

The men from Myrree: 'a place with many old people and tall trees'

Evan Evans, Hobart.

Myrree is a rich agricultural locality, situated approximately midway between Wangaratta and Mansfield in the foothills of the north-east Victorian highlands. Myrree lacks a pub, post office or store, but there is the Myrree State Primary School (which proudly celebrated its centenary in 1985), a Memorial Hall and a community recreation centre. The Memorial Hall contains the two conventional honour boards to those who have served Australia in war. The Myrree School also contains a special pictorial Honour Roll as it nestles in its 'crick'¹ between the Fifteen Mile and Boggy Creeks.

Mt Bellevue is the area's high point, which sits roughly in the middle of the Myrree district. This was the high point that the explorers Hume and Hovell climbed when they passed through the district on their 1824-25 expedition from Sydney to Geelong. They reported, *Halfway up this mountain the stone is of the worst quality, but on the top the stone has a portion of lime in it. The soil is of excellent quality and the grass and herbage is equal to any in the Murrumbidgee.* [Hume and Hovell Expedition, 1824].^{2,3}

This 'red dirt', either on the hill tops or washed into the valleys to form alluvial deposits, can bountifully grow anything from cereals, hops, tobacco and potatoes, or can sustain grazing stock and dairying. In more recent times, fine wine grapes have become prominent. The district's relatively consistent rainfall, typically in excess of 1 000 mm per year, ensures that the district's production is consistent by Australian standards.

As squatters, from 1853 the Evans family once farmed the 60 000 acre 'Whitefield' run which encompassed much of the district of Myrree. The Whitefield run's fragmentation was induced through a series of Crown Lands Alienation Acts and Crown Lands Occupation Acts that were introduced between the 1860s and 1880s. Along with substantial, but ultimately futile, forays into stations in the Hillston district of NSW due to the ravages of drought, rabbits and wild dogs, this winnowed the family's holdings back to John Evans' 'Redcamp' property on the Boggy Creek and the 'Manarhee' property on the Fifteen Mile Creek, run by his oldest son Jack [**below right**, standing right]. The Evans family was part of those risk-taking generations that pioneered modern Australia.



Looking over the 'Glenburnie' Paddock to the "Bald Hill range", 'Redcamp' on the Boggy Creek, Myrree, c1910.



Hop production on 'Manharee' on the Fifteen Mile Creek, c1940.

The **patriarch** of the family, John Evans, and his wife Eleanor Lucy (nee Whitty), had eleven children: nine boys and two girls. Unfortunately, the oldest child and daughter succumbed to diphtheria at nearly three years, but the remainder of their children survived into adulthood. It was then one of the New Testament's 'Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse' – war – took its tithe on both the Evans family and the Myrree district.

It is therefore reasonable to conclude that Myrree was a good crick. Marion Flanigan, an elder of the Myrree district recounts that shortly after marrying her husband Ian and coming into the district, his grandmother sagely commended her for choosing to *live in an area with many old people and tall trees.*

A fair question would be: why would a man willingly leave such a fortunate place? The answer, of course, would be to *protect* the place and the people they loved. The reality of industrialised war would soon intrude on these enviable intentions for most of the men, such as my great uncle, **Signaller 2399 Francis ('Ken') Evans** (51st Bn, KIA 13/10/1917, position #30 on pictorial roll of honour, **bottom of page, right**), who confided in a letter to his mother on 22 March, 1917:

All we want now is for the infernal war to end so as we can go to our dear homes in the only country in the world for me, Australia. However, all will be well yet Mother dear & try not to worry too much as 1917 ought to see the end of it.

The Great War would come and rudely interrupt the industrious agrarian idyll of the Myrree district. In total, 55 men who had attended the Myrree School or were associated with the district signed up to serve in the AIF and were later honoured on the Myrree Primary School pictorial honour roll. An inclusive net was cast for the roll, with an Englishman from Gloucester, **2nd Lieutenant Roy Bailey** included (#35, KIA 5/1/1918, near Cambrai).

Roy spent 18 months in total in Australia and specifically four months as a teacher at the Myrree Primary School *where [he] made himself highly popular*.⁴ A newspaper reported that Roy left Australia in January 1915 to enlist in England, and from where he was initially sent to South Africa where he fought with the Umvoti Mounted Rifles, seeing action in what was then German South West Africa. At the successful conclusion of this foray, Bailey then returned to England to take up a commission with the Royal Marines, 1st Battalion, in June 1917.

Conversely, Myrree man, **Sergeant Henry Simmonds** (#49) appears to have left Australia for England on 3 December, 1906. He then enlisted in the British Army, first as a corporal in the 1st Kent Cycling Battalion, later transferring as a sergeant to the Queen's Own Royal West Kent Regiment. His brother, **Gunner 19822 Gilbert Simmonds** (#11), enlisted into the 8th Field Artillery Brigade in Melbourne. Both brothers survived the war, with Gilbert being discharged with shell shock on 30 April, 1918, which was presumably sustained during the battles of Third Ypres, better known as Passchendaele. Henry was discharged in England after the war and emigrated to Canada. In 1932, he represented Canada in sailing (Star class) at the 1932 Los Angeles Olympic games but did not win a medal.



Photograph of the Honour Roll Board for the Myrree State School and residents of the district for the 'World's Greatest War', 1914-1920, for King and Country. Right hand panel provides the number key for the men's photo panels. (Photo provided by Ernie Handcock.)

Of the 55 men, there is only one that I have not been able to properly link to enlistment or RSL records. He is, by his photos, an older man (30-40 years), **Private R Rodman** (#18). Rodman was presumably also a veteran of the Boer War.

Two other men, **Private Leonard Forge** (#51) and **Private Leonard Patterson** (#53) enlisted but had the bad luck (or perhaps in retrospect, good luck), of having disabling training accidents, resulting in their discharge from service in Australia. [There was a Private Reuben Rodman who enlisted from Kyabram in January 1916;⁵ perhaps he too suffered an incapacitating injury or sickness after enlistment?]

