

April 2021



VicRoads Association
Newsletter No. 223



LEST WE FORGET

**ANZAC
DAY** 

25 APRIL



Membership of the Association is available to all who have been members of VicRoads or forerunner organisations or the spouse of deceased members, and bestows on them all the rights of the Rules of Association. Cost of membership is a once only fee of \$50. Enquiries about membership or receipt of the Newsletter by e-mail should be directed to the Secretary, VicRoads Association, PO Box 80, Kew 3101 or by phone or e-mail as shown in the footer below. Visit our website at vicroadsassociation.org



Contents

First World War	3
Servicemen listed on the CRB Roll of Honour of the First World War	6
Other CRB staff members who served in the First World War	19
Second World War	21
Servicemen listed on the CRB Roll of Honour of the Second World War....	22
Other CRB staff members who served in the Second World War.....	26
Prisoners of war.....	29
Two other CRB officers who had different wars.....	33
The legacy of Sir Albert Coates – keeping the men alive	34
Eulogy.....	38
Conclusion	39
References.....	40

Dear Members,

I have devoted this newsletter entirely to the remembrance of Anzac Day and the war service and sacrifice of staff members of the Country Roads Board (CRB). Some of these stories are about our colleagues who perished in the wars and some are about those that survived.

It is impossible for we who have never experienced war to understand the horror and terror of battle. We can proselytise all we like about the evil of war but, nonetheless, we must admire all these men who went off to war believing they were doing their duty. For those who returned, hardly a day would pass when they didn't think about the terror of their experience and of the men they served with who didn't make it back. Every serviceman suffered. Those who were not hit by bullet or shrapnel, or who never experienced gassing, were nevertheless casualties of war. They carried these scars for life and this is why their bonds are unusually close – bonds that exist only in combat. Some may have been heroes but all of them served with heroes. For those that survived, they deserved long and happy lives of peace.

I have written elsewhere about the randomness of war – how warfare does not discriminate between who lives and who dies. All wars are alike. They comprise chaos, boredom, bravado, folly, terror and trauma. But war is unique for every individual. Despite the differences between men in intellect, education, stature, athleticism – the fate of war does not discriminate amongst them. Incidentally, I mention men specifically in this context because I have not found a woman in the CRB's midst who served, but I fully acknowledge that many women provided outstanding service in all the wars. In war, there is a true brotherhood and sisterhood, galvanised by dependence on each other – and the support and desperation of their mates. Many of the bravest survived and many of the bravest died. Many pushed themselves beyond limits that they never imagined possible.

I have a one-generation family connection to both World Wars – I had uncles in both – so that I still have an awareness of war, but my children and grandchildren have little concept of the darkness of those times. So the names recorded on the Honour Boards and War Memorials around the country are now largely forgotten except for the distant and ever-diminishing thoughts of family members. This is why I have dedicated this newsletter to these men to ensure that their names live on for a little longer. We owe it to them.

In the foyer at Head Office are two Rolls of Honour – although the spelling on one of the original ones was spelt 'Honor' – with the names of members of staff of the CRB on them¹. For the First World War the names are of those who served, and for the Second World War, the names are of those who died in active service.

Most of us walked through the door of Head Office with scarcely a glance at the names of these men and yet they all had a story to tell more terrifying than anything we can imagine. Their names meant nothing to us – twenty of them never returned to tell their own story and now they are names on a largely anonymous plaque, hidden on an anonymous wall and now beyond our memory. With this story, our memory of them will last a little longer, recalled in a spirit of pride, gratitude and comradeship. Even though we didn't know most of them, it is important that they are remembered in the tradition of Anzac and because they were workmates. We should remember them.

¹ Unfortunately the original timber frames on both of them have been lost and only the brass plaques remain – possibly a decision made by an unsympathetic architect in modernising the reception area.



First World War

Those who enlisted for war service in the first World War are shown below. The asterisk denotes killed in action and the diamond, died of wounds.



The original First World War Roll of Honor.



