

Centenary of ANZAC Edition

# OUR HEROES



## Tasmania's Victoria Cross Recipients

“FOR VALOUR”

by Guy Barnett MP

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Published September 2015

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ISBN: 978 0 9942331 3 4

Printed by Foot & Playsted, Launceston, Tasmania 7250

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## DEDICATION

*This book is dedicated to all Tasmanians who have served, and their families.*

Centenary of ANZAC and 4<sup>th</sup> Edition



# Contents

Foreword: The Hon Will Hodgman MP .....	1
Foreword: Senator the Hon Michael Ronaldson .....	2
Introduction: Robert Dick .....	4
The Centenary of ANZAC : Guy Barnett MP .....	5
The Victoria Cross .....	8
Design .....	8
Australian Victoria Cross Recipients .....	9
Tasmania's Victoria Cross Recipients .....	9
The Human Cost of War .....	10
Other Notable Tasmanian ANZACs .....	11
The Boer War .....	15
Trooper John Bisdee .....	16
Lieutenant Guy Wyllly .....	17
The Great War .....	18
Background .....	18
World War .....	19
Gallipoli .....	20
The Battle of Lone Pine .....	21
Lieutenant Colonel Harry Murray .....	23
Captain Percy Cherry .....	26
Captain James Newland .....	27
Sergeant John Whittle .....	28

Sergeant John Dwyer .....	29
Sergeant Lewis McGee .....	30
Sergeant Stanley McDougall.....	31
Corporal Walter Brown.....	32
Lieutenant Alfred Gaby .....	33
Sergeant Percy Statton .....	34
Lance Corporal Sidney Gordon.....	35
World War Two.....	36
Edward “Teddy” Sheean.....	38
Korean War .....	41
Vietnam War.....	42
The Wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.....	43
Corporal Cameron Baird .....	45
Tasmanian Victoria Cross Memorial.....	48
Other Tasmanian Victoria Cross Memorials.....	49
The Australian War Memorial.....	50
Tasmanian Government Initiatives.....	51
Lieutenant Colonel Harry Murray VC Scholarships.....	51
The Frank MacDonald Memorial Prize.....	51
CPL Cameron Baird VC Scholarship.....	52
Endnote and Acknowledgements.....	54
Glossary.....	55
RSL Sub-Bran­ches in Tasmania .....	57



## Foreword: **The Hon Will Hodgman MP**

### **Premier of Tasmania**

2014 marked one hundred years of service and sacrifice by Australian service men and women since the outbreak of World War One in 1914.

*Our Heroes: Tasmania's Victoria Cross Recipients* has been updated to coincide with the centenary. It helps build our knowledge and understanding of Tasmanians who have been awarded the Victoria Cross.

The Victoria Cross is the highest award for acts of bravery in wartime. *Our Heroes: Tasmania's Victoria Cross Recipients* provides information about the background of each of the 14 Tasmanians who served with valour and who have been awarded this prestigious honour.

The first two Tasmanians to be awarded the Victoria Cross served in the Boer War. They were Trooper John Bisdee and Lieutenant Guy Wylly.

World War One saw 11 Tasmanians awarded the Victoria Cross. Consequently, *Our Heroes: Tasmania's Victoria Cross Recipients* gives us a wonderful insight into battles and conflicts of the Great War.

The 100th Australian to receive a Victoria Cross since the award was first created by Queen Victoria in 1856 was Tasmanian Corporal Cameron Baird, of Burnie. This revised edition of *Our Heroes: Tasmania's Victoria Cross Recipients* includes a chapter about Corporal Baird, who served in Afghanistan and was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross in February 2014.

*Our Heroes: Tasmania's Victoria Cross Recipients* is a tribute to these courageous individuals and a useful guide for discovering places that honour and remember Tasmania's Victoria Cross recipients. Places to visit include the Tasmanian Victoria Cross Memorial at the Hobart Cenotaph and the Lieutenant Colonel Harry Murray VC statue in Evandale.

Some of the profiles cite collections where it is possible to view the Victoria Cross. Lieutenant Alfred Gaby's Victoria Cross is on display at the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, while the Victoria Cross awarded to Lance Corporal Sidney Gordon and the medals of Corporal Walter Brown, along with a machine gun he captured, are displayed at the Australian War Memorial's Hall of Valour.

Our Victoria Cross recipients were brave men. This book shares their stories and is a tribute to their memory.



## Foreword: **Senator the Hon Michael Ronaldson**

### **Federal Minister for Veterans' Affairs**

It is a great privilege to write this foreword to the fourth edition of Guy Barnett's book honouring not only Tasmania's Victoria Cross (VC) recipients, but also other Tasmanians whose military service has brought them recognition beyond the shores of their island state.

Tasmania can make some proud boasts about its place in Australia's military history. The country's first VCs, Trooper John Bisdee and Lieutenant Guy Wylly, were both Tasmanians and in the 114 years since their service in the Boer War, 12 other Tasmanians have been awarded this highest of military honours. One was the British Empire's most highly decorated soldier of the First World War, Lieutenant Colonel Harry Murray VC CMG DSO and Bar DCM Croix de Guerre, who was born near Launceston.

Another of the Australian Imperial Force's (AIF) most respected soldiers and accomplished officers Major General John Gellibrand CB KCB, United States DSM Croix de Guerre Legion d'honneur hailed from Ouse. Such men earned high honours, the esteem of their peers and the gratitude of a nation. They "did their bit", and more. Some come to our attention years and even decades later. Thus Tasmanians can be proud of Alec Campbell from Launceston, a man who spent just two months in the front lines but who lived to become the last Australian survivor of the Gallipoli campaign.

As I write these words, Australia is marking the beginning of the Anzac centenary, a time when we look back on the battles and campaigns of the First World War and honour all those who wore the uniform of the AIF. We also honour the centenary of service since then. Over the century since, Tasmanians have continued to come forward in times of war and conflict. They served in all theatres of the Second World War, in Korea and Vietnam, on peacekeeping operations and more recently in the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Such is the nature of the Victoria Cross that is awarded only rarely. More than one and a half million men and women have served in our country's armed forces, just 100 have been entitled to wear the ribbon of the country's highest award for valour.



In the previous three editions of this book, Tasmania's Victoria Cross story has ended in August 1918 when Sidney Gordon received the award for his courage on the Western Front. In this fourth edition, Guy Barnett tells the story of Australia's, and Tasmania's, most recent VC, the late Corporal Cameron Baird VC MG. By definition, earning the Victoria Cross entails enormous risk and sadly, the award is often made posthumously. Corporal Baird joins the ranks of those courageous men who gave their lives in our country's service and in so doing performed an act of gallantry worthy of the highest honour. This service will never be forgotten.

I hope readers of this book will reflect on the nature of wartime service, on what it can mean for those who wear our nation's uniform and for the families who they leave behind. I hope also that Tasmanians will take pride in the achievements of their state's military personnel and the sacrifices they have made in Australia's name.



## Introduction: **Robert Dick**

### **State President, RSL Tasmania Branch**

The Victoria Cross is a rare award bestowed on individuals, who during times of war perform acts of extraordinary bravery, sometimes at the cost of their own lives. They provide courage, dedication, leadership and inspiration to those around them. The Victoria Cross is the highest military decoration that can be awarded to members of the British and Commonwealth Military Forces. For over 150 years the Australian Military Honours system mirrored that of the British, changing in the 1990s as Australia adopted its own honours system; however they maintained the Victoria Cross as the highest award for bravery in the face of the enemy.

One hundred Australians have been awarded this prestigious honour, fourteen of which are from our Island State of Tasmania, the most recently awarded being to CPL Cameron Baird VC MG who was born in the Northwest town of Burnie. CPL Baird's name was added to the VC Memorial in the Hobart Cenotaph Precinct in March 2015.

The conflicts where this prestigious medal have been awarded to these brave soldiers range from the rocky veldts of South Africa during the Second Boer War, the often muddy fields of France and Belgium during World War One, to our most recent area of conflict, the exposed flat land of Uruzgan, Afghanistan.

The bringing together of this list of brave Tasmanians and the stories of their gallantry, is a notable achievement and Guy Barnett MP should be commended for his research and his pride in the achievement of his fellow Tasmanians. This book will be a valuable addition to all schools and RSL Sub-Branched not just in Tasmania but throughout Australia.

CENTENARY of  
 ANZAC  
TASMANIA REMEMBERS  
2014—2018

LEST WE FORGET

## The Centenary of ANZAC: Guy Barnett MP

The Anzac Centenary is a milestone of special significance for Australians. Its commemoration marks 100 years since Australia's first involvement in the First World War—a defining period in the history and making of our people and nation.

Just over one hundred years ago, at 11pm on 4 August 1914, Britain declared war on Germany marking the start of what became known as the Great War.

Thousands of Australians enlisted with, ultimately, over 416,000 serving during the four year conflict from a population of only five million at the time.

Tasmanians were also swept up in the spirit of the times with 15,485 volunteering to serve their nation.

In fact, the first Australian to enlist after the declaration of war on 4 August 1914 was a Tasmanian, Captain Keith Heritage.

Born and raised in Longford, Captain Heritage served in Australia's first military operation of the war in German New Guinea before fighting in Gallipoli and then on the Western Front in France.

He was eventually killed by shrapnel in 1916 at Pozieres—a place described as being “more densely sown with Australian sacrifice than any other place on earth”.

On 4 August 2014, Captain Heritage was honoured with his story told at the national service commemorating the declaration of the Great War in Canberra—a fitting honour for a fine man. His story is told in greater detail later in this book.

During the conflict, Tasmanians like Keith Heritage would serve with distinction across the globe, making little-known places such as Gallipoli, Villers-Bretonneux and Beersheba famous in Australian history.



Guy Barnett MP with Keith Payne VC at the 2015 VC Recipients Portrait Exhibition in Hobart

In a little-known incident today, Tasmanians were involved in one of the very first Australian acts of the Great War.

Within days of the declaration of war, a party of Naval reservists were dispatched from Hobart in two motor-cars to detain a German ship, the *Oberhausen*, loading timber at Port Huon.

The vessel was captured, later re-named and commandeered for use as a cargo carrier for the remainder of the war.

Tasmanians were also at the forefront in leaving for overseas service with the first troopships leaving Hobart's Ocean Pier on 20 October 1914.

Tasmanians, then as now, served with bravery, continuing a record of courage that started during the Boer War and continues today in places like Afghanistan and Iraq. In fact, of the one hundred Victoria Crosses won by Australians since the medal's inception, 14 have been awarded to Tasmanians—a tremendous record and one of which the State can be proud.

The man often described as the “most decorated infantry soldier of the British Empire during the First World War”, Lieutenant Colonel Harry Murray VC, was also a Tasmanian—born and raised in our very own Evandale.

While the stories of courage and service they created are inspiring, the cost to Australia during the Great War was devastating.

The flower of a generation was lost with over 60,000 killed and 170,000 wounded, gassed or captured—a casualty rate of 65%, one of the highest of any nation in the war.

Tasmania also suffered with approximately 2,900 servicemen losing their lives during the war.

With the Centenary of ANZAC period having commenced, it is fitting that the Tasmanian Government stands with the community in commemorating this important national event.

A keynote of this commemoration was the construction of a Flame of Remembrance at Hobart Cenotaph, officially dedicated on Anzac Day 2015—the 100th anniversary of the original Gallipoli landings.