QMS James E Kidgell (#13) is another man who served in the Boer War and then stayed in South Africa. During WWI he enlisted in the South African Army and fought the Germans in Africa. In 1920, he returned to Myrree with his South African wife, Constance, to the family's 'Lumeah' property. They had twins (Ian and Cecil) who both served in WWII. **Flying Officer J Ian Kidgell** (190 Squadron, RAF) was a bomber pilot and was killed on 21 November, 1944, when his Short Stirling bomber was shot down by a 'German intruder' as he was returning to base.

In Myrree, the average enlistment age of the men was 26 years and two months, with the majority enlisting during 1916 (29 men) and 1915 (18 men). There were others who tried to enlist but their age and parental objections delayed them (**Pte 6414 Daniel Nolan**, 22nd Bn, #55) or like my grandfather **Evan Evans**, who had suffered football injuries to his knees, resulting in his enlistment being rejected despite multiple attempts. The men were enlisted into a range of AIF units across the service, from infantry to light horse, artillery, engineers/pioneers and ambulance, with one of the Handcocks (**Pte 7568 Fred Hancock**, #44) being allocated to the tunnellers. Overall, the 37th Battalion was the most popular 'Myrree battalion' with 11 men being allocated to it.

The downside for the district's pride in the numbers of men enlisting was the inevitable magnitude of the losses. In total, 13 men were killed in action, three died of wounds received in action and a further two were lost to sickness (influenza/pneumonia, malaria). As would be expected, there were a number of the men discharged as a result of wounding (including gassing), as well as a few cases of severe shell shock.

With the district's significant contribution to WWI in terms of men, it was not surprising that the district decided to produce a memorial beyond the conventional honour roll. This special memorial took the form of the pictorial honour roll for 'Scholars of the Myrree State School No. 2677 and Residents of the District' [[previous page](#)].

Despite canvassing a range of Hancock, Evans and Flanigan Myrree octogenarians and current staff at the Myrree School, I have not been able to ascertain the details of the committee who commissioned the honour roll. However, a short article in the 'Benalla Standard' (6 January, 1922) reports it was unveiled by Mr R Cook MP on 22 December, 1921.

A small bronze plaque in the shape of an 'artist's palette' used to be on the board. This plaque probably had the maker on it but it went missing sometime during the last century.

Marion Flanigan recounts that the decision to include all those men broadly associated with the district, not just those who attended the Myrree School, was somewhat contentious at the time. However, I am grateful the committee used this inclusive approach. The consensus of the current Myrree elders is that board was commissioned by the Myrree School Committee in the early 1920s and that it was paid for in the traditional way, that is, by working bees to cut firewood, selling raffle tickets and fundraising by social events.

Commissioning of a pictorial honour roll to commemorate the service of the district's men appears to have been relatively rare. I was aware of only three other such honour rolls in Australia (described in the following paragraphs), but have since found others [see [endnote 14](#)].

A smaller pictorial honour roll was made for the **Meadow Creek Primary School**. Under the banner, *Our ANZAC Heroes* and a portrait of King George V, are presented the uniformed portraits of 25 men. Interestingly four of those men, **L/Cpl Arnold Forge** (#23), **Gnr Clifford Haynes** (#6), **Pte Paul Haynes** (#1, KIA 9/4/1918, Le Hamel), and **Pte Henry Wallace** (#46) are shared with the Myrree Honour Roll.

A similar but far larger Honour Roll to that of the Myrree School's is the magnificent pictorial honour roll in the ANZAC Rooms of the **Coal Creek Heritage Village in Korumburra**, Gippsland. This honour roll board was produced by local Korumburra photographer, Mr A Pam, who presented it to the people of Korumburra on Armistice Day, 11 November, 1920. It was originally presented to be hung in the Korumburra Primary School, and within its 6 foot by 4 foot frame it contains 271 portraits, of which eight are those of local dignitaries, with the remaining 262 being those of Diggers who served during WWI.⁶

Another is the **Willunga** (SA) pictorial honour roll [below], which is a feature of the Australian War Memorial's 'After the War' exhibition (from 5 October, 2018, for one year). This honour roll presents the pictures of 64 servicemen from WWI from the Willunga area (near Maclaren Vale).

These pictorial rolls, and other like them, are very important, not only as an exquisite tribute to the men who served, but as a resource to those of us looking to match names with verified photos of the Diggers.



The Willunga (South Australia) Honour Roll Board (Picture AWM) which will feature in the 'After the War' exhibition later in 2018. The board was produced with funds provided by Willunga's 'Cheer-Up Girls' and was for permanent exhibition in the Willunga Agricultural Hall. Willunga is in SA's Maclaren Vale that hosts the 'Queen's stage' of the Tour Down Under cycling race each year.

The Hancock brothers occupy a special place on the Myrrhee Honour Roll. My great uncle, **Captain Gerald Evans** (#12) wrote to his mother from France on 11 June, 1916: *The Handcocks must be aggressive, six of them going!* And that was before a further two brothers enlisted over the coming months. Presumably, Gerald had seen an article on this special contribution in the local paper, 'The Wangaratta Chronicle'. Newspapers, although several months old, were like gold to the men in France to keep in touch with news from back home, so were eagerly shared around.



*Above: The 'aggressive' Hancock Bros 1914-1918 (collage of hand colourised photos). **Back:** Bert, John, Frank. **Front:** Fred, Henry, Richard, Charlie, Ralph. (Identifications supplied by Vic Handcock, April 2018).*



*Above: The Hancock boys c1915 in civilian clothing. **Back:** Richard, Fred, John/Jack (added later), Ralph, Peter (too young). **Front:** Bert, Frank, Charles, Henry. (Identifications supplied by Vic Handcock, April 2018).*

Overall, Charles and Harriett Handcock who commenced hop-growing in 1893 on the Upper 15 Mile Creek Road, Myrree, contributed eight sons to the AIF. They were, in order of enlistment: **Pte Jack** (#39, 7th Bn), **Spr Bert** (#41), **Pte Ralph** (#37), **Pte Frank** (#42), **L/Cpl Charles** (#40), **Pte 1846 Henry** (#34), **Pte 7568 Fred** (#44) and **Pte 2634 Richard** (#47) [see photos **previous page**]. With eight sons enlisting for the war, Charles and Harriett's family is thought to have made the greatest single-family contribution from Australia, and perhaps the Empire.

