

**HIGH HOPES TO HEARTBREAK:
A STUDY OF WORLD WAR I SOLDIER SETTLERS
AT COOMINYA, QUEENSLAND, 1920-1929**

Murray Johnson

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c/- Mervyn Dixon, 13 Main Street, Coominya, Qld 4311

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INTRODUCTION AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Coominya and District Historical Society undertook two projects as part of our contribution to acknowledging the centenary of the service of local personnel in World War I. We obtained financial assistance for both from the Queensland Government. The first under the auspices of the Lions Club of Lowood Pty Ltd in 2014 from the Queensland Anzac Centenary Grants Program for a project titled 'Coominya Soldier Settlers Commemoration' [GPR100155] for \$15,000, and the second under the auspices of the Coominya Public Hall Committee Inc. in 2017 from the Queensland Anzac Centenary Spirit of Service grants program for a project titled 'Coominya Soldier Settler Family Histories' [SSGP2054] for \$18,466. These applications were supported by the local members of the State and Federal parliaments: Deb Frecklington, Member for Nanango, Jim Madden, Member for Ipswich West and Shane Newmann, Member for Blair.

Two bronze plaques, made by Evan Worsell, Carol Park, were mounted on a sandstone plinth, donated by Cedric Zischke, in the Coominya Memorial Park by the Somerset Regional Council. The first, unveiled on Anzac Day 2015, commemorates the names of the Coominya soldier settlers and the location of their blocks of land, and the second, unveiled on Anzac Day 2018, describes the Coominya Soldier Settlement Scheme. Copies of these plaques (in reverse order) appear on the following pages.

In addition, the Society produced this book of the lives of the Coominya soldier settlers, their origins, their war service and their experience at Coominya and after they left.

We wish to express our grateful thanks for the research undertaken by Jean Hynson and Frank Uhr and for the research and assembly of materials and writing of the text by Murray Johnson.

Former and current members of the Coominya and District Historical Society are thanked for their contributions: Mervyn Dixon, Jeff Hewitt, Ann Utz, Dawn Oliver, Fred From, Eric From, Greg Banff and Brett De Grussa.

John Dingle

Editor

COOMINYA SOLDIER SETTLEMENT SCHEME

Soldier Settlements were established in all Australian States during World War I to support returned AIF and Allied ex-servicemen and give them a fresh start in life.

Coominya was one of 18 Soldier Settlements established in Queensland by 1920.

3000 acres on both sides of the railway line west of the town were purchased from the Watson brothers, and Mrs Lumley Hill provided 15 blocks from Bellevue Station.

The plan of the 100 blocks in the Coominya Soldier Settlement Scheme and their ex-servicemen lease holders are shown on the main plaque.

Each soldier settler received a repayable Government loan of 625 pounds to pay for land clearing, a house, basic tools and running costs, planting grape vines and citrus trees and living expenses until the farm became viable.

The scheme lasted less than four years due to poor soil, shortage of water, the settlers' lack of farming experience, and grapevine disease that resulted in low or no crops.

Many soldier settlers abandoned their farms and moved on, whilst some transferred to other Soldier Settlements elsewhere in Queensland. By 1925 only two remained on their Coominya blocks. However, the influx of new families had a great effect on Coominya. The school was enlarged, the shops and churches were built and a Bush Nursing Centre was established.

This monument was erected as a Queensland Anzac Centenary project by the Coominya and District Historical Society to honour the returned servicemen and their families who lived at the Coominya Soldier Settlement after the 1914 – 18 War.

This project is proudly supported by the Queensland Government.



**COOMINYA
AND DISTRICT
HISTORICAL SOCIETY**



WW1 COOMINYA SOLDIER SETTLEMENT SCHEME 1920 - 1929

Parish of Wivenhoe



Parish of Buaraba

AULD J	B135	KENNEDY D	W109	PRYOR H C	W120
BAKER T	W154	KENNEDY J	W108	QUINNEY A E	B136
BARNETT W J N	W162	KEYS A	B103	ROBERTS H	W107
BROOKS O A	B98	KLAEHN E	W153	RODD A J	B94
BROWN A G	B131	KNIGHT J E	W161	RYAN P	W119
BOBY S	W157	KOKKINN A G	B116	SEKACHOFF G P	B96
BURKE W J	W132	KOKKINN C E	B117	SCOTT W J	B101
BURTON A E	W135	LEACH L D	B109	SHARPE J	B94
CARROL T	W118	LIVETT A	B118	SHAW W	W125
CASEY J	W113	McCAFFREY F	W113	SHAW H	W164
COOPER H C	W110	McCLURE G	B111	SMITH P E	W142
CRICKMORE E J	W140	MacDONALD A T R	W137	SMITH R F	W150
DAVIS H	W159	McDONALD V H	W122,	SNEATH A C	B96
DEMPSEY J	B95		W123,	SUTCLIFFE V J G	W129
DENT T	B113	MacFARLANE J	W113	TAYLOR W T W	W110
EARL A H	W127	McKAY W	W131	TEEBUTT W	W147
FUNNELL J W	B141	McROBBIE A	W110	THEMOR W	B120
GILLESPIE J A	W114	McROBBIE A M	B123	TOWNSLEY A	B106
GREEN W G	W111	MEAGHER W	W163	TUPICOFF A	B121
GRIFFITH H	W136	MITCHELL D	W151	TUPICOFF N	B114
GRIMES A	W62	MOLONEY A	B97	VOSS E	W143
GUTTERIDGE J J	W165	MONEY G M	W158	WALLACE D	B132
HARRIGAN M	W120	MOORE W J	B107	WALSH J	W130
HAWKER A G	W156	MORRIS E C	B137	WHITE CA	B119
HEWITT W	W166	MORRIS F H	B111	WILLS G F	B95,96,97,98,99,
HILL W G	W166	NEILL W T W	B115		100,101,102,
HOBBS K C S	W146	NOLAN W	W145		103,104,105
HOBBIN M J	W111	NOLAN J	W148	WITTINGTON A H	B100
HUMPHRIES P	W134	PASHLEY F E	W121	WOOLSTON A H	W160
INCE H J	W117	PATTERSON G	B104	WRAY E	B110
INSTONE S	W124	PEPPARD J A	B105	WYNN S	W112
JOHNSON T	W121,122	PHILLIPS W J	W115	ZROFF J G G	W111
JOHNSON T H	B108	PITTER J	B102		
KELLY J A	B112	POWELL L	B133		

25TH APRIL 2015



COOMINYA
AND DISTRICT
HISTORICAL SOCIETY



ABBREVIATIONS

AIF	Australian Imperial Force
AWM	Australian War Memorial
AWOL	Absent Without Official Leave
<i>BC</i>	<i>Brisbane Courier</i>
<i>C-M</i>	<i>Courier-Mail</i>
FGR	Family Group Record
NAA	National Archives of Australia
<i>QPD</i>	<i>Queensland Parliamentary Debates</i>
<i>QPP</i>	<i>Queensland Parliamentary Papers</i>
<i>QT</i>	<i>Queensland Times</i>
QSA	Queensland State Archives

TABLE OF MEASURES

Area:

1 acre: 0.405 hectares

Currency:

1 penny (1d) in the 1920s: 42 cents (42c) in 2000

1 shilling (1s) in the 1920s: 5 dollars (\$5) in 2000

1 pound (£1) in the 1920s: 100 dollars (\$100) in 2000

Distance:

1 yard: 0.914 metres

1 chain: 20.1 metres

1 mile: 1.61 kilometres

Liquid:

1 pint: 568 millilitres

1 gallon: 8 pints: 4.55 litres

A message from the Premier



The period between 2014 and 2018 marks 100 years since the First World War, where Australians demonstrated the resilience, strength of character and integrity that has defined the enduring legacy of the Anzac spirit.

Since 2014, hundreds of Queensland communities have undertaken inspiring projects to honour the 57,705 Queensland men who volunteered to serve during the First World War. Although varied in nature, each project shows how Queenslanders are grateful for these servicemen and their selfless sacrifices.

Through their research and this subsequent publication, Coominya and District Historical Society have demonstrated that past Queensland communities held the First World War servicemen in similar esteem as we do today and sought out practical opportunities to respectfully show their appreciation.

I am pleased that the story of the Coominya Soldier Settlement Scheme has been preserved for future generations through this publication.

The Queensland Government, through the Queensland Anzac Centenary grants program, is proud to support this initiative and I congratulate Coominya and District Historical Society and the Coominya Public Hall Committee on this remarkable outcome.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which reads "Anastacia". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Anastacia Palaszczuk MP
Premier of Queensland
Minister for Trade

DISCLAIMER

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This project is proudly supported by the Queensland Government

PREFACE

A pleasant little town on the since-closed Brisbane Valley Railway south-east of Esk and 83 kilometres west of Brisbane, Coominya today bears no indication that in the 1920s it was the scene of a disastrous agricultural enterprise that brought scores of First World War veterans to the brink of financial and physical ruin. After being caught up in the carnage of the Great War of 1914-1918 these men, many with wives and children, aspired to a quiet existence in the rural landscape where they could rebuild their shattered lives. It was not to be. The Coominya district was selected by government officials as part of Queensland's post-World War One soldier settlement scheme intended to reward Allied servicemen for their sacrifice and sterling service. While the intention was undeniably honourable, the planning and implementation lacked sufficient foresight to achieve the desired outcome. Nature, too, conspired against the weary veterans of war. Only one of the dozens of soldier settlements established throughout the State in those immediate post-war years can be said to have met with any degree of success. Most did no more than stagger through the 1920s until the scheme was officially terminated in 1929. A small number were spectacular failures, totally collapsing within the space of just a few short years. Coominya Soldier Settlement was one of them.

THE COOMINYA SOLDIER SETTLEMENT

1. THE FORMATIVE YEARS (1918-1920)

From 1915 the Commonwealth Government began implementing schemes to rehabilitate injured, maimed and ill service personnel invalided back to Australia, but it also had in mind the need to provide support services for the tens of thousands of veterans who would be repatriated once the horrific global conflict of the Great War had been brought to an end. With unemployment and the cost of living running high,¹ the possibility of trained fighters venting their frustrations against civil society was also a very real issue.² At the same time, however, the authorities were keen to provide tangible rewards for the illustrious deeds performed by its citizenry on foreign fields. Preferential employment, affordable housing and vocational training were all implemented to satisfy the needs of repatriated troops. As a primary producing nation, the idea of settling returned servicemen on farms of their own where they could turn their swords into ploughshares and contribute to the country's wealth slowly became a significant aspect of the repatriation program. Not only would this mean increasing rural production, it would also deflect a potential threat away from congested urban areas. It was not an entirely new concept. Right from the initial colonisation of Australia in 1788 British officers and men had been provided with grants of land, the latter after their terms of service had concluded. Land grants were later extended to British officers following the Napoleonic Wars, and in the second half of the nineteenth century to those serving in a number of Australia's volunteer colonial forces. While veterans of the Sudan campaign of 1885 and the South African War of 1899-1902 received no such entitlements, soldier settlement was resurrected in 1915 owing to the unprecedented number of enlistments in the First World War.³

The Commonwealth Government was understandably responsible for the welfare of its returning troops, but soldier settlement was also dependent on the land available within the States. Control of land within their borders was one of the most significant residual powers left to the States under the Constitution of 1901. In effect, while the Commonwealth was able to implement soldier settlement and provide the funding, it was refused any control over the selection of land or even how its money was spent.⁴ Queensland proved to be the most rapacious of the States, initially embarking on a spending spree to build roads, bridges, railways and other infrastructure only incidental to, rather than having a direct bearing on, soldier settlement.⁵ With its agricultural potential yet to be fully realised, Commonwealth funding also provided a windfall to conduct agricultural exploration. Queensland thus became the first Australian State to establish farming settlements of returned servicemen in 1916, with the opening of land at Beerburrum, north of Brisbane, and Pikedale (near Stanthorpe) to the south.⁶ Over the next four years soldier settlements sprouted like mushrooms across the State from the tropical north to the semi-arid west. This agricultural rush also meant that mistakes were virtually inevitable, but the sheer scale of those errors was unfortunately unimaginable. Almost none of Queensland's post-World War One soldier settlements survived in the longer term, and a few of them collapsed within a few short years. Among the more spectacular failures was Coominya, where a soldier settlement was officially established in June 1920.

At first every soldier settler throughout the Commonwealth was advanced a loan of £500 for 'improvements' to be effected on their holdings. As well as implements and fencing, it was

also expected to include the cost of a private dwelling. When that amount proved to be inadequate the loan was increased to £625, and in January 1919 the Commonwealth agreed to fund the States to the tune of £375 per soldier settler to provide effective infrastructure. The entire £1000 was to be reimbursed over a 40-year period.⁷ Steadily increasing repayments for the soldier settlers was expected to be fully covered by rising production and corresponding income from their farms. But if no harvest resulted it also meant the debt ballooned out of control to a point where it was completely unmanageable. And that is exactly what happened in all too many cases. Moreover, in Queensland the soldier settlers could never own their land in the truest sense of the word: perpetual leasehold was favoured over freehold. Although it did provide a measure of security in that the settlers could use their farm and improvements as collateral, perpetual leasehold tenure remained a detested feature of the Queensland scheme.⁸ Such was the desire to escape the horrors of war, however, that many chose to accept this condition in the hope of finding rural tranquillity. From the Commonwealth and State perspectives, there were a number of non-associated reasons to launch into soldier settlement, all of which were on full display at Coominya which had already seemingly proved its potential as a grape and citrus-growing district through the pioneering efforts of civilian settlers.⁹ It was largely overlooked that these were experienced farmers who had chosen their land very wisely indeed.

After purchasing 65 hectares of land near Coominya in 1880, hotelier Jacob Banff was encouraged by his wife Julia (also Prussian and from a notable wine-producing district) to plant wine grapes. Clinton Vineyard flourished, and after Jacob's death in 1888 Julia and her children carried on the enterprise. Business continued to boom, and by 1912 the cellar capacity was increased to 45,460 litres. Two years later fibro-cement cellars were built to lift the capacity to 160,000 litres, and by 1917 Clinton Vineyard was the second-largest winery in Queensland. Grapes continued to be grown on the property until the 1990s.¹⁰ Jacob Banff had selected his land on the banks of Buaraba Creek (also known locally as Sandy Creek), where the soil was described as 'rich chocolate' — quite unlike the surrounding sandy ridges.¹¹

The case of William Gutteridge is even more pertinent. In the 1870s his father Joseph similarly selected land on Buaraba Creek, overlooking Atkinson's Lagoon, where he grew fruit and vegetables. One son remained on the farm while William ventured to North Queensland to prospect for gold and run a store at Croydon. He married, and in 1889 William and his wife Annie returned to Coominya where they assumed part of the family land on Buaraba Creek and established the Norman Vineyard in 1890.¹² The vineyard was restricted to a small rounded knoll encompassing 13 hectares where the gravelly sub-soil allowed moisture to be retained.¹³ Like the Banff family, their enterprise flourished, and by 1900 as many as 200 people visited Norman Vineyard on Sunday excursions during the vintage.¹⁴ William and Annie Gutteridge also planted citrus trees with success, albeit, restricting the cultivation to the more elevated richer soils.¹⁵

Inspired by these efforts, the Queensland Government planted an experimental vineyard at Coominya in September 1916. A range of grape varieties were tried with considerable success and by May 1919 the vineyard was in a position to distribute 'several thousands of cuttings'.¹⁶ An added bonus at Coominya was that the grapes matured around Christmas when they were in peak demand — considerably earlier than those grown on the famed vineyards around Roma further west.¹⁷ There were other productive farms scattered throughout the Coominya district, all of them where the soils were particularly fertile. Much of the remaining land was composed of sandy soils which had either been passed over years before,¹⁸ or opened up for cattle grazing or pig-farming.¹⁹

Historic Bellevue Homestead was a case in point. Part of the 150 square kilometre Wivenhoe Run taken up by sheep squatters John Ferriter and Edmund Uhr in 1848, the lease was purchased by Major William North (Snr.) in 1858. Shortly after acquiring the property North established a 2,000 hectare section which he named Bellevue Station. This remained in the hands of the North family after Wivenhoe was resumed and thrown open for selection in 1869. The following year the focus switched from sheep to beef cattle, and after passing through the hands of Alexander Duncan Campbell and John Hay and a conversion from leasehold to freehold in 1879, Bellevue Station was purchased by James Taylor for his son George and his wife Edith in 1884. George Taylor died in 1899 and two years later his widow married pastoralist Charles Lumley Hill, who turned the property into a noted Hereford stud between 1902 and 1904. Although attractive gardens were developed in the immediate vicinity of the homestead (which was relocated into Coominya township between 1975-1980), the bulk of the land on the original Bellevue Station was unsuited for intensive agriculture.²⁰ It was no different on an adjoining property, where the Watson family were similarly engaged in pastoral pursuits.

In June 1918, however, Robert Watson attended a meeting of the Associated Chambers of West Moreton at Ipswich to discuss the repatriation of returned servicemen, where the highlight of the evening was an enthusiastic address by William Gutteridge on the advantages of the Coominya district for the cultivation of citrus. Gutteridge insisted that it would be ideal for soldier settlement, and Robert Watson, speaking on behalf of his father Samuel, offered 40 hectares of his family's land to the Repatriation Fund. The Associated Chambers subsequently referred this generous gift to the Ipswich Repatriation Committee with a view to sub-dividing it into soldier settlement blocks for growing citrus.²¹ Seven months elapsed before members of the committee personally visited Coominya, where they were greeted by William Gutteridge and William Watson. Rather than simply citrus, Gutteridge now impressed upon his visitors the merits of grape-growing in the district, assuring them that the cost of preparing the land and planting cuttings would only amount to around £18 per acre. This compared favourably with Beerburrum, north of Brisbane, where the cost of preparing the land and planting pineapples had been £25 per acre. A brief inspection of the Banff Brothers' Clinton Vineyard 'thoroughly convinced' the committee members that grape and citrus growing at Coominya would undoubtedly be remunerative for returned servicemen.²²

On behalf of his colleagues, Oliver Perry advised the Land Settlement Committee in Brisbane that with the railway already passing through Coominya the transport of produce was assured, and although he was not a member of the delegation which visited Coominya, Perry boldly asserted that water was readily available at a depth of just 1.5 metres below the surface. In view of the later difficulties experienced by the soldier settlers in obtaining any water this was an extraordinary claim, but it no doubt had some influence in the final decision to open the area for returned servicemen. Perry was not yet finished. The profits generated by citrus and grape-growing would be considerable: 'Lemons in full bearing 100 trees per acre at £1 per tree £100. Grapes, this land will yield on an average 12 tons per acre which sold at 1d. per lb. [one penny per pound] will amount to £112 per acre.'²³

It was now that the Esk Shire Repatriation Committee entered discussions, offering to clear the land preparatory to soldier settlement if the Queensland Government contributed £300. The Committee itself was willing to throw in an additional £150 for this work. According to A.B. Smith the area was only lightly timbered and the soil easily worked, thus making it an ideal home for war veterans with families.²⁴ This offer to clear the land — and the Watson

family's 40-hectare gift — travelled all the way to Melbourne, where Hugh Sinclair MHR brought it to the attention of Senator Edward Millen, the Commonwealth's diminutive Minister for Repatriation.²⁵

At Coominya William Gutteridge was simultaneously canvassing his ideas through the local press. Not only would citrus and grapes do well by themselves, he now envisaged them opening the way for a whole range of associated industries, including 'spirit-distilling, the growing and curing of currants, raisins and sultanas, jam and marmalade manufacture' — the list was almost endless. Perhaps reflecting on the war experience of his son James, who had suffered two serious wounds during his overseas service, Gutteridge waxed lyrical on the potential of the Coominya lands for the settlement of partly crippled veterans. Farming here would only require 'light labour', and he warned that if it was not opened for soldier settlement there was a very real risk the land would fall into the hands of foreign families. Gutteridge did not elaborate on why these 'foreign families' would wish to possess the land — or even who they might be.²⁶ It was simply a play on the xenophobia which had long plagued Australian society. But it was not for nought that the pioneer viticulturist and citrus grower came to be known as the 'father' of the Coominya Soldier Settlement.²⁷

Unlike Gutteridge, the Watson family could see a pecuniary advantage if the settlement went ahead. When the Queensland Government was on the verge of accepting their 40-hectare gift in November 1919, the Watsons offered to sell an additional 2761 acres (1,117 hectares) of their grazing land at an average price of £2 per acre.²⁸ This inducement was made directly to Joseph Rose, a pineapple farmer from Woombye, north of Brisbane, who had risen to become Queensland's Comptroller of Soldier Settlement after establishing the Beerburrum Soldier Settlement. During his time as Comptroller Rose was to make some 'monumental blunders' in his selection of land,²⁹ and Coominya was to prove no exception.

Not only was Rose excited by the prospect of purchasing the extra land from the Watson family, he also entered into negotiations to buy another 970 hectares of grazing land on the neighbouring property of Bellevue from Edith Lumley Hill, who was well-known for her generosity and patronage of such organisations as the Soldiers' Comfort Fund and the Coominya Red Cross Society during the Great War.³⁰ Rose considered this particular tract of country to be 'the most suitable piece of land' in the entire district for growing grapes and citrus.³¹ Rose had little knowledge of these crops, and the land in question, of course, had been passed over years before as unsuitable for agriculture. That did not prevent the Comptroller foreseeing 'handsome returns' from small crops such as sweet potatoes and peanuts in addition to grapes and citrus. Experiments with peanuts were later attempted at Beerburrum Soldier Settlement with abysmal results, so it was probably fortunate they were avoided at Coominya. Rose was nevertheless utterly convinced that the land he had examined was so rich in parts that there was not 'a waste inch ... upon it'.³² He had his wish. While Edith Lumley Hill held a life interest in Bellevue Homestead the property was actually in the hands of trustees, and the section that Rose sought was eventually resumed by the Queensland Government at what was presumably considered a 'fair market price'. To his credit, the Comptroller did note deficiencies in a few areas and he exerted enough pressure on the Watson family to reduce the price of their land marginally below £2 per acre. He also reached an agreement with Banff Brothers whereby the Clinton Vineyard would purchase all the wine grapes grown by soldier settlers at a fixed price of £8 per ton, and Banff Brothers were even prepared to provide grape cuttings for distribution among the soldier settlers once their land had been prepared.³³ This generous offer was matched not only by the omnipresent William Gutteridge, who planted 33,000 cuttings to give away to the returned servicemen,³⁴

but in a more modest way by Red Hill Vineyards at Roma, which similarly pledged to supply free of charge — ‘as far as possible’ — any varieties of cuttings deemed suitable for the area.³⁵

There was one additional factor which made an important contribution to soldier settlement at Coominya becoming a reality. As previously mentioned, Australian troops returning home were confronted by high levels of unemployment and a rising cost of living. As the number of unemployed ex-soldiers increased so did the fears of authorities, and in view of the prominent role played by returned servicemen in Brisbane’s vicious ‘Red Flag Riots’ of 1919 against the small Russian community, there was genuine cause for concern.³⁶ There was also a touch of irony in this. Three of the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) veterans who later took up soldier settlement blocks at Coominya were Russian-born. Be that as it may, the Ipswich Repatriation Committee, Chamber of Commerce and Industry, sub-branch of the Returned Sailors’ and Soldiers’ Imperial League of Australia (RSSILA, forerunner of the RSL) and the Sailors’ and Soldiers’ Fathers Association (SSFA) — all urged the Queensland Government to expedite the opening of a soldier settlement at Coominya to alleviate the growing problem of unemployment among war veterans.³⁷

It had the desired effect. Although the local Land Ranger advised his superiors that nineteen farms comprising approximately 60.7 hectares each would be a suitable sub-division of the available land,³⁸ this was considered too few for so many. It was decided instead to subdivide the land into 109 blocks of roughly 13 hectares each. In February 1920 surveyors were on the ground and by the following May preparations were well in hand for clearing operations to commence.³⁹ It was at this crucial point that the Chief Supervisor of Soldier Settlement, C.T.O. Shepherd, made his own inspection of the Coominya lands. Unlike Joseph Rose, Shepherd was both knowledgeable and practical, and while he certainly supported the establishment of a soldier settlement at Coominya, he held serious doubts as to whether sufficient water supplies were available. Shepherd had good reason to be concerned. The township of Coominya itself was totally dependent on a wind-driven bore, and the Chief Supervisor found that not only was its capacity doubtful, the windmill was hopelessly ineffective in all but the strongest winds. There was an alternative supply of drinking water on the eastern side of the railway, but this was merely a hole in a gully that had been included in Portion 123 of the soldier settlement. Apart from that only ‘one or two’ civilian selections had their own source of water. Shepherd recommended that if the waterhole on Portion 123 was fenced in to prevent stock from polluting it, there would be a sufficient supply for up to two months for ‘20 or 30 men’. While all this was rather troubling, the situation was even worse on the western side of the railway, where Shepherd was unable to find any water at all. He suggested that the Government Water Diviner (J.H. Bestmann) should be despatched to Coominya immediately, and if his efforts proved unsuccessful there should be no attempt to open that area for soldier settlement.⁴⁰

Instead of heeding this sensible advice the Queensland Government decided to contract for the sinking of three bores throughout the soldier settlement area, the first of which tapped into water at a depth of 50.2 metres. A second bore reached water at ‘about 220 feet’ (67 metres).⁴¹ This made a mockery of the Repatriation Committee’s statement that water lay just below the surface. And it was equally unfortunate that against Shepherd’s advice the soldier settlement blocks west of the railway line were thrown open for selection. Given this set of circumstances, it was apparent that much could go wrong once the settlement was opened and the returned servicemen, many without any practical farming knowledge, trooped in. It did.

2. A STORM BREWS (1920-1922)

By October 1920 the soldier settlement had finally taken form. Spread across the parishes of Buaraba and Wivenhoe, and comprising a total area of 1,350 hectares, 50 blocks had been quickly taken up. Yet whereas the settlement had been intended, at least in part, to alleviate unemployment among returned servicemen in the Ipswich district, a surprising number of the new settlers were veterans of the British Army with limited knowledge of agriculture and totally unfamiliar with Australian conditions. The culture shock they experienced should not be under-estimated, and that was particularly applicable to their wives. While most of these female immigrants were from the urban centres of Britain there was at least one French spouse on the settlement.⁴²

The newly-appointed supervisor, A.E. Murray, himself a veteran of the Australian Light Horse, was to do his best to organise the soldier settlers and help them cope. Murray's headquarters was on a 12-hectare administrative block consisting of an office, storeroom, stables and staff accommodation. He was assisted by a clerk as well as a horse-driver, the latter in charge of three horses and a wagon for hauling materials. Established local farmers assisted by carting the incoming settlers' goods and chattels to their respective blocks. All essential material was purchased through the supervisor. This made sense in that Murray was able to buy in quantity and therefore more cheaply, but it was left unsaid as to whether this may have resulted in undue delays. A number of problems were certainly apparent from the very outset. For example, no provision had been made for the returned servicemen to receive any livestock, especially poultry and dairy cows. Representations made to the Queensland Government by concerned organisations such as the SSFA and the RSSILA were ignored, so a few local farmers again helped out by donating a cow or two through a lottery system. The first beast donated by A. Anderson of Sandy Creek was won by Hugh Ince, the very first returned soldier to take up land at Coominya. The Ipswich-based organisations also appealed to the public through the press for donations of poultry, a long-running campaign that was remarkably successful⁴³

The first influx of soldier settlers at Coominya had even more serious issues to deal with, particularly in regard to accommodation. While the advance of £625 to each individual included the cost of a dwelling, the gathering of material and the actual building usually took quite some time. Until that had been effected government regulations allowed the soldier settler to receive *twenty* sheets of galvanised iron — the number was quite specific — to provide temporary shelters. Those same sheets were expected to be used again in the construction of a more permanent abode. On arrival, then, the returned settlers and their families were forced to either build a rough tin humpy or supply their own tents.⁴⁴

Movement around the soldier settlement was also proving difficult for wheeled vehicles, with one early visitor appalled that trafficable roads were largely non-existent: 'Tracks lead hither and thither, but only the young adventurer would enjoy traversing them. Within the space of a mile one may experience the dangerous deceit of quick sand, the tenacious grip of the bog, the thrills of the switchback, and the sensation of shooting the rapids'. Responsibility for roads on the settlement devolved onto Esk Shire Council, but apart from the unwanted expenditure that was suddenly dumped in their laps, at least one councillor held doubts as to

whether the Coominya Soldier Settlement would prove to be a long-term proposition.⁴⁵ The Department of Public Lands eventually stepped in to put all the tracks throughout the settlement into a reasonable state before handing maintenance back to the local authority.⁴⁶

Then there was the recurring difficulty with the water supply. By October 1920 all three bores had been sunk but the Queensland Government failed to provide any engines for pumping. Although a little rain in early spring helped the settlers no end, a number of them were still forced to draw on supplies in Coominya, carting this precious commodity in tanks back to their blocks. At least one soldier settler and his wife were left with no other option than to carry water in kerosene tins for more than a kilometre.⁴⁷ The bores, in fact, were destined to become something of a nightmare. And as soon as the rain disappeared over the horizon Coominya was struck by the worst hailstorm in recorded history, devastating the government-run experimental vineyard as well as William Gutteridge's ripening crop of grapes.⁴⁸ This was followed by another lengthy dry spell, and at the beginning of January 1921 A.E. Murray lamented to his Brisbane superiors that although a contractor had arrived just before Christmas to install petrol engines for pumping water from two of the bores there was still no supply. The contractor had guaranteed that at least one of the pumps would be working before the New Year, but 'when it came to the actual pumping the weight of the lift on the pump was so great that it pulled the engine to a standstill'. By then the waterholes scattered around the district were almost dry, and more than one soldier settler was now forced to cart water 'from a long distance'. And yet, with a touch of the oxymoronic, Murray advised that none of the returned servicemen or their families had actually run short of water — 'excepting by their own extravagance in the use of water supplied'.⁴⁹ He made no attempt to qualify the extent of that 'extravagance'.

Six months later the engines on all three bores were finally operating successfully after coming under the direct control of the supervisor. But this was not what Murray's superiors intended, as it meant incurring further expenses in maintenance and the payment of wages to a caretaker. The former Light Horseman was curtly reminded that the soldier settlers were expected to appoint trustees from among their ranks to maintain the bores and pumping equipment. Moreover, by-laws were soon to be enacted to regulate charges for the water supplied, with the revenue thereafter directed towards the cost of maintenance.⁵⁰

It seems that the returned servicemen had more on their minds than taking responsibility for the bores. In August 1921 Murray called a meeting which was attended by the majority of the settlers. The supervisor patiently explained the seriousness of the water supply and urged the men to appoint trustees to keep the pumps in good order. There was little interest, so with the carrot having failed Murray decided to wield the big stick. A notice was posted on the wall of the administration building with the ultimatum that if trustees were not appointed by the end of September the water supply from the bores would be promptly shut down.⁵¹ The supervisor was beaten to the punch. Before the end of the month the pump on No.1 Villa Bore failed completely.⁵² This nonetheless had the desired effect, as the soldier settlers subsequently took over the operation and maintenance of the bores.⁵³

Two years later when the soldier settlement was faltering the pumps had once again fallen into a state of disrepair. Not wishing to incur any further expense, the Department of Public Lands offered to place the bores and engines in the hands of Esk Shire Council. The local authority was agreeable, provided the pumps had been repaired and placed in working order.⁵⁴ The matter then fell into abeyance until November 1923 when the last supervisor of Coominya Soldier Settlement, A.J. Dean, suggested that with the former soldier settlement

being opened for general selection a reliable supply of water would act as a powerful incentive for potential civilian farmers (though why this was not previously stressed for the soldier settlers was left unsaid).⁵⁵ The wheels of the Queensland bureaucracy continued to turn slowly, and in July 1924 Esk Shire Council was still patiently waiting for the engines to be placed ‘in thorough working order’ before taking control.⁵⁶

In early 1921 water shortages were more of a serious nuisance than an insurmountable obstacle, and apart from a few dark grumblings optimism generally reigned supreme. There can be no doubt that for many of the soldier settlers this was to be their first real home since becoming embroiled in the horrors of the Great War. Notwithstanding the hard physical labour there was a marked degree of tranquillity in the rural life that would have acted as a balm on shattered souls. And it was to save at least some of those souls that Archbishop Duhig travelled from Brisbane to Coominya in March 1921 to bless and dedicate the new Roman Catholic Church. The building had cost £1,000 — £1,320 with fittings — and despite the small size of the Coominya community the funds fell only £500 short. Even this deficit was almost halved on opening day, when a whip-around raised £232.⁵⁷ How many soldier settlers contributed is not known: roughly 30 per cent of their number belonged to the Catholic faith. With possible savings, deferred pay for war service, the advanced loan from the Commonwealth, and a sustenance allowance of £1 per week for single men, £1/10 for married men and 2/6 per child,⁵⁸ lack of money may not have been an albatross around the neck of too many soldier settlers at this early stage.

This was Coominya’s second house of worship. On 4 March the previous year a Presbyterian church had been opened and dedicated by the Moderator of the denomination, Reverend J.B. Galloway, and in this instance the building had been entirely free of debt.⁵⁹ Anglicans finally had their own place of worship, the third and last church in Coominya, in 1922. An attractive wooden building designed by architects Atkinson and Conrad, St Martin’s was opened and dedicated by Bishop Le Fanu on 24 June. Unlike the Presbyterians, the Anglican congregation still had to raise further funds to clear the debt owing to the diocese,⁶⁰ and by that time the soldier settlers’ trust in God was already beginning to be put to a severe test.

The situation had altered considerably from the year before when the soldier settlement had been genuinely booming. A sawmill erected to provide timber for houses was in full swing by the middle of 1921, with 54 dwellings already completed. A total area of 113 hectares had been cleared and 42 hectares ploughed. Along the boundary 140 chains of fencing had been erected and a further 1,420 chains of fencing was already dividing the individual blocks. An average area of 1.6 hectares had been planted with citrus trees on a number of farms, and many of the settlers were busy preparing to plant grape vines.⁶¹ The growth of the settlement was reflected to some extent by the local school which had originally been built to accommodate 20 pupils. By November 1920 enrolments had climbed to 39 — almost double the school’s capacity — and this figure was expected to reach ‘at least 60’.⁶² Despite the rapid influx of children, District Inspector Clement Fox of the Department of Public Instruction nevertheless advised caution before making ‘expensive additions’ to the existing building. When Fox submitted his report on the school in February 1921 conditions on the soldier settlement were in the process of transition. The majority of the 60-odd settlers and their families were still living in humpies or tents, the land was thickly timbered and, recognising that unpaid child labour would be essential to the married settlers, Fox reported that while there were ‘12 children of school age, and about 20 below’, attendance was certain to be irregular until the farms were in a more advanced state. Only then would the children be

able to 'come along to school'. As the District Inspector knew, fruit-growing would be the main industry, though he failed to expand on his comment that 'the soil is sandy'.⁶³

With all the hype bandied around regarding the supposedly rich and fertile soil it was surprising that no technical analysis was undertaken until 1922. Largely relying on soil colour and acid content,⁶⁴ the Queensland Government's Agricultural Chemist, J.C. Brunnich, regarded the results of his tests as 'very disappointing'. Brunnich collected soil samples from widely dispersed areas of the settlement, sufficiently representative of the whole, and found 'practically no plant foods'.⁶⁵ No amount of back-breaking labour could overcome this natural deficiency, and although fertilisers were available it was later found that the cost of these essentials far outweighed any potential gain.