Secured with the support of the Federal Government, State Government and RSL, the Flame provides Tasmanians with an appropriate place of reflection in the decades to come.

The ANZAC spirit of courage, service and sacrifice is a key thread in our national narrative.

These words of the famous Australian First World War correspondent, Charles Bean are now inscribed at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra: “Here is their spirit, in the heart of the land they loved; and here we guard the record which they themselves made”.

These thoughts ring true for ANZAC memorials and commemorations across Tasmania and Australia.

This commemorative period provides an opportunity for reflection—to remember the price of freedom and give thanks for those prepared to pay it on our behalf.

# The Victoria Cross



The Victoria Cross (VC) is the highest award for acts of bravery in wartime in the British and Commonwealth armed forces. The award is also available to civilians who commit acts of bravery under military command (this has occurred six times). To be awarded a VC, the act of bravery must be committed “in the face of the enemy”. For other acts of bravery, the corresponding award is the George Cross.

The Victoria Cross was instituted by Queen Victoria (*pictured left*) in 1856, in recognition of acts of bravery during the Crimean War of 1854–1855.

The award originally was not able to be awarded posthumously, or to African or Indian troops.

## Design

The Victoria Cross (*pictured below*) is designed in the shape of a Maltese Cross 35mm wide, bearing a crown surmounted by a lion, and the inscription “FOR VALOUR”. The medal was to have originally been inscribed with the words “FOR BRAVERY” but was altered at the request of Queen Victoria, who did not want people to incorrectly believe that only Victoria Cross recipients had been brave in battle.

The reverse side of each Victoria Cross is inscribed with the date of the act of bravery, along with the name, rank and unit of each recipient.

The medal is suspended from a crimson ribbon 38mm wide.

The medal, suspension bar and link weigh approximately 27g and are cast in bronze, believed to be obtained from the cascabels of two Chinese cannons captured from the Russians during the Crimean War. The same company of jewelers, Hancocks of London, has been responsible for producing every VC awarded since the medal’s inception.

During the Great War a quarter of all VC awarded were posthumous. In the Second World War and since, half of the recipients have survived to receive their award.

Three people have been awarded the Victoria Cross twice. A second Victoria Cross is signified by a bar worn on the suspension ribbon, and as a result, is known as the “Victoria Cross and Bar”.



## **Australian Victoria Cross Recipients**

The first Australian to be awarded a Victoria Cross was Captain (later Sir) Neville Howse. Howse was awarded the VC for the rescue of a wounded man on 24 July 1900, while serving as an officer of the NSW Army Medical Corps during the Anglo Boer War. A total of six Australians went on to receive the Victoria Cross for acts of bravery during the Boer War, including two Tasmanians, Trooper John Bisdee and Lieutenant Guy Wylly.

Australia was the first of several Commonwealth nations to create its own VC Award, which is a separate award, but the same as the British award in appearance.

As of August 2015, exactly 100 Australians had been awarded the Victoria Cross with the most recent being granted posthumously to Tasmanian-born Corporal Cameron Baird for actions in Afghanistan in 2013.

The Australian War Memorial in Canberra is noted for having the largest official collection of Victoria Cross medals in the world.

## **Tasmania's Victoria Cross Recipients**

Of the 100 Victoria Crosses awarded to Australians since 1900, no fewer than 14 have been granted to Tasmanians—a staggering record given that the State only represents a little over 2% of the national population.

Two VCs were awarded to Tasmanians as a result of activities during the Boer War, 11 were granted during the Great War (World War One) and one was awarded during Australia's mission in Afghanistan.

## The Human Cost of War

The true human cost of war, whether physical or mental, is a sacrifice grossly underrated and misunderstood.

Australian dead and wounded in the two world wars totalled 286,275. Even during the Vietnam War which did not approach the scale of a world war Australia lost 520 lives. At Gallipoli alone 8,700 Australians were lost and more than 19,000 were wounded in the brief nine month campaign. This number averaged at almost 800 dead and wounded each week.

In World War One Australian casualties totalled 215,338, or 4.33% of the Australian population, as of 1914. This was almost three times the number of dead and wounded in World War Two (70,937), which represented 1% of the Australian population, as of 1939.



## Other Notable Tasmanian ANZACs

Most of those who served in war or conflict did not have their bravery recognised with a medal. In this section, historian Reg Watson tells the stories of four ordinary Tasmanians, each of whom served with courage during the Great War. Their stories are reflective of many others who also volunteered during this time.

Many Tasmanians have served their country with distinction from the Boer War to modern Afghanistan. Some received national recognition such as the late Alec Campbell. Others, such as Sister Lizzie Orr who was added to the Tasmanian Honour Roll of Women in 2013, have only recently been honoured. Many, such as Major General Sir John Gellibrand, rose to great heights in their time but are not well known today.

**Alec Campbell:** When Launceston born Alexander (Alec) Campbell died in 2002, his funeral was attended by the Governor-General, the Governor of Tasmania, the Prime Minister and Federal and State Ministers and politicians. Campbell was the last surviving veteran of the Gallipoli campaign, dying at the age of 103. His death marked the passing of Gallipoli from living memory to history and legend.

Campbell joined the AIF under-age at 16, stating that he was 18. Even at this age recruits had to receive their parent's consent and in this, Alec was successful. Private Campbell was part of the joint Tasmanian and Queensland 15th Battalion. Being so young, he was nicknamed the "Kid" and left Australia from Adelaide on 16 August 1915 for Egypt. With the New Zealanders, the 15th underwent strenuous training. In August Campbell sailed for the island of Lemnos where further training was to take place. Many Tasmanians of the 15th were already at Gallipoli, having experienced heavy fighting and casualties. Finally after delays because of bad weather and rough seas, he disembarked at Gallipoli on 2 November. He assisted in carrying ammunition and water supplies to the trenches and received a minor wound. However, his sickness saw him admitted to the 4th Field Ambulance with influenza. Campbell was discharged after three days and shortly afterwards on 13 December 1915 he, along with the 15th Battalion, was evacuated from Gallipoli aboard *S.S. Carron*, thus ending Alec's Gallipoli experience.

The battalion returned to Egypt where Alec suffered from acute laryngitis and over the next few months his conditions worsened, resulting in partial paralysis to the right side of his face. He was in and out of hospital, unable to overcome the various illnesses that plagued him and, just over a year after his enlistment, returned to Tasmania where he was discharged as medically unfit. He was only 17 years of age.

Being "The Last of the ANZACs" brought him fame late in life, but it was not at his request or desire. He had fought for only two months, with his terse summary of his wartime service being: "Gallipoli was Gallipoli. I joined for adventure".

He went on to lead an uncommonly full life, having several occupations and careers. He became a strong unionist and married twice, having a total of nine children. Alec was also a great sailor, participating in seven Sydney to Hobart yacht races. He is buried at Cornelian Bay, Hobart.

**Keith Heritage:** While Alec Campbell was the “The Last of the ANZACs”, Longford-born Keith Heritage could well claim to be the “First of the ANZACS”. Heritage is credited as being the first Australian to volunteer for service in the AIF. He also served at Gallipoli, but did not survive the war, killed at 35 years of age at Pozieres, France on 26 July 1916.

Prior to the war, Heritage had been a great sportsman in civilian life and was a well-known oarsman, rowing in a winning crew that competed in Perth, Brisbane, Sydney and Henley-on-Thames, England.

Upon the declaration of war on 4 August 1914, Heritage enlisted while in Sydney and saw his first action before Gallipoli with the Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force, which had been organised to take over German New Guinea. The force was successful and captured Rabaul, with Heritage obtaining the rank of Lieutenant. In early 1915 he was back in Australia and had changed services, joining the 19th Battalion as a Lieutenant and landing at Gallipoli in August. He was evacuated in December and is believed to have been one of the last to leave.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

A03234

Group portrait in the Officers' Mess of Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force (AN&MEF). Heritage is back row, fifth from the left.

In Egypt he was promoted to Captain and was sent to the Western Front, where he was awarded the Military Cross (MC) for his action in raiding enemy trenches. In one action, he carried a wounded man back to safety with the official citation stating, “he set a fine example”. His death occurred when he told two tired soldiers to take a rest, giving them his own food and taking their post. While they were resting a bomb

landed nearby and a fragment from the shell struck him in the side of the head. Heritage died a short time later. It was a terrible shock when the family learnt of his death through a column in the local newspaper. His sister, first to see the paper, collapsed upon reading the news.

A century later, Captain Keith Heritage was honoured in August 2014 in having his story told at a Last Post ceremony at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra, during commemorations of the 100th anniversary of the declaration of the Great War.



Portrait of Major-General Sir John Gellibrand

**Major-General Sir John Gellibrand:** Sir John was a high-ranking Tasmanian AIF commander with a reputation for being outspoken on behalf of his men. He was not above clashing with the well-known Australian Commander in Chief, Sir John Monash, on occasions where he felt that Australian lives were being wasted unnecessarily under Monash's orders.

Gellibrand was born in the small rural community of Ouse, very close to the birthplace of another great Tasmanian, Sister Elizabeth Orr. Gellibrand served in the Boer War (1899-1902) with great distinction and later served in Ceylon (Sri Lanka), returning to Tasmania to farm at Risdon. When war was declared in 1914, Gellibrand immediately offered his services and was present at the

Gallipoli landings on 25 April 1915. He was awarded a DSO and was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel of the 12th Battalion.

After suffering illnesses at Gallipoli and being wounded on several occasions, he was sent to France for further service. Although illness continued to plague him, he received another promotion to Brigadier and was also awarded a Companion of the Order of the Bath (CB). He eventually returned to the Western Front in November 1917 and on 1 June 1918 was promoted to Major-General and given charge of the 3rd Division AIF, which he led until the war's end. His service was further recognised through the awarding of Knight Commander of the Order of the Bath (KCB) and an Officer of the Legion of Honour (French).

After the war he returned to Hobart working with the Tasmanian Public Service and later served as Victorian Police Commissioner. Upon returning to Hobart in 1923 and seeing the plight of ex-servicemen and their families, he formed an association with a number of prominent Hobart businessmen and professional people to help those in need. This association, then known as the Remembrance Club, later developed into Legacy, a national body supporting the dependents on those killed whilst serving their country. Gellibrand also entered politics, serving as the Federal Member for Denison. He died in 1945 and is buried in Victoria.

**Sister Elizabeth (Lizzie) Orr:** Almost unknown today, Sister Orr was Matron Imperial Army and included in the Tasmanian Honour Roll of Women in 2013 in recognition of her wartime service. She served during the Boer War and possibly during the earlier Afghanistan War (as she had in her possession an “Afghan Badge” of the 66th Regiment of Foot).

Sister Orr was born on the property of Norton Mandeville in 1860 near Hamilton and had already lived a full and active life when war was declared in South Africa in 1899. She served as a nurse during this conflict, afterwards remaining in South Africa for 12 years, before returning to Australia to run a private hospital at Maitland, NSW. At the commencement of the Great War, she sold the hospital and it was not long before she was in Egypt where she was engaged as Matron of Transports and Hospital Ships in the Mediterranean, Gallipoli and Salonika areas.

In 1916, Lord Kitchener, whom she knew in South Africa, presented her with a watch encased in a gold nugget. Her work was strenuous and difficult. Facilities and food were often inadequate and she needed all her common sense to battle against not only war wounds, but rampant diseases and sickness such as diphtheria, dysentery, measles and malaria. She was mentioned in dispatches twice and a document signed by Winston Churchill as Secretary of State of War reads, “I have it in command from the King to record His Majesty’s high appreciation of services rendered”.