Of the 35 people listed, only two names are familiar to me – William McCormack and William (Bill) H. Neville. McCormack was a member of the original CRB appointed in 1913. He was Deputy Chairman to William Calder and after Calder’s retirement, he served as Chairman between 1928 and 1938. Neville was a member of the Board from 1956 to 1962 so he was still working at the CRB when I started as a callow youth in 1961.

W.T.B. McCormack is listed first, no doubt because he was the most senior officer to enlist. The remaining names are in the order they enlisted. The Fifth Annual Report of the CRB (1918) provided the following details of “Officers and Employees who have enlisted for active service in The Australian Imperial Force”.



Name	Position	Rank	Unit	Date of Enlistment
Couve, H.T.L.	Clerk	Lieutenant	8 th Battalion	22.8.14
Dilworth, E.E.	Assistant Engineer	Captain	2 nd Field Company Engineers	22.8.14
Kerr, M.	Chainman	Private	7 th Battalion	22.8.14
Upton, T.H.	Assistant Engineer	Captain	Royal Engineers	24.9.14
Quail, C.	Chainman	Corporal	Head-Quarters Staff, 3 rd Brigade	16.9.14
Travers, J.H.	Chainman	Sergeant	Staff Pay Office, London	28.10.14
Lewis, K.B.	Draughtsman	Lieutenant	5 th Tunnelling Company	11.1.15
Bartlett, H.W.	Chainman	Driver	6 th Machine Gun Company, 21 st Battalion	3.2.15
Clowser, G.C.	Clerk	Lieutenant	Anzac Motor Transport	22.2.15
Allison, M.R.	Chainman	Corporal	2 nd Battalion	1.3.15
Moore, R.S.	Surveyor's Assistant	Lieutenant	10 th Field Company Engineers	17.5.15
Taylor, V.G.	Chainman	Private	5 th Battalion	7.7.15
Furmiston, E.M.	Chainman	Private	24 th Battalion	7.7.15
Jansen, R.	Clerk	Sergeant	Administrative Head-Quarters, London	8.7.15
King, S.	Roller Driver	Driver	2 nd Field Company Engineers	10.7.15
Cooper, G.L.	Overseer	Sapper	12 th Field Company Engineers	21.8.15
Page, H.D.	Tally Clerk	Private	14 th Battalion	18.9.15
Smith, R.H.	Overseer	Corporal	2 nd Field Company Engineers	1.10.15
Linford, A.R.	Clerk	Sapper	10 th Field Company Engineers	29.11.15
Murrell, W.L.	Assistant Engineer	Lieutenant	2 nd Battalion, Australian Pioneer Engineers	15.1.16
Kerry, A.H.	Clerk	Lance Corporal	10 th Field Company Engineers	8.2.16
Moodie, E.	Roller Driver	Lance Corporal	3 rd Pioneer Battalion	9.2.16
Kneale, T.F.J.	Tally Clerk	Sapper	10 th Field Company Engineers	14.2.16
Galbraith, A.V.	Senior Clerk	Captain	24 th Company, Army Service Corps	18.2.16
Graham, L.V.	Draughtsman	Lieutenant	10 th Field Company Engineers	9.3.16
White, L.W.	Junior Draughtsman	Private	15 th Field Ambulance	29.3.16
Herd, L.J.	Clerk	Driver	21 st Battery, Field Artillery Brigade	30.9.16
Wood, H.P.	Draughtsman	Air Mechanic	No. 71 Squadron, Australian Flying Corps	9.11.16
Payne, F.G.	Clerk	Gunner	Artillery	26.3.17
Tuxen, C.E.	Surveyor's Assistant	Sapper	1 st Draft Reinforcements to Field Engineers	2.4.17
Williams, W.T.	Survey Draughtsman	Sapper	Field Engineers	11.7.17
Birrell, W. D.	Clerk	Corporal	24 th Battalion	19.10.17
Neville, W. H.	Clerk	Sergeant	6 th General Service Reinforcements	19.12.17
Ponting, A.S.	Engineering Pupil	Sergeant	6 th General Service Reinforcements	26.10.18

The Fifth Annual Report also contained the following report:

"Since the beginning of the war, 34 officers and employees of the Board's staff have enlisted for active service with the A.I.F. Of these three have laid down their lives in the cause of the Empire. Three have returned to Australia, one has been discharged and returned to duty, while the others are still abroad.

