

WEDNESDAY, 24 APRIL 2019

Re-dedication of the St Peters Heroes Plaques

Soldier's Memorial

St Peters Street, St Peters

10.30am – 12pm

Thank you Bill (Bill Denny)

- Your Excellency, Hon Hieu Van Le AC, Governor of South Australia and Mrs Lan Le
- The Honourable Steven Marshall MP, Premier of South Australia
- Mr Peter Malinauskas MP, Leader of the Opposition
- Lieutenant Colonel Guy Moten, Australian Army

- Commander Andy Burnett, Royal Australian Navy
- Group Captain Gregory Weller, Royal Australian Air Force
- Mr Bronson Horan State RSL SA
- Margaret Angove, wife of the late Kevin Angove, last President of the St Peters RSL
- Past Presidents and Members of the St Peters RSL
- Family members and descendants of the St Peters Heroes
- Fellow Elected Members of the City of Norwood Payneham and St Peters

- Mr Mario Barone PSM, Chief Executive Officer, City of Norwood Payneham and St Peters and other Council Staff
- Mr David Cree, Treasurer of the St Peters Residents Association and Project Coordinator of the St Peters Heroes Memorial
- Mr Bradley Fenner, Headmaster, Prince Alfred College
- Mr Tim Browning, Headmaster, St Peters College
- Ms Vicki Stravinski, Principal, East Adelaide School
- Ms Melissa Evans, Principal, Norwood Primary School
- Students from East Adelaide School, Norwood Primary School, Prince Alfred College and St Peters College – local schools where many of the men we honour this morning were educated
- Distinguished Guests

- Ladies and Gentlemen

- Boys and Girls

- Mr Peter Ensor, President of the St Peters Residents Association (apology)

It is indeed an honour and a privilege to be in the presence of so many of descendants of the St Peters heroes, some of whom have come from Melbourne, Canberra and elsewhere in Australia.

On behalf of the City of Norwood Payneham and St Peters, I thank you sincerely for being here today.

A special welcome and thank you to the students from East Adelaide School, Norwood Primary School, Prince Alfred College and St Peters College – local schools where many of the men we honour this morning were educated.

I also want to acknowledge the St Peters Residents Association.

In particular the incredible body of research and effort undertaken by David Cree and Mr Peter Ensor, who with the generous support of so many people here today, and a grant from the Veterans SA – ANZAC Day Commemoration Fund, have made this re-dedication ceremony possible.

The Council commends the association for its important contribution to this ANZAC Avenue of Honour and the history of St Peters.

We gather on the eve of the 104th anniversary of ANZAC landing at Gallipoli at this ANZAC Avenue of Honour dedicated by the Council in 2014 to mark the centenary of the start of the Great War.

We gather in the presence of a solitary soldier, who since February 1922 has kept vigil over the memories of the 145 St Peters heroes who made the ultimate sacrifice.

A century ago, the women of St Peters resolved to erect a memorial to honour the St Peters Heroes who fell in the Great War.

A committee was formed to raise funds for the memorial and to decide the form it should take.

The then Town of St Peters reserved an area at the Town Hall end of St Peters Street, not far from where we stand today.

The final design, by Adelaide architect and artist Edward Davis, consisted of a base of Angaston Marble on top which is a statue of an Australian "Digger" with arms reversed, sculptured in Italy from a photograph.

The cost of the memorial was fully met by public subscriptions, with the unveiling and dedication conducted by the Governor of South Australia, His Excellency, Lieutenant Colonel Sir William Earnest George Archibald Weigall KCMG.

It is fitting therefore, that 97 years after Governor Weigall dedicated this memorial on behalf of the St Peters community, our current Governor will help unveil the plaques attached to this memorial containing the names of the heroes as a final mark of respect for their sacrifice.

Thank you, Sir, for being here today.

On the 5 August 1914, the day after Britain declared war against Germany, Australia's Prime Minister Joseph Cook told the country: "Australia is now at war."¹

From cities, town and villages across the country, men and boys – some as young as 14 - responded to the call to arms to fight in a war which broke out in Europe one day and touched Australia the next.

The Great War was a devastating conflict that took the flower of Australia's youth and forever changed our young nation and hundreds of communities within it.

¹ *The Advertiser*, 5 August 1914, p. 14

A generation had not yet passed since Federation in 1901, and yet it was the Federation generation that would be summonsed to give testimony to our national identity and character half a world away.