Her services saw her health wane so she returned to England in 1919. There she received the Royal Red Cross Medal from King George V, the highest award for nursing. She was given the rank of Matron Imperial Army.

Eventually Sister Orr returned to Tasmania and for the next 11 years was Matron of Vaucluse Infectious Disease Hospital. Matron Orr served as President of the Nurses Club, Hobart, which she helped found and also became the Patron of the Returned Army Nurses Association. She died in April 1945 and was honoured with a large service at St David’s Cathedral.

# The Boer War

1899–1902

Five Australians were awarded the Victoria Cross for acts of bravery during the Boer War, including two Tasmanians, Trooper John Bisdee and Lieutenant Guy Wylly, who also have the distinction of being the first Australian born soldiers to be awarded the Victoria Cross.

From the time of its acquisition by Britain during the Napoleonic wars, southern Africa had been shared between British colonies and independent republics of Dutch-Afrikaner settlers, known as Boers. Throughout the 19th Century the two powers had maintained a wary co-existence, although increasingly the question became whether Britain or the Boers should control southern Africa. The two had already fought an inconclusive war in 1880 (The First Boer War).

The conflict that became known as the Boer War (or Second Boer War) involved two independent Boer republics within South Africa, The Orange Free State and the South African Republic (also known as the Transvaal Republic) who perceived British interests in South Africa as a threat to their independence.

The discovery of gold and diamonds in the Boer republics in the 1880s intensified rivalry and British imperial ambition. Boer independence resulted in friction that, in 1899, provoked the Boers to attack, in order to forestall what they saw as an impending British conquest.

As part of the British Empire, the Australian colonies offered troops for the war in South Africa. At least 12,000 Australians served in contingents raised by the six colonies and (from 1901) by the new Australian Commonwealth (about a third of men enlisted twice), and many more joined British or South African colonial units in South Africa. At least 600 Australians died in the war, about half from disease and half in action.

Tasmania contributed four contingents of soldiers to serve the British Empire during the course of the Boer War, totalling 558 men. Twenty-two Tasmanians gave their life during the course of the war, 11 were killed in battle or died from wounds received in battle, and another 11 lost their lives to diseases contracted in the squalid conditions under which the men served.

Soldiers from Tasmanian contingents were also awarded four Distinguished Service Orders, and five Distinguished Conduct Medals for services performed during the Boer War. Another three were made Companions of the Order of the Bath.



## Trooper John Bisdee

**Unit:** 1st Tasmanian Imperial Bushmen

**Date & Place of Action:** 1 September 1900, Warm Bad, Transvaal

John Bisdee was born on 28th September 1869, at Hutton Park, Melton Mowbray, Tasmania. He attended the Hutchins School in Hobart. After leaving school, he worked on his father's property until enlisting for service in South Africa in April 1900 with the 1st Tasmanian Imperial Bushmen.

In South Africa, Bisdee saw action in both the Orange Free State and the Transvaal.

On 1 September 1900, a group of eight Tasmanian Imperial Bushmen, including Bisdee, formed an advance scouting party on

horseback, under the command of Lieutenant Guy Wyllie. Bisdee's actions during the following incident saw him awarded the Victoria Cross:

*"Bisdee and other members of an advance scouting party were ambushed by Boers in a rocky defile. Six of the party of eight were hit including two officers, Major Brooke and Lieutenant Wyllie. Brooke's horse had bolted so Bisdee dismounted, put the officer on his own horse and, despite being seriously wounded, ran alongside, then mounted behind him and withdrew under heavy fire."*

Bisdee had been wounded and was forced to return home to Australia. He returned to South Africa in March 1901 continuing to serve until the end of the Boer War. On returning to Tasmania, Bisdee resumed farming at Hutton Park, and on 11 April 1904, married Georgina Theodosia Hale. In 1906, he returned to service when he joined the 12th Australian Light Horse Regiment, Tasmanian Mounted Infantry. By 1910, Bisdee had risen to the rank of captain when he attended a course of instruction in India. In 1913, he became commanding officer of the 26th Light Horse.

On 26 July 1915, Bisdee joined the AIF and was assigned to the 12th Light Horse, and served in Egypt against the Senussi until receiving a wound in the leg. In March 1916, he was assigned Assistant Provost Marshal at AIF Headquarters in Egypt, then to the ANZAC Mounted Division and was promoted to major in September. Bisdee served with the 12th Light Horse throughout 1917. In January 1918, he was appointed Assistant Provost Marshal of the ANZAC Provost Corps and in June was promoted to lieutenant colonel. He was mentioned in dispatches three times. Bisdee was appointed Officer of the Order of the British Empire in June 1919. He was discharged from the AIF in May 1920 and returned to his farm in Tasmania.

He died in January 1930 and was buried at St John's Church, Jericho.



## Lieutenant Guy Wyllie

**Unit:** 1st Tasmanian Imperial Bushmen

**Date & Place of Action:** 1 September 1900, Warm Bad, Transvaal

Guy Wyllie was born on 17 February 1880 in Hobart, Tasmania. The son of an Indian Army major, Wyllie spent part of his childhood in India, before his family returned to Tasmania, settling in Sandy Bay. He attended the Hutchins School in Hobart, but completed his final years at St Peter's College in Adelaide, before returning to Tasmania.

In 1900, Wyllie joined the 1st Tasmanian Imperial Bushmen, and on 26 April, left for South Africa as a lieutenant. On the 1 September 1900, Wyllie was part of the same advance scouting party as John Bisdee, and for

the following action, was awarded the Victoria Cross:

*“Wyllie was one of two officers present at the same action as John Bisdee. Wyllie, himself wounded, saw that one of his own men, Corporal Brown, was badly wounded in the leg and was dismounted. Wyllie, despite his own wound, went to the assistance of Brown. He gave his horse to Brown and, at the risk of being cut off, opened fire from behind some rocks to cover the retreat of the others.”*

Following this incident, Wyllie was again wounded before transferring to the South Lancashire Regiment. On 5 December 1900, Wyllie was gazetted as a second lieutenant and joined the 2nd Battalion at Jubbulpore, in India.

On 1 October 1902, Wyllie transferred to the Indian Army, joining the 46th Punjabis, with whom he served until 1904 when he was transferred to the Queen's Own Corps of Guides, and from 1906 to 1909 served as aide-de-camp to Lord Kitchener, Commander-in-Chief, India. In April 1909, Wyllie was promoted to captain.

During World War One, Wyllie saw considerable service as a staff officer. He was stationed in France with the 1st Indian Cavalry Division, until joining the 3rd Australian Division as General Staff Officer II on 10 July 1916. In August 1915, he received a serious facial wound. Wyllie was three times mentioned in dispatches and awarded the Distinguished Service Order for his service in France.

Following the war, Wyllie returned to service in India. He was made a Companion of the Order of Bath in 1933. He spent his retirement in Britain until his death in 1962 in Camberley, Surrey.

# The Great War

1914–1918

**Worldwide military casualties: 8,000,000,  
civilian casualties 6,500,000; total 14,500,000**

## Background

The Great War, which officially began in 1914, was the culmination of events within Europe dating back to the beginning of the 20th Century, when Europe was dominated by five major powers: Britain, France, Germany, Austria-Hungary and Russia. These five powers competed with each in both Europe and the rest of the world in a period of empire building.

By 1910 these major powers had formed two distinct divisions. Britain, France and Russia formed the Triple Entente. Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy formed the Triple Alliance. The Ottoman Empire (now Turkey) supported the Triple Alliance against traditional rival Russia.



World Map (1914) showing nations of the Triple Entente and colonies in green and nations of the Triple Alliance and Colonies in Orange. Grey shows neutral nations.

## Outbreak

On 28 June 1914, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the Austrian throne, was assassinated in Sarajevo, prompting Austria to declare war on Serbia in an attempt to cement Austrian power over the Balkans. Russia responded by counter attacking Austria, triggering the end of peace between the two alliances.



## World War

When German forces invaded neutral Belgium in order to attack France, Britain was provoked to declare war on 4 August 1914. All the major European powers were now at war—and so were their empires.

### Australia's Involvement



Gallipoli Peninsula, Turkey, 25 April 1915. Troops landing in Anzac Cove.

As a member of the British Empire, Australia immediately offered support to Britain in the conflict. In July 1914, Leader of the Opposition, Andrew Fisher (who became Prime Minister that September), declared that “Australia will stand behind the Mother country to help defend her to the last man and the last shilling”. His sentiments reflected the common view of Australians. Most people believed the conflict would be over by Christmas.

During the course of the Great War, over 416,000 Australians enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) for overseas service.

The AIF was not the regular Australian Army, but a force assembled for the express purpose of overseas service for the duration of the War. Every man and woman was a volunteer. Of these volunteers, over 331,000 were sent overseas. The first units of the AIF were formed and combined with New Zealand soldiers to make the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC). After initial training in Egypt, Australian and New Zealand soldiers saw their first action on the beaches of Gallipoli, Turkey, landing on 25 April 1915.

Following the Gallipoli landing, Australian and New Zealand soldiers became known as Anzacs. They were renowned for their courage, sacrifice, ingenuity, independence and mateship, but most notably, perseverance in the face of overwhelming odds.

The AIF also served in the Middle East, where the Light Horse, Australian mounted infantry, gained notable successes at the battles of Romani in 1916 and Beersheba in 1917, as well as the advances through Palestine and Jordan in 1918.

After Gallipoli, the AIF served predominantly on the Western Front in Belgium and France between April 1916 and November 1918.

The Royal Australian Navy (formed in 1911) and the Australian Flying Corps (formed in 1912) also saw their first action during the Great War. The Royal Australian Navy

supplied warships for convoys from Australia and in the Mediterranean, as well as contributing in the effort to blockade Germany. The Australian Flying Corps served on both the Western Front and in the Middle East, and provided support to the infantry.

By the end of the war on 11 November 1918, the lives of more than 60,000 Australian soldiers, sailors, airmen and nurses had been taken. A further 170,000 were wounded, gassed or taken prisoner.

## Gallipoli

Gallipoli was a tragic military campaign. More than 8,700 Australians died, and over 19,000 were wounded. In total, 44,000 allies and 86,000 Turks died. There were more than 261,000 other casualties during just eight months of battle. Nevertheless, the Anzacs at Gallipoli have left a profound legacy that lasts to this day.

## The Strategy



Australian troops embark for the frontline.

By April 1915 the fighting had continued for eight months. Britain and France had been fighting Germany on the Western Front and Russia had been fighting Germany and Austria-Hungary on the Eastern Front. The Ottoman Empire (ruled from Turkey) was a German ally and a threat to British interests in the Middle East. The aim of the Gallipoli Campaign was to seize the Turkish capital, Constantinople and control the Dardanelles Strait.

This would have enabled allied ships to provide supplies to Russia, and possibly may have forced Turkey out of the War. The British and French agreed to land troops on the Gallipoli Peninsula separating Europe from Asia, after ships alone had failed to secure the Dardanelles.

## ANZAC Involvement

After completing training in Egypt, the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps were sent to the Gallipoli Peninsula, along with British and French Troops. They landed by sea on 25 April 1915 amongst confusion and misdirection. However, on this day, Australian soldiers established a hold on the steep slopes above the beach while Turkish troops fired down at the invading forces. For most of the eight months leading to the eventual evacuation of allied troops in December 1915, the campaign was locked in a bitter stalemate.