It is with deep regret that we have to record the deaths of Captain E.E. Dilworth M.M., who died of wounds received in France in May of this year, and Private V.G. Taylor who was killed in action in July last year. The loss of Captain Dilworth has removed from the Board's Engineering Staff a valued and efficient officer, and cut short a promising career. With Lieutenant Couve who fell at Gallipoli, he enlisted and left Australia with the first expeditionary force in 1914. Private Taylor was formerly employed as a chainman on the Board's Survey Staff, and was a capable and popular employee.

We mourn the loss of these heroic young men, but at the same time have reason for thankfulness in the prospect of the early return of their comrades to their native land.

Major McCormack, a member of the Board, who has been on service with his unit (10th Field Company Engineers) since May, 1916, has been awarded the Croix de Guerre. Captain Dilworth gained the Military Medal and Lieutenant Moore the Military Cross, and other members of the staff have received recognition of their service from the military authorities.

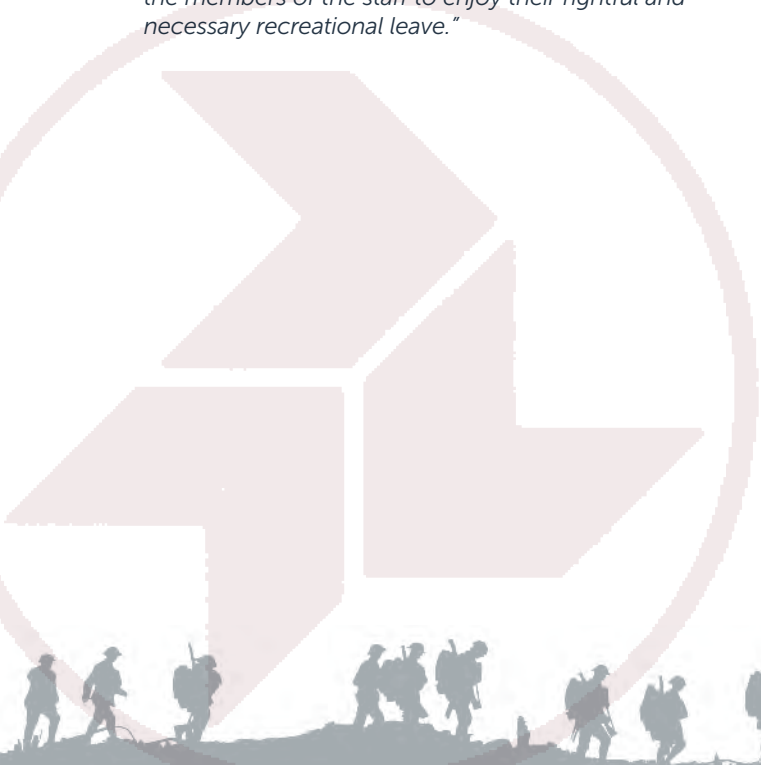
It is due to the remainder of the staff to acknowledge their loyal and willing service to carrying out the Board's work under particularly trying and arduous conditions.

The depletion and disorganization of the limited staff, owing to the large percentage of enlistments, has thrown upon them additional work and increased responsibility, which could only be overtaken by considerable sacrifice and working overtime. This has been undertaken without complaint, but it is hoped that the ending of the war will speedily bring a return to normal conditions, and enable the members of the staff to enjoy their rightful and necessary recreational leave."

