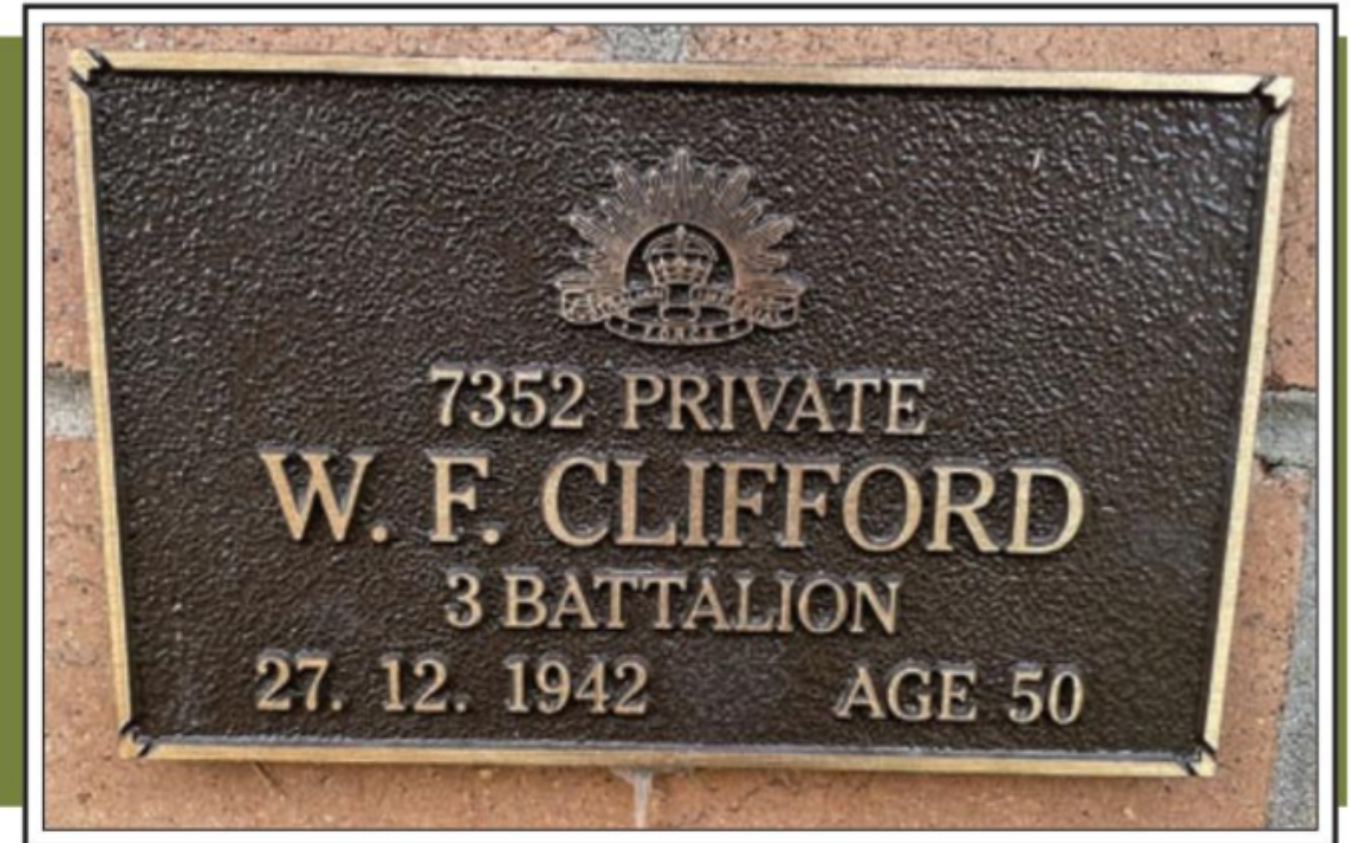


“NIP” CLIFFORD and the forgotten heroes that served their country



By **DAVID DIXON**

“We will remember them” is the eternal promise that we make to those who risked their lives for their country; and it’s a pledge that Patrick Bourke has kept.

The local researcher recently battled through the seemingly opaque War Graves bureaucracy to ensure that one forgotten Digger received the recognition that was his due.

“Two years ago, I discovered that a World War I veteran William Francis “Nip” Clifford was buried in an unmarked grave in the Old Dubbo Cemetery in 1942,” Patrick explained.