## The Gallipoli Legacy

Despite the Gallipoli campaign's failure to achieve its original goals, it is commonly believed that it established Australia as a proud and individual nation within the British Empire. At the time Australia was less than 14 years old as a nation, and had never before been united in conflict.

It was at Gallipoli that the Australian “digger” earned the reputation as a tenacious, brave, steadfast and trustworthy soldier, loyal to his mates and capable of success against the harshest odds.

Nine Australians were awarded the Victoria Cross for acts of bravery at Gallipoli.

## The Battle of Lone Pine

The Battle of Lone Pine is possibly one of the most notable battles fought by Australian soldiers. The Battle took place during the Gallipoli campaign. It was the only successful Australian attack against the Turks within the original perimeter of the Anzac Battlefield.



A trench at Lone Pine after the battle, showing Australian and Turkish dead on the parapet.

The Battle was a diversionary offensive launched by the 1st Australian Infantry Division on 6 August 1915. Turkish soldiers had cut down all but one of the trees on the ridge to cover their trenches, leaving the landscape to be dominated by a single Aleppo Pine (*Pinus halepensis*), which came to be known as Lone Pine.

In the three days of fighting, more than 2,000 Australian soldiers were killed, as well as an estimated 7,000 Turkish soldiers. Seven Victoria Crosses were awarded for acts of bravery at the Battle of Lone Pine.

The Aleppo Pine in the Australian War Memorial's grounds was planted by HRH The Duke of Gloucester on 2 October 1934. It bears the following inscription:

*“After the capture of the Lone Pine ridge in Gallipoli (6 August 1915), an Australian soldier who had taken part in the attack, in which his brother was killed, found a cone on one of the branches used by the Turks as overhead cover for their trenches, and sent it to his mother. From seed shed by it she raised the tree, which she presented to be planted in the War Memorial grounds in honour of her own and others’ sons who fell at Lone Pine.”*

Yarralumla Nursery in Canberra propagates trees from seed collected from the tree at the Australian War Memorial for use by RSL sub-branches, schools and community groups in commemorating our Australian soldiers.



The Aleppo Pine planted by The Duke of Gloucester in 1934 remains the foundation of the memorial.

Eleven Victoria Crosses were awarded to Tasmanians during the Great War. The stories of these brave men are ordered chronologically, based on the date of the action in which they were granted the Victoria Cross.

**Lieutenant Colonel Harry Murray**  
VC CMG DSO (and Bar) DCM CROIX DE GUERRE  
1880–1966

**“Mad Harry Murray”**

*The most highly decorated soldier in the Australian Army  
and in the Commonwealth for the First World War.*



**Born:** 1 December 1880 at Evandale, Tasmania

**Unit:** 13th Battalion

**Date & Place of Action:** 4–5 February 1917, Guedecourt, France

*“Harry Murray lived in Evandale. His military career started when, aged 21, he joined the Launceston Artillery as a gunner. Harry Murray served with the Launceston Artillery for six years. His military career went on hold when he moved to Western Australia, where he described his occupation as a timber cutter or timber getter. He worked a very hard life in the country. In 1914 he was back in uniform. He had joined the 16th Battalion AIF, along with his best mate, Percy Black, a goldminer from Western Australia.*

*“Harry and Percy landed and fought at Gallipoli together. In May 1915 in action at Pope’s Hill, they were both awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal. As No.1 and No. 2 on a machine gun, they held off a concerted Turkish attack on the rear of the Australian position while the rest of their company was defending the front of the position. Both were wounded during the action. Soon after Harry Murray was promoted to Lance Corporal,*

three months later he was promoted to Sergeant and commissioned as a Second Lieutenant on the same day.

*“While he and Percy Black were together they resolved to ‘never let the enemy prevent them from carrying out what they set out do’. This resolve was to come to the surface on many later occasions during the war. As an officer, Harry was posted to the 13th Battalion AIF, with which he went to fight in France and there he was soon promoted to Captain.*

*“In August 1916 Captain Harry Murray was awarded the Distinguished Service Order when, as a company commander, he stormed Mouquet Farm with 100 men and briefly held part of it from the Germans. The Australians later had to withdraw under intense enemy fire. A later attack with 700 men was unable to repeat Murray’s earlier success and it eventually took a force of 3,000 to recapture the position from the Germans. Murray’s initial success with only 100 men was later attributed to his ferocious determination and leadership.*

*“It was on 4 and 5 February 1917 that Murray won the Victoria Cross during an action that lasted for nearly 48 hours at Gueudecourt. Murray led a force of 140 men in an assault on a position known as Stormy Trench. During the battle he distinguished himself by encouraging his men, setting an example, leading hand-grenade bombing parties, leading bayonet charges, rescuing the wounded and carrying them to safety, crawling out in no-man’s-land on reconnaissance, rallying his men and saving the situation by sheer valour. They were forced to withdraw due to the overwhelming enemy firepower, and only 48 of the 140 survived.*

*“Later in April that year, 1917, during a series of assaults on the Hindenburg line at Bullecourt in France, Murray again was awarded the Distinguished Service Order and promoted to major. During action nearby, his mate Major Percy Black was killed in action. The fighting was severe and communications were very difficult. It is interesting to note that also at Bullecourt another distinguished Tasmanian, General Sir John Gellibrand, was commanding the 6th Brigade AIF. By the end of 1917 Murray was commanding his battalion, and in May 1918 was promoted to lieutenant colonel and posted as commanding officer of the 4th Machine Gun Battalion, which he commanded until the end of the war.*

*“During the last months of the war, he was awarded the Croix de Guerre and, at the end of the war, he was made Companion of the Order of St Michael and St George. He had also been mentioned four times in dispatches in the last two years of the war. Thus, at the end of World War One, Lieutenant Colonel Harry Murray was the most highly decorated soldier of the entire British Empire.*

*“In 1920 he bought an 80,000 acre farm, ‘Glenlyon’, near Richmond in North*



Guy Barnett MP with Geoff Leitch and Stephen Baldock at the Harry Murray VC Memorial Statue in Evandale





LTCOL HW Murray VC

Queensland. In 1927 he married and started his own family. When hostilities broke out again, he pulled on his uniform once more and from July 1939 to August 1942 commanded the 26th Battalion of the Militia and then held postings in the Volunteer Defence Corps until 1944, when he retired from active duty.

*“It was on 7 January 1966 that Lieutenant Colonel Harry Murray VC, the most highly decorated soldier of the British Empire in World War One, died in Queensland as a result of a car accident.”*

Taken from speech to the Senate by Senator Guy Barnett, Monday 29 November 2004.

The Murray Memorial Committee, based in Harry Murray’s hometown of Evandale, Tasmania, has established the Murray Memorial Room at Evandale, a museum dedicated to Harry Murray, as well as a permanent memorial to Harry Murray at Evandale.

The life-sized statue of Murray (*see background of photo bottom previous page*) was unveiled by then Governor-General Michael Jeffrey on 24 February 2006.

In 2015, Guy Barnett MP was proud to announce that the Australian War Memorial had agreed to allow the display of the portrait of Australia’s most highly decorated soldier, Lieutenant Colonel Harry Murray VC, at QVMAG in Launceston for the duration of the Centenary of ANZAC period.

The portrait was also displayed at QVMAG for a number of months with Murray’s medals in mid-2015—the last time the medals would be viewed in Tasmania before moving to the Hall of Valour at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra, where they would be on permanent loan from Murray’s family. The medals were unveiled by Mr Barnett at a packed event in June 2015.



LTCOL Harry Murray’s clan in 2006: the then Senator Barnett is flanked on his left by LTCOL Harry Murray’s son Doug, and on his right by then Chairman of the Murray Memorial Committee, Lt COL (Ret) David von Stieglitz. LTCOL Murray’s daughter, Clem, is seated at centre front.



## Captain Percy Cherry

**Unit:** 26th Battalion

**Date & Place of Action:** 26 March 1917,  
Lagnicourt, France

Percy Cherry was born on 4 June, 1895, in Drysdale, Victoria, where he lived until he was seven, when his parents took up an apple farm at Cradoc, Tasmania. Cherry worked for his father, becoming an expert apple packer, and at 14, won the case making championships at the Launceston fruit show.

In 1913, Cherry was commissioned in the 93rd Infantry Regiment. On 5 March 1915, Cherry enlisted with the AIF and was posted to the 26th Battalion. Although a trained infantry officer, Cherry was considered too young for an AIF appointment, and was instead sent to Egypt as a quartermaster sergeant in June 1915. In August, Cherry was made a company sergeant, and in September arrived at Gallipoli where he fought at Taylor's Hollow and Russell's Top. He was wounded just before the evacuation of 1 December and a week later promoted to second lieutenant.

In 1916 Cherry was transferred to the 7th Machine Gun Company and sent to France, where he served at Armentieres and Messines and on the Somme until he was wounded on 5 August following a duel with a German officer at Pozieres. In this remarkable incident, Cherry promised the dying German officer that his letters would be passed on to his family in Germany. In September he was made temporary captain and again transferred to the 26th Battalion as company commander. His rank was confirmed on 14 February 1917. On 3 March Cherry led his company in an attack on Malt Trench, where he captured two machine gun posts. For this Cherry was awarded the Military Cross. In the same month, (26 March, 1917) Cherry performed the following act for which he earned his Victoria Cross:

*“Cherry’s battalion was ordered to storm the village of Lagnicourt. His company encountered fierce opposition and when all the other officers had been killed or wounded, he led his men forward and cleared the enemy from the village. At one stage a stoutly defended crater temporarily checked the attackers. Cherry sent for mortars but before they were brought down on the crater Cherry rushed the position under Lewis gun and rifle grenade cover. After the crater was taken, Cherry and his party pushed through the village. Sensing the possibility of counter-attacks, he kept his party in position to strengthen the sector. The Germans did counter-attack and the battle raged all day long. Next day the Germans shelled the Australian positions killing Cherry among others.”*

Cherry's service medals are displayed in the Australian War Memorial.





## Captain James Newland

**Unit:** 12th Battalion

**Date & Place of Action:** 7–9 and 14 April, 1917, Boursies and Lagnicourt, France

James Newland was born on 22 August 1881 at Highton, in Geelong. He enlisted with the 4th Battalion, Australian Commonwealth Horse and served in the Boer War in South Africa. On returning to Australia, he joined the Victorian artillery for five years, eventually becoming a permanent instructional staff of the Commonwealth Military Services.

While stationed in Tasmania, war was declared. Newland joined the AIF on 22 August 1914 as a regimental quartermaster sergeant of the 12th Battalion. He was sent to Gallipoli, but was wounded shortly after the landing. However, on 22 May 1915, Newland was commissioned a second lieutenant, promoted to lieutenant on 15 October, and in March 1916, was promoted to captain as his battalion embarked for France.