But that was still to be realised, and when another combined delegation of the Ipswich sub-branches of the RSSILA and the SSFA returned to Coominya in June 1921 they were once again whisked away by the ever-present William Gutteridge to his Norman Vineyard and given an 'object lesson in the growing of grape vines and citrus fruits'. They praised Gutteridge's efforts, which they believed amply demonstrated 'the quality of the Coominya land for the cultivation of these fruits'. Brunnich would have later found the Norman Vineyard to be anything but representative of the soldier settlement. Gutteridge delayed his visitors for so long they were only able to make a few fleeting calls on the returned servicemen, and it needs to be borne in mind that members of the two organisations were businessmen and prominent urban citizens who had limited knowledge of agriculture. Indeed, while some of them remarked on 'the uniform nature of the soil', one claimed 'it was not so much the richness of the soil as other qualities'. That is, it had 'a porous subsoil, and being of a loose sandy nature, it is easy to work'. Despite such blatant ignorance, the group did take particular note of the work performed by a few of the soldier settler wives. Those they came across, they said, take 'pleasure in joining their husbands in the very substantial recreation of the cultivation paddock'.⁶⁶ Women certainly did play a vital role on soldier settlements right across Australia, but the apparent 'pleasure' they experienced needs to be qualified.

As Marilyn Lake observed in her study of post-World War One soldier settlement in Victoria, women were crucial providers, whether milking cows, tending vegetable gardens and/or raising poultry for meat and eggs. Their culinary skills could produce a wide variety of tasty and wholesome meals from the meanest of ingredients. Knitting and sewing abilities were no less essential for clothing the family when little money was available for purchasing new items, and for prolonging the life of worn garments.⁶⁷ And as noted by members of the Ipswich organisations which visited Coominya in June 1921, women not infrequently worked alongside their husbands in the orchard or paddock, clearing, burning, fencing, and preparing the soil for cultivation. For a great many rural wives, though, the burden of working both inside and outside the family hearth regularly proved too much to bear.⁶⁸

Children similarly played a significant role, regularly performing duties as soon as they were old enough to cope. One civilian settler at Coominya, hiding behind anonymity, advocated that children should be made to work from the age of ten years.⁶⁹ His children may have been forced to do just that, and like their mothers there was no thought of payment: family survival was of paramount importance. We have very few insights into the gendered and generational dimensions of soldier settlement at Coominya, where even dairy cows were virtually non-existent. But if other soldier settlements are any guide women and children would have found it tough going indeed.

Both the RSSILA and the SSFA did what they could to make life at least a little more tolerable. The latter organisation, in particular, made worthy efforts to provide clothing and reading matter, milking cows and poultry, and it was primarily responsible for a full-time nursing sister of the Bush Nursing Association being based permanently at Coominya from early 1922.⁷⁰ Prior to the arrival of a trained nurse, the soldier settlers and their families were either reliant on their own resources or, in more serious cases, the Lowood ambulance. On one tragic occasion in November 1921 no amount of medical assistance would have been of any avail.

Irish-born Charles White had served for three years during the First World War in the Royal Garrison Artillery of the British Army. With his wife, 12-year-old son and 9-year-old daughter, White had arrived in Queensland in April 1921 intent on forging a new life on the land. After successfully applying for Portion 119 in the Parish of Buaraba at Coominya, the family settled in. Just months later 43-year-old White was dead, the circumstances of his decease said to be of such a 'distressful nature' that it could not be reported. It was either a ghastly accident or, more likely, suicide. After White's funeral at Ipswich, the RSSILA and SSFA immediately stepped in to provide assistance for his widow and children, who were 'left practically without any means of financial support'.⁷¹

Children themselves could get up to serious mischief, sometimes with explosive results. In November 1921 the son of Scottish-born Andrew Livett, who enlisted in the AIF at Brisbane in October 1915 and served in the 49th Battalion, was rushed by train to Brisbane after sustaining a life-threatening wound. The boy was playing with a pea-rifle when the weapon literally blew apart, the bullet smashing through the jaw and lodging in his neck.⁷² The sisters of the Bush Nursing Association were fortunately spared such horrendous experiences, mostly dealing with far more mundane health problems. At times, though, they found themselves hard-pressed to treat and contain infectious diseases such as scarlet fever, one of a number of diseases of poverty known to have occurred at sporadic times on the Coominya Soldier Settlement. They were exacerbated by over-crowded conditions at the school.⁷³ In February 1921 District Inspector Fox had predicted enrolments would eventually reach at least 60, while arguing against making any improvements to the existing facilities.⁷⁴ In August 1922 attendance had climbed to 66,⁷⁵ yet it was not until January 1923 that approval was finally given to make hasty alterations to the school building.⁷⁶ Even then, it was not until the following April that work actually commenced. The original school building was reoriented in an easterly direction and placed on heavier foundations before an entirely new schoolroom was built to accommodate the burgeoning student population.⁷⁷

Apart from contagious diseases, pupils could occasionally be exposed to dangerous situations as they made their way to and from school down lonely bush tracks. The most dramatic incident occurred in April 1925, when the vast majority of soldier settler children had departed Coominya for destinations elsewhere. Head Teacher Eric Stevens reported to his Brisbane superiors early that month that one of the parents had discovered an 11-year-old girl barely 800 metres from the school 'in a very bad way'. Although in obvious shock, the child told Stevens' wife 'she had been forcibly detained, dragged to a paddock and interfered with by a tramp'. The Head Teacher immediately notified the police and medical officer at nearby Lowood,⁷⁸ though whether this quick response resulted in an arrest and charges being laid is not known. While this was clearly an exceptional case, it well illustrates the potential risks facing children living in rural seclusion amidst a transient population.

Malevolence struck Coominya in a more general way in late 1921. Having planted their small groves of citrus for longer-term gains, the soldier settlers had followed the advice of government experts and planted grape cuttings for their cash crop. It was then that the lengthy dry spell was finally broken by showery overcast conditions which encouraged the spread of fungoid diseases, particularly ‘downy mildew’. It was not the first time that ‘downy mildew’ had struck the vineyards in the Coominya district. The previous year an unnamed vineyard — possibly that of Banff Brothers or William Gutteridge — had lost an estimated £5,000 worth of grapes to this scourge. It was not only incurable; ‘downy mildew’ could destroy an entire crop in the space of just a few hours. The only means of containing the disease was through regular applications of Bordeaux mixture after planting. Cost may have been an inhibiting factor as it appears the majority of the returned servicemen failed to spray their crops as a preventative measure.⁷⁹

Charles Ross, the Queensland Government’s Instructor of Fruit Culture, discovered ‘downy mildew’ on the soldier settlement in October 1921. It was already present in four areas and Ross advised the settlers that unsprayed crops would have to be either destroyed or fed to livestock to halt its advance onto neighbouring farms.⁸⁰ And as if this was not bad enough, early the following year the sustenance allowance on which the majority of families depended for basic living expenses was suddenly cancelled. The Queensland Government had expected that the settlers would only require the sustenance allowance for twelve months. Completely ignoring the disaster which had overwhelmed the Coominya growers it was terminated in accordance with directions. As most of the returned servicemen were married with children it was not surprising that some of the families were reported to be ‘in a very bad way’. The government was warned that if no relief was forthcoming some of them would be forced to abandon their farms.⁸¹ Eight families, in fact, packed up and left.⁸² The remainder only managed to hang on through the assistance provided by the SSFA, especially in the way of groceries.⁸³

With tensions running high and money running low, thieving and physical violence among the soldier settlers was not unknown. In December 1921 William Meagher hauled Hugo Davis before the Lowood Police Court, having charged the latter with stealing his shovel valued at 15 shillings. Davis pleaded guilty and was fined 10 shillings, in addition to the cost of the shovel, and 4 shillings sixpence costs of court. This was no trivial matter: failure to pay would have resulted in seven days’ imprisonment.⁸⁴ With no sustenance allowance Meagher may well have been hard-pressed to replace his precious shovel. It was even more serious in May 1922 when John Gillespie took action against Hugh Ince in the Lowood Police Court for assault. Gillespie was in a position to hire a solicitor, while Ince may have been forced to represent himself. There was no budding legal career here, as Ince’s defence failed to convince the magistrate. He was fined £1 and ordered to pay 33 shillings and sixpence in costs.⁸⁵ Again, this was a substantial amount for a struggling selector.

And at that time the soldier settlers were still without any financial support from the government. Instead, they were advised to grow cotton. A few settlers had planted cotton as an experiment in September 1921, but like any other crop it was also at the mercy of local weather conditions. The intermittent rain which had encouraged the spread of ‘downy mildew’ in the grapes continued into early 1922 and created a degree of anxiety among the few cotton growers.⁸⁶ Their fears were put to rest by J.D. Young of the Australian Cotton-Growing Association, who visited the soldier settlement in April 1922 and predicted that if all the returned servicemen planted cotton they could expect returns of between £12 and £18 per acre.⁸⁷ There were good grounds for Young’s optimism.

In 1861 the American Civil War and the federal naval blockade of the Confederate States had reduced cotton supplies to British manufacturers to a mere trickle. Queensland growers had helped fill the void, but after the cessation of hostilities on the North American continent in 1865 and the resurgence of cotton in the antebellum South, the boom quickly went bust as Queensland exports were unable to compete through sheer distance and the crippling cost of transportation. It was then that cotton was mostly replaced by sugar cane in Queensland's coastal areas.⁸⁸ During World War One British cotton mills had again faced markedly reduced supplies and lengthy delays in procuring raw material. But unlike the American Civil War era, the resumption of cotton supplies to British mills following the Armistice of 1918 continued to be disrupted owing to three major factors. One was an outbreak of boll weevil in the American crop; having entered America in the 1890s the beetle (*Anthonomus grandis*), which feeds off cotton buds and flowers, spread rapidly. The second factor was the construction of the Aswan Dam which inundated the extensive cotton fields of Egypt. Then there was the sudden growth of the tyre industry for motor vehicles which consumed vast amounts of cotton. Taken together it resulted in an international cotton shortage from 1920. Notwithstanding that the two cotton gins operated by the Queensland Government were in a primitive state, there was cause for elation as cotton prices skyrocketed.⁸⁹ Global shortages triggered a rapid expansion of cotton across a wide swathe of Queensland, and with the unexpected destruction of the grape crops at Coominya cotton clearly promised salvation to the soldier settlers.

Not that they had a lot of say in the matter: it was virtually thrust upon them by government advisers as cotton had the potential to revitalise Queensland's flagging economy. More importantly, the government had entered into an agreement with the Australian Cotton-Growing Association with the latter guaranteeing to supply sufficient quantities of pure seed and undertake ginning operations for 1921-1922. This allowed the government time to build three new cotton gins to process the expanded crop.⁹⁰ There were just two things which J.D. Young overlooked when he visited the Coominya Soldier Settlement. One was the possibility of adverse local weather conditions which could impact on the projected returns. The other was that while the soil might have looked eminently suitable for cotton cultivation it had still not been scientifically tested at that time. As it transpired, both combined to destroy the hopes of the returned servicemen. In early 1922 they were only barely hanging on owing to the disappearance of the sustenance allowance.

3. DISASTER STRIKES (1922-1923)

Apart from the eight families who had already exited the settlement, and a fortunate few with ample savings, the majority of the soldier settlers were continuing to slide inexorably into deeper debt. According to one anonymous war veteran, Supervisor Murray had repeatedly reported the plight of the returned servicemen and their families to his superiors in Brisbane. On each occasion he had been asked to be more specific and identify the individuals requiring assistance. Although that information had been supplied, no financial assistance had been forthcoming.⁹¹ Whether Murray's support for the settlers had any bearing on his transfer in June 1922 can only be surmised,⁹² for he had certainly achieved much in the space of two years. Apart from the gruelling task of establishing the settlement and dealing with the devastation wrought by 'downy mildew', Murray's time at Coominya had resulted in the erection of 83 houses, 76 of which were still occupied, and a cottage had also been built for the bush nurse. Slightly over 303 hectares of land had been cleared and marginally under 162 hectares ploughed. A total area of 29 hectares of citrus and 80,000 grape cuttings had been planted, and with the failure of the latter a considerable area was already under cotton.⁹³ Impressive as this was, it was the soldier settlers, their wives and children who had put in the hard yards, a work ethic that could not be faulted by Harry Coyne, Queensland's Minister for Public Lands.

Making a personal visit to Coominya in October 1922, Coyne was a master of deflecting criticism of his government's soldier settlement scheme onto the personal failings of the returned servicemen themselves.⁹⁴ Not on this occasion. The Minister, who was also chairman of the Soldier Settlement Committee, found that 'really hard work had been performed', and 'there was no evidence of any slackness of effort'. Contrary to his usual form, Coyne retained that opinion to the very end. He did note that as well as citrus a number of soldier settlers were still persevering with viticulture, and he was understandably impressed by the cotton already under cultivation, with some individual plots extending up to almost five hectares. This was, of course, the crop his government hoped would revitalise the State's rural economy. In a way Coominya was in a position to act as a benchmark, with Coyne and fellow members of his committee eagerly awaiting results 'with confidence and interest'.⁹⁵

However, while Coyne insisted that he had received no complaints from the returned servicemen during his brief visit, the RSSILA and the soldier settlers begged to disagree. According to the RSSILA the war veterans had declared that unless they received a sustenance allowance all of them — without exception — would be forced to abandon their land. Added weight was given to their argument by the recent soil analyses conducted by the government's own agricultural chemist which had revealed that most of the soldier settlement was totally unsuited for cultivation.⁹⁶ To make matters worse the returned servicemen had received notices demanding payment of arrears for rent and interest on their leaseholds.⁹⁷ Coyne had barely arrived back in Brisbane when the settlers held a 'stormy meeting', during which it was decided to send a four-man delegation to Brisbane to confront the Minister in his parliamentary office. Despite their perilous financial position a social evening raised enough funds to cover the expenses of the delegates,⁹⁸ who duly arrived in Brisbane and placed their grievances before Harry Coyne.

Arthur Woolston quoted a case where one of his comrades had planted peas in a bid to obtain a quick return. The seed had cost £1/8/9 and after harvesting the crop he had only received two shillings and eight pence. Nor was cotton any better. John Kennedy was among those who had planted cotton in 1921. Instead of receiving the expected £12 to £18 per acre, Kennedy's maximum return had been just £9 per acre.⁹⁹ In fact, J.D. Young of the Australian Cotton-Growing Association had only returned to Coominya weeks before and scaled down his estimated return from cotton to £10 per acre. To achieve that, however, the settlers were advised to invest £14 per acre on fertiliser.¹⁰⁰ Thus, there was no logic in persevering with cotton even if they could afford to fertilise their crop, and those who were hoping for at least some return without fertiliser were soon to be delivered a very nasty blow indeed.

Coyne was sympathetic to their plight, and although the Minister still hoped that cotton might ultimately prove successful, he was convinced that neither citrus nor grapes had any future on Coominya Soldier Settlement. He also advised the delegates to ignore the demands for rent and interest which had been forwarded 'as a matter of course', and promised they would again receive a full sustenance allowance, including payments for arrears, until the current cotton crop matured. It was at this meeting in early November 1922 that Coyne first raised the possibility of transferring the returned servicemen to soldier settlements elsewhere in the State. But there would be no compensation, and perhaps thinking of the substantial cost of shifting the men and their families en masse, Coyne was prepared to alter the existing arrangements and conditions for any soldier settler who wished to remain at Coominya.¹⁰¹ Overall this was a reasonable outcome, though whether the promises would actually become a reality was another matter again. Some either could not or would not wait to see if Coyne's assurances were honoured. In the twelve months from June 1922, 28 soldier settlers and their families abandoned their blocks.¹⁰²

Transfer to fresh fields became a reality from April 1923 when the Chief Supervisor of Soldier Settlement, C.T.O. Shepherd, arrived at Coominya to revalue the holdings. Shepherd's first concern was that with the imminence of relocation the majority of settlers had been neglecting their land (which, of course, would greatly reduce the value when opened for general selection). This problem had been exacerbated by the continuing dry weather and 'excessively hot winds' that had virtually destroyed many of the citrus orchards; grape vines, on the other hand, had mostly been allowed to die back. Only eight cotton crops had received what Shepherd considered to be due attention, with the others smothered in long grass and wattle suckers. The Chief Supervisor predicted that even the tended crops of cotton would not realise more than £8 or £9 per acre, but this proved to be overly-optimistic.¹⁰³ The continuing dry weather prevented the cotton bolls from bursting so no harvest resulted.¹⁰⁴

Of the 57 returned servicemen still residing on the settlement, only 23 had elected to remain on the understanding that they would receive additional land to enable them to focus on either dairying or mixed farming. Where the average original holding had been around 13 hectares in extent, Shepherd recommended that the area for those who were willing to persevere should be increased up to 80 hectares. In his opinion 48 to 80 hectares would allow the settlers enough land to grow fodder crops for their dairy herds. Ever the realist, he also suggested that each settler should be provided with at least ten milking cows once they had raised sufficient fodder to feed the beasts. According to Shepherd the government also needed to advance the remaining settlers £5 each to purchase poison for destroying natural undergrowth which had not been cleared and to provide them with up to 50 kilograms of seed, the cost of both to be recoverable in instalments spread over two years.¹⁰⁵ Just as in 1920, Shepherd's report was largely ignored.

If anything, the Chief Supervisor's visit confirmed the awful truth: the soldier settlement was an utter failure. That also meant the search for a scapegoat could begin in earnest. Addressing a political meeting to support the Labor candidate for the seat of Lockyer in the forthcoming State elections, Minister for Public Lands Harry Coyne responded to an interjection by boldly stating the Ipswich and Esk Chambers of Commerce as well as the SSFA were wholly responsible for the existing state of affairs on Coominya Soldier Settlement.¹⁰⁶ Honorary secretary of the Ipswich branch of the SSFA, T.W. Turley, responded that his organisation had merely provided the soldier settlers with essentials. Moreover, while the government had refused to provide poultry, a public appeal launched by the SSFA had ensured that 'nearly all the settlers' had been supplied with 'a set of four fowls'.¹⁰⁷ His insistence that philanthropy alone was the aim of his organisation was possibly a snide remark that it was something the Queensland Government seemed to lack.

Incrimination continued for quite some time. W.A. Lingard of the Ipswich Chamber of Commerce politely stated that while no government Minister could be expected to know all the details of any matter directly affecting his portfolio (and they were all men at that time), it could be expected they would at least consult the records before making wild accusations.¹⁰⁸ Even the experienced and decent C.T.O. Shepherd found himself in the firing line. Shepherd was a member of the Land Settlement Committee which had authorised the establishment of Coominya Soldier Settlement in 1920, so it was perhaps not surprising that the committee might be required to explain its actions. And despite all that had happened, Shepherd still considered Coominya to be a viable proposition for the growing of grapes and citrus. He was probably correct when he stated that if 'downy mildew' had not struck the vines the first year after planting viticulture may have proved successful, though his expectations for citrus, especially lemons, was a little more difficult to fathom. Shepherd was dismissive of cotton-growing which, in his view, should never have been attempted, and he rightly pointed out the government had ignored his original report that the soldier settlement blocks were too small to provide a decent living. In that report he had also recommended that a number of blocks be withheld from ballot. Those, too, had been opened for settlement, and Shepherd had been surprised to learn that no soil analyses had been undertaken prior to the returned servicemen taking up their land.¹⁰⁹

The Chief Supervisor was particularly scathing of two fellow members of the Land Settlement Committee: Albert Benson and Joseph Rose. Benson was the Queensland Government's long-serving Director of Fruit Culture, and despite identifying a number of problems with the proposed soldier settlement area he had failed to enlighten his fellow committee members. Benson got off lightly. Joseph Rose, on the other hand, received the full venom in Shepherd's sting. As he had been the government officer who made the first inspection of the area and had recommended the purchase of land from both the Watson family and Bellevue Estate, Shepherd considered that the full 'onus' of culpability should fall squarely on the shoulders of Joseph Rose. Looking over the latter's report the Chief Supervisor found 'it would give anyone the impression that it was the best piece of country in Queensland'.¹¹⁰ By Shepherd's reckoning the buck should stop there. Others, though, were not so sure.

William Watson, who had gained financially from the sale of land, partially blamed himself. By doing so he completely exonerated the Ipswich Chamber of Commerce and the SSFA. Watson was also the first to draw attention to the so-called 'father' of the soldier settlement, William Gutteridge who, in Watson's words, had been one of the 'main movers' in the

matter.¹¹¹ Gutteridge's health had been in decline since 1920, and he died in September 1923 at the age of 73.¹¹² Without his expertise and experience the Norman Vineyard also fell into decline, and it is relevant that his son Alfred left Coominya to farm at Lowood. James, who had qualified for a soldier settlement block, fared no better than his fellow veterans. By February 1924 he was working locally as a labourer.¹¹³ Annie Gutteridge had left the family vineyard around 1910 to live at Lyndiaville, a private residence in the township. She continued to reside there until her own death in November 1930.¹¹⁴

E.D. Stewart, a veteran of the AIF who had visited Coominya in early 1920, similarly pointed his finger at William Gutteridge. Stewart was in no doubt that it was largely due to the advocacy of Gutteridge that the soldier settlement had become a reality.¹¹⁵ Accusations continued to be hurled around during the early winter of 1923, and it appears that responsibility — not only for Coominya, but the failure of soldier settlement in Queensland more generally — ultimately fell on the Land Settlement Committee. When William McCormack replaced Harry Coyne as Minister for Public Lands in July 1923 one of his first official acts was to disband the committee and bring soldier settlement directly under ministerial control.¹¹⁶ By then it mattered little to the majority of the Coominya settlers, with preparations already well underway for their transfer to places elsewhere.

4. EXODUS AND ABANDONMENT (1923-1925)

Once the decision had been made that transferral was the best option, it was agreed the soldier settlers could take their horse, cart and harness as well as farm equipment and tools. The returned servicemen were also instructed to take down their wire-netting and roll it up ready for removal. Wire netting was not only difficult to obtain in some areas, it was absolutely essential in many of the locations to which they were headed. Ridgeland (near Rockhampton), Mount Hutton to the west, Neumgna, Tarong, Taromeo, Charlestown and Cooyar, the last five in and towards the Kingaroy district, were all 'infested' with wallabies. Seedlings stood little chance without wire netting protection, and marsupial depredations would only increase with an influx of new settlers and further land clearing.¹¹⁷ In August 1923 the experienced supervisor, A.J. Dean, was transferred from the Highlands Soldier Settlement near Samford to oversee the winding down of Coominya.¹¹⁸

Additional land was the determining factor for those choosing to persevere at Coominya, though it remained to be seen whether a larger area would bring any tangible benefits. Their decision also depended on a satisfactory revaluation of the land. William Themor, secretary of the recently-formed Coominya Soldiers Settlers League, was among those who preferred to deal with the devil they knew, for he had heard that soldier settlers were abandoning their selections at Ridgeland owing to water shortages, and that the Kingaroy district was experiencing drought conditions. By Themor's reasoning the Queensland Government had failed to deliver on its promise to transfer them to 'better land'. The reality was that they could either remain where they were or go where they were directed. Themor warned that growing dissatisfaction would lead to the soldier settlers of Coominya descending on Brisbane en masse to have their grievances properly addressed.¹¹⁹ Regardless of whether that threat would have materialised, it does reveal that these hardened veterans of war were not simply passive victims in post-World War One Australia. Their resolve to be adequately rewarded for military service had led to the establishment of a number of organisations which eventually coalesced into the RSSILA (RSL) and became a powerful and influential conservative force in the years and decades ahead. In 1923 the war and its sacrifices were still very fresh in people's minds, and those of Themor's mould — and there were a great many — were prepared to grasp what they felt was rightfully theirs by whatever means were available. As far as soldier settlement was concerned they had every right to be dissatisfied and angry.

They could also be persistent, and that was clearly exemplified by those who chose to battle on at Coominya. By the end of April 1923 twenty returned servicemen were still prepared to remain on the settlement pending revaluation and the allocation of additional land.¹²⁰ It probably saved a lot of heartache when the government's Director of Dairying, E. Graham, threw a spanner in the works in June 1923. Responding to a request from four soldier settlers in the parish of Wivenhoe — Harry Pryor, Victor McDonald, Edward Klaehn and Sidney Bobby — to expedite matters,¹²¹ Graham combed through all the available reports on the soldier settlement land and came to the conclusion that dairying was likely to follow the path of grapes, citrus and cotton and be a dismal failure.¹²²

William Meagher, who took up Portion 163 in the parish of Wivenhoe in July 1921 and had successfully sued Hugo Davis for the theft of his shovel later that year, was determined to

continue with mixed farming and grapes. It all hinged on the acquisition of four neighbouring blocks, and unlike the Director of Dairying, Meagher remained wholly optimistic. In the past he claimed to have successfully grown tomatoes, sweet potatoes and other vegetables in addition to rosellas, all of which were 'equal to any I have seen anywhere'. Cotton had failed owing to the dry weather, with Meagher only averaging £7 an acre from his crop. But he was convinced that if the season had been good he would 'have received at least £18 or £20 an acre'. Meagher also claimed that his citrus trees were still looking 'splendid', and the poultry were doing well. In addition to the extra land he now wanted 'about 12 cows, 2 or 3 sow pigs' and more fowls. He also had his eye on the neglected grape vines on the administration block, and thought he could still 'do alright' if given a little more assistance.¹²³ When the additional land was finally offered to Meagher in late August 1923, however, he declined to accept.¹²⁴ By then it was apparent that revaluation of the settlement blocks would not go ahead, and those who had indicated they preferred to stay at Coominya were notified they would have to carry the burden of debt on the extra land. Not only that. The possibility of any further cash advances was ruled out by the Queensland Government.¹²⁵ Meagher accepted a transfer to the Callide Valley in January 1924. Michael Hobbin left at the same time, bound for the soldier settlement at Kingaroy.¹²⁶ After all they had been through these veterans of war were now being dispersed like dust in the wind.

It is clear that by the end of June 1923 the majority of the soldier settlers still at Coominya were extremely anxious to leave. Twelve men and their families had only recently been transferred northwards, and another 23 settlers were simply biding their time until their own opportunity arrived.¹²⁷ Some of them were destined for the Cecil Plains Soldier Settlement on the western Darling Downs where blocks had already been allotted. Most were expected to grow wheat and engage in dairying.¹²⁸ Yet despite this mass exodus the new Minister for Public Lands denied that Coominya was being abandoned: with inverted logic William McCormack insisted that it was simply a matter of relocation.¹²⁹ At the very same time he approved the sale of new and second-hand surplus equipment at Coominya.¹³⁰ This action was not surprising given that the estimated loss on Coominya Soldier Settlement had already risen to between £60,000 and £70,000 — an enormous sum indeed.¹³¹ There was also the human cost that was frequently overlooked. One unnamed soldier settler, who is said to have served as a lieutenant in the South African War of 1899-1902 and joined up again with the outbreak of the Great War, briefly summed up his experience at Coominya thus:

We came out here three years ago because we were told by experts that we could make a living by doing so. We were not experts ourselves, and we accepted that advice. When I came here this place was absolutely covered with trees. You can see what has been done on it. After 2½ years' hard work the place is now condemned. It is not only the loss of time that counts, but there is the loss of physical vigour. Many of us are men who have been through the war—we are not as young as we once were—and we can never recover that vigour.¹³²

That was the real tragedy, and as William Themor had already pointed out, transfer to other districts was no guarantee of success. The trials and tribulations for many were only set to continue. At the same time the Queensland Government attempted to play down the extent of this localised socio-economic disaster. In 1920, 109 blocks had been surveyed on the settlement, with at least 83 actually taken up by returned servicemen with a corresponding number of houses erected. Yet in August 1923 government sources claimed that only 48 settlement blocks had been allotted, while confirming the presence of 83 dwellings:¹³³ the numbers simply did not add up.

In October 1923 A.E. Quinney and four other soldier settlers indicated they were still prepared to remain at Coominya despite being saddled with the additional debt.¹³⁴ By January 1924, however, Quinney had obviously changed his mind, for he was among another batch of returned servicemen transferred north to the Jambin district in the Callide Valley.¹³⁵ Six weeks later the railway station at Jambin was said to present 'a very busy appearance', with trains carrying dismantled homes and equipment from Coominya arriving 'almost daily'.¹³⁶ While Jambin's fortunes were on the rise the soldier settlement at Coominya was descending into quiet solitude. When it was officially closed in April 1924 and placed under the control of a Land Ranger only two returned servicemen — Charles Frederick Wills and Percy Edgar Smith — were still in residence.¹³⁷ the Queensland Government wrongly claimed there were three.¹³⁸ While Wills and Smith continued farming well beyond the 1920s, it is relevant that they jointly occupied just over 110 hectares of land,¹³⁹ a far cry from the 13-hectare blocks they had originally taken up.

The first auction of surplus tools and equipment took place in January 1924, with everything from ploughs and harrows to grindstones and chisels up for grabs. The results were disappointing to government officials, with only a quarter of the items falling into the hands of bidders. Undeterred, a second sale was scheduled for the following month.¹⁴⁰ Whilst many of the houses had been dismantled and railed away to Jambin and other soldier settlements, a few had been rented out to civilian tenants from April 1923.¹⁴¹ One of them was a Mr E. Butler, who took up residence on the soldier settlement in a bid to recuperate his failing health. It proved to be an unhealthy decision, for in June 1923 he left a wife and two children to mourn his passing: Butler was buried in Lowood Cemetery.¹⁴² The following August the remaining 33 dwellings were put up for auction and removal in the expectation they would realise £150 each. It was not to be. All of them were finally sold to P.H. Adams of Redcliffe, who paid just £50 per dwelling. They had cost the soldier settlers between £195 and £234 each, or roughly a third of their original advance.¹⁴³

The town of Coominya was surprisingly able to withstand this rapid depopulation. In mid-1924 two storekeepers, J.W. Heers, Morrison & Co. and A.A. Cornhill (the latter also operating the refreshment rooms and a fruit shop) remained in business. So, too, did blacksmith A.A. Muckert and the local butcher, W.J. Huston. Pattersons Limited sawmill was still supplying timber, and at the Bellevue Hotel Mrs A.M. Neighbour continued serving drinks and meals.¹⁴⁴ But there could be no avoiding the contraction of local clientele. The last supervisor of Coominya Soldier Settlement, A.J. Dean, left in September 1924 to take over a lucerne farm at Forest Hill in the Lockyer Valley.¹⁴⁵ Dean re-established his connection to Coominya in October 1925 when he agreed to become patron of the Bush Nursing Association. And despite all that had happened at least one soldier settler, Sidney Bobby, made a sentimental return to Coominya just as the last supervisor was leaving. A veteran of the British Royal Horse Artillery, Bobby had transferred north to the Tarong district and although he expressed satisfaction with his new location,¹⁴⁶ he appears to have been a little premature, for by 1932 the Bobby family was living in Toowoomba.

Few others came back. In May 1925 the lands of the former soldier settlement were opened for general selection, and while perpetual leasehold tenure remained in place it was a vastly different proposition from what had been. Instead of 109 blocks of roughly 13 hectares, the entire area now comprised just 16 selections varying in extent from 30.7 to 134 hectares.¹⁴⁷ It was a hard lesson learned. In August 1925 the Queensland Government declared that the returned servicemen had left Coominya owing an aggregate amount of £30,140 on their

advances.¹⁴⁸ Irrespective of their future prospects, there was little chance of recouping anywhere near that amount. Yet in a remarkable display of acrobatic accounting which governments occasionally effect, the outstanding amount had been radically reduced to £10,488 by August 1928.¹⁴⁹ The following year the remaining losses were written off and separate statistics for soldier settlement were no longer recorded, finally bringing this disastrous scheme to its official conclusion.¹⁵⁰

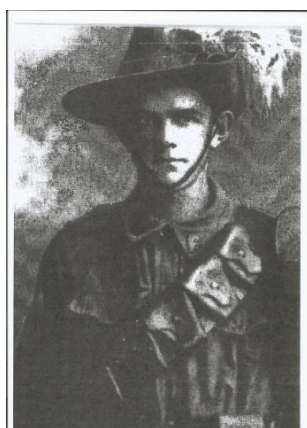
Coominya, of course, weathered this sad and sorry chapter in its past, and although it never rose to great heights it stands today as a vibrant town with a strong and vigorous sense of community. There were also those who defended the fertility of the local landscape. In the 1930s G. Fox had selected just over 43 hectares of land in the district, where he grew small crops in the sandy loam soil. By 1953 he had successfully diversified into grapes, and with ample applications of fertiliser Fox was doing well; evidence, so he implied, that the former soldier settlement had been falsely maligned.¹⁵¹ Yet Banff Brothers and William Gutteridge had years earlier demonstrated that there were indeed pockets of productive land around Coominya — it was not merely a place of sandy soils and withering winds. That much was undeniable. But with the exception of 1922 the decade of the twenties was marked by abnormally dry years in southern Queensland,¹⁵² and the circumstances of the soldier settlers were considerably different from that of civilian farmers. Most were inexperienced, they lacked sufficient capital, and, in a great many cases, they had been through years of horrific warfare. Apart from Wills and Smith who had managed to hang on until their land had been vastly increased in area, the rest stood very little chance of winning through to the end. They started with high hopes but for most it ended in heartbreak. Just like Coominya itself, though, they survived. It is those individuals, the veterans of war and later struggles on the land, who also deserve greater recognition. For above all else post-World War One soldier settlement at Coominya is a story of individuals who were locked in a struggle of human endeavour.