“As nothing was being done to commemorate the service of this long-forgotten veteran, I decided to undertake a project, by lodging a war grave claim with the Commonwealth Department of Veterans’ Affairs in Sydney,” he said.

Like many battle-scarred survivors of the horrors of the Western Front, Nip Clifford again signed-up to serve in World War II, dying in the darkest days of this conflict.

To receive his recognition, Patrick had to show that Clifford’s early death, aged only 50, was related to his service in two World Wars, following the tragic passing of his brother in France.

“I could see from his World War II service records that William Clifford had a significant problem with alcohol; his war death claim was granted on the basis that his early death was related to his alcohol abuse.

“Which was probably caused or aggravated by the trauma he experienced when fighting on the Western Front during World War I; very likely he was fighting with his brother, Terence, when Terence was killed in action on the Western Front.”

Proving this claim, however, was just the start of Patrick’s

journey.

“After a long delay, due to the lack of staff who were allocated to process these compensation claims in DVA, my application was finalised.

“I was able to successfully prove that William Francis Clifford’s early death in Dubbo in 1942 was war-related; hence, he

was eligible for a war grave in the Old Dubbo Cemetery, which would be provided free-of-cost by the Office of Australian War Graves.”

Patrick revealed, though, that this approval did not guarantee that Clifford’s final resting place would get official recognition.

“The grave records held by the

Dubbo Regional Council, were unable to give the exact location of William Clifford’s burial site in the Old Dubbo Cemetery, so it was not possible for the Office of Australian War Graves to provide William Clifford with a war grave in the cemetery,” he explained.

“The Office of Australian War Graves has, however, provided a

commemorative plaque for William Francis Clifford, in the NSW Garden of Remembrance in Sydney.”

Although Patrick doesn’t have a picture of “Nip” Clifford, he did find a fascinating drawing of him among a group of delegates at the 1936 RSL State Conference in Sydney from the popular Smith’s Weekly magazine of October 3, 1936.

“The World War I and World War II records have been digitised for William Francis Clifford and are now in the National Archive of Australia website,” Patrick said proudly.

“The project to obtain a commemoration for this Australian war veteran, was a long but satisfactory one,” he said.

This is not the only important local historical work that Patrick is carrying out, recently revealing some fascinating facts about a number of Dubbo-enlisted airmen.

“I have been researching the Dubbo High School ex-students who did their early RAAF World War II pilot training at Narromine during the war.

“Last month, the Memorial Wall at the Narromine Aviation Museum, commemorating the 2850 RAAF airmen who did their pilot training at Narromine, was unveiled by Air Chief Marshal Sir Angus Houston,” Patrick said.

His results found that local young men played a prominent part in the battle of the air that helped the Allies win the war.

“From what I have found, 19 Dubbo High School ex-students did their early RAAF World War II pilot training at Narromine.

“One ex-student received a Victoria Cross, and five ex-students received a Distinguished Flying Cross, sadly, 10 of these ex-students were killed during the war.”

A FEW OF THE DIGGER DELEGATES SEEN BY SYD MILLER AT THE ANNUAL CONGRESS IN SYDNEY LAST WEEK



1. Keith Todd, country vice-president (Griffith).
2. J. Sharpe (Leeton).
3. P. H. Callahan (Orange).
4. J. J. Gleeson (Bombala).

5. W. McDougall (Bondi-Waverley).
6. George Lovett (Lismore), Far N. Coast Councillor.
7. A. M. Low (Condobolin).
8. Matron Durham.

9. L. S. Ferrier, Western County Councillor (Orange).
10. Chas. Dawson (Wollongong).
11. F. M. Gordon (Kogarah).
12. Col. McLean.

13. W. Francis (Cootamundra).
14. W. Clifford (Narromine).
15. P. L. Macdonald (Ingleburn).
16. L. A. Robb, President.

17. George Murphy, Metropolitan Vice-President.
18. G. A. Saunders (Warren).
19. R. A. Ogilvie (Toronto).
20. H. Cridland (East Maitland).

ABOVE: Lasting image... an illustration from the Smith's Weekly of October 3, 1936, showing Nip (“W Clifford — Narromine”) among the delegates for the 1936 RSL State Conference in Sydney. **IMAGE:** SMITH'S WEEKLY.

TOP: William Francis ‘Nip’ Clifford’s commemorative plaque in the NSW Remembrance Garden, Rookwood Cemetery, Sydney. **PHOTO:** SUPPLIED