Other Myrree families were also significant contributors to the AIF, including the **Forge** family with five: **L/Cpl William** (#2); **Pte Leslie** (#17); **L/Cpl Arnold** (#23); **Pte Walter** (#24) and **Pte Leonard** (#51), who all returned safely to Myrree. The **Kidgells** gave **L/Cpl Eric** (#4), **Cpl William** (#9, KIA 6/8/1916 at Pozieres), **QMS James** (#13) and **Dvr Percival** (#29). Also with four sons serving were the **Pattersons**, with **Cpl Archie** (#7), **Pte John** (#18, DOW 7/5/1917 at Bullecourt), **Farrier Sgt Alex** (#31) and **Pte Allan** (#53).



Gold medal presented to Pte Archie Patterson.

On the night of 22 March, 1916, a farewell function was held for 11 men of the 37th Battalion in Myrree: Cpl **W Jarrott** (#10), and Ptes **J Leslie** (#26), **W Forge** (#2), **C Handcock** (#40), **H Handcock** (#34), **R Stickels** (#38), **A Patterson** (#7), **H Bridger** (#14), **J Jarrott** (#15), **L Forge** (#17) and **D Bryan** (#54). Each man was presented with an exquisite, gold fob medal inscribed with their names, and on the reverse side, *From Myrree Residents* [left].

Henry Handcock's grandson, Neville Handcock, is still growing hops on the family property, which is no mean feat given the vicissitudes of the hop market, particularly over the past 30 years. It was a visit with Henry Handcock's two surviving sons, Ernie and Vic Handcock, who proudly suggested that I view the Myrree School Honour Roll. Being allocated to the near by Moyhu Primary School, I had not seen it while growing up in the area.

The youngest son, Peter Handcock, did not enlist as he was too young. Peter is shown in the photo of the family in early 1915 [previous page]. As Jack Handcock had already gone overseas, the photographer left a 'space' for him in the back row. He later inserted a photo of Jack in uniform to complete the group. The only clue to the manipulation is that Jack has no legs in the photograph.

Commencing below are the portraits and details of the men on the Myrree Roll of Honour.



1. Pte Paul A Haynes
RN 1347, 37th Bn to 59th Bn,
b 7/1897, E 18/3/1916
KIA 9/4/1918, Le Hamel,
France.
P: Albert & Elizabeth
Haynes, Moyhu/Wangaratta.



2. L/Cpl William Forge
RN 1191, 37th Bn to 59th Bn,
b 12/1897, E 12/2/1916,
Dis 10/6/1919, d 1978.
F: William Forge, Myrree.



3. Pte Llewellyn Evans
RN 5335, 24th Bn, b 9/1879,
E 18/3/1916, Dis 30/4/1919.
M: Mrs Elsie Evans,
Heidelberg, Melbourne.



4. L/Cpl Eric G Kidgell
RN 2497, 16th Bn, b 13/4/1889
(Qld), E 25/5/1915 (Perth)
Dis 29/4/1916 (Perth),
d 25/2/1955.
M: Mrs Annie Kidgell,
Myrree.

In the media of the day, the Handcock family was held up as the epitome of loyalty and patriotism for Australia and the Empire. After the seventh son (Fred) enlisted, 'The Age' (6/7/16) elevated the family as *an example to slackers* and trade union strikers, while the 'Wangaratta Chronicle' (21/4/17) reported that Mr Charles Handcock was presented with a *handsome solid marble clock as an expression of appreciation and admiration for the sacrifices they have made in giving their sons so freely and willingly in response to their Country's Call*. The clock was donated to the Wangaratta Historical Society Museum in 1967.⁷

Unfortunately, some of the Handcock boys eventually made the supreme sacrifice for King and Country. **Private Albert John (Jack) Handcock** (#39), 7th Battalion, was the family's first loss, killed in action 2 May, 1915, on Gallipoli. Jack also had the unfortunate distinction of being the first of the Myrree district men to lay down their life for their country. For the Handcocks, Jack's loss was bookended by the loss of **L/Cpl Charles Handcock** (#40), 37/38th Battalion who died of pneumonia (following influenza) in Abbeville, France, on the penultimate day of the war (10/11/18). He was the last of the Myrree men to die during WWI. The other Myrree man to die of illness was **Trooper Edward Bryan** (#54) who died of malaria in Egypt on 26 August, 1918.



5. Driver Richard H Bray
RN 9597, 11th Field Coy Eng to 11th Field Ambulance, b 3/1892, E 20/1/1916
Dis 13/4/1919, d 26/7/1960.
M: Mrs Louisa Bray, SA.



6. Gnr Clifford Haynes
RN 1759, 7th Bn to 24th Field Arty Bde, b 4/1894, E 4/1/1915
Dis 17/7/1917^a.
P: Albert & Elizabeth Haynes, Moyhu/Wangaratta.



7. L/Cpl Archie Patterson
RN 1257, 37th to 59th Bn, b 7/1891, E 29/1/1916
Dis 10/6/1919.
F: Emerson Patterson, 'Wallacedale,' Myrree.



8. Dvr John T Nolan
RN 597, 1st Divisional Train, b 1/1890, E 18/8/1914
Dis 4/8/1915, d 3/2/1934.
F: John Nolan, Myrree.



9. Cpl William G Kidgell
RN 2556, 12th Machine Gun Coy, b 30/5/1882, E 16/6/1915,
KIA 6/8/1916 Pozieres, France.
M: Mrs Annie Kidgell, Myrree.



10. CSM WT Wilf Jarrott
RN 912, 37th Bn, b 1/1896, E 11/1/1916, KIA 7/6/1917
Messines, Belgium.
P: Thomas & Martha Jarrott, Myrree.



11. Gnr Gilbert J Simmonds
RN 19882, 8th Field Arty Bde, b 28/6/1891, E 30/11/1915,
Dis 30/4/1918 (shell shock), d 31/3/1966. F: George Simonds, Burwood, Vic



12. Capt D Gerald Evans
MC, MiD, 22nd Bn to 8th Bn, b 8/12/1889, E 18/2/1915,
DOW 20/9/1917, Battle of Menin Road, Belgium.
P: John & Elinor Evans, 'Redcamp,' Myrree.