In the Second Annual Report of the CRB published in 1915, it noted that 18 members of staff had (by then) enlisted and were already at the front. It regretted to report the death of Lieutenant Henry Couve at Gallipoli. He was the first member of staff to offer his services to the Empire and he was the first CRB staff member to be killed. It said that Lieutenant Couve was previously on the staff of the Public Works Department and joined the staff of the CRB on its inception.

As mentioned in the 1918 Annual Report, the number of enlistments was a significant proportion of the men who worked for the CRB at the time of the First World War. In 1914, just a year after the CRB was formed, a lot of its work was suspended. Although I can't find any definitive information on staffing levels, I expect that the full staff complement of the CRB during World War 1 would have been in the order of 50 to 60 people.

When William Calder first chaired the CRB in 1913, little did he know that one year later 'the war to end all wars' would break out. The following four years meant shortages of manpower, money and materials and roadworks were put into a holding pattern. Calder himself was too old to enlist, but he was acknowledged as a champion shot and he assisted in military training in the Moorooduc area during the Great War.



Servicemen listed on the CRB Roll of Honour of the First World War

I investigated every name on the roll but for a few, I could find no information. Where there are discrepancies between the Board's tabulation and the Australian Archives, I have adopted the data in the Archives.

William Thomas Bartholomew McCormack



Major William McCormack.

McCormack was born on New Year's Day, 1879, at Heathcote. His father, Thomas, was an Irish-born publican. He worked as a clerk in the shire office at Seymour before being appointed in 1902 as secretary and shire engineer at Mirboo, Gippsland. He was certificated as a municipal surveyor, hydraulic engineer, municipal clerk and engineer.

He had stints as shire engineer at Lockhart, NSW, and Korumburra, before being appointed in 1909 to the Public Works Department as assistant engineer, engaged in constructing roads and levees and reclaiming swamps. He was an honorary lecturer in engineering at the University of Melbourne in 1913-15, a foundation member of the Institution of Engineers, Australia, and a member of the Institution of Civil Engineers, London.

In March 1913 McCormack was appointed one of the three foundation members of the CRB – the others being William Calder (Chairman) and F.W. Fricke. In 1913-15 they travelled widely, frequently on horseback, to lay the foundation of the State's road network. McCormack's knowledge of local government, his diplomatic skills and quiet, equable personality made him a successful ambassador for the Board in its negotiations with sometimes fractious shire councils.

McCormack was a Lieutenant in the Australian Intelligence Corps in 1911-14, and he enlisted in the A.I.F. in January 1916 and soon after he became Major commanding the 10th Field Company, Engineers (10FE). He immediately made a start with the organisation of the unit, which was entirely recruited from the 3rd Military District comprising Victoria and that part of NSW south of the Murrumbidgee River. The headquarters were established at the Domain Camp, Melbourne, and were afterwards removed to Seymour, where the company went through a strenuous course of training.

The training of sappers included: knotting, splicing and lashing; barrel pier construction; semaphore and Morse signalling; construction of trestles, shear legs, derricks, etc.; construction of a barrel pier bridge across the Goulburn River; construction of trestle bridges across dry gullies; laying out and digging trenches (including island traverses dug at right-angles to the main trench to provide shelter from invasion or bombardment); demolitions; infantry drill; musketry; training, night and day operations; use of prismatic compass and map reading; range-finding by means of mekometers (devices that measured distance by the measurement of polarization of a reflected beam of light); field company drill; field geometry; road surveys and construction.

The training of drivers included: driving, riding and horse management; care and cleaning of harness; musketry; semaphore signalling; field geometry; knotting, splicing, and lashing.

McCormack was commanding engineer under Major General (Sir) John Monash. He was mentioned in despatches in the Battle of Messines and was also awarded a Croix de Guerre at Corbie-Hamel. 10FE also fought campaigns in the Battles of Amiens, Ypres and the Somme. During the Battle of the Somme McCormack contracted typhoid and was hospitalised.

Sapper Donald Darwin served under McCormack in 10 FE and his life was to later intertwine with McCormack's as they both became Chairmen of the CRB after the war.