THE SOLDIER SETTLERS OF COOMINYA: THEIR STORIES

AULD, JOSEPH HAROLD (1897-1944)

(Service Number 3251)

A butcher by trade, Joseph Auld was born at Ipswich, Queensland, on 8 January 1897 and enlisted in the AIF in September 1915 at the age of 18. While training at Chermside in Brisbane, Auld was charged on three separate occasions with being absent without leave (AWOL), serving between 2 and 6 days' detention on each count. Auld's final fall from grace came in April 1916 when he stole a money belt containing £8/10 from Alan Tanner, a driver in the Army Service Corps. Found guilty, the camp commandant ordered his discharge on the grounds that he was 'unlikely to become an efficient soldier'. The former butcher got off very lightly indeed.¹⁵³



JOSEPH HAROLD AULD

Two months later, and claiming that he had been discharged as 'unfit', Auld joined up again in his home town of Ipswich. Now 19 years of age and standing 163 centimetres tall, Auld had brown hair, blue eyes and a medium complexion. His mother, Sarah, signed the consent form as Auld's father, also named Joseph, was deceased. Exactly a year later Auld disembarked from the troopship *Booroora* in Egypt, and although his second term of service was brief, it did not involve any criminal behaviour. After being hospitalised on arrival with conjunctivitis, Auld was initially sent to the 1st Light Horse Training Regiment before transferring to the 2nd Light Horse Regiment in August 1916. A month later he was hospitalised again with conjunctivitis, and on this occasion medical authorities at the 14th Australian General Hospital recommended his return to Australia. Auld was discharged from the AIF as medically unfit on 5 March 1918 with interstitial keratitis — scarring of the cornea — a painful condition that can result in long-term visual impairment.¹⁵⁴

Auld signed an undertaking to abide by the conditions applicable to Portion 135 in the Parish of Buaraba at Coominya on 24 November 1920. He received a part-payment for clearing work he had undertaken on 19 August 1921, but his residence on the soldier settlement came to an end shortly afterwards when the lease was cancelled. On 10 September 1924 Auld married Rosetta Wilson in Brisbane, with the couple producing three children: Joseph Charles (1925-2006); Harold William (b.1927); and Elsie Cairns (1934-1937). The family was living in the Brisbane suburb of Morningside when Auld died on 19 May 1944 at the age of 47 years. He was buried in Bulimba Cemetery. Rosetta was also interred at Bulimba Cemetery following her death on 19 July 1952.¹⁵⁵

BAKER, THOMAS ALBERT FORBES (1894-1964)

(Service Number 2337)

After his family had temporarily relocated from Queensland to Victoria, Thomas Baker was born in the Melbourne suburb of Brunswick on 3 September 1894. The family was back in Queensland when Baker enlisted in the AIF at Brisbane on 13 January 1916 at the age of 21. Describing himself as a labourer, Baker was 175 centimetres in height with light brown hair, grey eyes and a fair complexion. He did not describe himself as incorrigible. Baker sailed from Melbourne on the troopship *Orsova* in October 1916 and even during the voyage he established a pattern of going AWOL and resisting arrest that would characterise his entire military career. He also experienced periods of hospitalisation — at least once for the treatment of venereal disease. But despite his anti-authoritarian behaviour, Baker saw action on the Western Front as a member of the 4th Machine Gun Battalion (4th Pioneers), and in June 1917 was slightly wounded in the left shoulder. Baker apparently remained on duty until receiving a far more serious wound in the back shortly afterwards which required treatment in England. In May 1918 Baker also had the unpleasant experience of being shot by military police ‘whilst an illegal absentee’. On this occasion he was fortunate that the bullet struck his left arm and was successfully treated at Birmingham War Hospital. After the Armistice and while awaiting his return to Australia, Baker married Mary Jane Gow at Drainie in Elginshire, Scotland, on 1 August 1919.¹⁵⁶ There was to be no issue from the union.

Notwithstanding his chequered military career, Baker qualified for the 1914-15 Star, British War Medal, Victory Medal and, following his discharge from the AIF at Brisbane on 6 April 1920,¹⁵⁷ a soldier settlement block at Coominya. He successfully applied for Portion 154 in the Parish of Wivenhoe on 23 February 1921. Going on the land seemingly improved Baker’s behaviour, for he worked particularly hard in a bid to make his block productive. The former absentee did his own clearing, root running, ploughing, harrowing and planting. A few grapefruit trees went into the soil in addition to citrus and grapes, and in November 1921 Baker received a payment for sinking a well on Portion 154. It may have been due to his effort and determination that Baker’s application for neighbouring Portion 155, consisting of 11 hectares, was accepted on 3 August 1921. Clearing work continued throughout 1922, with Baker planting 2,000 grape cuttings and 172 additional fruit trees in September. In December he also found time to paint the house that had been erected by D. Clark in June the previous year. It was unfortunate that it all unravelled in 1923.¹⁵⁸

In May 1923 Baker and his wife Jane accepted a transfer to a new soldier settlement holding at Cooyar, 90 kilometres north of Toowoomba, where they took up dairy farming.¹⁵⁹ This, too, was apparently unsuccessful. In 1925 the couple were living at Ipswich, where Baker was employed as an ironworker. The following year they settled in the Brisbane suburb of Corinda, where Baker worked on the railways, and they remained there until 1934. The couple separated some time afterwards. In 1949 Jane was living at Mackay in North Queensland, where she continued to reside until her death in April 1978. Baker, on the other hand, was living with his mother at Bundaberg in 1949. Between 1954 and 1958 he worked as a farmhand at Dululu, south-west of Rockhampton, returning to Bundaberg by 1963. Baker’s mother had died in December the previous year, and he had little longer to live himself. Thomas Baker died on 19 October 1964 at the age of 70, and was buried in Bundaberg General Cemetery.¹⁶⁰

BLAYLOCK, WILLIAM JAMES MM (c.1882-1976)

(Service Number 2628)

William Blaylock was born at Wigton in Cumberland, England, 'about 1882' and worked as a coal-miner. At a date unknown, Blaylock married Annie Ethel Charters who died in 1912 at the age of 33, and this may have prompted him to migrate to Australia.¹⁶¹ In 1913 he married Julia Harriet Hayward in Victoria before the couple moved north to Queensland. Blaylock was working as either a miner or prospector in the Northern Territory when he enlisted in the AIF at Darwin on 5 April 1916 at the age of 34 years. He was described as standing 180 centimetres tall with black hair, grey eyes and a dark complexion.¹⁶² While in camp Blaylock's second wife was living in the rented room of a house owned by a Mrs J. Shea on Zillman Road in the Brisbane suburb of Hendra. Marital tragedy struck for the second time on 11 September 1916 when Julia suddenly collapsed and died.¹⁶³

Blaylock remained in the AIF and departed from Sydney on the troopship *Ceramic* a month after his wife's death. While in training in England he was sentenced to 168 days' detention and lost nine days' pay for going AWOL, a common offence among Dominion troops, who regularly over-stayed leave to enjoy the sights of Britain. And apart from this one blemish, Blaylock otherwise had an impeccable record. In July 1917 he was transferred to the 52nd Battalion in France as a signaller.¹⁶⁴ That same month the battalion came under heavy enemy shelling at Zonnebeke, a Belgian municipality in the Ypres salient that was totally devastated during the war. Despite the intensity of the bombardment, Blaylock repeatedly ventured out to repair broken wires and maintain telephone communication between the battalion and brigade headquarters. For displaying 'great courage, bravery, and devotion to duty', he was awarded the Military Medal, but it did come at a cost.¹⁶⁵ The following day Blaylock was wounded in the chest by a shell splinter and did not re-join the battalion until the following October. After undergoing further training at the Australian Corps Wireless School, Blaylock returned to the front, but by now the war was beginning to take its toll. His health steadily deteriorating, Blaylock was hospitalised on a number of occasions with 'debility', a condition that continued to plague him until his return to Australia in December 1918. Blaylock was discharged from the AIF at Sydney on 20 February 1919.¹⁶⁶

Later the same year he married Mary Frances Webber at St Leonards in Sydney, his third marriage producing three children: Beatrice Mary (1920-1962); Margaret (Peggy) (1922-2011); and William (1926-1972). On 2 August 1921 the former coal-miner successfully applied for the 8 hectares of Portion 128 in the Parish of Wivenhoe at Coominya Soldier Settlement.¹⁶⁷ Although limited in area, the couple were still farming the land when Mary gave birth to their second child in August 1922. Although Blaylock initially hired James Gutteridge to plough and harrow the cleared and fenced land, he had taken over these tasks himself from October 1921. Around the time that his daughter Margaret was born Blaylock had planted 2,000 grape cuttings, but within twelve months the family had surrendered Portion 128 and Blaylock's tools and equipment were removed to Cecil Plains Soldier Settlement.¹⁶⁸ The Blaylock family may have attempted a new start at this location, but if that was indeed the case they fared no better. In May 1926 they were living in Brisbane, probably in the inner suburb of Fortitude Valley, where daughters Beatrice and Margaret were respectively married in 1941 and 1944. In May 1965 Blaylock was residing at Bowen in North Queensland, but had returned to Brisbane by the time of his wife's death on 8 July 1970. Blaylock died on 19 August 1976 and was buried at Pinaroo Lawn Cemetery in Bridgeman Downs, where his third wife Mary had been interred six years earlier.¹⁶⁹

BOBY, SIDNEY (1891-1974)

(Service Number 56322)

A gunner in K Battery of the British Army's Royal Horse Artillery during World War One, Sidney Boby was born at Paddington in London, England, on 23 January 1891. Enlisting in 1914, he emerged from the war physically unscathed and married Norah May Bassett in Kent in 1918. The first of the couple's two children, Dorothy, was born at Medway in Kent in 1919, following which the family migrated to Queensland where they disembarked in Brisbane from *the Ormonde* in 1920.¹⁷⁰



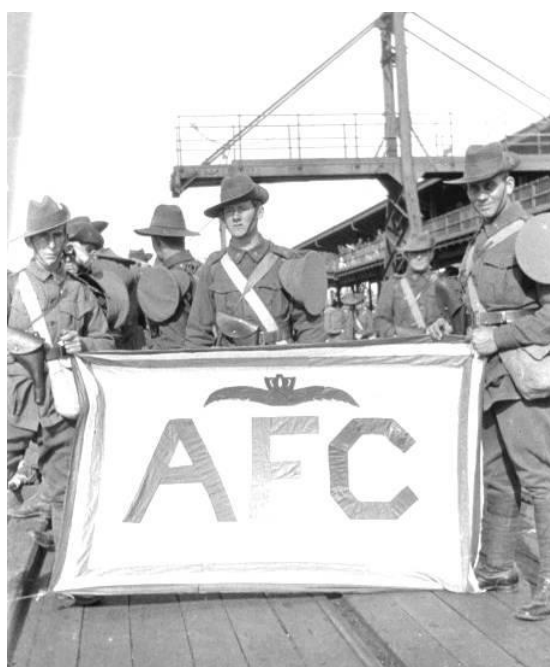
ROYAL HORSE ARTILLERY AT LONGUEVAL ON THE SOMME IN 1916

Boby signed an undertaking for the 13 hectares of Portion 157 in the Parish of Wivenhoe at Coominya on 23 November 1920, and had commenced clearing and fencing the land by August the following year. Although J.E. Knight undertook the initial ploughing, Boby was able to undertake this himself after purchasing a plough and harrow in May 1921.¹⁷¹ When the settlement began faltering, Boby served on the committee of the Coominya Soldier Settlement League, a representative body formed at the beginning of November 1922 to protect the interests of the ex-servicemen.¹⁷² In April 1923 he was among 19 other soldier settlers who announced their intention of remaining at Coominya pending revaluation and the provision of additional land. As well as his original block, Boby applied for the neighbouring Portions 155, 156 and 158.¹⁷³ However, when revaluation was ruled out by the Queensland government and the settlers were advised they would have to carry the existing debt on any incorporated land, Boby surrendered his block on 30 August 1923 after accepting a transfer to Tarong on the Kingaroy Soldier Settlement. As has previously been mentioned, Boby briefly revisited Coominya in September 1924 where he expressed satisfaction with the family's new location.¹⁷⁴ His sentiments were a little premature. By 1932 the family was living in Toowoomba, where a second child, Leslie Sidney, was probably born that same year.¹⁷⁵ The family continued to reside at Toowoomba until the early 1950s, when they relocated to Redcliffe, just north of Brisbane. It was there that the engagement of Leslie Boby to Lesley Henderson, a member of a well-known local family, was announced in May 1953.¹⁷⁶ Sidney Boby and his wife later settled permanently in Brisbane where Norah died in 1964. Sidney survived his wife by ten years, passing away in 1974.¹⁷⁷

BROOKS, OLIVER ARNOLD (1880-1962)

(Service Number 6782)

Oliver Brooks was born at Mile End in East London, England, in 1880 and arrived in Brisbane on the *Paparoa* on 18 November 1914. He was 31 years of age and farming at Tallebudgera, in what is now the Gold Coast hinterland, when he enlisted in the AIF at Brisbane on 17 February 1917. At the time Brooks was 167 centimetres in height, with brown hair, grey eyes and a medium complexion. He departed Sydney for overseas service on HMAT *Honorata* the following June and after undergoing further training in England transferred to the Australian Flying Corps. Brooks remained in England for the remainder of the war, and on 4 June 1918 married Edith Ellen Grimsdale, a domestic servant, at Wendover in Buckinghamshire where he was stationed. The couple had one child in England, Edith Olive (b.1919) before returning to Australia together on the *Ceramic* in October 1919. Brooks was discharged from the AIF on 31 January 1920.¹⁷⁸



MEMBERS OF THE AUSTRALIAN FLYING CORPS

Brooks apparently returned to farming at Tallebudgera, with a second child, Godfrey Llewellyn (1921-1967) born at Coolangatta. Another son, Charles Thomas, was born around 1923, possibly at Coominya,¹⁷⁹ where Brooks' application for Portion 98 in the Parish of Buaraba had been accepted on 5 July 1921. The block consisted of around 12 hectares.¹⁸⁰ Like most of the soldier settlers Brooks cleared the land himself, and when his horse died he was issued with another.¹⁸¹ In December 1923, however, Brooks accepted a transfer to Jambin, 34 kilometres north of Biloela, where the family initially farmed on Portion 46 in the Parish of Earlsfield.¹⁸² The couple's last child, Winifred Clara, was born in 1925 and in September of that year Brooks successfully applied for Portion 43 in the same parish, an almost identical area of 91.5 hectares.¹⁸³ Despite this apparent success, by 1954 Brooks, Edith and their eldest son Godfrey were farming at Etna Creek north of Rockhampton. Oliver Brooks died at Rockhampton on 24 May 1962. Edith also died at Rockhampton, on 11 March 1967, with both being laid to rest in Rockhampton North Cemetery.¹⁸⁴

BURKE, WILLIAM JOHN MM (1894-1965)

(Service Number 4153)

As a barman, William Burke was more used to serving drinks than serving his country, but when the chips were down he more than proved his fighting worth. Born at Tamworth in New South Wales on 21 March 1894, Burke enlisted in the AIF at Brisbane in September 1915 at the age of 23. Standing 176 centimetres tall, he had brown hair, brown eyes and a fresh complexion. Burke also had a scar on his right jaw. He embarked for overseas service on the *Kyarra*, and after briefly stopping at Alexandria in Egypt Burke arrived in France in May 1916 and was posted to the 9th Battalion. Taken ill in the field the following November, Burke had no sooner re-joined his comrades than he skipped parade, the first of three minor blemishes on his military record (a second offence occurred in September 1917 when he was docked three days' pay for being AWOL). Promoted to Lance-Corporal in February 1917, Burke emerged unscathed from the fighting which took place during the remainder of the year, but his luck changed in 1918. In March of that year he was hospitalised from enemy gassing; then, on 19 July the left flank of Burke's platoon found itself pinned down by heavy machinegun fire. To break the deadlock the former barman singlehandedly engaged the Germans with his Lewis gun, carefully working his way around to the rear of the enemy position and eventually killing the crews. Rushing forward he managed to capture the machineguns intact, thus enabling his platoon to consolidate its position.



A GERMAN MACHINEGUN CREW IN ACTION DURING WORLD WAR ONE, SIMILAR TO THOSE SUCCESSFULLY TACKLED BY BURKE

For the bravery displayed in this action Burke was later awarded the Military Medal. The following month, however, he was shot in the left arm, with the bullet fracturing the humerus. Invalided back to England, Burke's war was now effectively over, though he did manage to go AWOL one more time before returning to Australia on the *Dunluce Castle* in May 1919. Burke was discharged from the AIF on 24 August 1919.¹⁸⁵

William Burke subsequently took up Portion 132 in the Parish of Wivenhoe on Coominya Soldier Settlement and was hard at work on his land by July 1920 when he received a part payment for root running. Fellow veteran Sidney Fox initially ploughed the ground, but after Burke purchased a bay mare from Alfred Gutteridge in September 1921 he was able to carry out this work himself. In the same month Burke commenced fencing his block and in October-November his house was erected by A.T.R. Macdonald. The first grape cuttings were also planted in October 1921, while in November just over £148 was spent on fixtures for the house and additional farming equipment and tools. Burke spent considerable time between January and September 1922 on further clearing, interspersed with ploughing, harrowing and planting more grapes. It all fell apart later that year, but Burke persevered right through 1923, and it was not until 9 January 1924 that he joined a number of other soldier settlers transferred to the Callide Valley. Burke was able to take the bulk of his equipment to this new location,¹⁸⁶ though he appears to have been no more successful — at least not in the longer term. In April 1944 Burke was living at Petford, near Chillagoe in North Queensland; he was still residing at Petford in 1954 and died there in 1965.¹⁸⁷ There is no indication that William Burke ever married.

BURTON, ALBERT EDWARD MM (1894-1955)

(Service Number 6222)

19-year-old Albert Burton was working as a dairy farmer when he enlisted in the AIF at Brisbane on 11 March 1916, and after undergoing training in England was attached to the 20th Reinforcements for the 15th Battalion in France. With fair hair, fair complexion and 'greenish' eyes, Burton was 166 centimetres tall,¹⁸⁸ and his arrival in England had been something of a homecoming as he was born at Islington, London, in 1894. Although the exact date of his birth is not known, Burton was christened at the Islington Holy Trinity Church on 28 October of that year. Briefly hospitalised after arriving in France, Burton otherwise remained physically unscathed until July 1918, when he was shot in the right thumb and invalided back to England. It was for his conspicuous bravery in this action that the former dairy farmer was awarded the Military Medal. After recovering from his wound Burton was hospitalised again with conjunctivitis, which meant that his war was now at an end. He arrived back in Australia on HT *Shropshire* in May 1919 and was discharged from the AIF the following month.¹⁸⁹

On 15 November 1920 Burton signed an agreement for Portion 135 in the Parish of Wivenhoe on Coominya Soldier Settlement, and by July 1921 was well in the process of clearing his land. On 28 September 1921 he married Scottish-born Grace Smith. By then Burton had apparently become dissatisfied with his soldier settlement block, for in February 1922 he successfully applied for the 11 hectares of Portion 162 in the Parish of Wivenhoe.¹⁹⁰ The couple were still working this land in 1923, with Burton describing himself as a 'fruit farmer'. The couple's only child, Elizabeth Mary (d.1962), was also born in 1923, though whether the birth took place at Coominya remains unclear as Burton surrendered Portion 162 on 6 September of that year. Albert and Grace later divorced, and in 1930 he was living in the Goondiwindi district while Grace remarried in 1932. Four years later Burton was residing in the northern Brisbane suburb of Nundah; he died in Brisbane in 1955 and was buried in the Mount Gravatt Cemetery.¹⁹¹

CARROLL, TIMOTHY (1877-1942)

(Service Number 6335)

An unmarried labourer, Timothy Carroll claimed to be 38 years of age when he enlisted in the AIF at Brisbane on 17 October 1916. Having been born in Brisbane in either 1877 or 1878 he appears to have spent his entire life in the city. At the time of his enlistment Carroll was 175 centimetres in height, with a fair complexion, grey hair and blue eyes. After embarking for overseas service in November 1916 he also experienced difficulty leaving Australian shores, for when his troopship docked at Fremantle Carroll promptly disappeared. It was almost a month before the authorities caught up with the absconder from the east and he was placed aboard the A30 *Berrima* for the continuation of his voyage to England. After further training Carroll crossed the English Channel to France as a member of the 31st Battalion, but no sooner had he arrived at Le Havre than he went AWOL again. Carroll was also charged soon afterwards with being out of bounds and, worse from the military's point of view, drunkenness. It was not until he transferred to the 27th Battalion that Carroll finally reached the front lines. Then, in October 1917, he was wounded in action, either shot in the upper left or upper right arm (the military records are somewhat confused on this point), an injury so serious that Carroll was invalided back to Australia on the *Persic*. He was discharged from the AIF on 5 April 1918.¹⁹²

Much of Timothy Carroll's post-war life is shadowy. In 1919 he was living in South Brisbane, but later successfully applied for Portion 118 in the Parish of Wivenhoe at Coominya. Despite having no previous farming experience Carroll did his own clearing, initially hiring James Gutteridge to begin ploughing and harrowing. He obviously learnt quickly, for the following month Carroll was doing his own harrowing and although he had already fenced part of the property he paid Hugh Ince to continue that work while he concentrated on preparing the soil. Grape cuttings were planted in August 1921, followed by citrus trees two months later. Throughout much of 1922 Carroll continued clearing, ploughing and harrowing, but it appears that he was unable to meet his financial commitments. Before the year was out he was living with his married sister, Kate McCrae, in Merivale Street, South Brisbane, and working as a labourer.¹⁹³ Thereafter Carroll disappears from the historical record until 21 December 1939, when he was admitted to the Dunwich Benevolent Asylum on North Stradbroke Island in Moreton Bay, the last refuge for many of the misfits and destitute of Queensland society. Discharged in April 1940, Carroll was readmitted to the asylum from Ipswich just two months later. A second discharge in November 1940 was almost as brief, with his readmission from Brisbane in March 1941. This time Carroll remained at Dunwich until his death from myocarditis (inflammation of the heart muscle resulting in heart failure) on 20 January 1942. His sister Kate, then living at Milton, arranged for Carroll's body to be returned to Brisbane, and he was subsequently interred in Toowong Cemetery.¹⁹⁴

CASEY, JAMES (1882-1958)

(Service Number 2410)

A cook by profession, James Casey was born at Dalby in Queensland on 9 June 1882. He married Alice Wedge at Dalby on 8 December 1911, with the marriage producing three children: Alice (b.1911-d.1911); Patrick Kenneth (1912-1984); and John Joseph (1914-2004). Prior to enlisting in the AIF at Toowoomba on 12 April 1916, Casey had served 2½ years with the volunteer Light Horse unit at Dalby. By the time he embarked for overseas service on HMAT *Seang Choon*, Casey was 33 years of age, 170 centimetres tall, with black hair, brown eyes and a sallow complexion. While training in England he forfeited 3 days' pay after being arrested by the military police for being AWOL, and four months after reaching France as a member of the 52nd Battalion in October 1917 Casey faced the far more serious charge of desertion. In March 1918 he found himself sentenced to 10 years' penal servitude, and was extremely fortunate when the sentence was suspended the following August: Casey was discharged to duty with the 49th Battalion. He nevertheless absconded later the same month and remained in detention following his arrest at Amiens in October 1918. It was not until June 1919 that he was released from custody and returned to Australia on the *Prinz Hybertus*. Casey was discharged from the AIF the following September.¹⁹⁵



Despite his military offences, Casey qualified for the 1914-15 Star, British War Medal, Victory Medal — and a soldier settlement block at Coominya. His application for the 12 hectares of Portion 113 in the Parish of Buaraba was accepted on 2 August 1921, by which time Casey had already been hard at work for almost two months clearing the land. In July 1921 he purchased a horse so that ploughing could begin as soon as possible, but although that task was well underway by February 1922 it is doubtful whether Casey had planted any crops by the time he surrendered Portion 113 on 28 July of that year.¹⁹⁶ Little is known of his post-Coominya history. James Casey died at Toowoomba on 27 September 1958 and was buried at Drayton. His widow, Alice, died at Roma on 5 September 1971.¹⁹⁷

COOPER, HENRY COWLEY (1885-1943)

(Service Number 909)

Henry Cowley Cooper was born in the New South Wales town of Goulburn on 27 October 1885, and later became a professional cook. On 6 September 1902 he married Mary O'Shea in Sydney, a relatively brief union which produced two children: Henry Gordon (1903-1985) and Noni Patricia (1905-1906). When Cooper enlisted in the AIF at Townsville in North Queensland on 20 August 1914 he was again single and living at the Cleveland Boarding-House in that city. A tall man, standing 183 centimetres in height, Cooper was 28 years of age with grey eyes, black hair and a dark complexion. While he may have looked the ideal recruit, Cooper's subsequent military career was anything but exemplary. Departing Australian shores just a month after signing up, Cooper was destined for Gallipoli as a member of the 9th Battalion. He fell ill on two occasions, but in October 1915 Cooper incurred the wrath of his officers for leaving the firing line without permission. This was the beginning of a string of military offences which marked Cooper's overseas service.¹⁹⁸

In March 1916 he was charged with breaking camp in Egypt, and after reaching England the following August Cooper's absenteeism became virtually chronic. He was also hospitalised on at least one occasion with venereal disease, and after reaching France in May 1917 treatment for venereal symptoms continued sporadically. Yet, despite a court-martial and constant forfeitures of pay for being AWOL Cooper remained in the AIF until May 1918, when an injury to the left knee forced his repatriation back to Australia.¹⁹⁹

On 31 July 1920 Cooper married Elizabeth Townsend in Brisbane, with nine children resulting from this second marriage: Patricia Elizabeth (b.1921); Iris Gwendoline (b. 1923); Clarice Winifred (b. 1925); Alice Marie (1928-1932); Harry Desmond (b. 1930); Raymond Keith (b. 1931); Brian Henry (b. 1934); Robert (b. 1938) and Lauraline (n. 1939). As all the children were born in Brisbane it meant that after successfully applying for Portion 110 in the Parish of Wivenhoe on Coominya Soldier Settlement the family's residence away from the city was of brief duration.²⁰⁰

Cooper died in Brisbane on 19 June 1943, probably from tuberculosis. Elizabeth outlived her husband by 12 years, also dying in Brisbane on 16 July 1955. An interesting postscript to Cooper's life-story came in February 1944, when his first wife, Mary, then living in the Sydney suburb of Sutherland, contacted military authorities claiming that her 'husband', who had served as a 'sergeant' in the Great War (but actually never rose above the rank of private), had not received the bravery awards to which he was entitled. Mary insisted that Cooper had been invalided back to Australia after twice being wounded in the head and once in the leg. Not surprisingly, the base records officer in Canberra rejected Mary's claims, and when she died in Sydney on 12 August 1954 she may have still been unaware of the true nature of her ex-husband's overseas military service.²⁰¹

CRICKMORE, EDWARD JAMES (1887-1938)

(Service Number 2597)

A gardener by trade, 29-year-old Edward Crickmore enlisted in the AIF at Brisbane on 8 May 1916. With dark hair, medium complexion and brown eyes, he stood 169 centimetres tall and had been born in the inner Brisbane suburb of Fortitude Valley on 6 May 1887. Crickmore married Sarah Jane McGowen in Brisbane on 11 October 1906, and by the time he embarked for overseas service on HMAT *Seang Choon* in September 1916, Crickmore had already fathered five children. Another four were to be born after his return from the war: Evelyn Maude (1907-1970); Edna May (1908-1928); Mary Elizabeth (1910-1915); Grace May (1913-1987); Edward James (1915-1917); Edward (1918-1963); Charles (b. 'about 1920'); Frederick George (c.1922-1974); and Walter Henry (c.1925-2001).²⁰²

As a member of the 2/11 Reinforcements for the 4th Pioneer Battalion Crickmore may have expected a torrid time, particularly in view of the growing casualty lists reaching Australia from the Western Front. If that was indeed the case, he was not to be disappointed. After reaching England Crickmore was hospitalised with an unspecified illness, and then, just three months after crossing to France in June 1917, he received a serious gunshot wound to the left leg. His war was now over, for after initial treatment in England Crickmore was invalided back to Australia in March 1918 on the *Kenilworth Castle* and discharged from the AIF the following June. He was also granted a war pension of £1/10 per fortnight.²⁰³



Despite the injury, Crickmore signed an undertaking for Portion 140 in the Parish of Wivenhoe at Coominya on 5 January 1921, and the following June received a part payment for root running. He also did his own clearing and fencing, though Sidney Fox was hired to carry out the initial ploughing. In October 1921 Crickmore purchased his first grape cuttings, and after acquiring a horse and harness he was able to undertake his own ploughing and harrowing from March 1922. In July of that year Crickmore planted 300 fruit trees, followed by another 200 in August. Despite the problems he managed to persevere throughout 1923 until 15 December, when he surrendered Portion 140 after accepting a transfer to the Jambin district near Biloela where he took up Portion 40 in the Parish of Earlsfield.²⁰⁴ In September 1925 Crickmore's application for the 84.5 hectares of neighbouring Portion 38 was accepted,²⁰⁵ and he retained possession of this land until his death at Rockhampton on 8 February 1938.²⁰⁶ Unfortunately, it was not to remain in the hands of his family; when Crickmore died the Agricultural Bank took possession of the property and auctioned it off in May 1938.²⁰⁷ Sarah Jane appears to have relocated to Rockhampton, where she died on 4 March 1964. Both Crickmore and his wife were buried in Norman Gardens at North Rockhampton.²⁰⁸

DAVIS, HUGO (1892-1957)

(Service Numbers 4046 and Q186892)

Whether it was because he missed out on the actual fighting in the First World War — or for other totally unrelated reasons — Hugo Davis enlisted in the 2nd AIF in 1939. Born in the inner London suburb of Paddington on 30 April 1892, Davis migrated to Queensland around 1910 and worked as an engine fitter. He enlisted in the AIF at Townsville in North Queensland on 8 July 1916; at the time Davis was 177 centimetres in height, with light brown hair, a fair complexion and blue eyes. Just three months after joining up he embarked for overseas service in Brisbane on the *Boonah*, and was posted to the 31st Battalion following training in England. April 1917 found Davis in France, but no sooner had he crossed the English Channel than his war service was abruptly curtailed by hospitalisation for defective vision. On the two occasions Davis managed to re-join his unit he was almost immediately taken off strength owing to his poor eyesight. Somehow he managed to remain in Europe until after the Armistice, sailing home on the *Suevic* in January 1919. The following month Davis was officially discharged from the AIF.²⁰⁹



On 2 August 1921 Davis successfully applied for Portion 159 in the Parish of Wivenhoe at Coominya.²¹⁰ With an area of just 8.4 hectares he would have been struggling from the outset, and as previously mentioned Davis appeared at Lowood Police Court the following December charged with the theft of a shovel from fellow veteran William Meagher. The exercise cost Davis the substantial sum of £1/9/6, which included the 15 shillings value of the shovel.²¹¹

In October 1922 Davis was one of two soldier settlers from Coominya called before the Land Commissioner's Court at Ipswich to show cause why their land should not be forfeited. Davis failed to attend and as the court found that he had not met the conditions of residence Davis was probably already living in Brisbane.²¹² He married English-born Florence Ross in Brisbane on 28 March 1929, a union which produced just one child, Ronald (b.1930).²¹³ Davis next appears in the records on 18 October 1939, when he enlisted in the 2nd AIF at Brisbane. The family was then living in the northern Brisbane seaside suburb of Sandgate, and Davis listed his occupation as 'storekeeper'.²¹⁴

He was certainly appointed a storekeeper in the Australian Army, first in Brisbane, and then in Port Moresby, where Davis arrived in December 1942. It was there that he contracted malaria, which led to his discharge and return to Australia in July 1944. In 1957 the Davis family was living in the northern Brisbane suburb of Lutwyche, where Hugo Davis died on 22 November of that year, and was buried in Lutwyche Cemetery. Florence outlived her husband by almost two decades, passing away at Brisbane on 3 August 1977. She was buried in Mount Gravatt Cemetery on the city's southside.²¹⁵

DEMPSEY, JOHN (1894-1974)

Very little is known of John Dempsey, who was born in Southwark, London, in 1894. He married Marie Theresa Bianchi in 1915 at Hackney in London, a marriage which produced five children: John Cornelius (1916-2001); Bernard Joseph (b.1919); Theresa Mary Eileen (1921-2008); Leonard Cowleth (b.1923); and Lea Dominic (b.1928). Dempsey is known to have served in the British Army and was wounded in action. Acting on the advice of doctors, who recommended migration to a warmer climate, the Dempsey family arrived in Brisbane on the *Themistocles* in 1921. Shortly afterwards Dempsey successfully applied for Portion 95 in the Parish of Buaraba on the Coominya Soldier Settlement. As he had no previous farming experience Dempsey relied on the expertise of his fellow veterans for more specialised tasks. Walter Neill, Herbert Whittington and Alfred Sneath were paid from Dempsey's advance to fence his land, while the services of Alfred Gutteridge were called on for branding his bay gelding. But help was not enough, and Dempsey surrendered his block on 4 May 1922. His horse, harness, cart and implements were subsequently transferred to Portion 139, and Dempsey and his family probably returned to Brisbane. They were definitely living in the suburb of Merthyr in 1925, and Dempsey and his wife appear to have remained in the city until their decease. Marie Theresa died in 1972 and John Dempsey passed away two years later. Both were interred in Mount Gravatt Cemetery.²¹⁶

Their eldest son, John Cornelius, became a missionary and spent many decades in Papua New Guinea where he worked as a teacher before rising to become Inspector of Catholic Schools in that country. He returned to Australia in 1960 to take up a teaching position at Canberra and, later, Downlands College in Toowoomba. The Reverend Father Dempsey retired in 1996 and died at Toowoomba on 1 November 2001.²¹⁷ Both his brothers, Bernard and Leonard, served in the Australian Army during World War Two.²¹⁸

DINGLE, JOHN HENRY (1895-1945)

(Service Number 4494)

John Henry Dingle had previously served in the volunteer 44th Infantry prior to enlisting in the AIF at his home town of Ipswich in Queensland on 13 September 1915. A carpenter by trade, Dingle had been born in Ipswich in October 1895, and at the time of joining up was just short of 20 years of age. With a fair complexion, light brown hair and blue eyes, he stood 162 centimetres tall and weighed 51 kilograms. On 31 January 1916 Dingle embarked at Brisbane on HMAT *Wandilla* as a reinforcement for the 14th/15th Battalion. The troops spent a month in Egypt before continuing on to France, where Dingle was hospitalised with an unspecified illness and finally invalided to England. Like so many other Australians, he was not averse to occasionally going AWOL, first at Perham Downs in July 1917 and again at Hurdcott in January 1919. In August 1917 Dingle returned to France only to be sent back to England once again with infected lymph glands in the right groin. After re-joining his battalion in November 1917 Dingle required further treatment for his lymph glands in England from May 1918, where he remained until his return to Australia on the *Kashmir* in May 1919. Dingle was discharged from the AIF the following month.²¹⁹ His younger brother Percy had followed him into the Australian Army in August 1918, too late to embark for overseas service.²²⁰

By 1922 John Dingle was living on the Coominya Soldier Settlement, where he had taken up Portion 152 in the Parish of Wivenhoe. On 5 September of that year he married New Zealand-born Gladys Eleanor Goldsack at Coominya. It was her third marriage after being widowed in England in 1915 and again in 1918. Gladys sailed from England to Brisbane on the *Orsova* in April 1922, so it is possible that she had met her future third husband while he was serving overseas. The couple did not have any children.²²¹

In 1923 John and Gladys Dingle left Coominya for Ipswich, where he was employed by the local council, and settled at One Mile. Dingle remained on the council payroll for 22 years until illness forced him to stand down from his position as a truck driver. He died from a renal tumour on 2 June 1945 and was buried in Ipswich Cemetery. Gladys survived her husband by six years. Younger brother Percy enlisted in the 2nd AIF at the outbreak of World War Two and served in the Middle East. Shortly after returning to Australia, however, he was fatally injured in an accident.²²²

EARL, ARTHUR HENSON (1896-1963)

(Service Numbers 53366 and Q187162)

A popular misconception is that the First AIF was composed largely of tough, resourceful bushmen from Australia's inland districts. In fact, the majority were from the cities and larger towns, but Arthur Earl was a genuine bushman. He was also a criminal. A drover and shearer by profession, Earl was born at Rockhampton on 1 November 1896, though by early 1916 he was living at Indooroopilly in Brisbane. Earl initially enlisted in the AIF in January 1916, his time in training at the Exhibition Camp in the city marked by a string of minor offences, mostly for being AWOL. Then, in July of that year he broke into the house of Thomas Skiffington and stole £120 in cash and goods, including 52 precious stones, a pistol and cartridges. Police soon had their man, and Earl was sentenced to 12 months' imprisonment. After serving his time it appears Earl remained in Brisbane, where he enlisted again on 21 February 1918. Standing 172 centimetres tall, Earl was 22 years of age, with fair hair, brown eyes and a fresh complexion. He was also unmarried, which was just as well, for after embarking for overseas service on RMS *Osterley* the following June he was treated for venereal disease in the vessel's isolation hospital. He continued to be treated for venereal disease throughout much of his military service. After undergoing training in England, Earl arrived in France on 22 November 1918, eleven days after the Armistice, and may have decided to see the sights of the country for he soon went AWOL. As well as forfeiting two days' pay Earl was detached to burial duties,²²³ so between burying bodies and his ongoing treatment for venereal disease it was probably not the most exciting overseas adventure. And worse was to come.