Between 1914 and 1918 more than 500 men who lived or had family in the former Town of St Peters served in the Australian Imperial Force.

They lived in blue stone villas of St Peters and worker's cottages in Stepney.

They came from the middle class and the working class.

They were Anglicans and Methodists, they were Presbyterians and Catholics.

They were educated in public schools and they were educated at elite colleges.

They were Australian born and they were migrants.

And yet, for all of their differences they were drawn together for a common cause: to loyally serve their King and the British Empire against the Central Powers.

For some, only a few years had passed since they wore the colours of the First XVIII (18) or the whites of the First XI (11).

Then, the battlefields were the ovals of St Peters College and Prince Alfred College.

Soon, the battlefields would be the steep cliffs of Gallipoli and the mud and trenches of the Western Front.

One hundred and forty-five would not come home – some as young as 18.

In more than four years of bloody fighting, 60,000 Australians would lose their lives and 150,000 more would be wounded, gassed or taken prisoner.

For Australia's wartime Prime Minister Billy Hughes, the enormous sacrifice of a country of only five million people weighed heavily on his mind at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919.

When the American president Woodrow Wilson challenged the Prime Minister's claim for Australia to be represented in its own right at the conference instead of being part of the British Empire, Hughes responded: "I speak for 60,000 dead. For how many do you speak?"

Hughes was speaking for Private Fred Farmer Bassett, a warehouseman of Walkerville Road, St Peters.

He was speaking for Private John Montcreiff Ferguson, of Frederick Street, Maylands.

Hughes was speaking for Private William Adam Kinross, a driver from Kent Town.

He was speaking for Private Norton Atton Duckmanton, a farmer from Eighth Avenue, St Peters.

He was speaking for Frank Samuel "Crowie" Crowhurst, a salesman from Ann Street, Stepney, who landed at Gallipoli on the morning of 25 April 1915 and was dead by the afternoon.

And, Hughes was speaking for Lance Corporal Arthur Oliver Emmins.

Born in London, England in 26 December 1896, Arthur Oliver Emmins was educated at the London Board School, England before taking work as a fine plate maker and then a boot maker.

He was the third eldest of seven children to Thomas William Edward Emmins and Eliza Emmins.

On 9 October 1913, aged sixteen, he departed London, England with his family on board *The Beltana*, travelling Third Class.

At the time he enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force at the Keswick Barracks on 29 June 1915, Arthur was living at 81 Magill Road, Stepney.

His parents lived at 68 Frederick Street, Maylands.

Conscious of Arthur's tender age, Eliza had given him a short but simple letter to hand to the military officials, which read: "Dear Sir, I hereby agree to let my son join the Expeditionary Forces. Mrs, E. Emmins."²

² Discoveinganzacs.naa.gov.au, page 31 of 75

Arthur passed the medical examination and arrived at training camp on 30 June.

He gave his age as 19 and a half and nominated his mother as his next of kin.

He had brown hair, grey eyes, a medium complexion and stood at 5ft 7 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches.³

His Service Number was 3044.

Private Emmins was assigned to the 16th Battalion, 10th Reinforcement on 16 July and embarked from Adelaide on board the *HMAT A70 Ballarat* on 14 September 1915.

He disembarked in Alexandria, Egypt, on 4 November, some seven weeks later.⁴

On 10 March 1916, Arthur was transferred to the 48th Battalion and was promoted to the rank of Lance Corporal two months later, before joining the British Expeditionary Force in Marseilles, France.

³ Discoveinganzacs.naa.gov.au, page 8 of 75.

⁴ Discoveinganzacs.naa.gov.au

In September 1916 Arthur suffered Haematoma in his left leg and was sent to England to recover.

Returning to the front, on 11 April 1917, Arthur saw action in Bullecourt, France, the first day of an attack launched by the British commander Sir Hubert Gough.

The attack was planned for 10th April before but was delayed by a day due to a blizzard.