Other men who had served with McCormack had either volunteered from the CRB or worked there later. Of the 35 names listed on the CRB's Roll of Honor, four others served in 10FE, viz. Robert Moore, Leslie Graham, Arthur Kerry and Thomas Kneale. Nine served in various other Field Engineer units, tunnelling companies or in related units, viz. George Cooper, Edward Dilworth, Alfred Galbraith, Simon King, William Murrell, Cedric Tuxen, Thomas Upton and William Williams.

After the war, McCormack remained in England to study road construction, town planning, sewerage and water supply. He resumed his work with the Country Roads Board in April 1919, taking charge of the construction of the Great Ocean Road – a project initially carried out by returned servicemen. McCormack succeeded William Calder as Chairman of the CRB in 1928 and died in office in 1938. He was also a talented pianist and composer of dance music.



Henry Thomas Ladson Couve



Henry (Tom) Couve

Henry (Tom) Couve and Edward Dilworth enlisted together on 21st August 1914. Couve described himself as a civil servant and Dilworth as a civil engineer. Couve was two years older than Dilworth. They were colleagues at the CRB and it is most likely they were friends for them to enlist together. Dilworth was tall with a fair complexion whereas Couve was short with a dark complexion.

Poor Tom's record is short. It shows him promoted from Sergeant to Second Lieutenant at Gallipoli on 28th April 1915 and that he was killed at Cape Helles a little over a fortnight later. Only two entries. The brevity of his record is obscene but his loss would have been as tragic as for all the others who failed to come back. So these two mates who departed Australia with such high hopes were finally to come together eternally on our Roll of Honour, each with a dreaded asterisk by his name.

Tom embarked for overseas with C Company from Melbourne on 19 October 1914 aboard HMAT Benalla (A24). After a stopover in Albany, Western Australia, they arrived in Egypt on 2 December 1914. Following further training in Egypt, the Battalion took part in the Gallipoli landings on 25 April as part of the second wave. He was killed in action on 8 May 1915 and is commemorated on the Helles Memorial, Cape Helles, Gallipoli, Turkey, with others who have no known grave.

The Helles Memorial serves the dual function of Commonwealth battle memorial for the whole Gallipoli campaign and a place of commemoration for many of those Commonwealth servicemen who, like Henry, died there and have no known grave.

But there is an even sadder end to Henry's story. His 21 year old brother, Allan Crawford Couve, who enlisted a week later than Henry – also a Lieutenant – died of wounds at Gallipoli. He received a gunshot wound to the head on 25 April 1915 (Anzac Day) and died the following day. He is buried in the Beach Cemetery, Gallipoli at the southern point of Anzac Cove.

The image of Henry is from the collection of the brothers – now held at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra. They photographed members of their unit in Egypt prior to serving at Gallipoli where they both died. They embarked for war together and both were on the beachhead on Anzac Day. They were killed in action within weeks of each other – two handsome, fit and promising young men.

The Couve family was devastated. I could not imagine the despair of losing a beloved son, let alone two, in such a cruel way. There is some heartbreaking correspondence in Alan Couve's archive written by his sister, Eileen, who also worked at the CRB. When I first read it I burst into tears.



Henry (Tom) Couve – holding his rifle while skinning fruit in the desert



The Helles Memorial, Gallipoli.



Outdoor portrait of Lieutenant (Lt) Rupert Sunderland Barrett from Ballarat, Victoria (sitting) and 285 Sergeant (Sgt) Henry Thomas Ladson Couve from Dandenong, Victoria, (standing beside the horse).