In October 1919 Earl embarked on the *Raranga* for the voyage home, but when the vessel docked at Durban in South Africa he promptly disappeared after being granted shore leave. He remained at large until January 1920 when he presented himself at the AIF office at Durban. Placed under close arrest, Earl was subsequently shipped around the coast to Cape Town on the *Cluny Castle*, where he was sentenced to 28 days' detention and forfeited 156 days' pay — the substantial sum of £39. After serving his time Earl embarked from Cape Town on HT *Zealandic* bound for Australia, considerably poorer than when he had left England. Earl was finally discharged from the AIF on 21 June 1920.²²⁴

Despite all his faults, Earl qualified for a soldier settlement block and took up Portion 127 in the Parish of Wivenhoe on the Coominya Soldier Settlement on 18 October 1920. In June the following year he began receiving payments for clearing work, but Earl's attempt at farming terminated in November 1921 when he surrendered Portion 127 and left Coominya.²²⁵ Earl next appears in the records on 19 March 1932 when he married Priscilla Mary Hobbs (probably in Brisbane). The couple did not have any children, and in 1939 Earl joined the 2nd AIF in Brisbane and served in the 1st Garrison Battalion. He died in Brisbane on 21 July 1963 and was buried in Southport General Cemetery. The following year Priscilla was living at Jandowae before moving to Chinchilla by 1968. She died in her home town of Inglewood on 2 May 1974 and was buried in the local cemetery.²²⁶

FUNNELL, JOSEPH WESLEY (1859-1926)

(Service Number 5986)

An illiterate man who signed his name with an 'X', Joseph Funnell was born at Maitland, New South Wales, in 1859. When he enlisted in the AIF at Brisbane on 17 July 1916, Funnell had replaced his second Christian name of Wesley with William, and stated his occupation as labourer. He also lied about his age, as by then he was around 57 but claimed to be 41 years and 4 months. Standing 171 centimetres tall, Funnell was unable to fib about his appearance, particularly his ruddy complexion and blue eyes, and he did nothing to alter his light grey hair. He had married Jane Hogan at Lismore in New South Wales on 5 July 1881, a union which produced seven children: John Patrick (1881-1945); Robert Henry (1883-1963); Jane (1884-1885); James (1886-1962); Alice (1889-1974); Catherine Ann (1893-1919); and Elizabeth Florence (1896-1972). The marriage, however, did not last, and by the time of his enlistment Funnell was living with Eva Mathilda Arkinstall, who had separated from her husband Thomas. Funnell and Arkinstall were living at Ipswich when he was accepted into the AIF, reportedly on his fifteenth attempt. Previously rejected on medical grounds, Funnell was obviously determined as it was said that he had undergone two operations to make it possible.²²⁷



Given his age, it was not surprising that Funnell's military service was relatively short. And although he had been content to list his occupation as 'labourer', no sooner had Funnell commenced basic training in Brisbane than he let it be known that he was an experienced miner, and was duly transferred to a mining unit on 1 September 1916. Eight days later Funnell was posted to Seymour in Victoria, where he trained with the 516 Tunnellers Reinforcements before embarking at Melbourne for overseas service on HMAT *Ulysses* on 25 October. After arriving at Plymouth in England, the Tunnellers went into camp at Perham Downs before crossing the English Channel to France on 1 January 1917. The following

month Funnell was admitted to the 26th General Hospital, oddly, for treatment of an ‘old gunshot wound to the arm and hand’. He was invalided back to England and the following March a medical board found Funnell unfit for further service as he was over-age. The report also included a statement, without any particulars, that he had been gassed at the Front. HMAT *Themistocles* returned Funnell to Sydney in May 1917. He was accompanied on the voyage by his son John, a veterinary surgeon from Leeton in New South Wales, who had been serving in the 4th Pioneers Battalion when a gunshot wound to his right arm at Pozieres in August 1916 had ended his own war service. Father and son had not seen each other for 19 years, and both were discharged from the AIF in July 1917.²²⁸

Two years later Funnell and Eva Arkinstall were dairy farming at Montville in what is now the Sunshine Coast hinterland. Then, in July 1921, Funnell applied for Portion 141 in the Parish of Buaraba on Coominya Soldier Settlement. The matter was adjourned for almost a month before his application for the 13 hectare block was finally accepted. The delay meant little, as Funnell had commenced clearing the block prior to June 1921 and was ploughing the following month. By September he was apparently so busy with clearing, root running and planting that I.R. Fox briefly took over the ploughing and harrowing operations. Funnell procured his first grape cuttings in October and planted Rhodes grass in November. Clearing continued from January to March 1922, when Funnell resumed ploughing and harrowing on his own account. But all this work came to nought: on 18 October 1922 Portion 141 was surrendered to the Crown. In 1925 Funnell and Eva Arkinstall were farming at Mount Debatable near Gayndah, and that same year his application for a war pension was rejected on the grounds that the claimed disabilities had not resulted from military service. By then it mattered little anyway, for on 14 March 1926 Funnell died in Brisbane and was buried in Toowong Cemetery. After Funnell’s death Eva Arkinstall moved to Ipswich, where she continued using the surname of her defacto partner until her own death on 7 November 1940. In a strange twist, Eva was buried in Warwick Cemetery while Funnell’s estranged wife Jane was buried in an adjoining grave to his at Toowong Cemetery after her own death at Holland Park in Brisbane on 19 October 1944.²²⁹



RECRUITING POSTER FROM THE GREAT WAR

GILLESPIE, JOHN ALBERT (1892-1955)

(Service Number 53023)

John Albert Gillespie may have fallen victim to the lethal ‘Spanish’ Influenza virus before he even embarked for overseas service in May 1918. If that was indeed the case he was very fortunate to survive, as this particular strain of virus was responsible for claiming the lives of more people than the four years of horrific global conflict. In Australia alone, an estimated 12,000 died from its effects in 1918-1919.²³⁰



Born on the vessel *Sea Breeze* in the Gulf of Carpentaria in Australia’s far north on 19 April 1892, John Gillespie later became a pastry cook. At the time of his enlistment in Brisbane on 18 February 1918 he was 25 years of age, 168 centimetres tall with brown eyes, dark complexion and dark hair. During the voyage to England on the *Osterley*, Gillespie was hospitalised on a number of occasions, confusingly for either rheumatism or influenza, but it was certainly the latter which prevented his active participation in the war. Just five days after being marched into the 9th Training Battalion at Hurdcott Gillespie was back in hospital, a pattern which continued until his repatriation to Australia on the *Orontes* in October 1919. During one of Gillespie’s brief discharges from hospital, however, he found time to marry Marguerite Louise Avray at Lambeth in London on 31 July 1919. The couple remained childless.²³¹

John Gillespie commenced clearing Portion 114 in the Parish of Wivenhoe on Coominya Soldier Settlement in June 1921, and was ploughing and harrowing the following August when the first planting took place. Like the majority of his fellow veterans Gillespie complied with directions and planted citrus trees and grapes.²³² In May 1922 he took legal proceedings against fellow soldier settler, Hugh Ince, for assault. As previously mentioned, Ince represented himself, but Gillespie had sufficient financial resources to hire a solicitor. It also proved a successful strategy, with Ince fined £1 and ordered to pay 33/6 in costs.²³³ But whether Gillespie could actually afford the expense was another matter, as he appears to have left Coominya later in 1922 when the loan repayments began falling due. Nothing is known of Gillespie’s movements until February 1929, when he found himself on the wrong side of the law after being charged with stealing a lady’s tennis racquet and two lady’s gold watches which had been given to him to take for repairs. It emerged that Gillespie had pawned all three articles and spent the money (according to the *Truth* newspaper — not the most reliable source of information — on alcohol). Although the property was recovered, Gillespie was fined £2, in default 14 days’ imprisonment on each charge. At the time he was employed as either a cook or a clerk, probably the former,²³⁴ but on 11 May 1933 he was working as a fisherman when he was struck down by a hit-and-run motorist on Barry Parade in the inner Brisbane suburb of Fortitude Valley. Treated for abrasions at the Brisbane General Hospital, Gillespie was allowed to return to his home in Stanley Street, South Brisbane.²³⁵ Nothing more is known of John Albert Gillespie until his death in Brisbane on 15 June 1955.²³⁶

GREEN, WILLIAM GRANT (1893-1952)

(Service Numbers 20795, Q186742, Q90370)

With sallow complexion, dark eyes and black hair, William Green was 172 centimetres tall and 22 years of age when he enlisted in the AIF at Brisbane on 9 October 1915. A stoker who probably worked his way to Australia, Green was born at Aberlour in Banffshire, Scotland, on 22 April 1893, the son of a farmer. He may have also had a short temper, for on the voyage to England he was punished on two separate occasions for using obscene and threatening language to an officer. As he had trained as an artilleryman in Australia, Green was initially posted to the 9th Field Artillery Battery, first as a gunner and then as a driver. He proceeded to France in December 1916 and three months later transferred to the 12th Field Artillery Battery. In November 1917 he was invalided back to England with illness, and while being treated at Sutton Very forfeited ten days' pay for going AWOL. Returning to France in March 1918 and re-joining his unit the former stoker probably helped stop the German breakthrough the following month, and he remained physically unscathed until barely a fortnight before the Armistice. On 29 October Green was struck in the neck by an enemy bullet. The injury was fortunately non-life threatening, and after treatment at Rouen and London he was invalided back to Australia in March 1919 and discharged from the AIF the following May.²³⁷

Green returned to Brisbane's southern bayside suburb of Wynnum, where he had been living in 1915, and found work as a lamplighter. He later successfully applied for Portion 111 in the Parish of Wivenhoe on the Coominya Soldier Settlement, though it is questionable whether he actually took possession of the land as Michael Hobbin acquired Portion 111 in November 1921, a month after he had begun clearing the land. What happened in the interim is unclear, for by 1925 Green was back at Wynnum working as a bread carter. Three years later he had relocated north to Carmila, between St Lawrence and Sarina, where he was employed as a farmhand by the Pendergast family. Although Green was still working for the Pendergast's in 1930, Green was back in Brisbane in 1939 when war was again declared. Enlisting in the 2nd AIF Green was posted to the 1st Garrison Battalion and promoted to sergeant. Discharged in March 1941, he promptly re-enlisted again and was accepted as a private in the 32nd Garrison Battalion. This third term of war service came to an end with his discharge in September 1942. Green was then living at Manly, a neighbouring suburb of Wynnum, where he remained until at least 1949. He died in Brisbane on 16 June 1952, a bachelor to the end.²³⁸

GRIFFITHS, HAROLD (1884-1927)

(Service Number 407)

Born at Oswestry in Shropshire, England, around August 1884, Harold Griffiths migrated to Queensland sometime after 1901 and worked as a labourer. He enlisted in the AIF at Enoggera Barracks in Brisbane on 30 November 1914. At that time he was just over 30 years of age, stood 170 centimetres tall, and had hazel eyes, light brown hair and a fresh complexion. Griffiths was unmarried, and remained so. He was initially posted to Egypt as a member of the 5th Light Horse Regiment and in April 1916, while based at Abbassia near Cairo, Griffiths was promoted to Acting Sergeant. By then, however, he was experiencing serious medical issues. Griffiths underwent surgery in November 1915 for piles, a routine operation which uncovered the cardiac dilation which would curtail his active service and almost certainly led to his premature death. In September 1916 Griffiths boarded the *Gloucester Castle* for treatment in England before returning to Egypt in May 1917 and rejoining his unit. His medical problems were then compounded after contracting venereal disease, and in December 1917 he was 'marked for change to Australia'. Griffiths returned on the NZT *Tofua* and after disembarking at Melbourne in late January he was discharged from the AIF at Brisbane on 3 March 1918.²³⁹

Despite the poor health that was attributed to the strain of active service, Griffiths successfully applied for Portion 136 in the Parish of Wivenhoe on Coominya Soldier Settlement, signing an agreement to abide by the conditions on 15 November 1920. By January 1921 he had begun clearing the land, but the hard physical toil obviously proved too much: Portion 136 was surrendered in September the same year. Nothing more is known of Harold Griffiths until his death 'in Queensland' on 18 September 1927 — yet another delayed and virtually forgotten casualty of the war that was supposedly fought to end all wars.²⁴⁰



THE NZT *TOFUA* AT COLOMBO. GRIFFITHS RETURNED TO AUSTRALIA ON THIS VESSEL IN DECEMBER 1917

GRIMES, ALEXANDER (1885-1927)

(Service Number 9876)

A private in the 2nd Battalion of the British Army's Border Regiment during World War One, Alexander Grimes was born in Bradford, Yorkshire, in 1885. He was the eldest of John and Margaret Grimes' eleven children. His brother Robert also served in the Great War, but was killed in action on 21 October 1917 and buried in Lijsthoeek Military Cemetery. In 1920 Alexander, his parents, and siblings Terrance and Margaret Ellen migrated to Brisbane, and on 2 August the following year his application for the 10 hectares of Portion 133 in the Parish of Wivenhoe on Coominya Soldier Settlement was accepted by Land Commissioner A.C. Stevens. He had begun clearing and fencing the block the previous month, and although G.W. Sims began building his house in August 1921 it was not until the following November that it was finally completed by D. Clark. Kept busy with clearing, ploughing, harrowing and root running, Grimes was unable to spare time to paint his new home until the beginning of 1923. An unmarried man, electoral records reveal that his sister Margaret kept house during Grimes' residence at Coominya, an arrangement that came to an end 12 October 1923 when he surrendered Portion 133. By 1927 the Grimes family, including Alexander and Margaret Ellen, had relocated to the Sydney suburb of Petersham. Alexander Grimes died on 23 August of that year at the relatively young age of 41 or 42 and was buried in Rookwood Cemetery.²⁴¹



TROOPS OF THE BORDER REGIMENT IN TRENCHES AT THE SOMME IN 1916

GUTTERIDGE, JAMES JOSEPH (1887-1970)

(Service Number 2905A)

One of two sons of William Gutteridge, the so-called 'father' of the Coominya Soldier Settlement, James Gutteridge was not only a local man, but one with experience in growing both grapes and citrus. If anyone stood a good chance of succeeding on the settlement it should have been him. But it was not to be. James Joseph Gutteridge was born at Ipswich on 17 January 1887 and married Annie Carpenter Hall Crawford prior to enlisting in the AIF at Brisbane on 14 January 1916 at the age of 28 years. Standing 165 centimetres tall, Gutteridge had grey eyes, brown hair and a fresh complexion. Although he listed his occupation as 'labourer' he was almost certainly employed on his father's Norman Vineyard. The voyage to England was broken by four weeks in Egypt, and after arriving at Plymouth in June 1916 Gutteridge was posted to the 6th Reinforcements for the 31st Battalion. He was hospitalised in England with mumps, and after being discharged re-joined his unit before it crossed to France in September 1917. Just weeks after arriving at the Front, Gutteridge was shot in the left thigh and invalided back to England. After recovering he returned to France. Almost exactly a year later, on 29 September 1918, Gutteridge was struck by an enemy bullet in the left hip and again invalided to England. By then the war was in its final stages, and after his recovery Gutteridge returned to Australia in March 1919. He was discharged from the AIF the following month.²⁴²



He was welcomed home to Coominya at a party thrown by his parents, with around 40 close friends and family attending.²⁴³ As an ex-soldier he was also successful with his application for the 9.7 hectares of Portion 164 in the Parish of Wivenhoe on 2 August 1921,²⁴⁴ but appears to have spent a considerable amount of his time assisting other soldier settlers, particularly with ploughing. Nor did he retain possession of his own land for long. On 6 September 1922 the Land Commissioner's Court ruled that he had failed to fulfil the condition of personal residence and the block was forfeited to the Crown.²⁴⁵ Gutteridge was probably living and working on his parents' Norman Vineyard, and was apparently still there when his father William passed away on 8 September 1923. In February the following year James and his brother Alfred shared their father's probate of £3,192, a very large sum of money at that time.²⁴⁶ James Gutteridge nevertheless appears to have continued working on Norman Vineyard, and in December 1925 he was lucky to escape injury after the cart he was driving struck an ant-bed and overturned. His passenger was not so fortunate, sustaining serious head injuries that required surgery at Lowood Hospital.²⁴⁷

By 1928 Gutteridge had taken over the Royal Exchange Hotel at Gympie, but tragedy struck on 10 May the following year when his wife Annie died in Ipswich General Hospital while giving birth to their only child, Joseph, who survived for only two months. In 1937 Gutteridge was a tobacco-grower at Borella near Texas, but thereafter disappears from the records until 1954 when he was living in the Kingston district south of Brisbane. By 1958 he had relocated to Caboolture, north of the city, and in 1968 had returned to Brisbane where he was residing at 204 Nursery Road in the suburb of Holland Park. Gutteridge died at Brisbane on 17 June 1970 at the age of 83 years and was buried in Mount Gravatt Cemetery.²⁴⁸

HARRIGAN, MAURICE WILLIAM (c.1873-1952)

(Service Number 874)

Born near Manchester in England 'about 1873', Maurice Harrigan undertook pre-war military service in the Royal Artillery, but later served in World War One as a private in the Highland Light Infantry. On 2 July 1920 he boarded the Aberdeen White Star liner *Themistocles* in London bound for Brisbane, and on 2 August 1921 his application for the 12.5 hectares of Portion 120 in the Parish of Wivenhoe on the Coominya Soldier Settlement was accepted by Land Commissioner A.C. Stevens at his Ipswich sittings.²⁴⁹ A month later Harrigan married Mary Ellen Murphy (*nee* Loughlan) in the township. It was her second marriage. On 12 October 1910 Mary Ellen had married Stephen Murphy, only to be widowed in March 1912. Neither marriage bequeathed any children.²⁵⁰

Harrigan surrendered his block at Coominya on 31 January 1922, and in 1925 he was listed as a licensed victualler at Gympie and proprietor of the Gladfield Hotel at Killarney (probably consecutively). In 1937, however, Harrigan was working as a labourer at Marburg, and by 1943 Maurice and Mary Ellen Harrigan had settled in the Ipswich area, where they remained.²⁵¹ When Mary Ellen died on 16 March 1949 they were living at 29 Railway Street, Booval. Maurice survived his wife by less than three years, passing away on 13 February 1952.²⁵²

HAWKER, ALFRED GEORGE (1888-1969)

(Service Numbers 7420 and Q187687)

A private in the British Army's 1st Northamptonshire Regiment during the Great War, Alfred George Hawker was born at Islington in London on 23 July 1888 and later trained as an engineer. He married Maud Burwell at Rochford in Essex on 16 July 1912, a union which produced seven children: Leonard Edmund (1913-1985); Alfred Bernard Hewitt (1915-1965); Donald Alan (1917-1968); Joan Kathleen (b.1919); Gloria (b.1923); Doreen (b.1926); and Pauline (b.1929). On 21 August 1920 Alfred, Maud and their first four children boarded the Orient liner *Ormonde* in London bound for Brisbane.²⁵³

Hawker signed an undertaking for the 11.5 hectares of Portion 156 in the Parish of Wivenhoe on 21 December 1920, which was formally accepted on 5 July 1921. The previous month Hawker had purchased a spring cart and roan mare, while D. Clark was erecting his home. Like so many other soldier settlers at Coominya, Hawker did most of his own clearing, ploughing, harrowing and planting, though in his case Sidney Boby was hired to begin the fencing in August 1921 and R. Smith received a payment for ploughing in June 1922.²⁵⁴ Hawker also shared in the failure of the settlement, accepting a transfer north to Goovigen, a tiny hamlet between Jambin and Rannes in the Callide Valley, where he managed to secure Portion 42 in a ballot held during December 1923.²⁵⁵ The transfer appears to have resulted in a change in the family's fortunes as they were still residing there in 1940 when Hawker enlisted in the Australian Army and was posted to the 1st Garrison Battalion. Alfred Hawker and his wife later settled at Yeppoon, where Maud died on 11 December 1967. Hawker also died at Yeppoon, on 28 February 1969, and like his wife was buried in the Norman Gardens at Rockhampton.²⁵⁶

HILL, WILLIAM GEORGE MM (1893-1957)

(Service Number 1603)

A butcher by trade, William George Hill more than proved his worth as a soldier during the fierce fighting near Mont St Quentin on 2 September 1918. Unfortunately, it also brought his active service to an end. On that day strong enemy resistance from a trench close to a jumping off place stalled the Australian advance, so Lance Sergeant Hill with five men forced their way into the enemy trench and bombed along its length inflicting heavy casualties. While this action allowed the Australian attack to continue, Hill was shot in the right leg and shortly afterwards invalided to England. He was awarded the Military Medal for his initiative and bravery, and by the time Hill recovered in Bath Hospital the war had finally been brought to an end.²⁵⁷

Born at Raymond Terrace in New South Wales in 1893, Hill was living at Gatton in Queensland's Lockyer Valley when he enlisted in the township on 17 May 1915 at the age of 21 years. Standing 170 centimetres in height, he had a fair complexion, fair hair and brown eyes. Hill embarked for overseas service on the *Aeneas* the following month and served for a time in Egypt before reaching Marseilles in France during March 1916 as a member of the 25th Battalion, 2nd Australian Division. Periodically hospitalised in France for venereal disease, he nevertheless steadily climbed his way through the ranks. Hill also underwent specialised training as a Lewis gunner, and in July 1918 was promoted to Lance Sergeant. Then came the action near Mont St Quentin and the award of the Military Cross. Hill sailed for Australia on the *Khyber* in April 1919 and after disembarking at Brisbane on 18 May 1919 was discharged from the AIF.²⁵⁸

He returned to Gatton and on 11 July 1921 married Norah May Bourke in Brisbane. The couple remained childless, and it is not clear if the marriage took place before Hill successfully applied for Portion 166 in the Parish of Wivenhoe on the Coominya Soldier Settlement. Nor is it known when the couple left Coominya, and their subsequent personal history is similarly obscure. They were living in the inner Brisbane suburb of Paddington in April 1938, and appear to have remained in the city. William Hill died at Brisbane on 25 July 1957, while Norah survived until 2 August 1972. Both were buried in Toowong Cemetery.²⁵⁹



AUSTRALIAN TROOPS MOVING ALONG A COMMUNICATION TRENCH NEAR MONT ST. QUENTIN (AWM EO3139)

HOBBIN, MICHAEL JOSEPH (1895-1967)

(Service Numbers DM2/164090 and QX8693)

Like a number of other soldier settlers at Coominya, Michael Joseph Hobbin served in two world wars for two different countries. Born at Kirkintilloch in Dunbartonshire, Scotland, on 12 December 1895, Hobbin enlisted in the British Army Service Corps in World War One. In 1917 he married Hannah Barclay Thomson, a union which produced five children: Hannah Josephine (b.1918); Thomas (1919-1957); Francis (1922-1939); Peter (1923-1964); and Maureen (b.1928). Exactly when the family migrated to Queensland is unclear, but it was definitely after August 1919 as that was when their second child, Thomas, was born at Edinburgh.²⁶⁰

On 1 November 1921 Hobbin's application for the 11.5 hectares of Portion 111 in the Parish of Wivenhoe at Coominya was accepted by Land Commissioner A.C. Stevens.²⁶¹ The previous month he had begun clearing the land (which had been forfeited by William Green), while John Gillespie was paid to erect the fencing. Hobbin's third child, Francis, was born at Coominya the following year, and although clearing operations continued until September 1922, by then Hobbin had planted citrus trees as well as 2000 Isabella grape cuttings. Fourth child Peter was born at Coominya on 28 December 1923, by which time Hobbin was clearly struggling despite his best efforts to provide for a growing family. He finally accepted a transfer to Burrandowan Soldier Settlement near Kingaroy, and the family left Coominya in late January 1924.²⁶² It was not a particularly propitious time to move to Burrandowan, as that settlement was also in decline. Established in May 1919 for dairying and mixed farming, Burrandowan reached its zenith in June 1921 with 34 soldier settlers farming the land.²⁶³ Despite an influx of war veterans from other areas that number had dropped to 29 by June 1924.²⁶⁴ Yet Hobbin and his family were still on the settlement in June 1927, when he represented Burrandowan at the annual conference of the Soldier Settlers' Organisation held at Maryborough and was elected to the State executive.²⁶⁵ There were certainly problems to deal with, for in June 1928 the number of soldier settlers at Burrandowan had dwindled to just 14.²⁶⁶

It is not known when Hobbin and his family left Burrandowan. By 1940 they were living in Brisbane, where he enlisted in the 2nd AIF along with his sons Thomas and Peter.²⁶⁷ Given his age Michael Hobbin would not have served overseas, and it seems that he may have remained in Brisbane until his death on 26 April 1967. Hannah survived until 14 June 1989, with both being laid to rest in Pinnaroo Lawn Cemetery at Bridgeman Downs on the city's northside.²⁶⁸

HOBBS, KENNETH CHARLES STUART (1894-1986)

(Service Number 1177)

A farmer in the Lismore district of northern New South Wales, Kenneth Hobbs enlisted with his younger brother Reginald in the AIF at Lismore on 3 March 1915. On 16 August 1915 they embarked from Brisbane on HMAT *Kyarra* as 8th Reinforcements for the 5th Australian Light Horse. Both brothers were hospitalised shortly after arriving at Alexandria in Egypt. Although his own military service was to be constantly interrupted by spells in hospital for diarrhoea, Kenneth was far more fortunate than Reginald, who succumbed to the effects of cerebro-spinal meningitis on 29 November 1915 and was buried in the Chatby War Memorial Cemetery in Egypt.²⁶⁹

Born at Bega on the south coast of New South Wales on 9 July 1894, Kenneth Hobbs was 20 years of age when he joined up for war service, just over a year older than his unfortunate sibling, with brown hair, brown eyes and a fair complexion. He was 168 centimetres in height and weighed 56 kilograms. After training Hobbs was posted to the 2nd Machine Gun Squadron of the 2nd Light Horse Brigade and served in the desert campaign at least as far north as the Jordan Valley in Palestine. He returned to Australia on HT *Wandilla* in April 1919 and discharged as medically unfit.²⁷⁰



THE 9TH AND 10TH BATTALIONS AIF AT MENA CAMP IN EGYPT. NOTE THE WALLABY MASCOT IN THE FOREGROUND (AWM CO2588)

No sooner had Hobbs stepped ashore than he travelled north to Adavale in central Queensland to wed Rosalie Alma Cecelia Bell on 20 July 1919. The couple had five children: Kenneth Raymond James (1920-1986); Reginald Francis (b.1922); William Joseph (1924-1929); Edward John (b.1927); and Patricia Mary (1937-2002). While their first child was recorded as having been born at Coominya in 1920,²⁷¹ Hobbs' application for the 12 hectares of Portion 146 in the Parish of Wivenhoe on the soldier settlement was not accepted until 2 August 1921.²⁷² Second child Reginald was definitely born at Coominya in 1922; Hobbs surrendered his block on 28 March 1923 after accepting a transfer to Nangwee, centre of the Cecil Plains Soldier Settlement, west of Toowoomba, where the couple's third child was born in 1924. Apart from the latter's death at Dalby Hospital on 6 November 1929, it must have been a successful move, as they stayed there until at least 27 April 1949, when Hobbs' wife Rosalie also died at Dalby Hospital and was buried at Cecil Plains.²⁷³

The following year Hobbs married Amelia Antoinette Mirabito in Sydney, but had returned to Brisbane by 1951 where all three children from this second union were born: Mark Stuart John (b.1951); Gregory Bruce (b.1953); and Robert Dennis (b.1955). Hobbs also outlived his second wife, Amelia, who died in Brisbane on 27 March 1983 and was buried in the Mount Gravatt Cemetery. Hobbs joined her there after his own death in Brisbane on 7 June 1986 — just one month short of his 92nd birthday.²⁷⁴

HUMPHREY, PERCIVAL ('PERCY') (1897-1981)

(Service Number 3002)

Born at Millwall in East London, England in 1897, Percival ('Percy') Humphrey was working as a messenger boy at the age of 15. On 19 April 1914, however, he boarded the *Waipara* in London, and at the age of 17 sailed for a new life in Queensland. Just under four months later the Great War erupted in Europe. After landing in Brisbane Humphrey eventually made his way to Rockhampton, where he found work as an unskilled labourer.²⁷⁵

For reasons known only to himself he walked into the local recruiting office on 23 February 1916 and joined the AIF. He was then 19 years of age, stood 166 centimetres tall, and had brown hair, brown eyes and a medium complexion. The following October Humphrey embarked at Brisbane on A43 *Barunga* headed for the Middle East, where he was taken on strength into the 5th Light Horse Training Regiment at Moascar, an isolation camp in Egypt. Humphrey's instruction was both lengthy and gruelling, emerging as a 1st class operator of both the Lewis and Hotchkiss machine-guns. He was transferred to the 2nd Light Horse Training Regiment in June 1917, but in March 1918 his health collapsed and he spent a month in hospital suffering from debility. After being released Humphrey was posted to the 5th Light Horse Regiment and soon afterwards found himself in hot water for allowing the horses in his charge to graze on a crop belonging to one of the local inhabitants of Bethlehem. This was a serious breach of a Divisional Routine Order which cost Humphrey seven days' pay (£1/15-). In February 1919 he was again in hospital with chronic arthritis, and three months later lost another two days' pay for failing to appear on parade. By then it mattered little as the Ottoman Empire had been defeated and Allied troops were merely awaiting their return home. As it turned out, Humphrey first sailed from Port Said in Egypt to England in July 1919 and from there returned to Australia on the *Raranga*. He was discharged from the AIF on 15 November 1919.²⁷⁶

Little more is known of Humphrey's subsequent history. He was successful in his application for Portion 134 in the Parish of Wivenhoe on Coominya Soldier Settlement, and was certainly residing there in mid-1922. By 9 April 1923, though, Humphrey was in Brisbane, where he married Violet Louisa McGuire. The union produced no children. The couple eventually settled in the northern bayside suburb of Brighton, where Violet died on 27 September 1956. Humphrey apparently remained in the family home until his own death at Brighton in 1981.²⁷⁷

INCE, HUGH JAMES (1898-1976)

(Service Numbers 683A and Q155186)

Hugh James Ince was a fighter. Not only did he serve in two world wars, he was also fined in May 1922 for assaulting fellow war veteran John Gillespie on Coominya Soldier Settlement. Ince nevertheless looked anything but pugnacious. When he enlisted in the AIF in his home town of Rockhampton on 26 February 1917 he stood 165 centimetres in height, with grey eyes, fair hair and a fresh complexion. Ince was only 19 years of age and even his work as a grocer belied any air of aggressiveness. But he had served nine months with the local citizen forces prior to joining the Australian Army. As it transpired, it was the effects of the deadly Spanish influenza virus rather than enemy action which limited his physical participation in the Great War of 1914-1918.²⁷⁸

Ince was born at Rockhampton on 21 January 1898, and like so many other AIF volunteers, the decision to fight for 'King and Country' also provided an opportunity to see a world virtually unimaginable in sleepy Australian rural centres. He embarked at Melbourne for overseas service on the *Suevic* on 21 June 1917, and after undergoing training with the 11th Machine Gun Company was transferred to the 41st Battalion before proceeding to France the following December. In June 1918, however, he was laid low with influenza, the first of a series of periodic spells in hospitals before Ince was finally invalided back to England in November 1918. In May 1919 he stepped aboard the *Khyber* for the voyage back to Australia, where he was discharged from the AIF the following month.²⁷⁹



On 15 May 1920 Ince married Agnes May Knell at Rockhampton, a union which produced only one child, Gloria Betty (1922-2004). After living briefly at Yeppoon, the couple relocated to Brisbane. Shortly afterwards Ince applied for the 8 hectares of Portion 131 in the Parish of Wivenhoe on the Coominya Soldier Settlement, which was officially accepted on 2 August 1921. While the couple were able to celebrate the birth of their only child in 1922, there was also cause for regret after Ince was fined £1 with 33/6 costs in Lowood Police Court for his assault on Gillespie.²⁸⁰ At the same time the marriage began to fail, and it was for this reason that Ince surrendered his soldier settlement block in July 1922. The couple first moved to Bundaberg before returning to Brisbane where Ince found himself unemployed as the inroads of the Great Depression began to be felt. In 1932 the Queensland Government launched a scheme whereby 94 destitute men, 38 of whom had families, were placed on the former soldier settlement at Beerburrum, north of Brisbane, and assisted to grow tobacco. Ince and his family qualified for participation, but like the scheme itself, which floundered two years later owing to inexperience, a contracting market and abnormally heavy rain which encouraged the spread of destructive plant diseases and pests, the marriage of Hugh and Agnes Ince also broke down irrevocably. Using free railway passes issued by the Queensland Government, Agnes spent increasing amounts of time in Brisbane, where she eventually found work in April 1933 and refused to return home. Ince and his daughter left Beerburrum the following month, presumably for Brisbane, where he later enlisted in the Australian Army Citizen Military Forces following the outbreak of World War Two. In September 1946 Ince was working at Townsville as a telegraphic linesman, where he formalised his separation from Agnes after applying in the Supreme Court for a divorce on the grounds of desertion.²⁸¹ Ince later married Marjorie Oliver, who died at Atherton on 26 February 1960. His first wife died at Brisbane on 27 September 1964. In 1969 Ince was living at Gordonvale, south of Cairns, but had moved south to Biloela by the time of his own death on 27 July 1976. He was buried in Biloela Lawn Cemetery.²⁸²

