm on Monday, 4 June 1928, the day when the King's birthday was celebrated. A large crowd of well over 400 people assembled to hear the speakers. Cr Bernard Joseph Maher presided and after his initial address outlining the benefits of the memorial to the community, Reverend William Edwards led the hymn "Oh, God our help in ages past," ending with a prayer. John Henry Lister MHR followed by congratulating all who contributed to building the memorial. Reverend FG Hughes read a chapter from the bible, after which Cr Maher called upon Mrs Fairman, wife of the president of the Ex-Service Men and Women's Club, to unveil the fountain. Cr White and John Murphy, president of the Altona Progress Association, also spoke, both emphasising the ornamental and practical value of the gift. After another hymn the gathering listened to the Last Post sounded by Mr A Laird.

The choral portion of the proceedings were in the hands of Mr A Smith who officiated at the organ and led the singing.

In the evening the Ex-Service Men and Women's Club held a most successful dance at Parham's Cafe (ABC Cafe) on the corner of Pier Street and the Esplanade. Successful prize winners for the evening were: gent's prize, F Vassie junior and lady's prize, Mrs Flood.

(Rev. William Edwards was the person responsible for organising an old church from Newport to be transported to Altona in 1929, when the "new" church was named after

St. Eanswythe.)

The Fairman's

Mr L Fairman, stated to be the president of the Ex-Service Men & Women's Club, and wife Mrs Fairman, may be the couple, Leonard and Lily Fairman, who lived in Davies Street, Altona from at least 1927. Leonard was born in England, enlisted in the AIF in 1915, fought in France, requested to be discharged in 1917, the same year he married Victorian born Lily Green, later enlisting again for WWII. Leonard was a mechanic while Lily took care of domestic duties and they're now both interred in Altona Memorial Park.

ALTONA MEMORIAL DRINKING FOUNTAIN (continued)

Fallen from Grace

At the end of WWII the memorial was less than 20 years old and experiencing problems with drifting sands threatening its stability and repeated complaints to police, council and Altona RSL from parents of teenage girls who had been physically assaulted when bending over to drink from the fountain. At a joint meeting between members of Werribee council and the Altona RSL in 1946, it was agreed to replace the memorial fountain with a new obelisk memorial in Altona Park (Logan Reserve) on the corner of Queen and Pier Streets.



Obelisk memorial replaced memorial fountain in 1946

The memorial fountain was moved into the council yard until Bill Draper, secretary of Altona RSL, pressured for its reinstatement, which it was, in Cresser Reserve. It sat there for years serving no obvious purpose. The town clerk stated it was no longer regarded an official war memorial and one day it may be returned to a drinking fountain, and in the meantime it could be considered a historical landmark.



In 1971 the Altona Historical Society questioned what the future would be for the memorial, considered now to be in a disgusting condition where it still stood in Cresser Reserve. Altona Apex offered to help restore it and the historical society suggested an identifying plaque could be added.

The following year members of the public were agitating for improvements to be made to Cresser Reserve with the derelict memorial fountain to be included in any plans. It was another three years before council commenced the planning stage, noting that the old memorial had proven useful in keeping vehicles off the septic tank installation of the nearby public convenience. It was estimated the fountain could be restored for the cost of \$250.

However, it would seem works at Cresser Reserve did not include the old memorial after all and it was returned once again to the council yard where it would seem it came to a sad end in the 1970s.

ALTONA MEMORIAL DRINKING FOUNTAIN (continued)



The story doesn't end there. Records of the historical society in July 1987 recorded the donation of the marble plaque from the old memorial by member Larry Fleming who rescued it from the council yard. The society in turn donated the plaque to the Altona RSL where it now stands with pride of place in the collection of war memorials fronting the building in Sargood Street.

At some time in this saga a replica plaque was produced, except in black marble with white inscriptions, that the Altona RSL has had in their keeping and has now donated to the historical society's collection.

(Research for this article by regarding the Memorial Drinking Fountain by Ann Cassar)



Replica plaque

The current Altona War Memorial

Altona's current war memorial with eternal flame, seen here, replacing the obelisk, was installed in front of Civic Offices, Civic Parade in 1965.



CURRENT NEWS

Recent Donations to the collection include:

- 1.From Geoff Mitchelmore and the Friends of Lower Kororoit Creek group — a book, with archives to come
- 2.Book on the history of the Merrett Rifle Range Williamstown
- 3,Short Film-last race day at Williamstown Racecourse,February 10,1940 the CF Orr Stakes
4. A replica plaque relating to the Altona Memorial Drinking Fountain (see previous page)

Reupholstering is about to be carried out to the three piece lounge suite, piano stool, and repairs to the Council chair

Do not forget that Devonshire Tea is available on the first Sunday each month at The Homestead

Note that a new logo has been designed for the Society



Next General Meeting

The next General meeting is planned for **June 14, 2018**

Guest Speaker : Arlene Bennett

Topic: Australian Services Nurses War Memorial Canberra