In France, the 12th Battalion's first major battle was at Pozieres. Newland was mentioned in dispatches for conspicuous courage, leadership and organisation. In December 1916 he left his battalion to serve at Headquarters, but was reposted back to the 12th Battalion in February 1917 as commander of A Company for the drive on Bapaume. After an injury, Newland returned to the frontline for the April attacks. Newland received the Victoria Cross for actions performed on 7–9 and 14 of April, as follows:

*“In the initial advance on Boursies, which began at 3am, Newland’s company was confronted by heavy fire and many casualties were sustained. Newland then successfully led a bombing attack on a ruined mill located about 400 metres short of the village. The attack dislodged the enemy and enabled the company to move on the objective. The Australians then came under heavy shellfire during the day and at 10pm the Germans launched a violent counter-attack. By his personal exertion, disregard of fire and judicious use of reserves, he succeeded in dispersing the counter-attack and holding the position. The Germans broke through the company to the right of A Company, which was being led by Newland, and forced them back. Newland consolidated his men on the very position which Captain Cherry (also a VC winner) had held during the taking of Lagnicourt three weeks earlier. By personal example he encouraged his men to repel the combined attack and although the enemy renewed the attack three or four times Newland’s company held out. The 9th Battalion came to reinforce the 12th and the two units combined to counter-attack. The line was restored about 11am.”*



## Sergeant John Whittle

**Unit:** 12th Battalion

**Date & Place of Action:** 8 and 15 April 1917,  
Boursies and Lagnicourt, France

John Whittle was born on 3 August, 1883, on Huon Island, Tasmania, in 1883. Whittle enlisted with the 4th (2nd Tasmanian Imperial Bushmen) Contingent who he joined in South Africa on 27 March 1901 to join the Anglo-Boer War.

Whittle returned to Australia on 25 June 1902. Shortly after, he enlisted with the Royal Navy where he served five years on several ships as a stoker. After completing his Navy service, Whittle rejoined the army, serving in the Army Services

Corps, the 31st Battery and the Tasmanian Rifle Regiment.

Whittle enlisted with the AIF on 6 August 1915, joining the 26 Battalion as a reinforcement. On reaching Egypt he was reallocated to the 12th Battalion and promoted to corporal on 14 March 1916. A month after arriving in France, Whittle was again promoted to lance sergeant. On 18 July, Whittle was injured, returning to his unit in October, but was promoted to sergeant on 14 October.

In February 1917 Whittle earned the Distinguished Conduct Medal for bombing the enemy out of their trenches at the advance on Bapaume. Whittle was with fellow VC recipient Captain James Newland when he was wounded.

Whittle earned his Victoria Cross at the same time as Captain Newland, on the Bapaume-Cambrai road, outside of Boursies, and at Lagnicourt from 8 to 15 April 1917.

*“After a successful bombing assault on a ruined mill, Whittle was placed in command of a post just beyond it. Around 10pm the Germans counter-attacked and succeeded in entering the small trench Whittle was holding. Whittle quickly reorganised his men, charged the enemy and restabilised the position. Captain Newland then arrived and the two worked together until the line was re-established. Newland, under attack from three directions, withdrew his men to a sunken road and lined them out in defence along both banks. Just as this move was completed, Whittle, who had seen some Germans moving a machine gun into a position which offered a commanding arc of fire, jumped to his feet and charged the enemy gun crew. He killed the whole crew and then carried the machine gun back to the Australian positions. Newland then consolidated the position and when reinforcements from the 9th Battalion arrived a counter-attack was executed and all positions were regained.”*

Following the war, Whittle assisted in the Australian Army recruiting program. For many years he worked as an inspector with a major insurer in Sydney.



## Sergeant John Dwyer

**Unit:** 4th Machine Gun Company

**Date & Place of Action:** 26 September 1917,  
Zonnebeke, Belgium

John Dwyer was born at Lovett, Tasmania, on 9 March 1890, but spent most of his childhood on Bruny Island, attending the local school. After finishing school, Dwyer worked as a labourer in Queenstown, where he enlisted 4 February 1915.

Dwyer was posted to the 15th Battalion, joining it in August 1915 at Gallipoli. He remained at Gallipoli until transferred to the 4th Machine Gun Company on 15 March 1916. In France Dwyer was appointed a lance corporal in December, and then promoted to temporary corporal, and later, temporary sergeant.

However, he lost his temporary rank after being wounded during the battle of Messines on 9 June 1917.

In August Dwyer rejoined his unit, and in September earned the Victoria Cross for the following actions at the battle of Polygon Wood:

*“Dwyer, in charge of a Vickers machine gun, had gone forward with the first wave of his brigade. When the final objective was reached Dwyer rushed his gun forward to obtain a commanding fire position. While he was advancing he noticed an enemy machine gun causing casualties on the right flank. He rushed forward and fired his Vickers at the enemy, putting the gun out of action and killing the crew. He then seized the gun and established both it and his Vickers on the right flank of the brigade and inflicted further casualties during the subsequent counter-attack. The next day, when the position was heavily shelled, he carefully moved the gun to different positions and when the Vickers was put out of action by shell fire he secured a reserve gun and very quickly had it operational.”*

In April 1918, Dwyer was appointed temporary regimental sergeant, in May was commissioned second lieutenant and three months later, was promoted to lieutenant. On 23 January 1919, Dwyer was presented his Victoria Cross by King George V at Buckingham Palace.

Returning from war, Dwyer married and became involved in local government, serving as a councillor in the Bruny Island municipality. He also established a sawmilling business. In May 1931, Dwyer was elected to the Tasmanian House of Assembly as an ALP member for the seat of Franklin, which he held until his death in 1962. He held such portfolios as Minister for Agriculture and Deputy Premier.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL AD2623

## Sergeant Lewis McGee

**Unit:** 40th Battalion

**Date & Place of Action:** 4 October 1917, near Leper, Belgium

Lewis McGee was born in Campbell Town, Tasmania, on 13 May 1888. He was born the youngest of 11 children.

Prior to the War, McGee was married with an infant daughter and working as an engine driver for the Tasmanian Department of Railways. He enlisted on 1 March 1916 at age 27.

After enlisting, McGee was appointed to the 40th Battalion, which he joined for training in Claremont on 1 May 1916, followed by additional training in Britain, before heading to France in late November.

McGee was appointed a lance corporal on 23 May 1916 while still training in Tasmania, and on 4 December that same year, was promoted to corporal in Armentieres, France. On 12 January 1917, McGee became sergeant.

On 4 October 1917, while McGee's battalion were involved in fighting in Belgium, McGee undertook the following feat, earning him the Victoria Cross:

*“During an action McGee’s platoon was suffering severely and his company’s advance was halted by machine-gun fire from a pillbox. McGee rushed the post armed only with a revolver, shooting some of the crew and capturing the rest, and enabling the advance to proceed. He reorganised the remnants of his platoon and led them through the rest of the advance.”*

McGee was acting Company Sergeant Major, when he was killed in action during the second battle of Passchendaele, at Augustus Wood, on the morning of 12 October 1917. He was 29 years old. He is buried at Tyne Cot cemetery nearby. It is unlikely he was ever aware that he was recommended for the Victoria Cross for his bravery.

McGee's Victoria Cross is currently held by the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery in Launceston. The McGee Soldiers Club at Anglesea Army Barracks, Hobart, is named in his honour.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

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## Sergeant Stanley McDougall

**Unit:** 47th Battalion

**Date & Place of Action:** 28 March 1918,  
Dernancourt, France

Stanley McDougall was born on 23 July 1889 at Recherche in Tasmania. After finishing school, McDougall became a blacksmith. He was known as an excellent horseman, marksman and bushman.

Because of illness, McDougall was unable to enlist with the AIF until 31 August 1915, when he was posted to the 15th Battalion. As a blacksmith, McDougall could have joined a light horse unit, but instead chose to stay with the infantry. On 3 March 1916, while in Egypt, he began training with the 47th Battalion and, in June, sailed to France with them. On 5 May, McDougall was appointed a lance corporal, promoted to corporal in September, and temporary sergeant in November, confirmed in January 1918.

McDougall's battalion was one of the first to move into position to counter the German Offensive of 1918. On the night of 27–28 March, McDougall carried out the following for which he was awarded the Victoria Cross:

*“McDougall was on watch at a post on the 47th's right flank when he heard approaching enemy. When a Lewis gun team was knocked out by an enemy bomb McDougall snatched up the Lewis gun and attacked two enemy machine-gun teams and killed their crews. He turned one of the captured machine guns on to the enemy, killing several, and routing that wave. Meanwhile, about fifty Germans had crossed the Australian-held railway. McDougall turned his gun on them before they had time to establish themselves behind the battalion. When his ammunition was spent he seized a bayonet and charged, killing three men and an enemy officer who was just about to kill an Australian officer. McDougall then used a Lewis gun on the enemy, killing many, and forcing the surrender of the remaining thirty-three enemy.”*

Eight days later, McDougall performed another act for which he received the Military Medal. The 47th Battalion was disbanded in May 1918. In August, he was presented his Victoria Cross at Windsor Castle by King George V.

McDougall married in 1926. He spent most of his life working for the Tasmanian Forestry Commission, eventually becoming responsible for all the forests in northwest Tasmania. McDougall was also responsible for many outstanding rescues during bushfires, particularly the Fitzgerald fires of 1934. His uniform and the Lewis gun used in the attack are on display in the Hall of Valour of the Australian War Memorial.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

## Corporal Walter Brown

**Unit:** 20th Battalion

**Date & Place of Action:** 6 July 1918,  
Villers-Bretonneux, France

“Wally” Brown was born 3 July 1885 and spent his early years in New Norfolk, Tasmania. After leaving school, Brown worked as a grocer in Hobart until moving to Petersham, New South Wales, until enlisting with the AIF on 26 July 1915.

Brown left for Egypt in October, joining the 1st Light Horse Regiment on 14 January 1915. In Egypt, he made up a story that he had lost his false teeth so that he could be sent to Cairo, where he was transferred to the 20th Battalion reinforcements. On 30 September 1916, Brown left for France where he spent a month serving with

the 55th Battalion, followed by six months service with the Australian Field Butcheries. He joined the 20th Battalion at St Omar on 8 of August 1917.

In September and October 1917, Brown served at Passchendaele, for which he was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal for aiding his fellow wounded soldiers under heavy fire and taking charge of his section after his sergeant was disabled. In April, 1918, Brown was promoted to corporal and the 2nd Division moved from Flanders to Dernancourt, engaging in penetration tactics against the Germans, gaining ground, little by little. In July 1918, the 2nd Division had reached the Somme, and for the following actions, Brown was awarded the Victoria Cross:

*“Brown was with an advance party which took over some newly captured trenches near Accroche Wood and, on being told that a sniper’s post was causing trouble, he located the enemy strong point, picked up two Mills bombs and ran towards it under fire. His first bomb fell short, but on reaching the post he knocked one German down with his fist and threatened the others with the remaining Mills bomb. The whole party, consisting of one officer and twelve men of 137th Infantry Regiment, surrendered and Brown shepherded them back to the Australian lines”.*

He re-enlisted in World War Two, giving his age as 39 (instead of 54). He was last seen on 15 February 1942 in Singapore a few hours before the surrender with some grenades, walking towards the enemy saying: “No surrender for me”. His body was never recovered. His medals, along with the captured machine gun, are displayed at the Australian War Memorial’s Hall of Valour.



## Lieutenant Alfred Gaby

**Unit:** 28th Battalion

**Date & Place of Action:** 8 August 1918, near Villers-Bretonneux

Alfred Gaby was born on 25 January 1892 in Springfield, near Ringarooma. He attended school at Scottsdale until leaving to work on his family's farm. Gaby joined the 12th Infantry Regiment (Launceston Regiment) where he served for three years with the militia while still working for his father.