Lieutenant (Lt) Alan Crawford
(Dutch or Dutchy) Couve,
8th Battalion

Date	From what received	Remarks, etc., during active service, as reported on Army Form H, 811, Army Form A, 811, or in other official documents. The authority of the source to be stated in each case.	Place	Date	Remarks taken from Army Form H, 811, Army Form A, 811, or other official documents.
13/5/15	C/O 8TH BATTN. 2ND. INF. DIV.	WOUNDED. C.E.W. SKULL.	GALLIPOLI.	25/4/15.	Bn. List Dated 1/5/15. 18213 2032 2/15/15
14/5/15	C/O 8TH BATTN. 2ND. INF. DIV.	DIED OF WOUNDS.	DO.	26/4/15.	M.F.A. 421. D.D. 36 115 M.F. 20/15 - 2/15/15
3/3/17		Buried Beach Cemetery Gallipoli at Northern Point of Anzac Cove			Buried on Beach } Cove.

This is an excerpt from Allan Couve's file in the Australian Archives showing the details of his death.

On 12 January 1920, Eileen Couve wrote to the Officer in Charge, Switzerland Headquarters, Allied Forces, as follows:

Dear Sir,

I am informed that an internment camp exists in Switzerland in which soldiers and rescued prisoners of war, suffering from loss of memory and whose identity is uncertain, are being kept for treatment.

Acting on this information, I am forwarding herewith particulars and a description of my brother, Lieutenant A. C. Couve, 8th Battalion A.I.F.

My brother was reported missing the day after the landing at Gallipoli, 26th April 1915, and many rumours have been told to us by returning men, of his probable fate. Just lately we have been told that it was thought that he had been captured by the Turks, and later on when Turkey capitulated, been rescued and brought to Switzerland for treatment. We know that he was wounded in the head, his N.C.O. thought it was comparatively slight, and taken to the dressing station on the beach. From then all authentic information ceases, and for nearly 5 years we have had to mourn him as dead with just a tiny seed of hope that someday something might give us a clue.

It has been doubly hard on my parents as my only (other) brother was killed 10 days later at Cape Helles. You will perhaps understand then, how much this rumour means to us, and how desirous we are to clear the matter up one way or another.

I would be extremely grateful if you could forward to the proper authorities the enclosed particulars and photos, with a view to the possible establishment of my brother's identity, and if you would kindly communicate to me any steps it may be necessary to take, or any result of the enquiries that I trust you will make for me. My brother was a brave officer and gentleman and will you please accept, in return for any efforts you make on his behalf, the grateful thanks of his only sister.

(Sgd) Eileen Couve

And this is the description she wrote of her beloved brother.

**Description of Lieutenant ALAN CRAWFORD COUVE,
7th Platoon, B Company, 8th Infantry Battalion,
Australian Imperial Force, also latest known details
concerning him.**

Heavy, powerful build, well-proportioned with high-arched feet; light brown hair, tanned complexion, grey-blue eyes inclined to be round, well-shaped mouth, full face; height about 5 ft. 9 1/2 or 10 inches, exceptionally muscular, with good carriage, good teeth, some gold filled.

Had tip of sword embedded at base of toes in one foot, probably the left one; had had two ribs broken in 1913, one of which penetrated the lung; several scars on the back of the neck from boils; age 26; was 21 when landing took place, but looked 3 years older.

Wound said to be near the top of the head, the bullet going in near the top of forehead over the right eye and coming out somewhere about the crown of the head; the wound thought to be superficial when examined by his Sergeant immediately it occurred.

An all-round athlete, being a fine shot, footballer and tennis player, also a good bowler at cricket; fine untrained baritone voice, with a gift for entertaining a company or crowd.

Sensitive hands; had been in training as a chemist and had good knowledge of drugs, bandaging etc.

Nicknamed "Dutch" or "Dutchy"; enlisted in August 1914 from Dandenong, Victoria, Australia, where he lived with parents, elder brother called Tom who also left with him for Gallipoli in October 1914 in the 8th Battalion, on the H.M.A.T. Benalla as Sergeant. Had sister called Eileen, sometimes called Sue. House was called ALLOWAH. Was betrothed to Millie Veal whose Father was the local Vicar. Her photo enclosed, Father's a chemist. Left Australia as a Second Lieutenant, was promoted to First Lieut. in Egypt; was in Mena camp with the 1st Australian Division. In Mena Hospital for 5 weeks, owing to accidental sword thrust in foot; left for Lemnos on the "Clan McGillivray".