Three of the Handcock boys were wounded during the war. Most seriously wounded on 6 October, 1917, during the Battle of Third Ypres (Passchendaele) was **Pte Frank Handcock** (#42). He was also wounded at Pozieres on 8 August, 1916. Gunshot wounds resulted in his right leg being amputated above the

knee and one of his arms being paralysed. In a letter to the 'Wangaratta Chronicle' (20/2/18), Frank put on brave face to say, *it is amusing to see the chaps trying to use their artificial legs*, and that he was *anxious to get one to see how I get on*. Back then physical wounds and severe shell shock (initially begrudgingly) were attended to, but nobody had even thought of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). For Frank, the yearly readjustment of his leg was an agonising annual ordeal. Tragically, Frank took his own life 15 years later, just before his annual adjustment, leaving a widow and four young children behind ('The Argus', 24/2/33). He was by no means alone in this fate.

The majority of the Myrree boys enlisted after September 1915, so only around one-fifth of the men had the opportunity to serve on Gallipoli. In some respects, this was fortunate, as on Gallipoli the Anzacs spent long stretches in the trenches, where food and water supplies were of poor quality, and diseases such as diarrhoea and enteric were rife. Commenting on this 'good' fortune, **Captain Gerald Evans** (#12) wrote to his mother, while he was in the trenches near Fromelles (17/5/16):

*The work is fairly strenuous here but they take us out for a spell when we have been here for a while, so it is very different to Gallipoli where they had to stay in the trenches for months on end on bad food; the food is good here.*⁸

Still, as many of the Myrree men were to later find, the frequency and density of shells would be far greater than Gallipoli at places such as Pozieres, Bullecourt and Passchendaele.



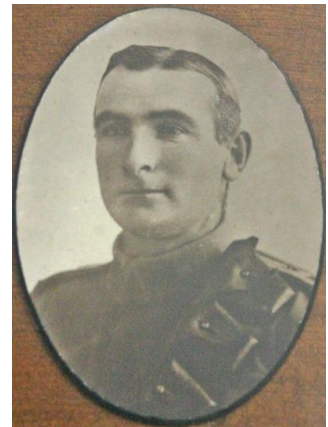
13. QMS James E Kidgell
RN 593, Served Boer War,
b 2/11/1873, E Sth Africa,
Dis not known,
d 1955 Gympie, Qld.
M: Mrs Annie Kidgell,
Myrree.



14. Cpl Horace Bridger
RN 1143, 37th Bn, b 11/1897,
E 22/1/1916, Dis 26/3/1918.
F: Joshua Bridger, Plaiston,
London.



15. Pte John M Jarrott
RN 5399, 8th Bn, b1897,
E 11/1/1916, Dis 21/3/1919,
d 24/1/1939, Culcairn NSW.
P: Thomas & Martha Jarrott,
Myrree.



16. Bdr Francis C Kyle
RN 3658, 3rd Field Art
Brigade,
b 2/1884, E 13/10/1914
Dis 18/5/1918 (gassed),
M: Mrs Margaret Tuomey,
Melbourne.



17. Pte Leslie Forge
RN 1833, 37th Bn,
b 2/1887, E 10/2/1916
Dis 2/7/1919, d 11/8/1951.
M: Catherine Forge,
Myrree.



18. Pte R Rodman
Not identified.
May have been Rueben
Rodman (1915-1918) from
Mt Scobie, near Kyabram.
5, 9



19. Pte John E Patterson
RN 6079, 3rd Bn, b 4/1886,
E 7/2/1916, DOW 7/5/1917,
Bullecourt, France.
P: William & Annie
Patterson, Cookardinia,
NSW.



20. Sgt TWC Bill Usherwood
RN 263, 23rd Battalion, b
8/1885, E 13/2/1915, KIA
4/8/1916, Pozieres, France.
P: Thomas & Annie
Usherwood, Mossgiel, NSW.



One of the Myrree boys who did get to serve briefly on Gallipoli was **Sergeant Bill Usherwood** (#20), a good friend of **Gerald Evans**, who had a particularly interesting time just getting to Gallipoli. Gerald's letter to his mother described the boat trip (29/11/15):

The boat that Bill Usherwood went across in was torpedoed but only a few men were lost [HMT Southland, en route Egypt to Lemnos]. There are three officers with us now who were on the boat, the men behaved wonderfully & the ships stokers & engineers rushed the boats. The captain shot several of them.⁸ Lieut Pearce MC [left, later Capt, 21st Bn, KIA 4/10/17] who went through the same school of instruction as I did, called for volunteers & went down & kept the engines going & they managed to beach there prematurely.

Capt Joseph Pearce MC
b 2/1886, E 18/3/1915,
KIA 4/10/1917, Third
Ypres, Zonnebeke,
Belgium.

As described by a cobbler (in a letter that has ended up in the Redcamp Archives):

*Dear Mr Usherwood,
Your letter inquiring for any news which I know concerning your brother and my mate [Sgt Tom Usherwood] ... Your brother Tom and myself have been mates from when we went into Broadmeadows together and as I had the next section to him we were very seldom apart ... We were fairly lucky for some time and after the first attack we reached our objective with slight loss, the five NCOs of the platoon still going strong. The last words Tom said to me, expecting orders, said to me, "It's a stiff job and has to be done, and we'll do it." We did it but I'll never forget that night ... The last I saw of good old Tom, he was doing splendid work getting his men forward and digging in. It was soon after this that one of the other NCOs saw him wounded. I wish with all my heart that I could give you more cheerful news but I know that should I ever fall my last wish would be that my dear people should not be kept in suspense. I cannot in anyway say anything else other than that your brother died a good soldier's and man's death.*

Letter from an unknown mate of Bill Usherwood's, dated 27 May, 1917.⁸



21. Pte Frederick A Foster
RN 2002, 55th Bn to 17th Bn
b 15/3/1889, E 14/1/1916,
KIA 15/4/1917, Lagnicourt,
France.
P: William & Ada Foster,
Forbes, NSW.