Prior to the breakout of war, Gaby travelled to Katanning, Western Australia, where he worked as a labourer until enlisting at the Blackboy Hill Camp in January 1916. From here Gaby was posted to the 10th reinforcements to the 28th Battalion. Because of his previous military experience, Gaby was rapidly promoted. He became a sergeant in December 1916, a second lieutenant in April 1917 and lieutenant in September 1917. In October 1917, Gaby was gassed in action.

By August 1918, Gaby, along with the 20th Battalion, was involved in the Battle of Amiens. Early in the morning of 8 August, 2000 guns opened fire, commencing the decisive battle, and what was later termed "the black day" of the German army. That same day, Gaby performed the following for which he was later awarded the Victoria Cross:

*"Gaby, in command of a company, moved with his unit to the east of Villers-Bretonneux towards Card Copse, where unbroken wire entanglements were encountered. Heavy fire from Germans covering a gap in the wire pinned down the Australians. Gaby found a gap in the wire and, single-handedly, approached an enemy strong point while machine gun and rifle fire poured from it. He ran along the parapet, emptied his revolver into the garrison, drove the crews from their machine guns and forced fifty of the enemy to surrender. This resulted in the capture of four machine guns. He then reorganised his company and consolidated the objective."*

Three days later, while leading his company along his line of posts under heavy rifle and machine gun fire from the Germans, Gaby was shot by a sniper, killing him instantly.

Gaby was awarded the Victoria Cross posthumously, which is on display at the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Hobart. He was never married.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL 101332

## Sergeant Percy Statton

**Unit:** 40th Battalion

**Date & Place of Action:** 12 August 1918,  
Proyart, France

Percy Statton was born on 21 October 1890 in Beaconsfield, Tasmania. He attended Zeehan State School. When he enlisted on 1 March 1916, Statton was married and was working as a farmer at Tyenna.

Statton was posted to the 40th Battalion, joining them for training in Britain in July 1916. In November 1916 Statton's battalion was posted to France. In May 1916, Statton had been appointed as lance corporal, and in November was promoted to corporal. On 16 January 1917, Statton was made

temporary sergeant, the rank being confirmed on 23 April 1917.

In June 1917, Statton completed actions under heavy artillery and machine gun fire for which he was awarded the Military Medal. In October, Statton was wounded, and in June 1918, he was gassed. On 12 August 1918, Statton earned the Victoria Cross for the following actions:

*“At about 6pm the advance of the 37th Battalion, on the left flank, was held up by machine-gun fire. A party of thirteen men sent against the first enemy gun was virtually wiped out. Statton supported the 37th's attack with two Lewis guns. When he saw the attack fail he got three men to follow him and, working along the bank of the Chuignes road, got to within seventy-five metres of the strong point. Statton, revolver in hand, then led his men across the seventy-five metres of open ground into the German trench. The party disposed of two guns and their crews and, at the second gun, Statton shot the whole crew, except one, with his revolver. As he had expended all his ammunition he had to grab the remaining German's rifle and use it to bayonet him. The small party then dashed towards the next two guns. The enemy retired only to be killed by the two Lewis guns Statton had sited earlier. Another enemy gun opened fire killing one member of the party and wounding another. Statton and the third man crawled back to their own lines as the 37th moved forward. That night he went out and brought in the wounded man and the body of the other.”*

Statton was presented his Victoria Cross by King George V on 7 June 1919 at Buckingham Palace. Following his return to Tasmania after being discharged from service on 18 January 1920, Statton worked in the timber industry. In 1934, Statton performed notable rescue work during the Derwent Valley bushfires. In later life, Statton lived at Ouse, where he was a local councillor. He died on 7 December 1959 in Hobart.





## Lance Corporal Sidney Gordon

**Unit:** 41st Battalion

**Date & Place of Action:** 27 August 1918,  
Fargny Wood, near Bray, France

Sidney Gordon was born in Launceston on 16 August 1891. He attended school at both Deloraine and Devonport. Upon leaving school, Gordon gained employment as a cooper's machinist in Beaconsfield. He later moved to Townsville, where he enlisted with the AIF on 27 September 1915.

Gordon served with the 41st Battalion in France. He was wounded on 5 October 1917. In June 1918 Gordon was appointed a lance corporal, and on 8 August that same

year was awarded the Military Medal for his conduct on the first day of the Battle of Amiens where he single-handedly attacked a machine gun crew that was holding up his section, killing the crew and capturing the gun.

Eighteen days later, on the night of 26–27 August 1918, Gordon was awarded the Victoria Cross for the following:

*“During the day Gordon’s battalion was precariously wedged between the banks of the Somme and Fargny Wood. Gordon single-handedly attacked a German machine-gun post that was persistently enfilading the Australian position, killing the gunner and capturing the post, which consisted of one officer and ten men. He then entered Fargny Wood and cleared a trench, capturing twenty-nine prisoners and two machine guns. He took over further trenches, capturing twenty-two prisoners and three machine guns.”*

Gordon returned to Australia in January 1919 and was demobilised in April. After working a short period as a grocer in Clayfield, Queensland, Gordon began dairy farming at a property near Beaudesert, Queensland. In 1938, he married Caroline Edith Manley, a widow, in Brisbane. They had two sons and a daughter together. Gordon had previously married Evelyn Catherine Lonergan with whom he had six children.

During the Second World War, it is believed Gordon served in the Queensland 31st Battalion (the Kennedy Regiment), however, his name is not included on the World War Two Roll. Gordon died on 19 October 1963 in Torquay, Queensland, aged 72. His Victoria Cross is displayed at the Australian War Memorial’s Hall of Valour.

# World War Two

1939–1945

Worldwide military casualties: 19,000,000,  
civilian 37,000,000; total 56,000,000



The peace that came after World War One was an uneasy one that ironically helped sow the seeds for another major war only 20 years later.

The German invasion of Poland in September 1939 and the Japanese attacks on Malaya and Pearl Harbour in December 1941 were the immediate causes of World War Two. However, the underlying causes were the emergence in the economic instability of the

1920s of fascist movements in Italy and Germany, which consolidated power during the Depression of the 1930s. Resentment of the Treaty of Versailles, especially the Guilt Clause and the Great Depression saw the Nazi party led by Adolf Hitler take power. Hitler denounced the Treaty of Versailles and undertook to reclaim lost territories.

Italy and Japan had also developed strong nationalist governments that sought to expand their territories. Italy pushed into North Africa, and Japan invaded China in 1936. Despite attempts by Britain to appease German demands for more territory in Europe, World War Two broke out in September 1939 when Germany invaded Poland. Australia, as part of the British Empire, entered World War Two immediately as a consequence of Britain's involvement. Australian men and women initially served in Europe, North Africa and the Mediterranean.

Japan entered the war in December 1941 when it attacked the US fleet at Pearl Harbour in Hawaii and started to invade countries in South-east Asia. In a rapid four-month campaign, Japan captured Malaya, Singapore, Burma, the Netherlands East Indies (Indonesia) and parts of New Guinea. For the first time in the nation's history, Australia was also forced to defend its own territory when it came under direct Japanese attack. Japanese planes bombed Darwin and other places in 1942 and 1943 and Japanese midget submarines entered Sydney Harbour in May 1942. The struggle against the Japanese in the jungles of Papua and New Guinea was also seen as a battle for Australia's own defence.

The allied armies secured the total surrender of Germany on 8 May 1945 and then the surrender of Japan in the Pacific on 15 August 1945 after the United States dropped the world's first atomic bombs on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

## Edward “Teddy” Sheean

The following is an excerpt from Guy Barnett speech during his time as a Tasmanian Senator in Federal Parliament on 26 October 2010, which details the life and acts of valour displayed by Ordinary Seaman Teddy Sheean.

*“Ordinary Seaman Teddy Sheean was born in Lower Barrington, Tasmania, on 28 December 1923. His family soon moved to Latrobe and he was educated at the local Catholic school and worked as a farm labourer until he enlisted in the Royal Australian Naval Reserve as an ordinary seaman in April 1941. Initially sent to the Flinders Naval Depot in Westernport Bay, Victoria, Sheean was later sent to Garden Island for further training in about March 1942. In June 1942 he helped commission the new corvette HMAS Armidale and was posted to that vessel as an anti-aircraft gun loader.*

*“At the end of November 1942, the Armidale was assigned to sail to Japanese-occupied Timor in the company of corvette HMAS Castlemaine. Their task was to land Dutch forces to reinforce the guerillas on the island, withdraw the Australian 2nd/2nd Independent Company and withdraw some Portuguese civilians. Arriving off Timor on 1 December, the two corvettes met up with HMAS Kuru, which had already picked up civilians from the island. These civilians were transferred to the Castlemaine, which then returned to Darwin.*

*“Ordinary Seaman Teddy Sheean was aboard the HMAS Armidale on 1 December 1942 at about 12.30pm, when the vessel came under repeated attack by at least 13 Japanese aircraft. By 3.15pm the Armidale had begun to sink, an event that would take less than five minutes. The Armidale had been struck by two aerial torpedoes, and after the second hit, Lieutenant Commander David Richards ordered the ship to be abandoned.*

*“Ordinary Seaman Teddy Sheean did not carry out that order. Out of 149 on board, only 49 would be rescued from the water. As the ship was sinking and the survivors in the water tried to board rafts the Japanese aircraft continued to strafe the men in the water. They were being shot while they were in the water. Ordinary Seaman Sheean, did not obey his commander’s command to abandon ship; he strapped himself to the gun and began firing at the aircraft. Witnesses report that tracer fire could be seen leaving the gun after it had sunk below the waves. He acted to save his mates. He acted in accordance with his conscience. He reportedly shot down at least one Japanese Zero in his efforts, and impacted upon others.*

*“Sheean was posthumously awarded a Mention in Dispatches and in 2001 HMAS Sheean, a Collins class submarine, was commissioned. It is the first Royal Australian Naval vessel to be named after a non-officer. There is a wonderful portrait of Ordinary Seaman Sheean in the Australian War Memorial.”*



Ordinary Seaman Edward Sheean, HMAS *Armidale* (Dale Marsh) *Australian War Memorial*

For decades, Sheean's family and friends from all walks of life have valiantly tried to secure a VC for Teddy, including his nephew Garry Ivory. In 2011, Guy Barnett (then Senator) requested a commission of inquiry into the posthumous awarding of VC medals, with 13 possible recipients, including Sheean, identified.

The outcome of the inquiry in 2013 found that there were not grounds to award Teddy Sheean, or any of the other 12 servicemen, a VC medal. However, the fight continues for posthumous VC recognition of Ordinary Seaman Teddy Sheean with Mr Barnett and Garry Ivory having written to HRH Prince Harry in 2015. The Prince responded positively, advising that he had forwarded the letter to the British Defence Service Secretary for consideration.

As of the date of printing (August 2015), the letter was still under consideration. A petition urging reconsideration by the British Admiralty was also circulating.

Other initiatives underway to promote the memory of Sheean’s bravery include the Tasmanian Liberal Government’s Teddy Sheean Memorial Grants Program. The program supports Tasmanian ex-service organisations and clubs by funding minor capital works with up to \$8,000.

A total of \$100,000 has been allocated for each round of the Grants Program, which will be provided over three years. The Grants Program honours Teddy Sheean as a representative of the many Tasmanians who selflessly gave their lives for others in the defence of our country.