INSTONE, SAMUEL (1893-1984)

(Service Numbers 241107, 65155 and Q120093)

Born at Tunbridge Wells in Kent, England, on 27 December 1893, Samuel Instone was working as a baker's assistant in London by 1911 and may have remained in that occupation until the outbreak of war in 1914. Although virtually nothing is known of his actual war experience it was certainly varied, with Instone serving as a private in the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry and as a gunner in the Royal Field Artillery. On 4 March 1917 Instone married Elsie Elizabeth Carr at St Paul's, Bow Common in London, a marriage which produced two children: Margaret Elsie (b.1918) and Sylvia May (b.1919).²⁸³

In 1921 the family boarded the *Ormonde* to begin a new life in Queensland,²⁸⁴ and Instone wasted little time after they had disembarked in Brisbane. His application for the 8 hectares of Portion 124 in the Parish of Wivenhoe on the Coominya Soldier Settlement was accepted on 2 August 1921.²⁸⁵ In June 1923, when the settlement was faltering, Instone accepted a transfer to Taromeo Soldier Settlement near Nanango, where the emphasis was on dairying and maize cultivation. The family remained at Taromeo until at least 1928.²⁸⁶ By 1932, however, they were living at 20 Burstow Street in East Toowoomba, and five years later they had relocated to 431 Logan Road in the Brisbane suburb of Stones Corner, where they remained in residence until at least 1944.²⁸⁷

On 10 July 1941 Instone enlisted in the Citizen Military Forces and received his discharge as a corporal on 22 May 1944.²⁸⁸ Eldest daughter Elsie had married Neville Muller in 1938, while Sylvia found her match with Gordon Broughton in 1942. With the girls having left the family home, Samuel and Elsie Instone appear to have given thought to moving interstate, and by 1949 they were living at 99 Wells Street in the Sydney suburb of Newtown, where Instone established himself as a storekeeper. By 1958 the couple had settled in the south-western suburb of Greenacre, where Instone was in paid employment as a process worker. He died at Greenacre in 1984, survived by Elsie who passed away sometime after 1985.²⁸⁹

KELLY, JOHN ARTHUR (1893-1964)

(Service Number 3681)

A horse breaker born in the south-western Queensland town of St George in 1893, John Arthur Kelly was ideal recruitment material for the Australian Light Horse — which is exactly where he found himself in 1918. Kelly had clearly been in no hurry to enlist, having married Victorian-born Bertha Frances Pitter in Sydney in 1915, a union which was to produce two sons, Raymond Arthur (1917-1943) and Ronald Rhodes (?- 1944). Kelly enlisted in the AIF in Sydney on 10 October 1917, with Bertha and their first-born relocating to the Brisbane suburb of Kangaroo Point until his return. Standing 177 centimetres tall, with grey eyes, brown hair and a dark complexion, Kelly was 25 years of age. After arriving in Egypt in April 1918 he was posted to the 1st Australian Light Horse Regiment, but his military career was cut short by malaria, possibly contracted while stationed at Gaza. Lengthy spells in hospital followed, with Kelly eventually invalided back to Australia and discharged from the AIF as medically unfit on 29 May 1919.²⁹⁰

Despite his indifferent health, Kelly signed an undertaking for Portion 112 in the Parish of Buaraba on 19 January 1921, the application confirmed in the Ipswich Land Commissioner's Court the following August. Unlike the perpetual lease selections of fellow war veterans, however, Portion 112 was a grazing homestead lease of 12.1 hectares, a form of tenure seldom granted to returned servicemen, and almost certainly permitted in this instance owing to its limited area. By June 1921 Kelly had begun the process of clearing, while C. McClure was paid to erect the initial fencing in July. At the same time A. Jorgensen commenced the construction of a permanent dwelling, a task completed by D. Clark in August. Kelly's purchase of a bay mare in July and a plough and harrow in September allowed him to prepare the land for cultivation, though given that he was almost certainly laid low from recurring bouts of malaria it was not surprising that fellow veterans were occasionally paid for some of the labouring work. In October 1921, for example, John Peppard briefly took over the ploughing. Kelly spent much of 1922 clearing his land, an onerous task which came to an end in November, when Portion 112 was sub-leased.²⁹¹



From January 1923 Kelly's equipment and materials were either returned to stock or sold off at auction, indicating that the family had left the soldier settlement. Nothing more is known of John and Bertha Kelly until their respective deaths in Brisbane on 15 June 1964 and 1968. The tragedy was that they survived their two sons, who perished in separate theatres of conflict in World War Two. Raymond died at Rabaul in New Britain on 11 September 1943; Ronald died in Germany on 2 March 1944.²⁹²

KENNEDY, DUNCAN (1891-1951)

(Service Numbers 4822 and Q200662)

It is not known when Duncan Kennedy migrated to Australia from Glasgow, Scotland, where he was born on 16 October 1891. A labourer by occupation, Kennedy almost certainly arrived in Brisbane with his parents and siblings in January 1910, but had made his own way to Sydney by 1912, where he met South Australian-born Ida Gwendoline Denyer. The couple married in the eastern Sydney suburb of Woollahra on 25 February 1914, a brief union that produced one son, Laurence Charles (1914-?). It was an unhappy relationship, evidenced by the birth of a second child, Mavis Gwendolin (1916-1918), twelve months after Duncan Kennedy had enlisted in the AIF at Casula in New South Wales on 29 November 1915. At that time Kennedy was 24 years of age, stood just 162 centimetres tall, and had blue eyes, brown hair and a ruddy complexion.²⁹³

Kennedy reached England in February 1916 as one of the 15th Reinforcements for the 4th Battalion, transferring to the 56th Battalion the following April. His war service was regularly interrupted by periods of hospitalisation for an unspecified illness, possibly bronchitis, although the first spell in hospital was directly attributable to influenza. Kennedy was released in time to embark with his unit for France in April 1916, and on 20 July he was struck in the left thigh by an enemy bullet. After being invalided back to England he forfeited two days' pay for being AWOL. In March 1917 Kennedy was transferred to the 61st Battalion, and the following September spent a day in custody and the loss of seven days' pay for again going AWOL. He returned to France in March 1918, and re-joined the 56th Battalion in October, by which time the war was virtually at an end. Kennedy returned to England in March 1919 and two months later voyaged back to Australia where he was discharged from the AIF.²⁹⁴

There was no happy reunion with his family. After meeting Ida in Toowoomba, Kennedy stayed overnight at her father's home and travelled back to Brisbane the following day. The couple never saw each other again.²⁹⁵ Kennedy's application for the 9.7 hectares of Portion 109 in the Parish of Wivenhoe, Coominya, was formally accepted by Land Commissioner A.C. Stevens at the monthly sitting of the Land Court at Ipswich on 2 August 1921 — the same day that an application by his ex-AIF father, John Kennedy, for neighbouring Portion 108 was accepted.²⁹⁶ Although Duncan Kennedy had purchased a brown mare and scuffler the previous April, James Gutteridge was hired to carry out the initial ploughing and harrowing in July. Kennedy began planting grapes the following month, and in September he put in the first 39 assorted citrus trees. As well as clearing, Kennedy found time to assist D. Clark in the construction of his permanent dwelling in November 1921. Early 1922 was spent clearing more land, and in March Kennedy exchanged his brown mare for a bay gelding, paying the £3 difference to allow him to take over the ploughing and harrowing the following June. August 1922 found Kennedy planting an additional 450 citrus trees on his block, and that same month he purchased 75 mandarin trees from H.A. Peterson Limited. It was a wasted effort. After accepting a transfer to the Cecil Plains Soldier Settlement, Kennedy surrendered Portion 109 on 6 September 1923.²⁹⁷

He was still farming at Cecil Plains in June 1925, when Ida filed for divorce in the Brisbane Supreme Court on the grounds of desertion. As Kennedy did not appear to contest the case, Chief Justice Blair granted the dissolution of the marriage.²⁹⁸ By early 1926 Kennedy was

back in Brisbane, where he married Beatrice Pickles on 3 April. One child, Barbara, was born to the couple. Kennedy and his second wife were still living in Brisbane at the outbreak of the Second World War, when Kennedy enlisted in the Citizen Military Forces. Laurence, his son from the first marriage, served in the Royal Australian Air Force during the conflict. Nothing more is known of Duncan Kennedy until his death in the Brisbane suburb of Bulimba on 12 August 1951. He was buried at the Mount Gravatt Cemetery.²⁹⁹

KENNEDY, JOHN (1870-1960)

(Service Number 9524)

The father of Coominya soldier settler Duncan Kennedy, and a miner by profession, John Kennedy was born at Bonhill in Dunbartonshire, Scotland, on 3 June 1870. He married local lass Mary Ingram Gilchrist on 27 March 1891, with the couple producing five children: Duncan (1891-1951); William Gilchrist (1894-1956); Janet McFarlane (1899-?); John (1906-?); and Mary Ingram Gilchrist (1908-1948). The family emigrated from Scotland on the *Whakatane*, arriving in Brisbane on 21 January 1910, and after briefly living in South Brisbane settled at West Wynnum.³⁰⁰

John Kennedy enlisted in the AIF at Brisbane on 11 January 1916, claiming to be 40 years of age (he was in fact 45). He stood 168 centimetres tall and had blue eyes, fair hair and a fair complexion. After proceeding overseas Kennedy disembarked at Devonport in England in July 1916 as a member of the 11th Field Company Engineers, and continued on to France four months later. Like his eldest son, John Kennedy spent numerous periods in hospital with ailments ranging from scabies to rheumatism, the latter responsible for his return to Australia in October 1918.³⁰¹

John Kennedy's application for Portion 108 in the Parish of Wivenhoe, Coominya, was accepted by the Land Court at Ipswich on 2 August 1921, the block bordering Portion 109 taken up by his son Duncan. John Kennedy was made of tough fibre indeed. After clearing some of his land he planted grapes in August 1921 and the following month an assortment of citrus trees also went into the ground. In December he was ploughing, harrowing and root running. August 1922 saw further plantings of mandarin and orange trees, and as well as the ongoing task of clearing, Kennedy found time to paint his home in November. The year 1923, however, marked the turning point for Coominya Soldier Settlement, and Kennedy surrendered Portion 108 on the same day that his neighbouring son relinquished Portion 109 (6 September).³⁰² Although both men transferred to Cecil Plains Soldier Settlement, they were back in Brisbane in 1925, with John and Mary Kennedy settling in the northern suburb of Nundah. Then tragedy struck. Mary died in June 1928 after 37 years of marriage. It was not until 22 September 1931 that John Kennedy remarried — this time to Margaret Liddle in Brisbane. The couple apparently settled down to a quiet life until John's death in Brisbane on 15 October 1960. He was 90 years of age.³⁰³

KEYS, ARTHUR (1884-1962)

(Service Number 2672A)

Standing just 158 centimetres tall, with ‘yellowish brown’ eyes, brown hair and a dark complexion, Arthur Keys was a long way from home when he enlisted in the AIF at Charleville in far south-western Queensland on 11 August 1916. He had been born near the Murrumbidgee River at Gundagai in southern New South Wales in 1884 and classified himself as a labourer. Keys embarked at Brisbane on the *Marathon* on 27 October 1916, but completed the voyage to England on HMAT *Miltiades* after briefly going AWOL at Fremantle in Western Australia. He had no sooner arrived at his destination than he absconded again, forfeiting two days’ pay. After undergoing training Keys was posted to the 44th Battalion and proceeded to France in November 1917. He had obviously been up to no good in England, for shortly after stepping ashore on the Continent Keys was confined to an isolation hospital where he was treated for venereal disease. In February 1918 he lost 14 days’ pay for being AWOL, repeating this offence again the following April, which cost him a further 14 days’ pay. Keys managed to keep out of trouble until 4 July 1918, when he was invalided back to England with a gunshot wound to the left wrist. This provided yet another opportunity to go AWOL — and the forfeiture of three days’ pay. The military police may well have been relieved to see the last of Keys when he returned to Australia aboard the *Saxon* in March 1919.³⁰⁴



Keys signed an undertaking for Portion 103, Parish of Buaraba, Coominya, on 15 November 1920, the application formally approved on 2 August 1921. By then he had already begun clearing the block, and in August D. Clark erected a permanent dwelling. Although Keys began ploughing in that same month, James Gutteridge was hired to continue this work in September, probably to allow time for planting citrus. Grape cuttings were obtained in November, and during the first half of 1922 Keys spent much of his time clearing, interspersed with ploughing and root running. The 320 fruit trees purchased from H.N. Peterson were planted out in July.³⁰⁵ Although the exact date and place are uncertain, Keys married Victorian-born Millicent Margaret Allsop around 1923,³⁰⁶ and he managed to persevere at Coominya until September 1925, when he accepted a transfer to Jambin near Biloela and took up the nine hectares of Portion 44 in the Parish of Earlsfield.³⁰⁷ The couple later moved to North Rockhampton, where their only child, Edward James, was born. Keys and his wife remained at North Rockhampton until their respective deaths on 13 June 1962 and 1963.³⁰⁸

KLAEHN, EDWARD EMIL (1897-1957)

(Service Number 3668)

With a deformity of the right foot, Edward Klaehn should not have been eligible to enlist in the AIF, let alone serve overseas. At 19 years of age he also required the permission of his parents, and there may have been a good reason why that was forthcoming. At the height of World War One Australian governments — Commonwealth and States — exerted considerable pressure on German-Australian farming families to send their sons to war against their ancestral homeland as a means of ‘proving’ their loyalty to their adopted country.³⁰⁹ Of course, there remains a possibility that Edward Klaehn willingly enlisted and went to considerable lengths to disguise his physical condition. A farmer by calling, Klaehn was born at Hatton Vale in Queensland’s Lockyer Valley on 8 September 1897. When he enlisted at Ipswich on 21 May 1917, Klaehn stood 177 centimetres tall and had grey eyes, light curly hair and a fresh complexion. As befitted a member of the Australian-German community he was of the Lutheran faith. Embarking at Sydney on HMAT *A7Medic* the following August with fellow members of the 10th Reinforcements for the 49th Battalion, Klaehn had no sooner been marched in at Codford in England when medical authorities identified problems with his foot, perhaps owing to it restricting his movements. In February 1918 Klaehn was returned to Australia on the *Balmoral Castle* and discharged from the AIF on 30 April.³¹⁰

The problem with his right foot does not appear to have interfered with Klaehn’s ability to engage in primary production. As a war veteran he was eligible for a soldier settlement block, and in April 1921 Klaehn signed an undertaking for the 11 hectares of Portion 153 in the Parish of Wivenhoe at Coominya. The application was not formally approved until the following September after the matter had been adjourned in the Ipswich Land Court. By then D. Clark had already erected a house on the land, while Klaehn was well into the process of planting fruit trees before purchasing grape cuttings after his application had finally been accepted. Throughout 1922 Klaehn was kept busy clearing, ploughing, harrowing, root running and planting. It was not until January 1923 that he appears to have finally found time to paint his house. Like his neighbours, however, Klaehn was obviously finding it increasingly difficult to make a living and surrendered Portion 153 on 22 November 1923.³¹¹

While he may have briefly remained in the Coominya district, Klaehn was living with Elizabeth Topp-O’Farrell, the estranged wife of Samuel O’Farrell, in Tiger Street, West Ipswich, in March 1925. The couple and a neighbour, Hannah Swain, were convicted of common assault for an attack on 20-year-old James McGrath, an intellectually disabled man who, according to evidence from the court proceedings, had been a constant nuisance in the neighbourhood. The three defendants were nevertheless fined five shillings each when found guilty.³¹² Klaehn and Elizabeth Topp-O’Farrell married on 15 August 1929, five months after the death of Samuel O’Farrell at Moree in northern New South Wales. There were no children from either of her marriages. The couple appear to have remained in the Ipswich area. Elizabeth died at Ipswich on 24 July 1956; Edward Klaehn survived until 9 November 1957.³¹³

KNIGHT, JAMES EDWIN (1895-1985)

(Service Numbers 1684 and Q187064)

Born at Yangan, east of Warwick in Queensland on 26 December 1885, James Knight was farming at Toolburra when war broke out in August 1914. In September 1915 he travelled to Brisbane to enlist in the AIF. Knight was then 21 years of age, stood 331 centimetres tall and had grey eyes, dark hair and a dark complexion. He embarked at Brisbane for overseas service on 20 April 1916, and after further training in England joined the 49th Battalion in France before being transferred to the 4th Pioneers. Knight was clearly not happy with this new posting. On 15 July 1916 he forfeited two days' pay for insolence to a non-commissioned officer, and lost a further 10 days' pay the following November for going AWOL. He repeated the latter offence the following month, and on this occasion found himself in serious trouble after being charged with desertion. While Knight was very fortunate to be found not guilty after facing a general court-martial, he nonetheless forfeited another 75 days' pay for being AWOL. Knight managed to keep out of trouble the following year, but his outspokenness surfaced again in April 1918, when he lost 20 days' pay for using insolent language to his superior officer. The following month Knight was transferred to the 4th Machine Gun Battalion, apparently a more conducive personal environment, as his record thereafter remained unblemished. Whilst in England after the Armistice Knight married Emily Louise Govey, a bootmaker by profession, in London on 8 March 1919. The marriage produced five children: Phyllis (1921-?); Edwin Herbert (?); James Robert (?), Doreen (?); and Violet (1931-2009).³¹⁴

Following Knight's discharge from the AIF on 5 November 1919, the couple settled in the Allora district, just north of Warwick, until 24 November 1920, when Knight signed an undertaking for the 11 hectares of Portion 161, in the Parish of Wivenhoe, Coominya. While the application was not formally accepted until August 1921, the family was residing on the block from April of that year. After clearing, ploughing, harrowing and root running, Knight was able to plant his first grape cuttings in September. More grape cuttings were purchased in October, with Knight continuing with the soil preparation throughout 1922. On 18 May 1923,³¹⁵ however, he accepted a transfer north to the small soldier settlement at Yarraman near Nanango.

In September 1924 Emily briefly returned to Coominya for a holiday as the guest of Mrs J. Johnson,³¹⁶ but they clearly fared no better at their new location. The Knight family returned to the Darling Downs in 1925. Sometime between 1928 and 1932 they relocated again, this time to Granville, now an eastern suburb of Maryborough, where James and Emily were destined to remain.³¹⁷ In September 1937 Knight contacted military authorities, claiming that while undergoing basic training in Brisbane before serving overseas he had met with a serious accident requiring hospitalisation. The long-term effects of the injury had resulted in lameness and he intended applying for a pension. While the outcome is not known,³¹⁸ physical incapacity did not prevent Knight from enlisting in the Citizen Military Forces during World War Two.³¹⁹ Emily died at Granville on 17 May 1964, survived by James who lived on until 26 December 1985.³²⁰



J. E. KRIBBE

KOKKINN, ARNLIOT (ARNOLD) GELINA BJORN (1897-1973)

(Service Number 1882)

Notwithstanding his Norwegian name and lineage, Arnliot Kokkinn (also spelt Kokkin) was born at Brisbane on 30 August 1897. Standing 170 centimetres tall, with grey eyes, brown hair, a sallow complexion, and describing himself as a labourer, Kokkinn enlisted in the AIF in Brisbane on 20 December 1915. He embarked for overseas service on RMS *Mooltan* in Sydney on 12 April 1916, and after undergoing further training in England, Kokkinn was posted to the 4th Pioneers Battalion (2nd Reinforcements) in May. Shortly after crossing the Channel to France, however, he was transferred to the 48th Battalion. On either 6 or 8 August Kokkinn was struck in the neck by an enemy bullet, a non-fatal wound that was successfully treated in France. He apparently made the most of his recuperation and leave, contracting venereal disease from a prostitute in Le Havre, and receiving on-going treatment during the second half of 1917. Kokkinn survived the fighting of the following year physically unscathed, and with the war over he took advantage of his overseas service by going AWOL on a number of occasions during 1919. He returned to Australia on the *Argyllshire* in September 1919 and was discharged from the AIF on 16 November of that year.³²¹



Just ten days later Kokkinn married Rose Ann Mills in Brisbane, a union which produced two sons: Bernard (1922-1988) and Arnold James (c.1924-1926).³²² Although Kokkinn's application for the 12.5 hectares of Portion 116 in the Parish of Buaraba, Coominya, was accepted by the Land Court at Ipswich on 2 August 1921,³²³ little is known of the couples' residence at Coominya. They were certainly highly-regarded by their fellow veterans, for when Kokkinn met with an accident while visiting Ipswich late in May 1921 the soldier settlement community began a subscription list for the family's benefit.³²⁴ Portion 116 was surrendered on 17 May 1923. In June 1924 Kokkinn successfully applied for the 127 hectares of Portion 141 on Ridglands Soldier Settlement at Morinish, near Rockhampton.³²⁵ Access to his land across Louisa Creek was nevertheless difficult, and in May 1925 Kokkinn complained to Fitzroy Shire Council, which was responsible for local infrastructure. He was advised that the estimated cost of providing a crossing was £17/10s, and that the council was prepared to pay that amount to Kokkinn if he completed the work himself 'to the satisfaction of the Overseer'.³²⁶ Whether he did so is not known. The following year the family left Central Queensland for Lismore in northern New South Wales, where their second son, Arnold James, died. They remained in northern New South Wales. Rose Ann died at Murwillumbah on 1 July 1958: Arnliot Kokkinn died at South Grafton on 23 September 1973, and was buried in the Clarence Lawn Cemetery.³²⁷

KOKKINN, CHARLES FRITZOF (1895-1959)

(Service Numbers 1754 and Q149176)

Close relative of Arnliot Kokkinn (or Kokkin), Charles was born at Brisbane on 1 January 1895. Describing himself as a farmhand, Kokkinn appears to have worked at a number of labouring jobs, including as a rouseabout for Wirth's Circus. He remained a bachelor. Kokkinn enlisted in the AIF at Brisbane on 1 April 1916. Of small stature, standing only 160 centimetres tall, he had grey eyes, brown hair and a fresh complexion. Kokkinn departed from Sydney for overseas service on the SS *Hawkes Bay* just nineteen days after enlisting, and while undergoing training at Rolleston in England he found himself in trouble for overstaying a leave pass, an offence he repeated the next month. Kokkinn arrived in France in December 1916 and was posted to the 49th Battalion (2nd Reinforcements). In January 1917 he was briefly hospitalised with an unspecified illness, but his next experience of hospital was far more frightening. On 29 March 1917 Kokkinn was struck in the right shoulder by an enemy bullet, and although the wound was considered to be 'slight' he was invalided back to England for treatment.³²⁸

After returning to France he was hospitalised again in July 1917 — this time with trench fever — by which time it was clear to medical authorities that Kokkinn's health was failing. Sent back to Australia for debility and rest, he embarked on HS *A64* only to have the voyage broken in South Africa, where he was admitted to No.2 General Hospital at Maitland. He finally reached Australia on HMT *Benalla* and was discharged from the AIF on 5 December 1917.³²⁹

By 1919 he was living in South Brisbane, but in early 1921 Kokkinn took up Portion 117 in the Parish of Buaraba, Coominya, a block bordering that of Arnliot Kokkinn. His health was still poor, evidenced by the fact that much of the work on Portion 117 was undertaken by others, mostly wider family members. Although Kokkinn did receive a part-payment for fencing in March 1922,³³⁰ the work was clearly too difficult; the block was either abandoned or surrendered shortly afterwards. By 1925 Kokkinn was back in South Brisbane, where he remained until at least 1928. His health may have improved, for after war was declared in 1939 Kokkinn enlisted in the Citizen Military Forces. In 1943 he was living in Boundary Road, Darra, though by 1954 he had moved to Bribie Island north of Brisbane. Kokkinn was still living on Bribie Island in 1958, and when he died on 29 November the following year it was likely to have been his final resting place.³³¹

LEACH, LEONARD DOUGLAS (1898-1987)

(Service Number 2789)

A journalist and author, Leonard Douglas Leach was born at Marylebone in London, England, on 28 September 1898, third son of Percy and Kate Leach who conducted a successful fruit business in High Street. Leonard Leach enlisted in the London Regiment when war broke out in 1914, later taking advantage of Queensland's soldier settlement scheme which welcomed British war veterans. He sailed from London on the Orient liner *Ormonde* on 20 March 1920, and after arriving in Brisbane successfully applied for Portion 109 in the Parish of Buaraba, Coominya. Leach had settled on his block by April 1921. However, little work was actually performed and the lease on Portion 109 was cancelled in April 1922. By February 1925 Leach was at St John in New Brunswick, Canada, where he embarked on the liner *Montcalm* bound for Liverpool in England. April 1928 saw Leach sailing from Liverpool to New York, returning to England by 1935 for his marriage to Christine Robinson in London. The couple had two children, Christine (b.1936) and John (b.1939), both of whom were born at Edmonton in London. Remarkably little is known of Leach's publications, largely because the bulk of his contributions appeared in ephemeral magazines and journals. Many were written anonymously, including the numerous short stories he wrote for the British boys' paper, *Boys Broadcast*, in the 1930s. He also used the pen-name 'Douglas Leach', particularly with the numerous western serials he contributed to *Radio Fun* in the 1940s and 1950s. Between 1961 and 1973 Leach wrote many texts for British war comics such as *Battle Picture Library*, *Air Ace*, *War at Sea* and *Giant*. As commissions for these began to dry up from the late 1960s he co-wrote three novels with Robert Hale: *The Man on the Marsh* (1969); *The Big Boys* (1970); and *Three for a Killing* (1971). The last work Leach completed for a *Battle Picture Library* comic appeared in September 1973, at which time he was 75 years of age — apparently marking his retirement. Christine (senior) died in 1982, and Leonard Leach passed away at either Kingsbridge or Salcombe in Devon on 14 December 1987. Despite his relative obscurity today, the pen for Leach had indeed proved far mightier than either the sword or ploughshare in his own lifetime.³³²

LIVETT, ANDREW (1891-1966)

(Service Number 3135)

Born at Glasgow, Scotland, in 1891, Andrew Livett married Jeanie Ramsay Clarkson Hay in her home town of Falkirk in Stirlingshire, Scotland, on 11 June 1909. The couple had five children: James (b.1910); Thomas Hay (1912-1986); Mary Shaw Stewart (1916-1992); Andrew Hay (1920-2001) and Margaret (1922-1924). The first two children were born in Scotland and accompanied their parents when they boarded the liner *Paparoa* in London on 17 September 1913 bound for Brisbane. The family settled at North Ipswich, where Livett found work as a labourer until enlisting in the AIF at Brisbane on 4 October 1915 at the age of 25. At that time he was 167 centimetres in height, with blue eyes, brown hair and a fair complexion.³³³



Livett was initially sent to Egypt where he joined the 49th Battalion and served as batman to Lieutenant J.V. Atkinson. The pair became good friends. On 5 June 1916 the 49th Battalion embarked at Alexandria bound for Marseillaise in France, where Livett blemished his military record and forfeited four days' pay for being absent from parade. The unit's first experience of trench warfare was at Fleurbaix, and a month later they were in action at Pozieres where heavy losses were sustained. Mouquet Farm and Ypres followed before the 49th returned to the Somme at Flers. It was here that Lieutenant Atkinson and his batman were called away to Etaples, where Atkinson received further instructional training. The pair re-joined their battalion on 28 February 1917 in time for major engagements at Norleu, Bullecourt and Messines. Livett was then granted leave in England where he probably contracted venereal disease in August 1917. Prior to Livett's return Atkinson had been promoted to captain and he also departed for leave in England. Atkinson and Livett were again with the 49th Battalion when they defended Amiens and Dernacourt during the German offensive in March 1918. It was at the latter location that Atkinson was wounded by a sniper's bullet two metres from his batman. The pair waited until dusk before attempting to reach medical help, but as Livett assisted Atkinson to safety a second bullet struck the captain. It was a mortal wound. By that time the pair had been involved in eleven major engagements in France and Belgium, but unlike Captain Atkinson, Livett survived the war. In March 1919 he was hospitalised again, this time with appendicitis, and the following month Livett returned to Australia on the *Armagh* and received his discharge from the AIF.³³⁴

On 25 June 1921 Livett signed an undertaking for the 10 hectares of Portion 118 in the Parish of Buaraba, Coominya. That same month he commenced the task of clearing, while fellow veteran William Themor began enclosing the block with fencing in October. At the same time, D. Clark erected the Livett family's permanent home. James Gutteridge was hired in November to begin ploughing — which was just as well,³³⁵ because Livett and his wife had their hands full after their eldest son James was seriously injured by an exploding pea-rifle, an incident previously mentioned.³³⁶

The first half of 1922 found Livett continuing with his clearing and root running, and it was not until the following August that he was in a position to take over the ploughing and harrowing. The family persevered throughout 1923,³³⁷ with Livett one of twenty soldier settlers in April of that year who made a decision to stay on at Coominya pending revaluation and increased areas.³³⁸ By May Portions 116 and 117 had been added to Livett's original holding, but it soon became apparent there would be no revaluation and that he would incur the debts existing on the additional areas. Although their last-born child, Margaret, died in Brisbane in 1924, the Livett family accepted a transfer to Jambin in the Callide Valley where they had settled on a selection at Bell's Creek, five kilometres from the township, by July of that year.³³⁹ On the night of 31 December 1924 Jacob Hundtoft's general store was struck by lightning and burnt to the ground, and during the magisterial inquiry into the accident in February 1925 Hundtoft stated that on the night in question he and a number of others were at Andrew Livett's farmhouse.³⁴⁰ Although it is not known when the family left Jambin, they had certainly returned to Brisbane long before Andrew Livett died in the city in 1966. Jeanie Livett outlived her husband by two decades, passing away at Brisbane in 1986.³⁴¹

MACDONALD, ALAN THOMAS RHIND (1899-1980)

(Service Number 21816)

A tall young man standing 186 centimetres in height, Alan Macdonald enlisted in the AIF at Brisbane on 7 April 1917. With grey eyes, brown hair and a dark complexion, Macdonald was 18 years of age and a carpenter by trade. He had made a previous effort to join up but had been rejected for being under-age, and to strengthen his case on the second occasion Macdonald persuaded his father to sign a consent form (his mother was deceased). Born at Toowoomba on 25 May 1899, Macdonald boarded the HMAT *Runic* in Sydney on 22 March 1918 as a reinforcement for the field engineers. He no sooner reached England, however, than he was hospitalised with influenza and did not re-join his unit until June. The following month Macdonald was transferred to the Signals Corps and stationed at various postings around England for the remainder of the war, his one major achievement being a promotion to corporal. As a late enlistee Macdonald was forced to wait until November 1919 before returning to Australia on the HT *Nestor*, receiving his discharge from the AIF on 9 January 1920.³⁴²

On 8 February 1921 Macdonald married Rotha Sylvia Elliott Powell in Brisbane, with two children later born to the couple: Joyce Audrey (b.1923) and Alan Robert (b. 12 January 1928). Then, on 23 March 1921, Macdonald signed an undertaking for Portion 137 in the Parish of Wivenhoe at Coominya. Sidney Fox began ploughing the block in July while Macdonald was root running in August and planting grape cuttings in September. More grape cuttings were obtained in October, though when these were planted is unclear. The first few months of 1922 were mostly spent clearing, with Macdonald taking over the ploughing from February. But it soon came to an end. The lease of Portion 137 was surrendered on 16 June 1922 and the couple left Coominya behind them. Nothing further is known of either Macdonald or his spouse until his death in Brisbane during 1980.³⁴³

MACFARLANE, JOHN (1897-1965)

(Service Number 38265)

John Macfarlane is a somewhat shadowy figure, and although listed as a soldier settler at Coominya there is no evidence that he actually took up any land. A clerk by occupation, Macfarlane was born at Ipswich in Queensland on 8 March 1897, and was still living there when he enlisted in the AIF on 16 March 1917. Standing 177 centimetres tall, he had blue eyes, black hair and a dark complexion. Posted to the 14th/31st Battalion of the field artillery as a driver, Macfarlane boarded the *Canberra* in Sydney on 16 November 1917 and arrived at Southampton in England at the end of January 1918. Crossing to France the following March, Macfarlane's record of service thereafter becomes scanty until he contracted 'Spanish' Influenza barely a week before the Armistice. He returned to Australia on the *Port Denison* on 25 March 1919 and was discharged from the AIF two months later.³⁴⁴

In 1921 Macfarlane was residing in Brisbane's inner western suburb of Taringa, and while he made an application for Portion 113 in the Parish of Wivenhoe at Coominya, it is unlikely that he ever left the city. Portion 113 was partly cleared by W.J. Phillips before being taken up by fellow veteran Frank McCaffrey in January 1922.³⁴⁵ On 9 July 1924 Macfarlane married Gladys May Morrow in Brisbane, with the couple remaining childless. From 1925 they were residents of Taringa, and after Gladys died on 30 October 1935 Macfarlane apparently remained in the suburb until at least 1958. Indeed, he may have still been there when he died on 4 July 1965, as his place of death was merely recorded as 'Brisbane'.³⁴⁶

McCAFFREY, FRANK MM (1899-1980)

(Service Numbers 6127 and QX2954)

Born in Charleville in far south-western Queensland, Frank McCaffrey was working as a fencer in Central Queensland when he enlisted in the AIF at Emerald on 5 October 1916. Claiming to be 18 years of age at the time, he later stated that he had actually been aged 15 years and 3 months. This was probably a slight exaggeration. However, as his exact date of birth in 1899 is not recorded, the reality is that he was probably aged somewhere between the two. The one certainty is that McCaffrey was definitely below the minimum legal age for recruitment into the AIF. Standing 167 centimetres tall, he had grey eyes, brown hair and a fresh complexion when he fronted the recruitment officer in Emerald.³⁴⁷

Embarking at Brisbane on the *Marathon* on 27 October 1916, McCaffrey arrived at Plymouth in England and was marched in to the 7th Training Battalion based at Rolleston. He proceeded to France in April 1917 with the 26th Infantry Battalion, but his military record is patchy and confused until August 1918,³⁴⁸ when Allied forces launched their Hundred Days Offensive which ultimately brought the war to an end. The 26th Battalion led the 7th Brigade attack around Villers Bretonneux, and on 6 August McCaffrey's platoon was pinned down by withering fire from a German machine-gun nest. McCaffrey went forward alone, killing the three-man crew with bombs and capturing the machine-gun intact. He then continued to bomb his way along the enemy trench, playing a major role in the capture of fifteen enemy soldiers. For his bravery the former fencer was later awarded the Military Medal, but as his citation made clear it was not the only time that McCaffrey had excelled himself. On a second occasion he moved forward with a Lewis gun after all other members of his section had either been killed or wounded, directing his fire against the enemy so effectively that the Australian line was able to continue its advance.³⁴⁹

And he was lucky, for McCaffrey managed to avoid physical injury until the Armistice. Then, on 31 January 1919, he married restaurant waitress Helen Douglas Gorrie French in her home town of Dundee in Scotland. The couple were destined to have five children, none of whom were particularly long-lived: Agnes Douglas (1920-1923); Jean Douglas (1922-1925); Mary Douglas (1924-1939); Malcolm Noel (1926-1985); and Frank Robert (b.1930). The newlyweds sailed to Australia on the *Ceramic*, where they arrived in Brisbane on 3 October 1919.³⁵⁰ McCaffrey had named his sister Jean as next-of-kin when he enlisted in the AIF and it must have come as something of a shock to learn that on 23 January 1921, when 17-year-old Jean was employed as a governess on Logan Downs Station near Clermont, she had drowned in a lagoon on the property.³⁵¹ Then again, death appeared to stalk McCaffrey's own nuclear family.