22. Pte Charles H Fitch
RN 631, 10th MG Coy to 37th
Bn, b 12/1896, E 19/2/1916
Dis 1/3/1919.
F: Charles Fitch, Box Hill,
Melbourne, Victoria.



23. LCpl Arnold Forge
RN 2063, 37th Bn, to 5th Bn
b 5/1894, E 1/5/1916,
Dis 15/5/1919, d 28/7/1963.
F: Robert Forge, Myrree.



24. Pte Walter A Forge
RN 3631, 2nd Pioneer Bn,
b 2/10/1871, E 12/10/1916,
Dis 6/3/1920, d 23/1/1929.
F: Robert Forge, Myrree.
Married Florrie Ada Rushton,
5/6/1920, London, UK.





25. Dvr Albert C Lewis
RN 14784, 3rd Div Train,
b 1875, E 31/7/1917,
Dis 29/10/1918,
d 8/1/1951 Heidelberg.
W: Margret Lewis,
Nth Carlton, Victoria.



26. Cpl James F Leslie
RN 1223, 37th Bn, b 10/1893,
E 12/2/1916, KIA 20/7/1917,
Neuve Eglise, Belgium.
P: James & Isabella Leslie,
Aberdeen, Scotland.



27. Bdr Henry White
RN 9117, 6th Field Arty Bde,
b 10/1893, E 23/8/1915, KIA
7/8/1916, Pozieres, France.
F: William White, Malvern,
Melbourne.



28. Cpl Benjamin J Marshall
RN 22350, 7th Field Arty Bde,
b 7/1889, E 26/1/1916
Dis 4/6/1919.
F: Benjamin J Marshall,
East Brunswick, Melbourne.

For many of the Myrrhee men, time out of the line in Egypt and at the Western Front enabled the catching up with various cobbers in the same or other units. Shortly before being killed in action at Messines, Belgium, on 9 July, 1917, **CSM William Jarrott** (#10) wrote the following letter to his parents, which was paraphrased in the 'Wangaratta Chronicle'¹⁰ (7/7/17):

*He says he has just been in heavy engagement in which he received a slight wound to the face. His company received special mention for bravery and he was promoted to Warrant Officer. He was sending home a souvenir which he took from a pack he seized while making a raid on an enemy trench. **Charlie** (#40) and **Henry** (#34) **Handcock, Leslie** (#17) and **Arnold** (#23) **Forge, Jim Leslie** (#26, KIA 20/7/1917) and **Horace Bridger** (#14) are all with him [in the 37th Bn]. The latter two are now corporals. He speaks of the severity of the winter which lasts for six months in this part of the world, and despite all the clothes he had on he felt the cold severely. He says he was in the best of spirits and going strong.*



29. Dvr Percival J Kidgell
RN 853, 4th Field Arty Bde,
b 19/9/1884, E 28/6/1915,
Dis 15/7/1919, d 1977 (Qld).
M: Mrs Annie Kidgell,
Myrrhee.



30. Sig Francis (Ken) Evans
RN 2399, 51st Bn,
b13/10/1884, E 3/4/1916,
KIA 13/10/1917,
Zonnebeke, France,
P: John & Elinor Evans,
'Redcamp,' Myrrhee.

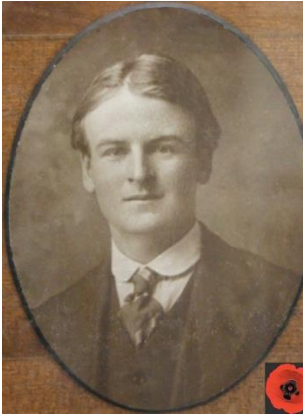


31. Farr Sgt Alex G Patterson
RN 7232, 5th Field Arty Bde,
b 8/1883, E 7/9/1915
Dis 28/3/1919.
F: W Patterson, Henty,
NSW.



32. Dvr William Southey
RN 2092, 8th Field Arty Bde,
b 8/1885, E 10/11/1916
Dis 6/8/1919.
F: W Southey, Chinchilla,
Qld.





33. Dvr Bryan B Hart
RN 5069, 8th Field Arty Bde,
b 8/1885, E 19/7/1915,
KIA 19/10/1917,^a
Passchendaele, Belgium.
F: John Hart, Tolmie via
Mansfield.



34. Pte W Henry Handcock
RN 1846, 38th Bn,
b 4/8/1889, E 27/3/1916,
Dis 30/4/1919, d 7/8/1978.
P: Charles & Harriett
Handcock, Myrree.



35. 2nd Lt Royal HS Bailey
1st Bn, Royal Marines, Light
Inf, b 12/1/1887,
E 26/06/1917
KIA 5/1/1918, Villiers-
Pouich, France (near
Cambrai).
W: Ethel Bailey, Bristol, UK.



36. Pte Harry Jones
RN 2485, 8th Bn, b 1/1894,
E 17/6/1915, KIA 18/8/1916,
Pozieres, France.
M: Mrs Emma Jones,
Littleport, England (Mother).



41. Spr RE Bob Handcock
RN 3045, 5th Field Coy
Engineers,
b 8/1887, E 25/3/1915,
Dis 19/6/1919, d 20/11/1961.
P: Charles & Harriett
Handcock, Myrree.



42. Pte RF Frank Handcock
RN 4177, 21st Bn, b 5/1895,
E 1/10/1915, Dis 18/4/1918,
d 23/2/1933.
P: Charles & Harriett
Handcock, Myrree.



43. Sgt Reginald W Minter
RN 6559, 6th Field Amb to
3rd Aust Gen Hosp, b 5/1893,
E 21/4/1915, Dis 19/12/1919.
F: Walter Minter, Forest
Gate, London, England.



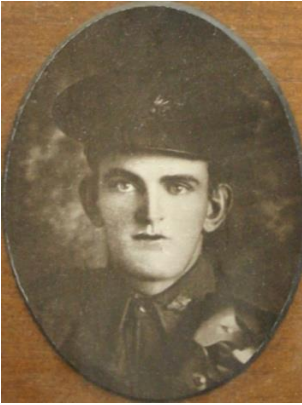
44. Pte Fred A Handcock
RN 7568, 1st Tunnelling Coy
b 5/1893, E 20/4/1917,
Dis 23/7/19, d 18/4/1963.
P: Charles & Harriett
Handcock, Myrree.