Guy Barnett MP with Garry Ivory, Teddy Sheean’s nephew

# Korean War

1950–1953

**Worldwide military casualties: 1,672,000,  
civilian 2,828,000; total 4,500,000**

At the end of World War Two the world became increasingly divided into two hostile groups. On one side were the communist countries like Soviet Russia and China; on the other the Western powers such as Britain, France and the United States. Despite the creation of the United Nations to prevent conflict, a “Cold War” began between these two blocks. In an early Cold War struggle, Australian troops, ships and aircraft joined UN forces in 1950 to support South Korea against communist North Korea.

The Korean War began on 25 June 1950 when the army from communist North Korea invaded the Republic of South Korea. Korea had been artificially divided by Russia and the USA at the end of World War Two. The 1950 hostilities came as a result of the desire for reunification, Cold War tensions and communist plans for the overthrow of what the communists called “western imperialism”. The UN Security Council declared North Korea’s invasion an act of aggression and called on member countries to send forces to restore order. Australia was among the first countries to commit military forces to the UN command, led by the United States of America. In the first months of the war the North Koreans were decisively pushed back.

The war escalated when communist China sided with North Korea in October 1951 and drove the UN forces back south. A stalemate developed, which lasted until July 1953 when a fragile armistice was finally agreed. In 2015 Korea remains divided into the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (North Korea) and the Republic of Korea (South Korea).

Australian forces—including a squadron of the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF), a regiment of the Australian Army and Royal Australian Navy support ships—arrived in South Korea in September 1950. By the end of the war three years later, 339 Australians had died, more than 1,200 had been wounded and 29 taken prisoner of war.

# Vietnam War

1962–1973

**Worldwide military casualties: 1,158,000,  
civilian 1,200,000; total 2,358,000**

The “Cold War” affected much of eastern Asia. During World War Two the Japanese occupied Vietnam, and after the war the French tried to reimpose colonial rule, but by 1954 were driven out by the Vietnamese. The United States intervened and with other Western nations split Vietnam into a communist north and a pro-Western south. The United States then supported the South Vietnamese Government with military aid to prevent a communist takeover.

The same “containment” strategy which was applied in the Korean conflict was applied again in Vietnam. This was based on the “domino theory”, based on fears that if one country fell to communism others would follow.

In 1962 Australia entered what was to become one of the longest conflicts in the nation’s military history. Australian troops were first sent to South Vietnam to help train the South Vietnamese army. Over time, Australia committed further ground troops to support the South Vietnamese and American forces who were fighting against the armies of North Vietnam and the guerrilla forces of the Viet Cong, the communist rebels operating within South Vietnam. Australia’s commitment to the Vietnam War lasted until 1973. Australia first supported South Vietnam by sending 30 military advisers in July–August 1962. Australia’s commitment in Vietnam gradually increased during the 1960s and the Government decided to introduce recruitment by conscription. In 1964 selective conscription was introduced, with conscripts chosen by ballot.

After a period of gradual disengagement from the conflict, when operations were increasingly returned to the South Vietnamese forces, the last Australian troops were withdrawn from Vietnam in 1973. During the war more than 50,000 Australians served in the army, air force and navy. Of these, 520 were killed and nearly 2,400 were wounded. The United States suffered more than 50,000 deaths as a result of the war.

In April 1975 South Vietnamese resistance finally collapsed and North Vietnamese troops occupied Saigon (now called Ho Chi Minh City).



# The Wars in Afghanistan and Iraq



Australian soldiers returning from Patrol Base Razaq

On 2 August 1990 Iraq commenced the invasion of its oil rich neighbour Kuwait. The invasion was widely condemned by the international community and within weeks the United States had assembled a large multinational task force in the Persian Gulf and Saudi Arabia. The First Gulf War (1990–91) saw Australian military involvement both on the ground and at sea. Australian warships formed an interception force to uphold UN sanctions against Iraq while Australian service personnel served in British and American ground formations.

Following the fall of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s a power vacuum in Afghanistan saw the Taliban gain power. On 11 September 2001 following multiple terrorist attacks in the United States, President George W Bush declared a “war on terror”. In October 2001 coalition forces, of which Australia was a part, invaded Afghanistan to oust the Taliban regime. Prior to the formal invasion Australian Special Air Service Regiment (SAS) soldiers were already undertaking operations in Afghanistan against the Taliban and al Qaeda. The formal war ended in mid-2002 with Australian troops remaining on continued deployment. As of 1 July 2014, 41 Australian troops have lost their life in the war. Four VCs have been awarded.

On 20 March 2003 Australia joined Britain and the United States in the Second Gulf War (2003–09). The war was predicated on the perceived threat of the then Iraqi

dictator, Saddam Hussein's possession of nuclear and biological weapons. Following the invasion and the removal of the Hussein regime no such weapons were found. Two Australian soldiers were killed in the war.

Australian troops have also played, and continue to play, an important role in peacekeeping operations around the world. Australia has provided humanitarian and security assistance to many countries or regions through close to 100 separate missions. Some of these include the Solomon Islands, the Middle East, Egypt, Somalia, Rwanda, Cambodia, Sudan and East Timor, where Australia led the UN authorised INTERFET taskforce in 1999.



OMLT Delta leaves on patrol from Patrol Base Razaq



## Corporal Cameron Baird

**Unit:** 2nd Commando Regiment

**Date & Place of Action:** 22 June 2013, Uruzgan province, Afghanistan

This distinguished soldier was a member of 2nd Commando Regiment and had previously been awarded the Medal for Gallantry in 2007. In February 2014, Baird was awarded the Victoria Cross for Australia posthumously for his actions in Uruzgan province, Afghanistan, on 22 June 2013.

Corporal Cameron Stewart Baird VC MG was born in Burnie, Tasmania, on 7 June 1981. His father Doug played for the Cooee Football Club and coached the Ulverstone football club before the family moved to Melbourne in 1984. As a young man Baird was a keen Australian Rules footballer and in 1999 was nominated for the AFL draft but later suffered a shoulder injury and was not selected.

Cameron was knocked back twice from enlisting in the Army as a result of this shoulder injury but, with the support of his parents, he successfully enlisted on his third attempt on 4 January 2000. Baird was deployed to East Timor and Iraq before leaving the Army in July 2004. In September 2006 he re-enlisted and in mid-2007 then Lance Corporal Baird was deployed to Afghanistan and during a night-time operation on 22 and 23 November 2007 was awarded the Medal of Gallantry for “gallantry in action during close quarters combat”.

His operational service included Operations TANAGER, FALCONER, BASTILLE and four tours on Operation SLIPPER. The Department of Defence describes Baird as

*“an outstanding Special Forces soldier... [h]e exemplified what it meant to be a commando”.*

On 22 June 2013, while under small arms fire, Baird led his team to kill six enemy combatants. Soon afterwards an adjacent team came under heavy fire. Baird led his team to provide support. En route, he and his team were engaged by rifle and machine gun fire. Baird, with little regard for his own safety, charged the enemy position and came under further fire from the flank. Drawing fire from the enemy, Baird’s action enabled his team to retake the initiative.



CPL Cameron Baird VC MG

Baird then charged a fortified and prepared compound three times in the ensuing action. His actions once again drew fire from the enemy enabling his team to neutralise the enemy combatants. Baird was killed in this third attempt.

He was awarded the Victoria Cross for Australia posthumously. Along with Ben Roberts-Smith, Baird is one of only two soldiers to be awarded both the Victoria Cross for Australia and Medal for Gallantry.

His parents, Doug and Kaye Baird, received the Victoria Cross on his behalf from the then Governor-General Quentin Bryce on 18 February 2014.



Doug and Kaye Baird with son Cameron's medals

Chief of the Australian Defence Force, General David Hurley AC DSC, said to Baird's family on the day they received Cameron's medal:

*"Thank you for his service with us and for the everlasting example of leadership, courage and mateship that is his legacy. Cameron has earned his place in the pantheon of those who have served their country with valour in times of war."*

The citation for Baird's VC reads in part,

*"[f]or the most conspicuous acts of valour, extreme devotion of duty and ultimate self-sacrifice at Ghawchak village, Uruzgan province, Afghanistan, as a Commando Team Commander... Corporal Baird's acts of valour and self-sacrifice regained the initiative and preserved the lives of his team members. His actions were of the highest order and in keeping with the finest traditions of the Australian Army and the Australian Defence Force."*

Baird's courage and service has been commemorated through a number of initiatives in Tasmania.

On 31 March 2015, a memorial plinth and plaque in CPL Baird's honour was unveiled by the Governor of Tasmania, the Honourable Professor Kate Warner AM. The event was attended by CPL Baird's parents, representatives from the Australian Defence Force, Federal, State and local representatives and many from the Burnie community.

At that event, Mr Barnett announced on behalf of the Hon Jeremy Rockliff, Deputy Premier, that the Tasmanian Government would establish a scholarship named in CPL Baird's honour for a student from northwest Tasmania. The scholarship is offered to a student who is enrolled in a government school in northwest Tasmania, intends to study at the Australian Defence Force Academy, is of good character and has contributed in a positive way to their local community—to help increase students' awareness.

CPL Baird's personal motto was "Aspire to Inspire". It is intended that the scholarship will grow the spirit of this ethos.

## Tasmanian Victoria Cross Memorial



On 11 May 2003 a memorial honouring Tasmania's Victoria Cross recipients was unveiled at the Cenotaph on the Domain in Hobart by then Governor of Tasmania, Sir Guy Green, in the presence of then Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Danna Vale, then Premier of Tasmania, Jim Bacon and then Hobart Lord Mayor Rob Valentine.

The idea of a single memorial dedicated to all of Tasmania's recipients of the Commonwealth's highest award for valour had been considered by the Tasmanian Branch of the RSL more than two years earlier. The Tasmanian RSL lobbied for the project, which eventuated in a joint funding initiative from all levels of government.

The memorial (pictured above) is constructed with soil from the birthplaces of all Tasmanian VC recipients, as well as soil from the battlefields of France, Belgium and South Africa.

The rammed earth design of the memorial represents the trenches occupied by the early diggers, and also features a sound scape providing information on all the recipients so that they may be remembered and commemorated by future generations.

## Other Tasmanian Victoria Cross Memorials

With the support of the then Howard Australian Government, the Tasmanian RSL was funded to have plaques constructed and laid in the hometowns or schools of Tasmania's Victoria Cross recipients.

The most recent plaque was opened on 31 March 2015 by the Burnie City Council. It is located at the Burnie Cenotaph in memory of Corporal Cameron Baird, who was killed in 2013 in Afghanistan and grew up in Burnie.



Percy Statton VC Memorial Plaque

The locations of the memorials are as follows:

Sergeant Percy Statton – Zeehan Primary School

Lieutenant Alfred Gaby – Scottsdale Primary School

Sergeant Stanley McDougall – Dover RSL Sub-Branch

Sergeant Lewis McGee – Ross Cenotaph

Sergeant John Dwyer – Alonnah, Bruny Island

Lt Col Harry Murray – Evandale

Trooper John Bisdee & Lieutenant Guy Wylly – The Hutchins School

Captain Percy Cherry – Huonville Primary School

Sergeant John Whittle – Cygnet Primary School

Corporal Walter Brown – New Norfolk Primary School

Lance Corporal Sidney Gordon & Captain James Newland – Hobart Anglesea Barracks Memorial Garden

Corporal Cameron Baird – Burnie Cenotaph

## The Australian War Memorial

The Australian War Memorial in Canberra is recognised as one of the world's great national monuments. The grand monument houses vast national collections of relics, personal and public records and art and media to relate the story of Australia's experience at war, as well as the nation's involvement in regional conflict.