On 24 January 1922 McCaffrey signed an undertaking for the 8 hectares of Portion 113 in the Parish of Wivenhoe at Coominya, his application formally accepted the following month. This block had previously been allocated to fellow veteran John MacFarlane and partly cleared by W.J. Phillips, but almost immediately McCaffrey began clearing additional land. H. Jorgensen erected the family home the following month, and by May McCaffrey was busy with fencing. In July 1922 he planted grape cuttings, and was ploughing and harrowing in October and November. Clearing again occupied much of McCaffrey's time during 1923, though it was clearly a losing battle. On 15 October of that year he surrendered the lease of

Portion 113 after accepting a transfer north to the Callide Valley.³⁵² On 60.7 hectares of open forest country adjoining Washpool Gully near Biloela, McCaffrey first grew cotton, before branching into dairy cattle. He planted a citrus orchard and grapes and also raised Berkshire pigs. By May 1926 he was doing particularly well and had become a pillar in the local community. The former fencer was serving as chairman of the Biloela School of Arts Committee and the football and tennis clubs, as well being a member of the Biloela Amateur Race and Cricket Clubs and the Local Producers' Association.³⁵³ A founding member of the Biloela branch of the Australian Labor Party, he also served as secretary of the local branch of the RSSILA.³⁵⁴ Later he was on the Callide Valley District Hospital committee, an official in the Amateur Boxing Association, and a member of the Callide Dairyman's Association.³⁵⁵ If this was not enough, McCaffrey also gained renown as a well-sinker, providing many farms throughout the district with a permanent source of water.³⁵⁶

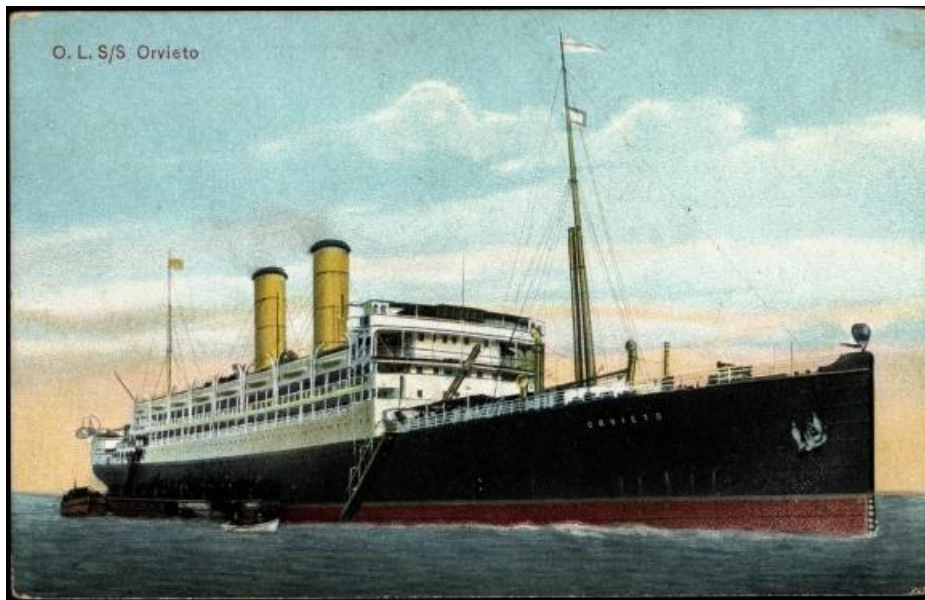
McCaffrey and his wife had experienced tragedy with the loss of their first-born children Agnes and Jean, and on 7 July 1937 Helen, who was two years her husband's senior and actively involved in local charities as well as the local branch of the RSSILA, died in the Callide Valley District Hospital at Biloela.³⁵⁷ Then, on 21 March 1939, the couple's third child Mary (also known as 'Maisie'), died in Rockhampton General Hospital 'after a long and painful illness'.³⁵⁸ Despite these personal misfortunes, McCaffrey did not hesitate when war broke out again in 1939, enlisting in the Second AIF at Rockhampton on 26 January 1940. But whereas he had raised his age to join up in 1916, he now reduced it by claiming to have been born in June 1905. His military experience nevertheless stood him in good stead, with McCaffrey promoted to lance-corporal in April 1940, full corporal in July and acting-sergeant in October. He had briefly returned to Biloela on home leave in June and received a rousing farewell from the local community, indicative of the high-standing with which he was held. Embarking for overseas service on 3 February 1941, McCaffrey was promoted to full sergeant the following month. However, unlike his exemplary record in the first global conflict, the former Coominya soldier settler twice received a severe reprimand from his commanding officer after first skipping parade and then going AWOL.³⁵⁹

McCaffrey returned to Australia in February 1943 and was finally discharged from the Second AIF on 28 August 1945. Interestingly, when he had enlisted in 1940 McCaffrey had stated his occupation as farm labourer rather than farmer.³⁶⁰ This could have meant that his circumstances had taken a turn for the worse, and although he probably returned to Biloela after demobilisation McCaffrey later moved to Brisbane. Around 1952 he married Dorothy Rita Higgins. McCaffrey died in Brisbane in 1980, and was laid to rest in Mount Gravatt Cemetery on the city's southside.³⁶¹

McCUE, EDWARD JOSEPH (1889-1954)

(Service Number unknown)

The son of a coal miner, it is not surprising that Edward McCue followed his father Hugh underground. Born at Rutherford in Lanarkshire, Scotland in 1889, McCue is known to have served in the British Army during World War One, but identifying his unit has proved an impossible task. Seven Edward McCue's are recorded in the British military records, three of whom were in Scottish regiments. Indeed, the Edward McCue who took up Portion 111 in the Parish of Buaraba, Coominya, has proved to be a remarkably elusive character. It is known that he married Ellen Duffy in 1902 at Gorbals in Glasgow, with four children born to the couple: Neil (1904-1973); Hugh (1906-1955); Edward (b.1910) and Winifred (b.1915). All four children were born in Scotland. On 17 September 1921 the family boarded the Orient liner *Orvieta* in London with Brisbane as their destination port. In 1922-1923 they were farming on their soldier settlement block at Coominya, transferring north to Jambin in the Callide Valley on 9 January 1924 after they had successfully balloted for Portion 37 in the Parish of Earlsfield. Given the general lack of success that awaited former Coominya soldier settlers in the Callide Valley, Edward and Ellen McCue had probably returned to Brisbane long before Ellen's death on 8 June 1947. Edward was living in the inner city suburb of Paddington when he died on 3 January 1954, and it was left to eldest son Neil to settle his affairs. Both Edward and Ellen were laid to rest in Toowong Cemetery.³⁶²



THE LINER *ORVIETO* ON WHICH THE McCUE FAMILY MIGRATED TO QUEENSLAND IN 1921

McDONALD, VICTOR HAMILTON (1887-1953)

(Service Number 5389)

A seaman who became an infantryman and farmer before returning to maritime employment as a lighthouse-keeper, Victor Hamilton McDonald was born at Maryborough in Queensland on 25 June 1887. On 1 November 1911 McDonald married Constance Charlotte Weinheimer in Brisbane, with six children (including twins) subsequently born to the couple: Edward Victor (1912-1955); Florence Frances and Henry Shaw (b.1914); Ruby May (b.1917-d.1917); George Phillip (1918-1919); and Charles William (1925-2007). In 1918 the family was living in the inner Brisbane suburb of Spring Hill when McDonald enlisted in the AIF on 23 January. He was then 31 years of age, stood 171 centimetres tall, and had blue eyes, brown hair and a ruddy complexion.³⁶³

McDonald embarked on the *Ormonde* at Sydney in March as a member of the 15th Reinforcements for the 31st Battalion in the Middle East. But no sooner had he arrived in Egypt than McDonald was admitted to the Segregation Hospital with mumps. He was readmitted to hospital just a few weeks later with measles before finally re-joining his unit. In May 1918 McDonald was transferred from Suez to Alexandria and embarked on the *Indarra* for Southampton in England. While undergoing further training at Codford in Wiltshire he was admitted to hospital once again — this time with venereal disease. McDonald was transferred to Parkhouse and appears to have still been in England when the war reached its conclusion. He returned to Australia at the end of January 1919 and was discharged from the AIF on 17 March.³⁶⁴

Although McDonald's application for the 12 hectares of Portion 123 in the Parish of Wivenhoe, Coominya, was accepted on 2 August 1921,³⁶⁵ he might not have taken it up. However, when T. Johnson surrendered Portion 122 on 21 July 1922 it was immediately allotted to McDonald. Johnson had cleared, fenced, ploughed and planted citrus trees on the block, but a large number of the latter had been destroyed through want of attention. McDonald began replanting,³⁶⁶ and electoral records confirm the family's residence at Coominya up to at least mid-1925. They probably left later that year, as McDonald was working as a labourer at Urangan, Hervey Bay, in 1926.³⁶⁷ The family's fortunes were soon to change.

By 1928 McDonald had secured the position of lighthouse-keeper at Inskip Point, where the family remained until at least 1934.³⁶⁸ By December 1944 they were at the North Head Lighthouse off Bowen, but the following year returned south to Tinana on the outskirts of Maryborough. In February 1952 McDonald and his wife were living at 79 Dundas Street, Granville (Maryborough). On 15 March 1953 Victor McDonald died in Brisbane, where he may have been under treatment for a serious illness. Constance McDonald remained at Maryborough, where she died on 17 December 1969. Three of their children (including Florence) had followed in their father's footsteps and served in the Australian military forces during the Second World War. Eldest son Edward had the misfortune to be seriously injured in a training accident and was discharged from the Second AIF before proceeding overseas.³⁶⁹



V. H. Mc Donald

McROBBIE, ALEXANDER (1878-1961)

(Service Number 2705)

The second of thirteen children born to railway guard Alexander McRobbie (Sen.) and his wife Agnes, McRobbie first worked as a grocer's messenger before becoming a joiner and carpenter. Born at Aberdeen in Scotland in 1878, he migrated to Australia on the *Orotava* and arrived in Brisbane on 21 June 1907. McRobbie was 38 years of age and employed as a carpenter when he enlisted in the AIF on 24 June 1915. With blue eyes, brown hair and a fresh complexion, he stood 172 centimetres tall. McRobbie arrived on the island of Lemnos in November 1915, too late to take part in the Gallipoli campaign, and after returning to Alexandria in Egypt he was attached to the 49th Battalion. Shipped to Marseillaise in France, McRobbie was briefly invalided to England in May 1917 with an unspecified illness before re-joining his unit. In August 1917 he was temporarily transferred to the 52nd Battalion, though it was not until May 1918 that McRobbie returned to the 49th. Seven days later, however, he was detailed to the 4th Machine-Gun Battalion, remaining with this unit for the duration of the war. Despite one charge for going AWOL in December 1916, McRobbie was promoted to acting-corporal by the time of the Armistice. He returned to Australia on the HT *Warwickshire* in April 1919 and was discharged from the AIF three months later.³⁷⁰

Later in 1919 McRobbie was living at Bundaberg, presumably with or close by his younger brother George, who had also migrated to Australia.³⁷¹ He had nevertheless returned south by July 1922 after taking up Portion 110 in the Parish of Wivenhoe on the Coominya Soldier Settlement. Over the next few months McRobbie was kept busy clearing, root running, ploughing and harrowing. In August 1922 he procured 2,000 grape cuttings, though when these were planted is not clear. He persevered with his holding until December 1923,³⁷² when McRobbie successfully balloted for Portion 26 in the Parish of Earlsfield near Jambin in the Callide Valley.³⁷³ In company of a number of other disillusioned soldier settlers, McRobbie left Coominya on 9 January 1924 to begin life anew.³⁷⁴ Unfortunately, he fared no better. By 1925 he was living at Mount Morgan before moving to Gladstone prior to 1930. McRobbie remained at Gladstone until at least 1943. In 1958, however, he had settled in Rockhampton,³⁷⁵ where he died on 12 November 1961 and was buried in North Rockhampton Cemetery two days later. Whether being the second of thirteen children had any bearing on his outlook on life can only be guessed, but McRobbie never entered into wedlock.³⁷⁶

MOLONEY, ANDREW FRANCIS (1891-1954)

(Service Numbers 9037 and 159886)

An Irishman born at Ennis in County Clare on 30 July 1891, Andrew Moloney was employed as a clerk prior to 1914. With the outbreak of war he initially served in the Royal Munster Fusiliers before being transferred to the Machine-Gun Corps (resulting in a second service number). Unlike so many others, Moloney survived the conflict physically unscathed, and around 1919 he married Johanna Brien in her home town of Wexford, Ireland, a marriage that produced six children: Catherine Mary (1920-1994); Thomas Patrick (1922-1973); Eileen Teresa (1925-2008); Kevin Bernard (1927-2006); James Connolly (1930-1972); and Liam Mellows (b.1932).³⁷⁷

With their first-born child, Andrew and Johanna Moloney migrated to Queensland, boarding the Aberdeen Liner *Themistocles* in London on 2 July 1921.³⁷⁸ Little time was wasted, as Moloney signed an undertaking for Portion 97 in the Parish of Buaraba at Coominya on 11 October 1921. He began clearing his block the same month. Fellow soldier settler Alan Macdonald began erecting the family's home in December, building work completed by D. Clark. The couple's second child, Thomas, was born at Coominya on 6 January 1922, and Moloney continued clearing and preparing his land throughout the year and into 1923. From July 1922 he was in a position to take over the ploughing, and Moloney purchased and planted citrus trees at the same time. But by early 1923 circumstances were weighing heavily against the former fusilier and he surrendered the lease of Portion 97 on 18 May of that year.³⁷⁹

By 1926 the growing family was living at Given Terrace in the inner Brisbane suburb of Red Hill, where Moloney was working as a window dresser. He was still employed as a window dresser and living at the same address in mid-1928,³⁸⁰ following which the family relocated to Sydney where they settled permanently. Andrew Moloney died in the suburb of Chatswood on 16 October 1954; Johanna survived until Christmas Day 1975, passing away at Auburn.³⁸¹

MONEY, GEORGE MARSTON (c.1860-1947)

(Service Number unknown)

Twice-married George Marston Money was born 'about 1860' in the Oxfordshire town of Woodstock, England. On 24 April 1886 he married Emily Alice Hanwell in his home town, a union that produced eight children: George Knapp (1886-1961); Emily Alice (1889-1893); Harry Beach (b. 5 January 1891); Muriel Rose (b.1893); Cyril Duncan (1898-1981); Percy Arthur (1900-1967); Marston (b.1901); and Jessie Freda (1904-1967). In 1911 Money was employed as a relieving officer in local government, with the family then living at Islington in London. Money was doing well enough to hire a live-in housekeeper named Florence May Cant, but all was not well. Around this time Money's wife Emily was committed to a local asylum where she died in 1925. By 1913 Money had migrated to Queensland with his children and housekeeper, settling temporarily at Bundamba before moving to Drayton near Toowoomba where he found employment as an insurance agent. On 25 June 1915 he married Florence Cant, and two years later the family shifted to Ipswich where Money continued working as an insurance agent. In 1919 they had moved again, this time to the northern Brisbane suburb of Nundah.³⁸²

There is no record of Money having enlisted in the military during World War One. Given his age, however, it is quite possible that he had served in the British Army at a much earlier period. He certainly qualified as a soldier settler, signing an undertaking for the 11 hectares of Portion 158 in the Parish of Wivenhoe, Coominya, on 24 September 1920. Although Money's application was not formally accepted by the Ipswich Land Court until 6 December 1921, he had occupied the block by August when clearing work was in progress. In September 1921 Money was ploughing and harrowing, and by the time his application was accepted he was planting grape cuttings. Clearing continued during 1922, and it was not until October of that year that Money planted the citrus trees supplied by H.N. Peterson. It seems that neither crop allowed Money to live up to his surname, and while he persevered throughout much of 1923 he did not hesitate to accept alternative land on the Atherton Tableland in North Queensland. Money and his family finally left Coominya on 4 October 1923.³⁸³ This again was clearly a mistake, for by 1925 they had returned to Brisbane and were living in the northern suburb of Kelvin Grove. Three years later they had moved to Normanby on the city's southside.³⁸⁴ Nothing further is known of George Marston Money until his death in Brisbane on 4 December 1947.³⁸⁵ He was by then around 87 years of age.

MOORE, WILLIAM JAMES (1886-1950)

(Service Number 751)

Born at Bronte in Sydney in 1886, William Moore spent his formative years in the Lake Bathurst district, 27 kilometres south of Goulburn, and later worked as a general labourer. Yet Moore was living in Brisbane when he enlisted in the AIF on 12 March 1917, and for some inexplicable reason he claimed to be 29 years of age when he was actually closer to 31. He was unmarried at the time and remained a bachelor for the rest of his life. Standing 171 centimetres tall, Moore had blue eyes, dark brown hair and a fresh complexion. Sent to the machine-gun depot at Seymour in Victoria for training, Moore was soon posted overseas, arriving at Port Said in Egypt towards the end of December 1917. In February 1918 he was in England, and four months later proceeded to France with the 11th Machine Gun Reinforcements. While there was still a great deal of bitter fighting ahead, there is no indication that Moore took part in any major engagement, and following the Armistice he had the unenviable task of burying decomposing bodies after being detached to the Australian Burial Corps in April 1919. Moore returned to England the following August, and sailed for Australia on the HT *Port Denison* in November. He was discharged from the AIF on 24 December 1919.³⁸⁶

Moore remained in Brisbane until signing an undertaking for the 12.5 hectares of Portion 107 in the Parish of Buaraba, Coominya, on 31 December 1920. Although his application was not formally accepted until 2 August 1921, Moore had been clearing the land from at least July. H. Jorgensen began erecting his house in August (completed by D. Clark in December), and while fellow veteran John Peppard began the ploughing that same month, Moore was occupied with root running. In September Peppard continued ploughing and harrowing, and Moore had turned his attention to fencing. The remainder of the year was largely spent clearing, a task which continued until August 1922, when Moore took over the ploughing and harrowing. Although there is no record of any crops being planted,³⁸⁷ presumably that had been accomplished as Moore remained on his soldier settlement block until 8 January 1924, leaving Coominya to take up Portion 46 in the Parish of Earlsfield near Jambin in the Callide Valley.³⁸⁸ He had successfully balloted for this alternative land in December 1923,³⁸⁹ and was among a number of other war veterans who were hoping that this more northerly location would deliver the rewards which had eluded them at Coominya. Most, including Moore, were soon to be disappointed. While Moore was still farming at Jambin in 1925, he was three times unlucky after deciding to try his hand on the Highlands Soldier Settlement at Samford near Brisbane later the same year.³⁹⁰ Many of the settlers had by then switched from dairying to growing bananas, for in 1925 prices rose substantially. So did the number of soldier settlers. In June 1925 there were twenty-six war veterans on the settlement, their numbers climbing to thirty-four the following year. In January 1926, however, the dreaded 'bunchy top' disease which had been devastating other banana-growing districts in Queensland and northern New South Wales made its first appearance on Highlands Soldier Settlement. By 1927 it had destroyed the crops to such an extent that only six soldier settlers were able to continue with bananas, while those who were able to do so returned to dairying. The rest packed up and left.³⁹¹ It is more than likely that Moore was among the latter group. By 1929 he was living in South Brisbane and again working as a wage labourer. He was still a resident of South Brisbane in 1943. Moore died in Brisbane on 13 March 1950.³⁹²

MORRIS, ERNEST CHILLMAN (1898-1982)

(Service Number 57984)

Born at Lambeth in London, England, on 5 January 1898, Ernest Morris left his native city when he was 17 years of age, disembarking from the *Limerick* in Brisbane on 10 December 1915. It was a rather odd time for a young lad approaching military age to leave England, and he was certainly in no hurry to enlist in the Australian forces either. Morris worked as a labourer until finally joining up in Brisbane on 21 June 1918. By then he was 20 years of age and stood 166 centimetres tall. Morris had blue eyes, fair hair and a fair complexion, and he sailed from Sydney to England on the HMAT *Borda* on 17 July of that year. Posted to the 15th Battalion in September, Morris's short military career alternated between ordinary private and driver, and it was in the latter capacity that he proceeded to France in January 1919. With the war over Morris had time to sample the countryside, albeit, while officially AWOL on two separate occasions. In May 1919 he also received treatment for venereal disease, but it all came to an end on 4 October when Morris disembarked from the *Ceramic* on Australian soil and was discharged from the AIF fifteen days later.³⁹³

On 4 September 1920 Morris married Victoria Lillian Seers in Brisbane, with an only son, Desmond Paul, subsequently born to the couple.³⁹⁴ On 5 May 1922 Morris was allotted Portion 111 in the Parish of Buaraba at Coominya, and commenced clearing the block the following month. In September he was ploughing, harrowing and root running, It turned out to be a relatively brief sojourn on the land, as Morris surrendered the lease of Portion 111 on 21 June 1923.³⁹⁵ Two years later he was living in the Brisbane suburb of Enoggera, and then came a long hiatus when he disappeared from the records until 1980, when he was residing in the Gympie district.³⁹⁶ But it was in Brisbane where he died on 15 January 1982. Victoria survived her husband until 1990, when she, too, died in Brisbane.³⁹⁷

MYLES, JOHN (1890-1957)

(Service Number unknown)

Although Irishman John Myles was born in 1890, little more is known of him until his arrival in Brisbane in 1920. That he served in the British Army during World War One can be accepted, but information relative to his military service has not been located. Myles was definitely in England after the Armistice, as he married Christina Doyle in Surrey in late 1919. Two children were born to the couple, neither of whom was destined to reach old age. Robert was born in Brisbane on 19 November 1920 and killed on 27 August 1942 during the fighting in Papua New Guinea as a member of the 61st Australian Infantry Battalion. Patricia Mary was also born in Brisbane, on 24 December 1924, and died there in 1974. Queensland was home to both as John Myles and his pregnant wife Christina had left London on the Aberdeen liner *Demosthenes* on 19 August 1920 bound for Brisbane.³⁹⁸

On 23 March 1921 Myles signed an undertaking for the 13 hectares of Portion 149 in the Parish of Wivenhoe, Coominya, his application formally accepted the following September. By then he had already begun clearing the native vegetation, and in July Myles had reached the stage of root running and fencing. He erected his own house by September, when he was able to turn his attention to planting grape cuttings on an area of land ploughed and harrowed by Sidney Fox. More grape vines were planted in October, though it was not until September 1922 that the citrus trees obtained from H.N. Peterson the previous month were finally planted. By then Myles had taken over the ploughing and harrowing from Fox, and despite the setbacks experienced during 1923 Myles managed to maintain his holding until 5 January 1924, when he appears to have accepted a transfer to alternative land in the Callide Valley, possibly taking up Portion 58 in the Parish of Earlsfield at Jambin.³⁹⁹ This was a far more successful venture than Coominya, for Myles was still farming there well into the 1940s. Their deceased son Robert is also commemorated on the war memorial at Biloela.⁴⁰⁰ By 1948, however, the remaining family had relocated to Yeppoon, north-east of Rockhampton, and it was there that both John and Christina Myles remained. John Myles died at Yeppoon on 7 December 1957, while Christina survived until 5 April 1965.⁴⁰¹

NEILL, WALTER THOMAS WAVERLEY (1885-1935)

(Service Number 4256)

A general labourer who experienced the tragic loss of three wives, one of whom died just five months after marriage, Walter Neill was born in the Melbourne suburb of Collingwood on 9 August 1885. He married Lillian Mary James from Kerang on 31 May 1909, who died on 31 October, ten days after giving birth to their son Charles Clifford. On 9 February 1911 Neill married Mabel Lydia Lottie Woods, who brought her own child, Ernest James (1908-1980), to the union. Then, on 6 December 1914, Mabel Neill died at Hotham in Victoria, and this may have prompted Neill to move north to Queensland. Both children appear to have either been placed with relatives or the authorities, as they remained in Victoria throughout their lives. Charles died at Bairnsdale in 1978 and Ernest at Geelong in 1980. They were certainly not with Neill when he enlisted in the AIF at Brisbane on 30 August 1915. With blue eyes, silver grey hair and a fair complexion, Neill was 168 centimetres tall, and embarked from Brisbane on the HMAT *Kyarra* on 3 January 1916. After training in England he was posted to the 9th Battalion and proceeded to France the following July. Promoted to lance-corporal in August, Neill was sent back in England for further training in October. On 15 December 1916 he married confectioner's assistant Ethel Elizabeth Ayres in London, but just 15 days later Neill was admitted to Parkhouse Military Hospital with venereal disease, and did not return to duty until April 1917. No doubt he had some serious explaining to do. Neill again proceeded to France in July of that year, and lost his lance-corporal stripe soon after arriving for being in possession of a false document. On 19 September he was badly gassed at the front, and while in hospital he received additional treatment for venereal disease. By then hostilities were drawing to a close, and Neill was forced to wait until April 1920 before he was returned to Australia with third wife Ethel on the *Honorata*, and was discharged from the AIF on 20 August of that year.⁴⁰²

Neill's application for the 14 hectares of Portion 115 in the Parish of Buaraba, Coominya, was formally accepted on 2 August 1921,⁴⁰³ at which time he commenced clearing operations. Capable of doing his own ploughing and harrowing, Neill began planting grape cuttings in September and was root running in October. He returned to clearing in November, a task which occupied much of his time until he resumed ploughing and harrowing in April 1922. Citrus trees were obtained from H.N. Peterson and planted in August. Neill continued with his work during the remainder of 1922 and throughout 1923, increasingly finding the situation becoming untenable. On 19 November 1923 he surrendered the lease of Portion 115 after accepting a transfer to the Callide Valley.⁴⁰⁴ Neill and his wife Ethel left Coominya in January 1924 to take up Portion 42 in the Parish of Earlsfield at Jambin.⁴⁰⁵ This time he achieved a measure of success. The couple were still farming at Jambin when Ethel died on 8 September 1933, but despite this devastating third marital blow Neill appears to have persevered on his soldier settlement block almost up to the time of his own death at Mount Morgan on 25 December 1935.⁴⁰⁶

NOLAN, WILLIAM (1890-1974)

(Service Number unknown)

William Nolan was one of a number of ex-British Army veterans who migrated to Queensland in the immediate post-war years to make a fresh start in life. Like Nolan, a number of those who failed at Coominya went on to succeed in their rural endeavours on better quality land elsewhere in the State. Born at Bradford in West Yorkshire, England, on 3 March 1890, Nolan married Mary Thirkill in their home town in 1913. The couple's first child, Teresa, was born on 23 December of that year (d.9 April 2002), and they were to have five more offspring: Eileen (1915-1999); Theresa May (1920-2003); Joan Margaret (1924-1999); Dorothy (b. 1926); and Maureen Philomena (b. 1928). A fresh start was made when the growing family boarded the Orient liner *Orsova* in London on 23 April 1920, with Brisbane as their destination.⁴⁰⁷

On 12 January 1921 Nolan signed an undertaking for Portion 145 in the Parish of Wivenhoe on Coominya Soldier Settlement, and by July he was ploughing and harrowing the land that had previously been cleared. In October Nolan purchased grape cuttings to begin his vineyard, but it was clearing and soil preparation which occupied the bulk of his time until June 1922. Citrus trees were obtained in July, thereby fulfilling his obligation to the Queensland Government. Moreover, despite escalating problems Nolan continued to work Portion 145 until the offer of alternative land on the Atherton Tableland in North Queensland left him with little choice if he wished to continue farming. The lease of his Coominya block was duly surrendered,⁴⁰⁸ and the Nolans left Coominya with five other soldier settlement families on 4 October 1923.⁴⁰⁹ They settled at Kairi, where successful Chinese tenant farmers had been evicted to allow war veterans to grow maize.⁴¹⁰ The couple's last three children were born at Atherton, the main service centre of the district, and Nolan is known to have continued farming at Kairi into the 1930s. Moreover, there is no reason to believe that Nolan and his wife Mary relocated anywhere until retiring to Cairns sometime prior to 1954. Mary died at Cairns on 13 January 1972, while William passed away two years later on 30 April 1974. Both were laid to rest in the local cemetery.⁴¹¹

PASHLEY, FREDERICK ERNEST (1878-1960)

(Service Number 1602)

After enlisting in the AIF at Brisbane on 14 October 1918, Frederick Pashley was far too late to see any action on the Western Front, but his war experience turned out to be quite different from so many others. Pashley was sent overseas to perform garrison duties in the former German territory of New Britain in the Pacific, which had been captured in 1914 by a combined Australian army and naval force. Born in South Brisbane on 12 December 1878, Pashley married Irish-born Mary McGuire at Walloon, just west of Ipswich, on 15 May 1901. The couple subsequently had five children, all but the first-born going on to enjoy lengthy lives: Frederick Ernest Kennedy (1902); Grace Ellen (1903-2001); William Bailey (1904-1994); Arthur James (1908-1989); and Agnes Mary (1912-2010).⁴¹²

Pashley had previously undertaken twelve months' service with the Scottish Volunteers in Brisbane prior to the First World War. Forty years of age and working as a labourer when he joined up in 1918, he stood 163 centimetres tall and had grey eyes, brown hair and a fair complexion. He embarked in Sydney on the SS *Melusia* and sailed for Kokopo in New Britain before reaching Rabaul on 13 January 1919. Pashley remained at Rabaul until the following September, by which time he had been appointed as a clerk in the Department of Public Works and received the princely sum of 7 shillings per day (regular privates in the AIF, including those who saw action on the Western Front and in the Middle East, received 6 shillings per day). Pashley returned to Australia on the SS *Melusia* and was discharged from the AIF on 5 December 1919.⁴¹³

His family was then living in the Nundah area (possibly at Boondall) in Brisbane's north.⁴¹⁴ On 13 November 1920 Pashley signed an undertaking for Portion 121 in the Parish of Wivenhoe at Coominya, and although his application for this soldier settlement block was not formally accepted until early August the following year, he had cleared some of the land by June 1921. D. Clark erected the family home at the same time, and the following month Pashley began ploughing and harrowing. His first plantings were made in August before returning to clearing work in September. More grape cuttings were purchased in October, and although Pashley continued to work his block into the following year, his time at Coominya was rapidly drawing to a close. When Pashley surrendered the lease of Portion 121 on 21 July 1922 it was allotted to war veteran T. Johnson.⁴¹⁵

By 1925 the Pashley family had settled in the northern Brisbane suburb of Boondall. As noted above they may have been residing at Boondall before their sojourn at Coominya, and they were certainly destined to remain in this suburb. Mary Pashley died there on 24 January 1944, with Frederick continuing to occupy the family home until his own death on 22 June 1960.⁴¹⁶



PEPPARD, JOHN AUGUSTUS (1878-1926)

(Service Number 449)

An experienced farmer who served in the Australian Light Horse, John Augustus Peppard was born at Tarrawingee, between Wangaratta and Beechworth in North-East Victoria, in 1878. He was the third and last child born to Michael and Elizabeth Peppard, as his father died in July 1881. Elizabeth then married John William in 1885, to whom she bore another five children, and the family later moved to Queensland where they settled at Kingaroy. John Peppard was obviously not with them, as he enlisted in the AIF at Sydney on 11 September 1914. He was then 33 years of age and unmarried (as he remained). Peppard was 172 centimetres tall, with grey eyes, black hair and a dark complexion. Embarking for overseas service in Sydney, Peppard reached Maadi in Egypt during May 1915 as a member of the 6th Light Horse Regiment. And unlike so many of his brothers-in-arms he did not participate in the Gallipoli campaign, remaining instead with the Allied forces battling their way northwards from the Egyptian frontier. Peppard was in Jerusalem in August 1918, and returned to Australia on the HT *Port Darwin* the following November. He was discharged from the AIF on 24 February 1919.⁴¹⁷

It may have been with the intention of being closer to his family that he signed an undertaking for Portion 105 in the Parish of Buaraba, Coominya, on 2 December 1920. By July 1921 he was clearing and fencing the block, and while Sidney Fox began the ploughing in August, Peppard was able to take over from him later the same month. In September fellow veteran Alan Macdonald began erecting his home, which was completed by D. Clark in December. It was in September that Peppard began planting grape cuttings, with more obtained the following month. Further clearing took place from November, occupying a considerable amount of Peppard's time until October 1922. If and when he planted citrus trees is not recorded, but if Peppard had relied solely on grapes he would already have been in serious trouble. Be that as it may, he managed to hang on for another five months, surrendering his lease on 23 March 1923.⁴¹⁸ Not that he was in a hurry to leave even then, as the available evidence suggests that Peppard remained in the Coominya area until at least 1925, following which he made his way back to Sydney and settled in the suburb of Randwick. He had little time to enjoy his new environs. Peppard died at Randwick on 23 November 1926 and was buried in the Catholic section of Rookwood Cemetery.⁴¹⁹

PITTER, CLARENCE ('JACK') (c.1895-1972)

(Service Number 397)

One of three Victorian-born brothers who, along with their father, fought in the First World War, Clarence 'Jack' Pitter beat the odds by enlisting in the AIF for a second time in 1917. Born at Flemington, Melbourne, around 1895, Pitter's family later moved to Brisbane where he initially found work as a general labourer. On 21 August 1914, and under the assumed Christian name of 'Jack' Pitter followed his older brother Raymond into the AIF, with both young men posted to the 9th Battalion which landed at Gallipoli on 25 April 1915. Raymond Pitter received a minor head wound during the landing, but after treatment on a hospital ship managed to re-join his unit. Then, on 31 May, 'Jack' Pitter's luck ran out when he was shot in the chest and invalided direct to England for treatment. He was still in England, and also receiving treatment for venereal disease, when Raymond arrived via Malta after receiving a severe gunshot wound to the neck at Gallipoli on 7 July 1915. Unlike Raymond, who recovered from his injury and returned to service, 'Jack' Pitter was invalided back to Australia on the *Star of England* and discharged from the AIF as medically unfit on 12 April 1916.⁴²⁰