During the attack Arthur was struck in the head by a shrapnel pellet, killing him instantly.⁵

War records show that at least six of his fellow 'Diggers' verified his death, with one describing him as: "Young, fair, does not look more than 19."⁶

His body was seen lying on top of five others.⁷

⁵ Private W.Oman, 18/9/1917, Australian Red Cross Society Wounded and Missing Enquiry BUreau Files, 1914-1918, War 1DRL/0428, s3-ap-souteast-2.amazonaws.com

⁶ South Australian Red Cross Information Bureau (1916-1919), sarcib,.ww1.collections.slsa.sa.gov.au

⁷ D.P. Dickson, 9/18/1917, Arthur Oliver Emmins, South Australian Red Cross Information (1916-1919) Bureau, sarrcib.ww1.collections.slsa.sa.gov.au

That attack at Bullecourt was a disaster for the Australians, resulting in more than 3,000 soldiers killed or wounded and more 1170 taken prisoner.

A second attack in May 1917 claimed another 7,000 Australian casualties.

Charles Bean, Australia's official war historian, later wrote:

“Bullecourt, more than any other battle, shook the confidence of Australian soldiers in the capacity of the British command; the errors, especially on 10th and 11th were obvious to almost everyone.”⁸

Six months would pass before Arthur's death was publicly announced.

⁸ Charles Bean, quoted in 'Bullecourt: Stalemate in the trenches,' awmlondon.gov.au

On 20 October 1917, *The Chronicle* reported the Arthur Emmins had been killed in action. The message from his mother and father read:

He left his home in health and strength
 To answer his country's call
 He gave his life, he gave his best
 For you, for me, for all
 He lived a man, he lived a hero
 One less for earth, one more for heaven⁹

One week later, *The Chronicle* reported that Mr and Mrs Emmins had been advised that a second son, William, had been killed in action in June while their third son, Edward, had been wounded.¹⁰

On the first anniversary of Arthur's passing, a notice appeared in *The Advertiser*, which read:

"In loving memory of our dear son and brother, Lance Corporal Arthur Emmins, 48th Battalion, who was killed in action in France, April 11, 1917."¹¹

⁹ The Chronicle, 20/10/1917, p. 38.

¹⁰ The Chronicle, 27/10/1917, p. 38.

¹¹ The Advertiser, 11/4/191, p. 6.

The notice was inserted by his loving mother, father, sisters and brothers.

Directly under his family's notice was another; a tribute of fewer words but equally burdened by grief.

"In loving memory of Lance Corporal A.O. Emmins, killed in France, April 11, 1917. Inserted by Doris.¹²

Two years later under the heading 'Heroes of the Great War,' the still-heart-broken Doris Foster inserted another message in memorium.¹³

In March 1918 Eliza Emmins wrote to J.M. Lean, Officer in Charge, AIF Base Records, Melbourne, whether he had any personal effects which belonged to her two sons killed in action.¹⁴

It would be more than three years before Arthur's identity disc would be returned to his mother.

¹² The Advertiser, 11/4/191, p. 6.

¹³ The Chronicle, 17/4/1920, p. 12.

¹⁴ Discoveinganzacs.naa.gov.au, page 60 of 75.

But it was not only Arthur's identity that had been missing for this time.

It was also Arthur's remains.

In fact, three years would pass from the time Arthur was killed to the time his mother was notified his body had been found.

On 27 April 1920, Eliza Emmins wrote to Base Records in Melbourne, with the following:

*"Dear Sir, in reference to your letter dated 13/4/1920 I wish to inform you that I am very grateful to you for the information I have received in respect to my son Lance Corporal 3044 48th Battalion having been found after being missing for three years and would be very pleased to have private access of grave when time presents. Oblige yours faithful, Mrs E. Emmins."*¹⁵

Arthur Oliver Emmins is buried in the Queant Road Cemetery, Buissy, France.

There he rests in eternal peace amongst 1,000 other Australians, 700 of whom have never been identified.

¹⁵ Discoveinganzacs.naa.gov.au, page 49 of 75.

At 5:11 am on 26 April – just two days from now - the name of Arthur Oliver Emmins will be lit for a short time on the outside wall of the Hall of Honour at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra, a reminder to Australia of his sacrifice in the in the Great War.

Today, on 24 April 2019 - 102 years to the month after his death - Arthur's name will appear for the first time on a plaque attached to this memorial here in St Peters Street, only a few hundred metres from where he lived as a young man.

His name will appear alongside 144 other men who fell but have not been forgotten.

And here it will stay.

At the going down of the sun and in the morning we will remember the St Peters heroes who gave up their tomorrows so that we can live today.

Lest We Forget.