As can be seen from his Myrree ROH portrait, and in a later portrait in the AWM collection [right, AWM P05248.065], **CSM William Jarrott** (#10) was solidly built, like most of the Jarrott family. The picture of his brother, **Private John Jarrott** (#15), shows a much more slightly built and younger man. In a letter to his mother, Gerald Evans remarked on John's suitability for war (29/10/16):

*Think I told you young Jarrott was with this battalion now, poor kid, Tommy should have kept him on the crick for a couple more years, he is not developed enough for this game.*⁸

Gerald's assessment was accurate, as John's service record shows a series of illnesses and time recovering in English hospitals. However, John stuck out the war and served as well as he could.





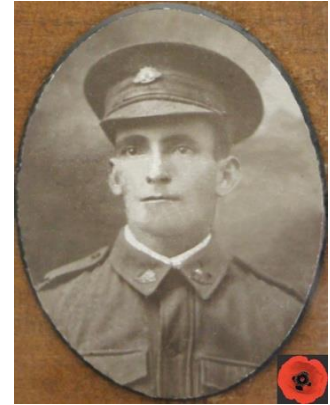
37. Pte J Ralph Handcock
RN 2021, 4th LH Reg/2nd
Pioneer Bn, b 28/9/1894,
E 1/10/1915, Dis 30/6/1919,
d 5/3/1989.
P: Charles & Harriett
Handcock, Myrree.



38. Pte Roy Stickels
RN 680, 37th Bn,
b12/1892, E 15/3/1916,
Dis 27/12/1917 (TB).
F: Edward Stickels, Myrree.



39. Pte AJ Jack Handcock
RN 1350, 7th Bn, b 2/1892,
E 21/9/1914, KIA 2/5/1915,
Lone Pine, Gallipoli.
P: Charles & Harriett
Handcock, Myrree.



40. Sgt Charles Handcock
RN 39, 38th Bn HQ, b 7/1886,
E 7/2/1916, DOI 10/11/1918,
Abbeville, France.
P: Charles & Harriett
Handcock, Myrree.



45. Pte Fred J Marshall
RN 2368, 44th Bn, b 4/1890,
E 11/5/1916, Dis 21/2/1918.
S: Emma Marshall, Benalla/
Wangaratta, Victoria .



46. Pte Henry Wallace
RN 6835, 5th Bn, b 11/1887,
E 2/9/1916, Dis 17/3/1919.
F: H Wallace, Hansonville,
Vic.



47. Pte Richard M Handcock
RN 2634, 2nd Pioneer Bn,
b 1/1898, E 4/7/1917,
Dis 23/1/1919.
P: Charles & Harriett
Handcock, Myrree



48. Pte Harry Plant
RN 4246, 20th Bn, b 12/1896,
E 14/10/1915,
DOW 20/9/1917, Menin Rd,
Belgium.
A: Maria Patterson, Myrree.

Being but a proverbial stone's throw from Greta and (Ned) Kelly country, there was, of course, Kelly connections for the Myrree men. Continuing the misfortune of the Kelly family, **Private Frederick Forster** (#21, KIA 15/4/17) was the son of Ned's sister, Kate.¹¹ Kate died in 1898 when she tragically drowned in a billabong of the Lachlan River near Forbes in NSW. Frederick and his siblings were then cared for by his grandmother Ellen Kelly, and uncle, Jim Kelly, at Greta for a time. Fred completed his growing up with the Forge family in Myrree and is warmly remembered to this day by both Patterson and Forge descendants as being a good young man.

Before he enlisted in the AIF, Fred was a bee-keeper in Myrree, being good mates with the five **Forge** brothers (**L/Cpl William** #2, **Pte Leslie** #17, **L/Cpl Arnold** #23, **Pte Walter** #24, **Pte Leonard** #51) and the two Patterson brothers he had grown up with (**Cpl Archie** #7 and **Pte Allan** #53), who returned safely to Myrree. **Interestingly, Pte Forster provided four shillings of each pay to Mrs Evelyn Scott, Port Kembla, NSW.**¹² I assume Mrs Scott was one of his sisters.

Only two men from Myrree served as officers. They were **Lieutenant Roy Bailey** (#35, Royal Marines, KIA 5/1/18) and **Captain Gerald Evans** (#12, 8th Bn, DOW 20/9/17). Unfortunately, both paid for this responsibility with their lives. Evans was also the only Myrree man to be decorated. Gerald was recommended for the Military Cross three times, finally being awarded an MC for his actions at Second Bullecourt (8-9 May, 1917) in what was considered to be one of the fiercest hand-to-hand bombing fights of the war (Bean¹³). Gerald was also mentioned in despatches for First Pozieres (24-28 July, 1916) and for leading a successful raid on 29 September, 1916, at Zillebeke near Ypres in Belgium.

The Evans brothers were fated to meet only one more time in this life and that was in Dernancourt, near Albert in France, on 21 March, 1917. **Signaller Ken (Francis) Evans** (#30, KIA 13/10/17) described the meeting in a letter to his mother written on 22 March, 1917:

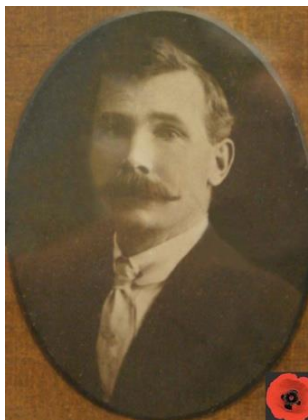
I saw Gerald for a few minutes yesterday. I was marching through a village where his battalion had been billeted for four days and he happened to be standing on the side of the road, I couldn't stop but we saw one another at about the same time, and he walked alongside me for a good way & we had a bit of a talk, I was more than glad to see him as I have been wishing to for some time & he looks really well. He was leaving there that afternoon and we are moving in the opposite directions at present.