Pitter moved back into the family home in the Brisbane suburb of Kangaroo Point and soon found work as a motorman (driver/mechanic). His 18-year-old brother Leslie enlisted in the AIF on 26 January 1917 and eventually rose to the rank of sergeant before returning to Australia after the war and a lengthy convalescence from the effects of 'Spanish' Influenza.⁴²¹ 'Jack' Pitter enlisted for the second time on 6 February 1917. He was then 23 years of age, stood 177 centimetres high and had blue eyes, dark brown hair and a dark complexion. Pitter was first posted to the 11th Depot Battalion before receiving training on medium trench mortars. But his war injury may have affected his health and he was discharged as medically unfit for a second time on 18 June 1917.⁴²² Pitter's father, William, was the last of the family to enlist in the AIF — on 26 April 1917 — and his military career was just as brief when he was discharged as medically unfit on 1 September 1917.⁴²³ Raymond Pitter, the first to enlist, returned to Australia on special leave in October 1918 and received his discharge from the AIF on 3 February the following year.⁴²⁴

'Jack' Pitter was the only member of the family to fancy a life on the land in the aftermath of war. His application for Portion 102 in the Parish of Buaraba, Coominya, was formally accepted on 2 August 1921,⁴²⁵ by which time he had begun clearing his soldier settlement block. Arthur Gutteridge commenced ploughing and harrowing in August, though this was briefly taken over by Pitter later in the month. He returned to clearing, a task which continued until all work appears to have come to a halt by February 1922. It was not until 26 July 1922, however, that Pitter surrendered the lease of Portion 102 and probably returned to his family in Brisbane.⁴²⁶ By 1925 he was definitely living with them in Hope Street, South Brisbane. Five years later Pitter made his way to Innisfail in North Queensland,⁴²⁷ though by June 1937 he was again in Brisbane and living in Frederick Street, Northgate.⁴²⁸ There is no reason to believe that Pitter again strayed away from Brisbane for any great length of time before his death in 1972. Unlike his brothers and fellow veterans Raymond and Leslie, Clarence 'Jack' Pitter never married.⁴²⁹

QUINNEY, ALFRED EDWARD (1888-1935)

(Service Number 36030)

Born at Battersea in London in 1888, and baptised on 4 November of that year, Alfred Quinney was employed as a lift attendant in his home town in 1911. On 7 April the following year he married Matilda Elizabeth Morris in St Bartholomew (now Saint Philip and St Bartholomew) Church at Battersea, a union which ultimately produced ten children, four of whom did not reach adulthood: Daisy Elizabeth (1914-1988); Eveline Dorothy (1915-1918); Primrose Phyllis (1917-1918); Charlotte Cecelia (1918); Matilda (1920); Violet Daphne (1922-2010); Cecil Herbert (1924-1984); Myrtle May (1926-1997); Raymond Oliver (1932-1999); and Bernard Arthur (1934-2012).⁴³⁰

In October 1916 Quinney was 28 years of age and living at Upper Norwood in south-east London, where he was working as a time-keeper. Rather than volunteering, he was probably conscripted into the British Army, and despite his preference for the 5th Lancers, Quinney was posted to the Essex Regiment. Like so many others Quinney and his wife Matilda were probably anxious to escape post-war Britain, no doubt exacerbated by the deaths of three of their first four children, and arrived in Brisbane on the liner *Osterley* in 1920.⁴³¹

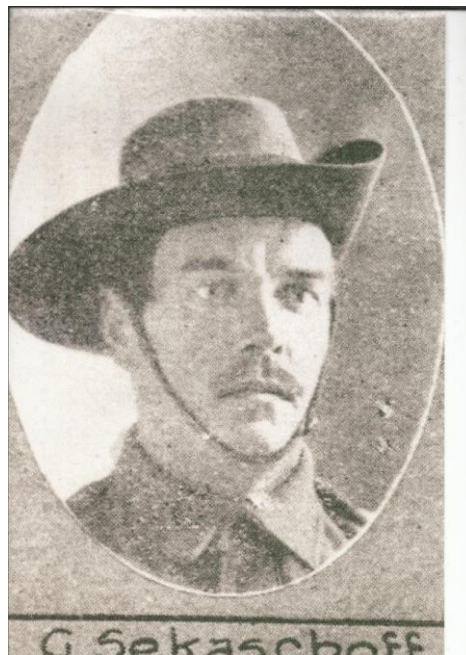
On 2 December 1920 Quinney signed an undertaking for Portion 136 in the Parish of Buaraba at Coominya, and by June the following year clearing work had begun. At the same time D. Clark erected the family home. In July just over two hectares (5 acres) was ready for ploughing, which Quinney carried out himself in August, shortly after his application for the soldier settlement block had formally been accepted by the Land Court in Ipswich. After completing the ploughing and harrowing in September Quinney resumed clearing additional land, a task which occupied much of his time until May 1922. When and what crops were planted is not recorded, but as Quinney did not surrender Portion 136 until 27 November 1923 it suggests that he may have at least been tending a citrus orchard.⁴³² And despite the fact that successful farming on the soldier settlement had proved so elusive, Quinney and his family remained at Coominya until 1925 after he found work in the township as a storeman. Two children, Violet and Cecil, were born at Coominya in 1922 and 1924 respectively.⁴³³

In 1926, however, the family had moved north to Mount Morgan near Rockhampton, where Quinney worked as a labourer. Given his war experience it may have proved too much, for the family had returned to Brisbane by 1928 and were living in Tingal Road, Wynnum North, where they remained until 1931. Then came the final move to Frederick Street in Ipswich.⁴³⁴ They would go no further, as Albert Quinney died at Ipswich on 24 October 1935. Whether his premature demise was attributable to his war service can only be surmised, and although it would have certainly made life extremely difficult for Matilda, who had given birth to their last child only the year before, she did not remarry until 1943 or 1944. Her second husband, Rudolph Carl Trost died on 4 December 1962, while Matilda survived until 1975.⁴³⁵

SEKACHOFF, GEORGE PETER (1893-1945)

(Service Number 2208)

Also spelt Sekaschoff, little is known of George Sekachoff's early life, except that he was born in the Russian city of Saransk on the Volga River basin on 7 March 1893. When and how he came to Australia is similarly unclear, but as with the majority of Russian emigres in Queensland Sekachoff was largely restricted to manual labour as the only means of survival. Thus, it was no surprise that when he enlisted in the AIF at Townsville on 8 March 1915 Sekachoff listed his occupation as 'labourer'. Standing 173 centimetres tall, 22-year-old Sekachoff had blue eyes, dark brown hair and a fair complexion. He also belonged to the Greek Orthodox faith. Embarking for overseas service in June 1915 as a member of the 9th Battalion, Sekachoff soon found himself being transferred from one unit to another. In March 1916, for example, he was transferred to the 49th Battalion based at Tel-el-Kebir in Egypt. Sekachoff had no sooner settled in before he was posted to the 4th Division Artillery, ending up in the 44th Battery before the month was out. The following month found Sekachoff with the 11th Battery at Serapeum, but a week after crossing the Mediterranean to Marseillaise in France in June 1916 he was again with the 44th Battery. Sekachoff appears to have remained in this unit until he was hospitalised with venereal disease in October 1917. After treatment he was once again shuffled through a number of postings until September 1918, when Sekachoff was transferred to AIF Headquarters in London for return to Australia. George Sekachoff's name is amongst a list of Russian Anzacs who were said to have been purged from the 4th Division 'on account of their Russian nationality' after the Russian Revolution of October 1917 when Russia made peace with Germany. A secret circular was issued by 4th Army Headquarters stating 'It has been reported that in some units there are serving a certain number of men of Russian nationality whose loyalty to the British is suspected'.⁵⁵⁴



Briefly appointed as a saddler, he managed to reach his adopted homeland in December and was discharged from the AIF on 23 February 1919.⁴³⁶

On 27 November 1920 Sekachoff married Polish-Russian Lucinda Uscinski (sister of another Russian Anzac, Vincent Uscinski) in Brisbane, with two children subsequently born to the couple: Anna (1921-1944) and Lucy (1923-1963).⁴³⁷ Sekachoff appears to have taken up Portion 96 in the Parish of Buaraba at Coominya sometime during 1922. He was certainly engaged in clearing the soldier settlement block in August of that year, and the following month planted his first citrus trees. Although clearing and preparation continued until early 1923, the Sekachoff family departed from Coominya to take up alternative land on the Mount Hutton Soldier Settlement north of Roma. As the bulk of Sekachoff's tools and equipment were forwarded from Coominya to Portion 16 at Gunnewin, it seems likely that this was the family's initial home.⁴³⁸ However, in September 1925 Sekachoff successfully applied for Portion 39 in the same area.⁴³⁹ As the principal industry at Mount Hutton was dairying these were relatively large holdings, but the returned servicemen had to contend with lengthy dry spells, prickly pear infestations and marsupial depredations. Opened for soldier settlement in January 1919,⁴⁴⁰ a total of 131 war veterans took up land, but by 1929 only 45 remained.⁴⁴¹ One of them was Sekachoff, who persevered on his holding until 1943.⁴⁴² But it was not the path to fortune. Indeed, on 13 January 1941 he petitioned for bankruptcy,⁴⁴³ though he still managed to battle on for another two years before taking up residence in Scarlet Street, Dalby, around August 1943. Sekachoff and Lucinda were joined there by eldest daughter Anna, who unfortunately died on 27 March 1944.⁴⁴⁴ And death continued to haunt the family. George Sekachoff died at Roma on 28 December the following year. His death appears to have prompted Lucinda to join her youngest daughter Lucy and husband Jan Zelazko in Brisbane, where she died in 1966. Sadly, Lucinda survived her remaining daughter, who had died three years before.⁴⁴⁵

SHAW, HERBERT (1888-1961)

(Service Number 272)

Twice court-martialled on the field while on active service in France, Herbert Shaw was born at Rockhampton in Queensland on 8 March 1888. Working as a labourer when he enlisted in the AIF at Brisbane on 25 September 1915, Shaw seemingly had some mining experience, as he was immediately posted to the 1st Tunnelling Company of the Australian Mining Corps, a unit in which he remained for the duration of the war. Shaw was 27 years of age and unmarried when he made the decision to serve his country. With grey eyes, brown hair and a fresh complexion, he stood 170 centimetres tall when fronting up to the recruitment officer. Sapper Shaw embarked in the HMAT *Ulysses* in Sydney on 20 February 1916, but there is no mention of his arrival and first few months of service on the Western Front. In August 1916, however, the former boy from Rockhampton found himself in serious trouble indeed after absenting himself from action for a period of six hours. Found guilty by a court martial, Shaw was sentenced to twelve months' imprisonment with hard labour. But he was lucky. By then he had already been held in custody for close to a month, and with the forfeiture of 101 days' pay Sapper Shaw was discharged to re-join his unit. Then he fell ill, and it was not until December 1916 that he was back in action.⁴⁴⁶

Shaw managed to stay out of further trouble until May 1917, when he was again hospitalised, this time from the effects of mining gas while tunnelling underground. It was serious enough to keep him away from the front for the remainder of the year. Shaw had no sooner returned to the 1st Tunnelling Company than he was again hauled before a court-martial, the charge in this instance for allowing a prisoner in his charge to escape. After forfeiting another 30 days' pay he should have returned to his comrades. Instead he was bundled off to hospital to be treated for the venereal disease he contracted during a period of leave. His war was now over, for while confined to hospital Shaw also caught influenza, almost certainly the deadly 'Spanish' strain which killed millions of people as it spread across the globe in 1918-1919. Unlike so many others Shaw survived, and after returning to Australia on the *Armagh* he was discharged from the AIF on 20 May 1919.⁴⁴⁷ It had indeed been an eventful experience.

Life on the land probably offered a decent recompense for what Shaw had been through, and on 12 February 1921 he signed an undertaking for Portion 164 in the Parish of Wivenhoe at Coominya. By June of that year he was clearing the holding, work which proceeded throughout the following month. He nevertheless took time off to marry Grace Meikle Nelson on 23 July 1923, a union which produced only son Peter Nelson Shaw (1923-2016). Little time was lost, though, for Shaw began ploughing his land in September and planting immediately afterwards. As D. Clark had built the family cottage in August the couple at least had a decent roof over their heads. Work on Portion 164 continued during 1922 and into the first half of 1923. On 10 July of the latter year, however, Shaw surrendered the lease of his land in anticipation of taking up an alternative soldier settlement block elsewhere in Queensland.⁴⁴⁸

That desire was fulfilled on 4 October 1923, when he and Grace departed from Coominya with five other soldier settlers and their wives, all of whom were bound for the Atherton Tableland in North Queensland.⁴⁴⁹ The couple settled at Kairi, where their only child was born two months later. In the longer term the Atherton Tableland proved no more successful than Coominya, and by 1928 the family was living at Edmonton, just south of Cairns, where

Shaw was again working as a wage labourer. The year 1936 found the family in the southern Brisbane suburb of Salisbury, with Shaw still labouring for a living. They apparently remained in Brisbane, where Grace died on 8 May 1952 and was buried in Lutwyche Cemetery on the city's northside. Herbert Shaw's own life came to an end on 20 April 1961, though whether he joined his spouse in Lutwyche Cemetery remains unclear.⁴⁵⁰

SHAW, WILLIAM (1868-1956)

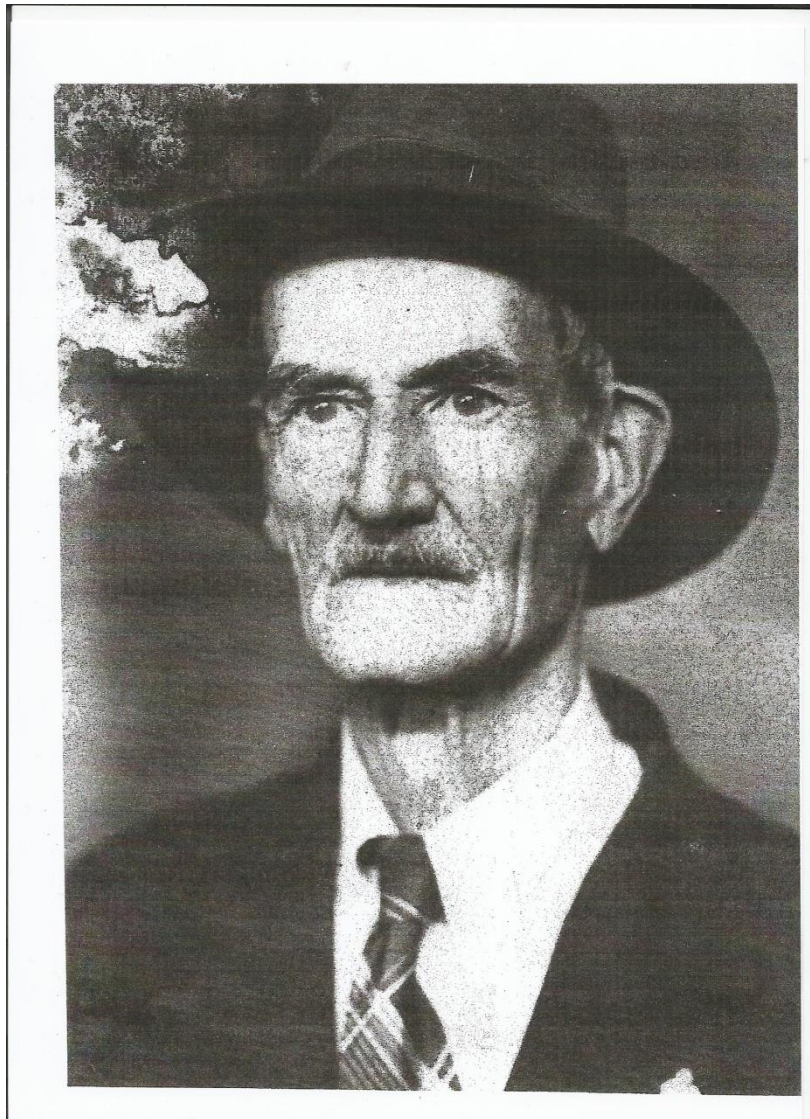
(Service Number 327)

A veteran of the South African War of 1899-1902, William Shaw did not hesitate when Britain's conflict with Germany erupted in August 1914. Born at Westbury in Tasmania on 23 March 1868, Shaw was working as a cook when he enlisted in the AIF at Brighton, Tasmania, on 29 August 1914. He claimed to be 38 years of age, but was actually 46, a factor which weighed heavily against him when Shaw went into combat for the second time in his life. Unmarried, he stood 172 centimetres tall and had blue eyes, brown hair and a dark complexion. Posted to the 12th Battalion of the 3rd Infantry Brigade, Shaw first proceeded to Egypt and was soon fighting for his life on the Gallipoli Peninsula. Promoted to lance-corporal on 12 July 1915, Shaw was evacuated from Anzac Cove just weeks later suffering from debility and a stomach disorder which required hospital treatment on Malta. In August he sailed from the island to England on HMHS *Franconia*, where he was immediately admitted to Bethnal Green Military Hospital. In spite of his illness, Shaw apparently had ample time to himself, for in February 1916 he was diagnosed with venereal disease which resulted in considerable loss of pay. Even worse was the fact that Shaw had married Catherine ('Kate') Padfield at St Pancras in London on 15 January. Like Walter Neill, he clearly had some explaining to do. Shaw must have succeeded, for despite his earlier indiscretion his marriage to Kate proved to be loving and long-lasting, eventually producing seven children: William Ernest Frederick (1917-1982); Henry William (1918-2004); James Stanley (1920); Muriel Euridice Jane (1921-2008); Mavis Catherine (1923-2007); Violet Lucy Louise (1925-?); and Stanley John Percival (1930-1966). Notwithstanding Shaw's treatment in England for debility and 'influenza of the stomach', on 8 May 1916 he was repatriated back to Australia on the *Themistocles* officially suffering from shell shock.⁴⁵¹

As the couple's first two children were born in Tasmania, it was sometime after April 1918 that the growing family moved north to Queensland, where Shaw signed an undertaking for the 8 hectares of Portion 125 in the Parish of Wivenhoe, Coominya, on 30 March 1921. By the time his application was formally accepted in August, Shaw had been clearing, root running and fencing. D. Clark had also begun erecting the family cottage. Like so many of his fellow veterans, Shaw was initially forced to rely on James Gutteridge for ploughing and harrowing. In October 1921 he began planting his grape cuttings and citrus trees, with the couple's fourth child, Muriel, born at Coominya on the last day of the month. Shaw took over the harrowing in November, but it was clearing additional land that occupied most of his time during the first half of 1922. In June of that year he found time to sink a well on the property, and he was undertaking his own ploughing in July. At the same time Shaw purchased another 1,000 grape cuttings, and the following August more citrus trees were obtained from H.N. Peterson. In December 1922 Shaw was finally able to paint his home, but even with all this hard work the circumstances conspired against him as it did with almost all others. Bowing to the inevitable, Shaw surrendered the lease of Portion 125 on 3 April 1923 after accepting a transfer to Ridglands Soldier Settlement north-west of Rockhampton.⁴⁵²

In the longer term this proved to be no more successful, as Ridglands was frequently plagued with severe water shortages. Although the family was still persevering in 1925 they had abandoned the soldier settlement block by 1928 and temporarily settled in Rockhampton. But Shaw was not yet finished with farming. By 1934 he and Kate were living on Lakes Creek Road at Koongal, and in 1936 they were farming at Tanby. This was only temporary.

In 1949 the family was residing at Yeppoon, where Shaw listed his occupation as 'orchardist'.⁴⁵³ Most, if not all of Shaw's agricultural skills, would have been acquired at Coominya, so in a very important sense his experience on the soldier settlement had not been entirely wasted. By the 1950s, however, Shaw was aging, and in 1954 the couple were residing at 157 Murray Street in Rockhampton.⁴⁵⁴ Two years later they were either visiting or living with their last-born son Stanley and his wife Daphne at Yelarbon, near Goondiwindi, when Shaw died on 21 May 1956. As Stanley himself prematurely passed away at the age of 36 years in July 1966, Kate had probably moved in with eldest son William and his wife Rosetta when she died at Newcastle, New South Wales, on 3 November 1978.⁴⁵⁵



WILLIAM SHAW IN LATER LIFE

SMITH, PERCY EDGAR (1866-1940)

(Service Number 2707)

A bigamist who abandoned his lawful wife and seven surviving children in England when he migrated to Queensland and married again, Percy Edgar Smith was one of only two soldier settlers who managed to make good on the Coominya Soldier Settlement. More remarkably, Smith had been discharged from the AIF as medically unfit in 1918, after spending much of his overseas service confined to hospitals, where he was treated for nephritis and emphysema. Born at Newgate in London on 8 November 1866, Smith was employed as a 'railway servant' when he married Lucy Holder at Harlesden in the north-west London borough of Brent on 14 September 1891. In the years ahead Lucy gave birth to eight children: Jessie (1892-1980); Ada Winifred (1896-1937); Grace Lucy (1897-1969); Percy James William (1899-1985); May Florence (1901-1929); Isabel (1903-1904); Edgar Samuel (1905-1973); and Albert Edward (1908-1991). The family was living in Greenwich, when Smith made his departure in 1911.⁴⁵⁶

In March 1913 Smith was working as a railway labourer in Brisbane when he was bashed and robbed of £5 by three toughs after drinking and spending freely in the inner suburb of Spring Hill. Police managed to arrest all three offenders, but a broken nose and bruising was one thing:⁴⁵⁷ marrying again without a legal separation from his wife was another. On 16 August 1916 Smith wed Agnes Walsh in Brisbane, the union apparently failing to produce any children.⁴⁵⁸ And by then the groom was in the Australian Army. Smith enlisted in the AIF at Brisbane on 10 February 1916, claiming to be 42 years of age (he was actually 49) and was working as a concrete packer at the time. Standing just 165 centimetres in height, Smith had brown eyes, fair hair and a fresh complexion. He sailed from Brisbane on the *A42 Seang Choon* on 19 September 1916 as a member of the 7th Reinforcements for the 4th Pioneer Battalion. Disembarking at Plymouth in England the following December, Smith's subsequent presence in France was continually disrupted by ongoing hospital treatment for nephritis and emphysema and trips back and forth across the English Channel. Nephritis, it might be added, is a serious inflammation of the kidneys which can result in complete kidney failure. Finally, in June 1918, he was repatriated back to Australia on the *Barambah* and discharged from the AIF on 19 August of that year.⁴⁵⁹

After reuniting with Agnes, Smith presumably returned to labouring work until signing an undertaking for Portion 142 in the Parish of Wivenhoe on 11 November 1920. Despite his previous illnesses, Smith was clearing the land by late June 1921 and root running and fencing in July. D. Clark erected the couple's home (which they named Ivy Cottage) in August. Fellow soldier settlers, particularly Sidney Fox, undertook the initial ploughing, and it was not until September 1922 that Smith was in a position to handle the ploughshares himself. As the soldier settlement began to fail Smith benefitted from the addition of Portions 143 and 144 to his original holding, and was still planting grapes and fruit trees in early 1924.⁴⁶⁰ He seems to have persisted with these crops, listing his occupation as 'fruit farmer' in 1928.⁴⁶¹

Agnes died in March 1931 and was buried in Ipswich Cemetery,⁴⁶² while Smith continued farming at Coominya until at least 1937.⁴⁶³ In late 1936, however, London County Council, which had been providing financial assistance to Lucy Smith and her children, began making inquiries as to her husband's whereabouts and financial situation. Although the correspondence continued into early 1937 it is unlikely that English authorities ever caught

up with Lucy's errant spouse.⁴⁶⁴ Moreover, the end for Smith was rapidly drawing near. At some point in time after mid-1937 he left Coominya for Brisbane, where he died on 21 July 1940 and was buried in Toowong Cemetery. On the other side of the world Smith's legal wife Lucy survived until 1969, dying at Greenwich at the age of 99 years. She had not seen her husband for more than half a century.⁴⁶⁵

SMITH, ROY FRANCIS MM (1888-1961)

(Service Number 921)

A humble clerk who was awarded the Military Medal for bravery in France in September 1916, Roy Francis Smith was born in the inner Melbourne suburb of Fitzroy in 1888. Smith enlisted in the AIF at Melbourne on 16 September 1914 at the age of 26 years. Standing 171 centimetres in height, he had brown eyes, dark brown hair and a 'medium' complexion. Embarking at Melbourne on A38 *Ulysses* on 22 December 1914, Smith was initially with the 14th Battalion and served at Gallipoli. It was there he was transferred to the 2nd Signal Company in August 1915, but following the withdrawal and further training at the signal school in Ismailia, Smith was posted to the 4th Division Signal Company based at Tel-el-Kebir in Egypt during January 1916. Six months later Smith crossed the Mediterranean Sea and disembarked at Marseillaise in France. By September he was in action on the Western Front where he was awarded the Military Medal, the details of which have proved elusive. Granted leave in Britain, Roy Smith returned to France in December 1916 and the following month was promoted to lance-corporal. In May 1917 he took another step up the ladder with promotion to motor cyclist corporal, but his second period of leave in Britain in October of that year resulted in Smith contracting the venereal disease that hospitalised him until early 1918. After re-joining his unit he managed to avoid physical injury until October, when he embarked at Taranto in Italy on HT *Port Sydney* and returned to Australia on special leave. By the time Smith arrived home the war was over and he was discharged from the AIF on 31 January 1919.⁴⁶⁶

By Christmas 1918 Smith had married Jessie Margaret McDonald in Melbourne, a union which produced two children: Jean McDonald Smith (b.1920) and Roy McDonald Smith (b.1924).⁴⁶⁷ While it is not known when the couple moved north to Queensland it was certainly before 27 November 1920, when Smith signed an undertaking for the 14.5 hectares of Portion 150 in the Parish of Wivenhoe at Coominya. Although his application was not formally accepted until 2 August 1921, Smith, his wife and first-born were already in residence by July 1921, with clearing and root running by then in progress. James Gutteridge began ploughing their soldier settlement block the same month, continuing through to September, when Smith began planting grape vines. Citrus trees soon followed, and more grape cuttings were purchased in October 1921. By the end of the year Smith had also taken over the ploughing and harrowing, though clearing additional land occupied much of his time throughout 1922. All this hard work failed to bring any measure of success, however, and the lease of Portion 150 was surrendered on 27 March 1923.⁴⁶⁸

In October 1923 Smith was living and working at Nangwee near Oakey,⁴⁶⁹ while Jessie and Jean Smith remained at Coominya until at least 1925. But by 1928 the reunited family had returned to Melbourne, where they took up residence in Preston where Smith worked as a salesman. Three years later the family had moved to Bendigo where Smith was again employed as a clerk. The year 1942 found them back in Melbourne, where they were living at Caulfield. The following year Smith listed his occupation as 'manager', though in what branch of business remains unclear. This was not the case in 1949, however, when Smith was again employed as a clerk. The family nevertheless remained at Caulfield until at least 1954.⁴⁷⁰ Either by himself or together with his family, Smith later made his way to Western Australia, where he died in 1961 at the age of 72 years.⁴⁷¹ The date and place of Jessie Smith's death is not known.

SNEATH, ALFRED CYRIL (1896-1943)

(Service Number 3558)

Born at Ipswich on 26 July 1896, Alfred Cyril Sneath was one of a number of local men who were later to be seduced by the prospect of owning their own farm at Coominya. Like so many of them Sneath also lacked sufficient agricultural experience, and he was probably further hampered by the wounds he had received on the Western Front in 1916. In 1913 he was living in the inner Brisbane suburb of Paddington and working as a tramline points boy. On 15 August of that year 17-year-old Sneath was on duty near the Exhibition grounds when he was knocked down by a car and sustained injuries to his face and chin. He was fortunate. After being treated by ambulance officers Sneath was taken home to recover.⁴⁷²

On 15 April 1915 19-year-old Sneath enlisted in the AIF at Clifton on the Darling Downs. Standing 175 centimetres in height, he had grey eyes, brown hair and a fair complexion. He was also of sufficient build to warrant a posting to the 7th Field Ambulance, and after a brief stop at Alexandria in Egypt, Sneath arrived in France in April 1916. He was not averse to going AWOL — and losing pay for his efforts — but the former tramline points boy had little time left to see much of France. On 26 August 1916 Sneath's war came to an end when he was wounded by enemy gunshot in the left hand, side and left leg, injuries serious enough for evacuation to England and, ultimately, return to Australia on the *Miltiades* on 4 May 1917.⁴⁷³

Sneath was working as a labourer at Canungra when he married Margaret Agnes Lebeter in the township on 21 September 1919, a union which produced four children: Catherine Evelyn (1921-2003); Margaret Kathleen (1923-1929); Alfred Cyril Jnr. (1926-1997); and Mervyn David (1928-1985).⁴⁷⁴ By September 1921 Sneath had taken up Portion 96 in the Parish of Buaraba at Coominya, and notwithstanding the wounds he had received in France five years before he was able to engage in the arduous tasks of clearing, root running, fencing and ploughing. But not for long. On 10 June 1922 Sneath surrendered his soldier settlement block,⁴⁷⁵ and in 1925 he was back in the employ of the tramways in Brisbane, this time as a conductor. The family was then living in Charles Street, Red Hill.⁴⁷⁶ Four years later tragedy struck when 6-year-old Margaret Kathleen died, followed to the grave by her mother on 10 February 1931. With a young family to care for, Sneath was left with little choice. On 20 June 1932 he married Mona Elizabeth Partridge, who had children of her own, with the expanded family eventually settling in the south-western suburb of Oxley. Sneath continued working as a tramway conductor, and in June 1935 discovered that one of his passengers who he thought was sound asleep had actually collapsed and died. He did not have a great deal of time left himself. Sneath died on 23 October 1943 at 47 years of age. He was buried in Toowong Cemetery. Second wife Mona died on 23 August 1956.⁴⁷⁷

SPOONER, HARRY GORDON MORRISON (1873-1967)

(Service Numbers 3163 and 390757)

The disappointment experienced at Coominya may well have affected Harry Spooner's decision to settle permanently in Australia. He was nevertheless a trier, and made another attempt at farming before finally giving up and returning to England. Born at Wandsworth in Surrey on 8 March 1893, Harry Spooner was living at Wimbledon and working as a clerk in the lamp trade by 1911. On 20 November 1915 he married Ethel Beatrice Walden at South Wimbledon, a union which ultimately produced two sons: Gordon Allen (1920-2017) and Frank Clyfford (1924-2007). In early 1917 Spooner either enlisted or was conscripted into the 9th Battalion (Queen Victoria's Rifles) of the London Regiment, remaining on active service until 15 January 1919.⁴⁷⁸ One of his three brothers, Thomas, was killed in action at the Battle of the Somme on 1 July 1916.⁴⁷⁹



HARRY GORDON MORRISON SPOONER

Owing to a general strike and lack of employment, Harry and Ethel Spooner with their newly-born son Gordon, boarded the Aberdeen liner *Demosthenes* in London on 19 August 1920, bound for Brisbane and a new life on the land at Coominya.⁴⁸⁰ Spooner signed an undertaking for Portion 138 in the Parish of Wivenhoe on 10 November 1920, and was well into clearing his land by August the following year. Although fellow veterans Sidney Fox and John Peppard began the ploughing, Spooner took over this task himself in September 1921. At the same time he was engaged in harrowing, root running and planting — quite an accomplishment for a man who had previously spent his working life in clerical duties. Grape cuttings went into the soil in October 1921 and Rhodes grass seed in January 1922, with citrus trees to the number of 285 following in September of the latter year. Yet despite this worthy effort, the prevailing circumstances on the soldier settlement finally defeated the London immigrant: Spooner surrendered the lease of Portion 138 on 15 May 1923.⁴⁸¹ After failing to procure land on the Ubobo Soldier Settlement near Gladstone, the family left Coominya in November 1923 for a small farm in Brisbane's south-east at Birkdale which Spooner purchased from his own savings.⁴⁸² Although he was still farming the land in 1925, this second attempt at agriculture also met with defeat. Forced to return to clerical work, the Spooner family was living in McIntyre Street, Hendra, on Brisbane's northside in 1928.⁴⁸³ Five years later (1933) they returned to England and eventually settled in Kent, where Harry Spooner died in the town of Bromley on 15 September 1967. Ethel also died at Bromley on 8 January 1985, as did the couple's second son Frank, on 23 June 2007. First-born Gordon died at Woolwich in Kent on 15 August 2017.⁴⁸⁴

SUTCLIFFE, VICTOR JOHN GEORGE (1897-1964)

(Service Number 2366)

A coal-miner by profession, Victor Sutcliffe was born at Dinmore near Ipswich on 17 October 1897. He enlisted in the AIF at Ipswich on 28 November 1915, and given his mining background it was almost a foregone conclusion that he soon found himself in No.3 Company of the Australian Mining Corps. At the time of his enlistment the 18-year-old Sutcliffe stood 168 centimetres tall, and had blue eyes, light brown hair and a 'medium' complexion. Embarking at Sydney on the A16 *Star of Victoria* on 31 March 1916, Sutcliffe arrived at Marseillaise in France two months later. By then, however, he was suffering from a severe bout of influenza which led to an immediate stay in hospital followed by a short period in the segregation camp. Attached to No.1 Australian Tunnelling Company in June 1916, he was accidentally wounded in the hand by a bullet the following month. Treated at the 138th Field Ambulance, Sutcliffe was able to re-join his unit a few days later, but he then experienced a spate of illnesses and ailments — including lipoma (benign tumours composed of fatty tissue) and balanitis (a bacterial infection of the penis) — which largely kept him out of the fighting until the war was over. On 20 April 1919 Sutcliffe boarded the *Boonah* for return to Australia. Disembarked in Sydney, he was discharged from the AIF in Brisbane on 29 July of that year.⁴⁸⁵

He did not dally for long, marrying Carey Melva McColough on 21 October, a union which produced seven children over a span of 22 years: Ethna May (1921); Coral Claire (1923-2006); Euvoyne Elaine (1925-2007); Edna Valerie (1928-2015); Kevin Bryan (1932-1973); Faye (1942); and Keith Leroy (b.1943).⁴⁸⁶ On 24 November 1920 Sutcliffe signed an undertaking for Portion 129 in the Parish of Wivenhoe at Coominya, and by July 1921 was clearing the land of natural growth. In September he was ploughing and harrowing, but there is no record of any planting. It seems, in fact, that little more was done, for on 30 March 1922 the lease of Portion 129 was cancelled,⁴⁸⁷ and the family are next known to have been living on Amosfield Road near Stanthorpe. There is no mention of Sutcliffe's occupation at this time, and nor was this relocation in any way permanent.⁴⁸⁸