The Memorial endeavours to have only authentic memorabilia, ranging from the relics of war, to military medals. The Memorial includes a Roll of Honour, made of bronze, and featuring the name of every Australian who has died in conflict since the Boer War. The Roll of Honour stands several metres high and is more than 70 metres in length.

It includes the towering "Hall of Memory" a high dome clad structure within which lies the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, the remains of whom were repatriated to Australia from the battlefields of Europe in 1993.

The Memorial includes a tribute to the servicemen who won the Victoria Cross and featuring commemorative tributes to many Australians who distinguished themselves in war.



The high dome housing the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, flanked by the Roll of Honour.  
At centre is the Pool of Reflection which supports a flame that is never extinguished.



# Tasmanian Government Initiatives

## Harry Murray VC Scholarships

The Lieutenant Colonel Harry Murray VC Scholarships were first awarded in 2012 to promote research and understanding of Tasmania's military history, and issues facing veterans.

The Tasmanian Veterans' Advisory Council (TVAC), which provides advice and support to the State Government on issues affecting the serving and ex-serving community, recommended that the scholarships be named after Lieutenant Colonel Harry Murray who was born in Evandale in 1880. Lieutenant Colonel Murray believed in training and discipline, and possessed sound tactical skills. He was one of the most decorated infantry soldiers of the British Empire during the Great War and Australia's most decorated soldier.

The Scholarships are available to students who are in their final year of undergraduate study and intending to study Honours with a thesis involving Tasmanians' involvement in the military. They are administered by the University of Tasmania on behalf of the State Government.

For further information, please visit [www.dpac.tas.gov.au](http://www.dpac.tas.gov.au).

## The Frank MacDonald Memorial Prize



The Frank MacDonald Memorial Prize recognises Great War veteran, Frank MacDonald (*pictured left*), who was born in Ulverstone in 1896, and died in August 2003 at the age of 107. Frank MacDonald was one of the last of the 40th Infantry Battalion, Australian Imperial Force, the only all-Tasmanian Battalion raised in the Great War. He was responsible for repairing signal lines between headquarters and trenches and received the Military Medal for working courageously under heavy fire. He also served in the Second World War and received the Legion of Honour in 1998.

The prize is an essay-based competition for Year 9 students that aims to promote and preserve the meaning of the Anzac spirit in the Tasmanian community.

Prize winners have the opportunity to research Australia's participation in the Great War by taking a study tour to visit significant Great War landmarks and battlefields on the Western Front in Europe. Students also undertake research into individual soldiers who fought in the Great War as part of the preparation

for their trip to Belgium and France. The Frank MacDonald Memorial Prize was first awarded in 2004 and is an initiative of the Tasmanian Government, supported by RSL Tasmania. It is jointly administered by the Department of Education, and Communities, Sport and Recreation Tasmania, in the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

For further information, please visit [www.dpac.tas.gov.au](http://www.dpac.tas.gov.au).



2014 Frank MacDonald Memorial Prize students pictured with Guy Barnett MP following their return to Tasmania from the Western Front.

## CPL Cameron Baird VC Scholarship

In March 2015, the CPL Cameron Baird VC Scholarship was announced by the Tasmanian Liberal Government. The Scholarship, which will increase students' awareness and learning about Corporal Baird VC and his service and sacrifice, will be in the sum of \$1,000 and offered annually to a student in Year 12.

The selection committee will be seeking a student who:

- is enrolled in a government school in the North-West of Tasmania.
- intends to study at the Australian Defence Force Academy (ADFA).
- is of good character.
- has contributed in a positive way to his/her local community.

Students will be asked to complete a written application that includes testimonials from their school principal and members of the local community.

The selection committee will include a representative of the Returned Services League of Australia (RSL).

For more information contact Learning Services Northern Region on 6478 4329 or email [learning.services.nr@education.tas.gov.au](mailto:learning.services.nr@education.tas.gov.au)

# LEST WE FORGET

## Endnote and Acknowledgements

Updating *Our Heroes* has been a long-standing desire. Tasmania's military history is outstanding and worthy of being told in this centenary of ANZAC.

In the 10 years since the first edition of this book was published, I have had a number of readers contact me with comments and suggestions. Old stories have been unearthed and new ones formed—not the least of which was CPL Cameron Baird VC MG and the story of his bravery in Afghanistan in 2013 and before. Further feedback is always welcome and I hope that, in time, a new chapter can be added noting that Ordinary Seaman Teddy Sheean has been appropriately recognised with a Victoria Cross.

A keen and longstanding personal interest and family connection to some of Australia's military history helped provide a spark for this book. My grandfather, H.S. Barnett of Hobart, flew with the Royal Flying Corps during World War One when planes were little more than canvas and wire. During the Second World War, my great-uncle, Laurie Thyne of Launceston, served with Sparrow Force in the 2/40th battalion before becoming a Japanese prisoner of war for three and a half years. In addition my wife Kate's grandfather and great uncle were both trained in the Light Horse in Tasmania, with the latter serving in Palestine in World War One. Stories like theirs, and many others, deserve to be remembered. I hope that this book helps spread the story of the courage and sacrifice of our servicemen and women past and present. I hope it is of special interest to students and young Tasmanians. I thank God for the opportunity to promote the memory of the bravery and sacrifice of those who served.

Many people deserve to be thanked for their support of this update. In no specific order they are: The Premier of Tasmania, Hon Will Hodgman MP, and Senator the Hon Michael Ronaldson, Federal Minister for Veterans' Affairs, for their insightful forewords; Robert Dick, State President of RSL (Tasmania Branch) and the staff at RSL (Tasmania) for their support in a variety of much-appreciated ways; Reg Watson, historian, for his contribution on other Tasmanian heroes; John Wadsley of Friends of Soldiers Memorial Avenue for his thorough and thoughtful review of the initial drafts; staff and family for their hard work, encouragement and support. Last, but by no means, least, a special vote of thanks goes to Mr Doug and Mrs Kaye Baird, parents of CPL Cameron Baird VC MG, for their time, thoughts and keen support.

The values of courage, endurance, mateship and sacrifice that flow from the pages of this book are worthy of acknowledgement. The question for all of us now is this: How will we respond?

# Glossary

## **Aide-de-Camp**

(French for camp assistant) a personal assistant or secretary to a person of high rank, usually a senior military officer or a head of state.

## **AIF**

Australian Imperial Forces, the two all-volunteer Australian Army forces dispatched to fight overseas during World War One and World War Two.

## **Battalion**

An army unit having two or more companies and a headquarters.

## **Boer**

Word used to describe farmers of European origin (primarily Dutch and German) who migrated further into the African continent following British settlement on the South African Cape.

## **Colonel**

Rank just below brigadier. Typically serving as staff officers in between field commands at battalion and brigade level. The insignia is two diamond shaped pips (properly called stars) and a crown.

## **Company**

A division of a battalion.

## **Corporal**

The second lowest of the non-commissioned officer ranks, ranked between lance corporal and sergeant. The badge of rank is a two-bar chevron (also known as “stripes”, “tapes” or “hooks”).

## **Garrison**

A body of troops stationed in a fort or fortified town, or, a fortified place, in which troops are quartered for its security.

## **Infantry**

Soldiers who fight primarily on foot with small arms in organised military units, though they may be transported to the battlefield by horses, ships or other means.

## **Lance Corporal**

Lowest ranking non-commissioned officer, between private and corporal. The badge of rank is a 1-bar chevron.

## **Lieutenant Colonel**

Rank superior to major and subordinate to colonel. It is pronounced “Left- Tenant” by Commonwealth forces. The insignia is a crown above a pip.

**Lewis Guns**

Machine gun of American design most widely used by the British Empire during World War One.

**Major**

Rank above captain and below lieutenant colonel. The rank insignia for a major is a crown.

**Maltese Cross**

A cross having four equal arms resembling arrowheads joined at the points.

**Maxim Gun**

First self-powered machine gun. The Maxim used energy from the ammunition it fired instead of a crank. However, the Maxim was large and difficult to manoeuvre.

**Militia**

An army of trained civilians, which may be an official reserve army, called upon in time of need.

**Parapet**

A defensive wall or elevation used in fortification.

**Pillbox**

Low, concrete structure, enclosing a machine gun during warfare.

**Platoon**

Military unit consisting of two or more sections, making up a company.

**Sniper**

Person firing shots over a long distance from a concealed location.

**Trooper**

A cavalry soldier of private rank, or, a member of a troop. This rank is used in British, Australian and Canadian armoured branches of service.

**Vickers Gun**

An improved version of the Maxim gun. At the beginning of World War One the Vickers was the official machine gun of the British Army.

## RSL Sub-Branches in Tasmania

<b>Beaconsfield</b> PO Box 55 Beaconsfield 7270	<b>Bicheno</b> PO Box 136 Bicheno 7215	<b>Bridport</b> PO Box 14 Bridport 7262	<b>Brighton Green Ponds</b> PO Box 118 Kempton 7030
<b>Bruny Island</b> 140 Matthew Street Bruny Island 7150	<b>Burnie</b> PO Box 199 Burnie 7320	<b>Circular Head</b> PO Box 112 Smithton 7330	<b>Claremont</b> 9 Bilton St Claremont 7011
<b>Clarence</b> PO Box 89 Rosny Park 7018	<b>Cygnets</b> 80 Mary Street Cygnets 7112	<b>Deloraine</b> PO Box 178 Deloraine 7304	<b>Devonport</b> PO Box 365 Devonport 7310
<b>Dunalley</b> PO Box 120 Dunalley 7177	<b>Esperance</b> PO Box 248 Dover 7117	<b>Exeter</b> c/- Post Office Exeter 7275	<b>Fingal Mathinna</b> 46 Powers Road Pyengana 7216
<b>Flinders Island</b> 30 Barr St, Lady Barron Flinders Island 7255	<b>George Town</b> PO Box 105 George Town 7253	<b>Glenorchy</b> 320 Main Road Glenorchy 7010	<b>Greater Hobart</b> c/- Hobart Workers Club 213 Liverpool St
<b>Huon</b> 66 Main Road Huonville 7109	<b>Kingborough</b> 102 Wells Pde Blackmans Bay 7052	<b>King Island</b> PO Box 309 Currie 7256	<b>Kingston Beach</b> 39 Beach Rd Kingston Beach 7050
<b>Latrobe</b> 160 Gilbert St Latrobe 7307	<b>Launceston</b> 313 Wellington St Sth Launceston 7249	<b>Lenah Valley</b> 188 Lenah Valley Rd Lenah Valley 7008	<b>Lilydale</b> PO Box 56 Lilydale 7268
<b>Lindisfarne</b> PO Box 3 Lindisfarne 7015	<b>Maydena</b> RSL Club, Kallista Rd Maydena 7140	<b>New Norfolk</b> PO Box 77 New Norfolk 7140	<b>Northern Midlands</b> PO Box 39 Longford 7301
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**This book has been published thanks to the  
generosity of Denis Durham and the Durham family.**

**The book is free although a donation to RSL Tasmania or  
any of its sub-branches is recommended.**

Printed and designed by Foot and Playsted, Charles Street, Launceston  
Tasmania

Authorised by Guy Barnett MP

*53 St John Street, Launceston TASMANIA 7250*