The Official Diary of the 8th Battalion indicated that Gerald Evans was billeted in Dernancourt while Ken's 51st Battalion was moving from Buire-sur-l'Ancre to Mametz on the way to the front line in the region of Vaulx-Vraucourt (28/3/17 to 13/4/17). Dernancourt is almost on a direct line between Buire-sur-l'Ancre and Mametz.

Thus, it turned out that *all* the men who enlisted from Redcamp – **Sapper Ken Evans** (#30), **Captain Gerald Evans** (#12), **Sergeant Bill Usherwood** (#20) and **Corporal Jim Leslie** (#26) – would make the ultimate sacrifice for both King, Country and Empire.



49. Sgt Henry H Simmonds
b 25/8/1883 Moyhu, E UK,
Cpl 1/1st Kent Cycling Bn
then Royal West Kent Rgt,
d 1/8/1954,
Vancouver, Canada.



50. Pte Thomas Bowen
RN 6851, 8th Bn, b 1/1874,
E 1/1/1917, KIA 20/9/1917,
Battle of Menin Road, Ypres.
W: Mrs Mary A Bowen,
Angledool, NSW.



51. Pte Leonard Forge
37th Bn, b 7/1896,
E 22/1/1916, Dis 17/7/1916
due to accident in Australia.
M: Catherine Forge,
Myrreee.



52. Pte David C Fleming
RN 15896, 2nd/1st Divisional
Signal Coy, b 2/1897,
E 4/10/1916, Dis 8/9/1919.
M: Jessie Fleming, King
Valley, Victoria.



53. Pte Allan Patterson
37th Bn, b 11/1894,
E 1/6/1916,
Dis 14/9/1916 due to accident
in Australia.
F: Henry Newton Patterson,
Myrreee, Victoria.



54. Tpr Edward D Bryan
RN 1128, 8th LH Rgt,
b 4/1894, E 9/8/1915,
DOI 28/8/1918, Egypt
(malaria).
P: Edmund & Margaret
Bryan, Garfield, Victoria.



55. Pte Daniel J Nolan
RN 6414, 22nd Bn, b 6/1894,
E 7/10/1916, Dis 5/9/1919.
F: John Nolan, Myrreee,
Victoria.

^a The WWI honour board in the Myrreee Memorial Hall notes that **C Haynes** made the 'supreme sacrifice', but this does not appear to accord with AWM nor The AIF Project records. In addition, **B Hart** who *did* make the 'supreme sacrifice' and is listed *above* C Haynes on the Honour Board is not so listed. I suspect the * was inadvertently placed in the wrong place on the Honour Board.

Acknowledgments

I would like the octogenarian elders of Myrree, Marion and Ian Flanigan, David Evans, Ernie Handcock and Vic Handcock, for their insights and suggestions, without which this article would not have been possible. I would particularly like to thank Ash Graham and Robyn Kilgour at the Myrree Primary School for providing access to the Myrree Primary School Honour Board, and Rick Martin (Moyhu Primary School) for access to the Meadow Creek Pictorial Honour Roll. I would also like to thank Neville and Donna Handcock, Kay Rowlands, Grenville Younger, Kaye Patterson, Dennis Nelson, Bruce Kidgell, David Waring, Faithe Jones, Lorraine Monshing, Karen and Bill Forge, Shannen Boyd, May Forge, Brad Campbell for assistance with identification and expanding on the stories associated with some of the Myrree men.

Abbreviations under soldiers' portraits

Ranks: Pte = Private, L/Cpl = Lance Corporal, Dvr = Driver, Gnr = Gunner, Bdr = bombardier, Spr = Sapper, Sig = Signaller, Tpr = Trooper, Cpl = Corporal, LSgt = Lance Sergeant, Sgt = Sergeant, Farr Sgt = Farrier Sergeant, CSM = Company Sergeant Major, Lt = Lieutenant, QMS = Quarter Master Sergeant. Honours: MiD = Mentioned in Despatches, MC = Military Cross.

Other: Bn = Battalion, LH = Light Horse, Arty = Artillery, Bde = Brigade, Rgt = Regiment. RN = Regimental number, b = born, E = enlistment, KIA = Killed in action, DOW = died of wounds, DOI = Died of illness in service OS, Dis = Discharged, d = died after WWI.

Next of kin: P = parents, F = father, M = mother, S = sister, W = wife, A = aunt.