In September 1932 the Sutcliffe family was in the Toowoomba area where the fifth child Kevin was born. They were still there a decade later when Carey gave birth to Faye, the child dying the same day on 15 April 1942. This may have at least been partly responsible for another shift, this time to Brisbane where the couple's last child, Keith Leroy, was born the following year.⁴⁸⁹ In 1945 Sutcliffe was working as a fitter at Archerfield when he ran foul of the police and ended up in court. In effect, he stole a wallet containing £15 in cash and a cheque for 7 shillings 8 pence from Arthur Pinfold, an Australian soldier. He was further charged with stealing tools to the value of £21, the property of the U.S. Government, and having in his possession petrol and tools suspected of having been stolen. Magistrate P.G. Knyvett came down hard on Sutcliffe, fining him a total of £30 (£10 on each charge) and ordering the offender to pay £15 restitution.⁴⁹⁰ Despite this setback, the Sutcliffe family remained in Brisbane. In 1954 they were living in the inner western suburbs, moving to the northern suburb of Zillmere by 1963. Victor Sutcliffe died in Brisbane on 19 June 1964; Carey Sutcliffe joined her husband in death on 18 August 1969.⁴⁹¹

TEBBUTT, WILLIAM (1876-1956)

(Service Number unknown)

An English rural postman who later farmed successfully in Queensland, William Tebbutt was born at Rothwell in Northamptonshire, England, on 10 November 1876. On Christmas Day 1901 he married Ada Jane Turner in St Andrew's Church at Kettering in Northamptonshire, with five children subsequently born to the couple: Leonard Wilfred (1903-1974); twins Nora (1904-1975) and Lily (1904); Alice (b.1909); and Hazel Ruth (1917-1961).⁴⁹² On 1 November 1911 the growing family boarded the White Star liner *Zealandic* at Liverpool, bound for Adelaide.⁴⁹³ Following the outbreak of World War One Tebbutt enlisted in the AIF — almost certainly in Adelaide — but the lack of any military record strongly suggests that he may have joined up under a false name. That Tebbutt was a war veteran is confirmed by his successful application for the 13 hectares of Portion 147 in the Parish of Wivenhoe, Coominya. Tebbutt signed an undertaking for the block on 20 September 1920 (formally accepted on 2 August 1921), and although James Gutteridge was initially paid to plough and harrow the cleared land in June 1921, Tebbutt soon took over this task. His first planting, probably citrus trees, occurred in August of that year, with grape cuttings following in October. Tebbutt appears to have diligently worked Portion 147 throughout 1922, but it was not enough to stave off the inevitable.⁴⁹⁴ By the middle of 1923 the Tebbutts had transferred to Mount Hutton Soldier Settlement north of Roma, where they settled at Okoro. While William Tebbutt was still farming there in 1930 the only member of the family still with him was 13-year-old Hazel, who probably kept house. Exactly when the couple separated is not known, and by 1937 Tebbutt had also abandoned Mount Hutton Soldier Settlement for Brisbane. Hazel had married Alfred Smith at Okoro two years before, and in 1937 Tebbutt was living alone in James Street, Woolloowin, before moving to Cordella Street in South Brisbane by 1943.⁴⁹⁵ Ada may have returned to England after her marriage breakdown, and after the Second World War Tebbutt also returned to England. If there was any attempt at reconciliation it did not succeed. Tebbutt returned to Brisbane from London on the *Maloja* in September 1950. He was then 74 years of age. Ada, on the other hand, sailed from Liverpool to Sydney on the *Stentor* in April 1955, when she was aged 75.⁴⁹⁶ Shortly afterwards Ada was back in Brisbane, though whether she was there to comfort her husband before his death on 3 August 1956 is not clear. Ada Tebbutt survived until 14 June 1964. Both were laid to rest in Lutwyche Cemetery in Brisbane's north.⁴⁹⁷

THEMOR, WILLIAM (1897-1965)

(Service Numbers 1518 and Q191179)

The son of a civil engineer, William Themor initially fell into the far more modest occupation of packer until later acquiring the skills to qualify as a plumber. He was only 18 years of age when he enlisted in the AIF at Brisbane on 24 May 1915. A short young man standing just 130 centimetres in height, Themor had brown eyes, dark hair and a dark complexion. He was born in Brisbane on 9 April 1897, and embarked for overseas service in June 1915. After undergoing further training in Egypt, Themor found himself swept into the fighting on the Gallipoli Peninsula with the rest of the 26th Battalion, where he soon experienced bouts of debilitating diarrhoea. Themor nevertheless remained at Anzac Cove until shortly before the withdrawal in December 1915, when he was evacuated to Malta suffering from influenza. By March 1916, however, Themor was in action in France, taking part in a major raid across No Man's Land the following month. In July and August he was caught up in the bloodbath of Pozieres before illness resulted in varying periods of hospitalisation. Themor returned to the fray in early 1917, and on 5 May that year he was slightly wounded in the left hand at Bullecourt. He had recovered sufficiently to take his place in the fighting at Bapaume in June, followed by the actions at Cassel in August and the Third Battle of Ypres (Passchendaele) in September. Again struck down by illness (including venereal disease), Themor was at least able to temporarily escape the savagery of the Western Front.⁴⁹⁸

During the full term of his overseas service he was also frequently listed as an absentee, and although most of these AWOL offences resulted in the forfeiture of pay, on two separate occasions — July 1916 and 20 January 1919 — Themor was forced to front a court martial. Neither did anything to curb his errant behaviour, for as late as May 1919 he was briefly listed as an illegal absentee. Although the first half of 1918 had largely been spent in English hospitals, Themor still managed to find time to marry Bessie Rose Mantle at Hendon on 22 June of that year. By the time he returned to France in September the war was grinding its way to its conclusion, and it is possible that Themor's penchant for going AWOL contributed to his late return to Australia. It was not until July 1920 that he finally stepped ashore in his home country, receiving his discharge from the AIF on 18 September of that year.⁴⁹⁹

The first of William and Bessie Themor's children, Dorothy Rose Hannah (1918-2007), had been born in England. Seven more siblings were to follow in Australia: Winifred Maud (1920-1961); William (1922); Walter Frederick (1923-1933); Vincent George (1925); Kathleen (1928-1945); William Thomas (1930-1969); and Peter (1936-1987).⁵⁰⁰ It is not known when William Themor applied for Portion 120 in the Parish of Buaraba on Coominya Soldier Settlement. He was certainly clearing the land by July 1921, and after root running in September he was erecting fencing in October. That same month G.W. Sims began erecting the family's home, a task that was not completed until D. Clark took over in December. Like so many of his fellow veterans, Themor was forced to call on the services of James Gutteridge to carry out the initial ploughing and harrowing, but from March 1922 he was able to take over this work himself. Themor purchased his first fruit trees from H.N. Peterson in July 1922, and between further clearing, preparation and planting he was fully occupied during the remainder of 1922 and throughout most of the following year.⁵⁰¹

Towards the end of 1923, however, Themor faced defeat and accepted a transfer to Goovigen in the Callide Valley, where he successfully balloted for Portion 20 in the Parish of Earlsfield.⁵⁰² Times clearly remained tough, for in February 1925 Themor pleaded guilty in the Police Court at Wowan with having stolen a bag of sugar from the railway siding at Goovigen. It was a lapse which cost him dearly. Fined £1 and 3/6 court costs, he was also ordered to pay restitution of £1/9 to the legitimate owner.⁵⁰³ Nor did the land at Goovigen bring about his financial salvation. In 1933 the Themor family was residing at Beerwah, north of Brisbane, when tragedy struck. Two of the Themor children, William and Vincent, had previously died in the year of their birth. Then, on 4 December 1933, 10-year-old Walter drowned in nearby Coochin Creek while playing with a model boat.⁵⁰⁴ The family did not remain at Beerwah. In 1936 they were living at Monto in the Burnett River district, where Themor worked as a labourer. But by 1940 they were in the inner Brisbane suburb of Fortitude Valley, where Themor was employed as a plumber.⁵⁰⁵ On 15 February of that year he enlisted in the Citizen Military Forces, rising to the rank of corporal before his discharge on 28 December 1943. The family was by then living in the suburb of Enoggera.⁵⁰⁶ They were still there on 18 January 1947 when Bessie Themor passed away and was buried in Lutwyche Cemetery. Themor did not grieve for long. The following year he married the widowed Vera Lila Callinan, but the couple's subsequent history is not known until Themor's own death in Brisbane on 20 October 1965. He was buried in the Mount Gravatt Cemetery, while Vera survived until 1 June 1997 and was laid to rest in Cleveland Cemetery.⁵⁰⁷

THIRKILL, EDWARD (1898-1982)

(Service Number 4021/241400)

Born in 1898 at the West Yorkshire town of Bradford in England, Edward Thirkill was working as a spinner of worsted cloth at the age of 13 years. Having lived in Bradford all his young life, it was no surprise that he served in the West Yorkshire Regiment during World War One, though of his experiences in this supposed war to end all wars nothing is known. Following the Armistice he returned to Bradford, where he married Ellen Flynn in 1920, and on 31 July of that year they boarded the Orient liner *Orsova* in London bound for a new life in Queensland.⁵⁰⁸ It is not clear when he took up Portion 145 in the Parish of Wivenhoe at Coominya, and nor is there any documentation relating to his attempt at farming on the soldier settlement. What is known with certainty is that on 4 October 1923 Edward and Ellen Thirkill, with five other soldier settlers and their families, left Coominya to take up alternative land at Kairi on the Atherton Tableland in North Queensland.⁵⁰⁹ Although the Thirkills were still residing at Kairi in mid-1925, their long-term prospects ultimately proved no more successful than at Coominya, and by 1928 they were living in the southern Brisbane suburb of Buranda where Thirkill worked as a labourer. This, too, was of brief duration, for by mid-1930 they had relocated to Lewisham in Sydney.⁵¹⁰ Their only child, Paul John, was born in Sydney in 1934, and it was sometime after this that the family settled permanently at Liverpool on the city's south-western outskirts. Ellen Thirkill died there on 13 July 1972. Edward outlived his wife by over ten years, passing away on 12 November 1982 and joining Ellen in Grave 1230 in the Catholic section of Liverpool Cemetery and Crematorium. On 19 October 2012 the couple's only child, Paul John Thirkill, also died at Liverpool.⁵¹¹

TUPICOFF, ALEXIS (1895-1971)

(Service Number 5763)

Born at Samara in south-western Russia on 17 March 1895, Alexis Tupicoff served in the Russian Army as an artilleryman and spent much of his young life in the Manchurian city of Harbin, which contained a large resident population of Russians. He followed in the footsteps of his older brother Nicholas, leaving Russia on the *Empire* and arriving in Brisbane on 16 March 1914. Tupicoff soon found work as a railway labourer, one of the few regular employment opportunities open to expatriate Russians in Queensland, and was living at Rockhampton when he enlisted in the AIF on 9 February 1916 at the age of 21 years. Like his brother, Tupicoff was of tall stature, standing just over 183 centimetres in height, with dark brown hair, a dark complexion and 'brownish' eyes. Initially posted to the 15th Battalion, Tupicoff lost two days' pay for going AWOL while undertaking training in England. In November 1916 he was transferred to the 42nd Battalion and crossed the English Channel to France, where he was soon undergoing treatment for venereal disease. But far worse was to come. A tunneller engaged in mining enemy trenches, Tupicoff was involved in the Battle of Messines in June 1917, where 19 large mines devastated the German front-line defences. Unfortunately for Tupicoff, he was struck in the face by an enemy bullet during the fighting, the injury leaving him with severe disfigurement of the nose, mouth and throat. Initially invalided back to England, he was returned to Australia in October 1917 and discharged from the AIF as medically unfit the following month.⁵¹²

Tupicoff was able to resume his duties with Queensland Railways, this time in the workshops at Ipswich, but the heavy labouring soon took its toll. In April 1918 he applied to the Repatriation Department for assistance to return to Russia, hoping to find easier work in his home country. By then, of course, Russia was under Bolshevik control and the new government's signing of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty with the Central Powers (Germany and its allies) on 3 March 1918, which effectively ended Russia's participation in the Great War, was viewed with suspicion and outright hostility by the Allied combatants. Not surprisingly, Tupicoff's application was firmly rejected.⁵¹³ He next turned his attention to Coominya, with his application for the 12.5 hectares of Portion 121 in the Parish of Buaraba formally accepted on 1 November 1921.⁵¹⁴ Tupicoff had already begun clearing this block the previous July, though it is clear that he was forced to rely heavily on assistance provided by his fellow soldier settlers. John Peppard, for instance, did the ploughing and harrowing, while William Themor erected the fencing; Andrew Livett supplied the house blocks and Hugo Davis was paid for loading timber. It was nonetheless a losing battle, as Tupicoff spent varying periods of time in Rosemount Repatriation Hospital from the effects of his war service. Nor did he receive any sympathy from either Land Ranger Leichman or Land Commissioner A.C. Stevens, with the latter ruling in October 1922 that Tupicoff had failed to perform the residency conditions of his lease. Exactly when he was forced to relinquish Portion 121 is not clear, except that it was definitely prior to April 1923.⁵¹⁵ Electoral records reveal that Tupicoff remained in the Coominya district until at least mid-1925, probably working as a wage labourer. By 1930 he had moved north to the Atherton Tablelands before returning to Ipswich by the middle of the decade. He spent the remainder of his life in Ipswich, where he died in 1971. Unlike his older brother, Alexis Tupicoff he never married — no doubt at least partly due to the disfigurement he suffered as a result of the war.⁵¹⁶

TUPICOFF, NICHOLAS (1893-1976)

(Service Number 2513)

Older brother of Alexis Tupicoff, Nicholas was no stranger to mystery and suspense. Highly-educated and fluent in five languages, Tupicoff was forced to work at manual labour. He was also charged with the murder of a fellow Russian and gave evidence in a case where an Australian soldier had died in mysterious circumstances. Born at Samara in south-western Russia on 22 July 1893, Tupicoff lived for many years at Harbin in Manchuria, where he worked as a Chinese interpreter for an American company before fleeing through Japan to avoid conscription into the Russian Army. He arrived in Brisbane on the *Yawata Maru* in November 1912, and soon found work with Queensland Railways. At one stage he was briefly employed as a shipping clerk owing to his fluency in the Russian, Polish, German, English and Chinese languages.⁵¹⁷

On 22 August 1914, however, he caught a suburban train from Brisbane to Petrie with fellow Russian Teodor Makovetsky where the pair expected to find work on the railways. Told to start work the following day, Tupicoff returned alone to the boarding house in South Brisbane where both he and Makovetsky were living. Evidence later given in court suggested that Tupicoff caught another train to Petrie that evening and travelled back to Brisbane the same night. Be that as it may, the body of Makovetsky was discovered beside the railway line near Dakabin, just north of Petrie, on the morning of 23 August. He had been bludgeoned to death with an iron bar and shovel and his throat had been cut. Suspicion soon fell on Tupicoff, who was charged with Makovetsky's murder and appeared in Brisbane's Central Police Court in 10 September. Police Magistrate Lieutenant-Colonel R.A. Moore committed Tupicoff to stand trial for the murder,⁵¹⁸ the venue shifting to Maryborough where he appeared before Justice Real in the Circuit Court on 6 October. Yet, despite very strong circumstantial evidence a jury found Tupicoff not guilty and he was discharged the following day.⁵¹⁹ Throughout his ordeal Tupicoff had received considerable support from Brisbane's Russian community, no doubt owing to allegations Makovetsky had previously been involved with the secret police in Tsarist Russia.⁵²⁰ But this was not the end of Tupicoff's dealings with the Queensland police.

In April 1916 he was called to give evidence into the death of Henry Christie, an Australian soldier whose body had been found beside the railway line near Traveston, just south of Gympie. He had either fallen or been pushed from the northern mail train to Rockhampton, and Tupicoff just happened to be a passenger who was one of the last to see Christie before his death.⁵²¹ At that time Tupicoff was living in the southern Brisbane suburb of Coopers Plains and working as a labourer. He may have been visiting his brother Alexis, who had settled in Rockhampton, though Tupicoff's presence on the train was never subjected to scrutiny. And in this instance he walked away without any implication of foul play.

On 22 June 1916 Tupicoff enlisted in the AIF at Brisbane. He was 23 years of age, stood 182 centimetres tall, and had black hair, a dark complexion and brown eyes. Tupicoff embarked at Brisbane on the *Seang Choon* in September 1916 and reached Plymouth in England the following December. After undergoing training he proceeded to France as a member of the 5th Reinforcements for the 47th Battalion. In January 1917 Tupicoff received treatment for synovitis of the right knee, a condition which required lengthy periods of hospitalisation for the remainder of the war. He also suffered from a heart condition, and after being invalided

back to England in late 1917 Tupicoff never re-joined his unit. Surprisingly, he was not returned to Australia until early 1919. Tupicoff was discharged from the AIF on 25 March of that year.⁵²²

On 12 April the following month he married Alexandra Muller from a Russian-German family which had also migrated to Queensland before the war. The couple were to have six children: Richard Nicholas (1920-1985); Leonard (b. 'about 1922'); Douglas (b. 'about 1924'); Francis (b. 'about 1926'); Joan Elizabeth (b.1928); and Olga (b. 16 June 1931).⁵²³ On his return to Australia Tupicoff again worked as a labourer until signing an undertaking for the 12 hectares of Portion 114 in the Parish of Buaraba at Coominya on 20 January 1921. For reasons undisclosed his formal application was adjourned by the Land Court at least four times before finally being approved in 1922. It mattered little as Tupicoff was already in residence by June 1921, and, like his colleagues, initially focused his attention on clearing the block for planting. D. Clark began erecting a house in August 1921, and while Tupicoff turned his attention to root running and fencing, Alfred and James Gutteridge were hired to plough and harrow the land. It nevertheless appears that Tupicoff and his growing family had abandoned Portion 114 by June 1922 and returned to Ipswich,⁵²⁴ where he found work in the railway workshops as a blacksmith striker. In 1932 Tupicoff purchased a house in Hopetoun Street,⁵²⁵ and began to move in higher social circles, serving as vice-president of the Ipswich sub-branch of the RSSILA by October 1942.⁵²⁶ The family remained at Ipswich, where Tupicoff died in 1976. It is not known when Alexandra joined her husband in death.⁵²⁷

WALLACE, DANIEL (1897-1942)

(Service Number 4448)

Unlike his father who followed the 'long paddock' as a drover, Daniel Wallace settled for becoming a dairyman. Born in 1897 at Brocks Creek, near Katherine in the Northern Territory, Wallace enlisted in the AIF at Darwin on 3 January 1918. Standing 167 centimetres tall, he was 21 years of age with dark eyes, brown hair and a sallow complexion. On 30 April 1918 Wallace embarked for overseas service at Sydney on the ironically named SS *Port Darwin*, arriving in Egypt as a general reinforcement for the Anzac Mounted Division the following June. Illness immediately took control. Hospitalised with influenza as soon as he stepped ashore, Wallace later developed bronchitis and pleurisy. Released from hospital in September, he was admitted again in October after contracting malaria. Wallace finally joined the 2nd Light Horse Regiment at Moascar in Egypt in December. Perhaps the highlight of his overseas service came in January 1919, when Wallace was detached as an escort to the railway engineers. He returned to Australia on the HT *Timaroa* in April and was discharged from the AIF the following month.⁵²⁸

On 17 May of that year Wallace married Rockhampton-born Sarah Margaret Sunflower at the Leichhardt Street Mission Hall in the inner Brisbane suburb of Fortitude Valley. Sarah had already given birth to a daughter, Daphne May (b.18 January 1917), but as the birth was not registered until 1921 Wallace was recorded as the father.⁵²⁹ By September of the latter year the family had settled on Portion 132, Parish of Buaraba at Coominya, where Wallace was busy clearing the land. H. Jorgensen received two payments for constructing the family home in October-November, though it was evidently completed by D. Clark in December. Wallace began fencing his property in January 1922, and although L. Powell briefly continued with the clearing, Wallace resumed this task in March. Indeed, clearing and fencing occupied most of Wallace's time until December, when he began ploughing and harrowing. A final payment for clearing was made to him in March 1923, but from July all utensils, tools and equipment was returned to stock,⁵³⁰ indicating that the family had left Coominya. In 1925 Wallace was living in the inner Brisbane suburb of Paddington, moving to End Street at West End, Brisbane, by 1931. At that time he was employed as a labourer. The year 1937 found Wallace living in Sydney,⁵³¹ where he died at Randwick on 17 April 1942. He was buried in the Woronora Cemetery at Sutherland. Sarah married John Seymour in Brisbane the same year, though it is not clear whether she had returned to Queensland or had previously separated from Daniel Wallace. Sarah Seymour remained in Brisbane, where she died in 1973.⁵³²

WHITTINGTON, HERBERT (1882-1967)

(Service Number unknown)

There are two mysteries surrounding Herbert Whittington. While he is believed to have served in the British Army during World War One, and certainly qualified for a soldier settlement block in Queensland, his unit has not been identified. And Whittington was apparently still living on the Coominya Soldier Settlement, and stating his occupation as 'soldier settler', three years after he had surrendered his land. What is known with certainty is that Herbert Whittington was born at Smethwick in Staffordshire, England, in January 1882 and later worked as a general labourer. On 26 December 1906 he married Amy Blackwell at St Cuthbert, Winson Green in Warwickshire, a marriage which bequeathed three children: Edwin (1910-1976); Mary (b.1912); and Dennis (1920-1962). The family boarded the Aberdeen White Star liner *Themistocles* in London on 2 July 1921 bound for a new life on Coominya Soldier Settlement, where they had taken up residence on Portion 100 in the Parish of Buaraba by 12 October of that year. It is also known that a number of other soldier settlers had previously received payment for undertaking preparatory work on the block, and until February 1922 Whittington concentrated solely on clearing additional land. But the Soldier Settler Ledger for Coominya states that Whittington surrendered Portion 100 on 18 October 1922. In February 1924 the family's cottage was dismantled and transported to Cecil Plains where it was re-erected to serve as a police station. The electoral roll for 1925, however, records Herbert and Amy Whittington still living at Coominya, where he is listed as a soldier settler. There is a possibility that Whittington may have transferred to an alternative block as the records for Coominya are far from complete. Again, he may have been working as a paid labourer, but the family had certainly vacated Coominya and indeed Queensland well before 1928 as Amy Whittington died in Sydney in that very year. Two years later Herbert Whittington was living in the inner Sydney suburb of Darlinghurst, and probably spent the remainder of his life in the Sydney region. He died at Helensburgh, just south of the city, in 1967.⁵³³

WILLS, CHARLES FREDERICK (1886-1972)

(Service Numbers 223045 and Q228543)

Charles Frederick Wills was an unlikely success story, one of only two soldier settlers at Coominya to triumph from the land. Born at Bombay in India on 22 April 1886, Wills had returned to England with his parents, Charles and Agnes, by the age of four. After working briefly as a labourer he joined the Royal Navy in 1902, serving on a number of vessels, the last of which was HMS *Venerable* in 1909. While he would have remained in the naval reserve, it is not clear in what capacity Wills participated during World War One (if at all). On 30 October 1917 he married Edith Emily Rush at West Ham in Essex (now part of East London), a union that produced three children: Charles Frederick (1919-1994); Winifred Edith (1922-2005); and Patience Beatrice (1925-2009). The last two were born on the Coominya Soldier Settlement.⁵³⁴

In early 1921 Charles, Edith and Charles Jnr arrived in Brisbane on the *Demosthenes* and had taken up Portion 99 in the Parish of Buaraba at Coominya by June of that year. A. MacDonald commenced building a standard dwelling the following month, which D. Clark completed in August. During this time Wills was engaged in clearing operations, and by October he had begun root running and fencing. At the same time Alfred Gutteridge was hired to begin ploughing and harrowing, a task taken over by Wills in March 1922. In July of that year he planted his first fruit trees, following up in August with mandarins purchased from H.A. Petersen. Further plantings were made in September. There is no evidence that Wills planted grapes, a fortuitous strategy which may have influenced his desire to remain at Coominya despite carrying the extra debt for a greatly expanded area. As well as his original block, Wills acquired Portions 110, 111, 112, 113, 114 and 115 in the Parish of Buaraba. The arrival of a cream separator in November 1924 indicates that he had turned his attention to dairying, benefitting further when all unpaid interest was written off in December.⁵³⁵ Taken together it was more than enough to ensure the family's economic survival.

Charles and Edith were still farming their land when World War Two broke out. Charles enlisted in the Citizen Military Forces,⁵³⁶ returning to the farm until Edith's death on 10 July 1957. By the following year, however, Wills had retired from Coominya and was living in the Ipswich suburb of Brassall with a married daughter, probably Winifred who became engaged to Jack Gilbert in September 1951 and later settled in Ipswich. The year 1963 found Wills residing on the Gold Coast before moving to Redcliffe, just north of Brisbane, by 1968. The former sailor from Bombay died on Christmas Day in 1972 at the age of 86.⁵³⁷

WOOLSTON, ARTHUR HENRY (1886-1963)

(Service Numbers 211973 and Q187087)

Arthur Henry Woolston had more than his share of misfortune in life. The failure of a 17-year marriage after his wife ran off with his best friend, a second relationship that came to grief after 23 years, a charge of horse-stealing and a hopeless struggle to make ends meet as a soldier settler at Coominya. Arthur Woolston was born at Battersea in Surrey, England, on 13 April 1886 and joined the Royal Navy at the age of 14 years. After serving for three years he returned to civilian life and later worked as a potman (serving drinks and doing odd chores) at the Regents Arms in Hastings Street, Luton. It was there that he met an attractive domestic servant named Rose Alice Mercer, who was also employed at the Regents Arms. Woolston married her at Maidstone in Kent on 9 January 1911. The couple had two children, only one of whom reached adulthood: Amelia Rose (1912-1916) and Grace Eleanor (1916-1963). Following the outbreak of war in 1914 Woolston enlisted in the Army Service Corps and by his own admission was serving with the 3rd Middlesex Regiment on the Western Front when he was shell-shocked and later discharged. On 27 September 1919 the family boarded the Orient liner *Osterley* in London for Sydney, where Woolston later claimed he sought to buy land. Having failed to find anything suitable the family moved north to Queensland. However, there is a strong suspicion that Woolston may have been briefly in New Zealand, where he committed two criminal offences while using the alias 'Arthur Wall'.⁵³⁸

Be that as it may, the Woolston family was definitely in Queensland by November 1920, when Woolston signed an undertaking for Portion 160 in the Parish of Wivenhoe on Coominya Soldier Settlement. By June 1921 he was busy clearing the land and the following month purchased lemon trees, grapefruit and custard apples from H.A. Petersen, all of which were planted during August and September. Although clearing operations continued during 1922, from the beginning of the year Woolston was also kept busy with root running and ploughing. To make extra money he also leased a mare from John Ryan, a farmer near Gatton, which Woolston entered in country race meetings. It was a business deal that would have unexpected repercussions when the 12-month lease expired in February 1923. In April 1922, however, Woolston purchased mandarin and a small number of plum trees. A solitary fig tree was probably intended for household use. More fruit trees were purchased and planted in September.⁵³⁹ In November Woolston was among the soldier settlers who travelled to Brisbane to impress upon Harry Coyne, Minister for Public Lands, the critical position faced by the returned servicemen and their families at Coominya.⁵⁴⁰ The following month Woolston was treated by the Lowood ambulance-bearer for 'shock and collapse' which temporarily rendered him speechless,⁵⁴¹ with the family abandoning Portion 160 shortly afterwards.

Woolston and his wife were offered a job on a farm near Bundaberg, but their quandary was a shortage of money for the relocation. It was then that Woolston made a foolish mistake by selling the leased mare in Ipswich for £10. To make matters worse he and his wife lost their new job and were forced to return south, where Woolston was arrested for horse-stealing. In April 1923 he appeared before Justice O'Sullivan at the Ipswich Circuit Court and was fortunate indeed to receive a 12-month suspended sentence for the offence.⁵⁴² Woolston finally managed to find steady employment driving a taxi for the Reel Cab Company in Brisbane, which was established in 1918 by former AIF personnel. He appears to have

continued driving cabs for this company for many years. The family moved into a house in the suburb of Red Hill which had been purchased by George Simpson, a railway officer who had befriended the family at Coominya. In 1926 it proved to be more than a friendship when Rose Woolston left her husband and daughter to move in with Simpson.⁵⁴³ That same year Woolston formed a relationship with Dorothy Marjory Baylyn, to whom he had two more children: Ramon Vincent (1926-1998) and Adrian Sylvester (1928-1996), suggesting that there may have already been an intimate relationship prior to the departure of Woolston's lawful wife. Although there is no record of Woolston marrying Dorothy Baylyn, the children took the Woolston surname. The couple remained together until 1949.⁵⁴⁴

In March 1931 Woolston claimed damages after the taxi he was driving in Edward Street, Brisbane, was struck by another vehicle,⁵⁴⁵ apparently later moving to Gympie where he enlisted in the Citizen Military Forces in 1939 and served in the First Garrison Battalion.⁵⁴⁶ Either before or after his relationship with Dorothy Baylyn dissolved in 1949 Woolston returned to Brisbane, where he died on 23 November 1963. Rose Simpson reverted to the Woolston surname after George Simpson died on 23 March 1961, and was living at the Sundale Garden Village at Nambour in 1980. She died there shortly afterwards. Following her separation from Arthur Woolston, Dorothy Baylyn formed a relationship with Lawrence Wallis. She died at Brisbane in 1966.⁵⁴⁷

WRAY, EDGAR (1890-1959)

(Service Number B2455)

With a fair complexion, light brown hair and grey eyes, Edgar Wray was 24 years of age and 167 centimetres tall when he enlisted in the AIF at Brisbane on 18 September 1914. But it is there that his military records ends. Earmarked for the 15th Infantry Battalion, Wray did not report to his unit, which sounds suspiciously like desertion. If that was indeed the case, it was highly unethical — to say the least — that he later managed to obtain a soldier settlement block. Born in Brisbane on 11 January 1890, Edgar Wray trained as a tailor and after his brief appearance as an enlistee he next resurfaced on 10 November 1920 when signing an undertaking for Portion 110 in the Parish of Buaraba at Coominya. The application was formally accepted on 2 August 1921, by which time Wray was root running and fencing the property. Although James Gutteridge was hired to begin ploughing in July, Wray did the harrowing and planted the initial fruit trees in August. He obtained his first grape cuttings in October and largely spent the remainder of the year clearing more ground. This work continued through to June 1922, and for a tailor Wray did exceptionally well to persevere on the soldier settlement until 1925. In January of the latter year Wray's cottage and 1000-gallon water tank were railed to Portion 43 in the Parish of Earlsfield at Jambin in the Callide Valley, and while there is no record of their previous owner following suit it remains possible that Wray did accept a transfer to the Callide Valley. The documentation is far from complete, but if this was indeed the case he met with no success in the longer term. Wray later moved to Goulburn in New South Wales, where he married Jessie Edith Nayler in 1936. There was no issue from the marriage. In May 1942 Wray was employed in the public service at Goulburn when he suffered a broken leg as a result of a motorcycle accident. He and his wife continued to reside in Goulburn until their respective deaths in 1959 and 1974.⁵⁴⁸

WYNN, SAMUEL HENRY (1879-1953)

(Service Number 770)

A labourer born at Enfield on the then north-eastern outskirts of London, England, on 12 June 1879, Samuel Henry Wynn later migrated to Australia and was working on the western Darling Downs by 1913. On 6 October 1915 Wynn enlisted in the AIF at Brisbane at the age of 36, his brother Walter in England recorded as next of kin. Standing 170 centimetres in height, with blue eyes, dark brown hair and a dark complexion, Wynn embarked on HT *Demosthenes* at Sydney on 6 May 1916 bound for Southampton in England. After undergoing training he was posted to the 41st Battalion and crossed the English Channel to France on 24 November 1916. Two months later Wynn was hospitalised for two weeks with an unspecified illness, but better news came in August 1917 when he was promoted to Lance Corporal. He took another step up the ladder the following October with a promotion to Armourer Staff Sergeant. In February 1918 Wynn was transferred from the 41st Battalion to the Australian Army Ordinance Corps, where he remained for the rest of the war. He returned to Australia on HT *Karmala* in July 1919 and received his discharge from the AIF the following month.⁵⁴⁹

On 16 April 1921 Wynn married Ellen Dredge (*nee* Williams) in Brisbane. Ellen had married John James Dredge in 1915, bearing him a son before Dredge departed for overseas service with the AIF and was killed in action in France on 12 August 1918. Following her second marriage Ellen gave birth to two girls, Ellen Margaret (b.1922) and Madeline Ida (b.1924).⁵⁵⁰ By June 1921 Wynn and Ellen were residing on Portion 112 in the Parish of Wivenhoe at Coominya, where Samuel had already cleared some of the land. The initial ploughing was undertaken by James Gutteridge, but Wynn followed up with the harrowing and planted his first grape cuttings in August 1921. Citrus trees followed in October. Between November 1921 and February 1922 Wynn spent much of his time clearing, but for reasons unknown the lease for Portion 112 was cancelled on 11 April 1922.⁵⁵¹ The couple probably returned to Brisbane, though Wynn created some anxiety for his brother Walter in England, who appealed through the Brisbane press in December 1924 for information as to his whereabouts. Indeed, nothing more is known of Samuel and Ellen Wynn until their respective deaths in Brisbane on 26 April 1953 and 17 December 1975.⁵⁵²

ZROPF/ZROFF, JACOB GUSTAV GEORGE (1883-1969)

(Service Number unknown)

Remarkably little is known of Jacob Gustav George Zropf (also spelled Zroff) who took up Portion 111 in the Parish of Wivenhoe on Coominya Soldier Settlement. Zropf was born at Toowoomba on 2 August 1883 and was working as a labourer on his father Johann's farm at Ravensbourne in 1905. Eight years later Zropf was employed as a bullock-driver, and on 2 December 1914 he married Ada Clara Knoll, who was three years his senior. One child, Archibald (1916-2010), was born to the couple. Owing to the variable spelling of the family surname, and the possibility that Zropf may have enlisted under an alias to disguise his German heritage, it has not been possible to track down his military record. (He is known to have used 'James' as his Christian name). Electoral rolls suggest that Zropf probably enlisted in the AIF in the latter half of 1917 or 1918, qualified by his later eligibility for a soldier settlement block. The family's residence at Coominya was obviously brief: in 1922 and again in 1925 they were living at Esk. Zropf, in fact, spent his entire life in the West Moreton region. From 1932 to 1936 the family was living at Gatton, before briefly returning to Esk and then Helidon in 1937. They appear to have settled at Helidon for a considerable period, where Zropf was probably farming on his own account. However, in 1956 they returned to Esk, where Ada died on 26 July of that year and was buried in the local cemetery. Two years later Zropf was in Gatton, returning to his home town of Toowoomba prior to his own death there on 14 June 1969. He was also laid to rest in Esk Cemetery.⁵⁵³

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