Footnotes and citations

1. Anon. Crick: 'on the crick' is an old Australian colloquialism for a child being nursed in the crook of its parents arm. It is also an expression that can be used as a synonym for a cradle.
2. Hovell, WH. Journal kept on the journey from Lake George to Port Phillip, 1824-1825. *Journal of the Australian Historical Society*, 7, 1921.
3. Hume, H. Brief statement of the facts in connection with the overland expedition from Lake George to Port Phillip in 1824-1825. Yass: J.J. Brown, 1855.
4. Anon. Myrree - RHS Bailey. *The Wangaratta Chronicle*, Wed, 13 January, pg 2, 1915.
5. Anon. Presentation to volunteer. *Kyabram Guardian*, Friday, 7 January, pg 2, 1916.
6. Korumburra Roll of Honour, <https://open.abc.net.au/explore/62033>.
7. Wangaratta Historical Society Museum, The Handcock Clock. <https://victoriancollections.net.au/items/51e495572162ef201c863909>, 1917.
8. Evans, DG. Gearld Evans letters and other documents. <https://rslvirtualwarmemorial.org.au/explore/people/232126>, 2017.
9. Anon. District Roll of Honor. *Kyabram Free Press and Rodney and Deakin Shire Advocate*, Tues, 23 July: pg 4, 1918.
10. Anon. News of soldiers. *The Wangaratta Chronicle*, Saturday, 7July: pg 3, 1917.
11. Dean, GJ. Ned Kelly's World - Kate Kelly. <http://members.iinet.net.au/~gdean1/history/familytree/katekelly.html>.
12. RSL Virtual War Memorial, Private Frederick Arthur Foster. <https://rslvirtualwarmemorial.org.au/explore/people/240450>.
13. Bean, CEW. Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918. Vol. III and IV. Brisbane, Queensland University Press, 1941.
14. For list of recently discovered Pictorial Honour Rolls (go to VWMA.org.au and search 'Pictorial' for the latest finds):
 - a. **Abermain Comforts Fund PHR** (25 men), Cessnock, NSW; b. **Blayney PHR** (103 men), Blaney, NSW; c. **Central Congregational Church PHR** (15 men), Ipswich, Qld; d. **Childers Memorial Hall PHR (18 men)**, Childers, Qld; e. **Creswick School PHR** (80 pictures of men, 143 additional men in gold letters), Creswick, Victoria; f. **Curraulka PHR** (33 men), Yorke Peninsula, SA; g. **Freeling PHR** (32 men), Freeling SA; h. **Kogarah Pictorial Honour Roll No.1** (143 men), Kogarah, NSW; i. **Manoora PHR** (31 men), Manoora, SA; j. **Meadow Creek School**, (25 men), Moyhu, Victoria; k. **Mildura Settlers Club PHR** (57 men), Magnet Galleries, Melbourne, Victoria; l. **Mount Gambier PHR** (224 men), Mt Gambier, SA; m. **Mount Hicks PHR** (29 men), Yolla, Tasmania; n. **Murray Bridge PHR** (19 men, incl WWII and Vietnam), Murry Bridge, SA; o. **Paynesville PHR** (38 men), Paynesville, Gippsland, Victoria; p. **Queensland National Bank PHB** (22 men), Brisbane, Qld.; q. **Rhynee RSL PHR** (22 men), Clare and Gilbert Valleys, SA; r. **Riverton PHR** (9 men, 1 woman), Clare and Gilbert Valleys, SA; s. **Tara PHR** (10 men), Tamora, NSW; t. **Williamstown Town Hall PHR** (262 men), Williamstown, Victoria. Overall, 22 Pictorial Honour Boards catalogued and counting.

List of Men recognized on the Myrree Primary School and District Honour Board

1. Pte P Haynes*: <https://VWMA.org.au/explore/people/210264>
 2. LCpl William Forge: <https://VWMA.org.au/explore/people/165360>
 3. Pte L Evans: <https://VWMA.org.au/explore/people/204617>
 4. LCpl EG Kidgell: <https://VWMA.org.au/explore/people/313435>
 5. Driver R Bray: <https://VWMA.org.au/explore/people/78317>
 6. Gunner C Haynes: <https://VWMA.org.au/explore/people/294879>
 7. Cpl Archie Patterson: <https://VWMA.org.au/explore/people/76462>
 8. Driver J Nolan: <https://VWMA.org.au/explore/people/52021>
 9. Cpl WG Kidgell*: <https://VWMA.org.au/explore/people/800244>
 10. CSM WT Jarrott*: <https://VWMA.org.au/explore/people/269951>
 11. Gunner GJ Simmonds: <https://VWMA.org.au/explore/people/302068>
 12. Capt DG Evans*: <https://VWMA.org.au/explore/people/232126>
 13. SQM/Sgt JE Kidgell: <https://VWMA.org.au/explore/people/786372>
 14. Cpl H Bridger: <https://VWMA.org.au/explore/people/241320>
 15. Pte JM Jarrott: <https://VWMA.org.au/explore/people/334870>
 16. Bmdr FC Kyle: <https://VWMA.org.au/explore/people/166339>
 17. Pte Leslie Forge: <https://VWMA.org.au/explore/people/116391>
 18. Pte Reuben C Rodman: Not found
 19. Pte JE Patterson*: <https://VWMA.org.au/explore/people/142580>
 20. Sgt WCT Usherwood*: <https://VWMA.org.au/explore/people/68265>
 21. Pte FA Foster*: <https://VWMA.org.au/explore/people/240450>
 22. Pte C Filtch: <https://VWMA.org.au/explore/people/71607>
 23. LCpl A Forge: <https://VWMA.org.au/explore/people/217548>
 24. Pte Walter A Forge: <https://VWMA.org.au/explore/people/131370>
 25. Pte AC Lewis: <https://VWMA.org.au/explore/people/800658>
 26. Cpl JF Leslie*: <https://VWMA.org.au/explore/people/363258>
 27. Bombardier H White*: <https://VWMA.org.au/explore/people/161008>
 28. Cpl BJ Marshall: <https://VWMA.org.au/explore/people/126609>
 29. Driver PJ Kidgell: <https://VWMA.org.au/explore/people/343420>
 30. Sig F Evans*: <https://VWMA.org.au/explore/people/291803>
 31. Farr Sgt Alex G Patterson: <https://VWMA.org.au/explore/people/136655>
 32. Driver W Southey: <https://VWMA.org.au/explore/people/361001>
 33. Driver B Hart*: <https://VWMA.org.au/explore/people/207207>
 34. Pte WH Handcock: <https://VWMA.org.au/explore/people/353929>
 35. Lt Royal HS Bailey*: <https://bristol-cathedral.co.uk/we-have-our-lives/person/Roy-Bailey>
 36. Pte H Jones*: <https://VWMA.org.au/explore/people/80890>
 37. Pte JR Handcock: <https://VWMA.org.au/explore/people/200144>
 38. Pte R Stickles: <https://VWMA.org.au/explore/people/269215>
 39. Pte AJ Handcock*: <https://VWMA.org.au/explore/people/214389>
 40. LCpl C Handcock*: <https://VWMA.org.au/explore/people/263084>
 41. Sap RE Handcock: <https://VWMA.org.au/explore/people/156340>
 42. Pte RF Handcock*: <https://VWMA.org.au/explore/people/259653>
 43. Sgt R Minter: <https://VWMA.org.au/explore/people/136967>
 44. Pte FA Handcock: <https://VWMA.org.au/explore/people/334486>
 45. Pte FJ Marshall: <https://VWMA.org.au/explore/people/282388>
 46. Pte H Wallace: <https://VWMA.org.au/explore/people/143235>
 47. Pte RM Handcock: <https://VWMA.org.au/explore/people/161141>
 48. Pte H Plant*: <https://VWMA.org.au/explore/people/207975>
- Sgt H Simmons: Enlisted British