Was wounded early on the morning of 26th April 1915; wound examined and bound up by his Sergeant who thought it comparatively slight and who, with a private soldier, carried him to a dressing station on the beach, expecting him back in 3 or 4 days.

A month later he was posted dead, but no one can be found who saw him die or know where he was buried. From the moment he was left unconscious at the dressing station on the beach at the Anzac landing at Gallipoli, no authentic information can be obtained.

Enclosed: photos of himself in civilian and military clothes; his fiancée; and sister, father, mother and brother.

There was much correspondence on the file reflecting the desperation of the Couve family losing their two beloved sons (and brothers) within days of each other. A week earlier Eileen had hand written a letter to Colonel Bolton which said:

"You have probably forgotten me, though I do not think you will have forgotten my brother, Lieut. Alan Couve, who was with you in Egypt and at the Landing. It is of him I am writing.

We received an intimation from the Defence Dept. that he was wounded, and then a second notice that he was wounded, been in hospital, recovered in a few days and returned to the lines where he was immediately killed. We now know that report was wrong; that he never rejoined his Battalion.

The men of the 8th and of his Company "B" who have been returning these last two or three years have brought back with them so many varied stories of his death and burial, and also one rumour that he did not die, but was somehow made prisoner of war and is now in Switzerland, being treated for loss of memory; that I have felt impelled to write and ask if you would kindly obtain for me a record of his death as officially set out in the war diary of his Company. I understand that each Company has such a diary.

You can well believe that such reports are very unsettling, and I should be glad of the official record. If you are unable to obtain it for me, would you please tell me where I should apply for it.

My father is in very bad health and we have not told him the rumours of my brother being alive so would you please address your answer to me c/o Country Roads Board, Titles Office, City. You will perhaps remember that my brother was in the Country Roads Board before enlisting. I am working there now. Dad might otherwise see your letter and be curious.



Beach Cemetery,
Gallipoli.

I trust you will forgive me worrying you with this matter, but you will understand how my mother and I feel in this matter."

The matter was finally concluded by The Commandant, Australian Imperial Force Headquarters who said:

"It is much regretted that it is impossible to hold out any hope that any officers and men missing in Gallipoli will be found to be still living. The rumour which Miss Couve heard is like many similar rumours entirely without foundation, and she should be advised to pay no attention to it."

Alan was a 20 year old chemist's apprentice prior to being appointed a Second Lieutenant on 24 August 1914. He embarked for overseas with G Company aboard the same ship as his brother, Henry. After training in Egypt, the Battalion took part in the Gallipoli landings on 25 April as part of the second wave. Lt Alan Couve was wounded in action on the first day and died from his wounds on 26 April 1915. He is buried in Beach Cemetery, Gallipoli, Turkey. The image below is also from the collection of the brothers.

Tom and Alan were not only brothers in arms on the battlefield in Gallipoli, they are still mourned to this day by the Dandenong Football Club. Tom and Dutchy were inseparable on the footy field as well as in the army. The two footballers were commemorated by the club on the Centenary of the Anzac landing. Born to Josen Marie Couve, a pharmacist who emigrated from Mauritius, and Minnie "Minnie" Couve (nee Ladson), the brothers excelled at whatever they tried.

They were raised in the local pharmacy. Football was their great passion and they had an immediate impact when they joined the 'Redlegs' – the Dandenong Football Club. Tom served as honorary secretary for the club as well as being a league delegate – and he played in the 1912 premiership alongside his brother. The duo celebrated the 1912 Berwick District Football Association victory – with the Redlegs winning 3.10 (28) over Pakenham 4.3 (27). Dutchy was the star of the Redlegs' success that day – he booted all three of Dandenong's goals to bring home the cup.

Tom played longer than Dutchy, finishing up in the 1914 grand final loss to Pakenham, with his last match only a month before the pair set off across the seas to the Middle East. Their legacy lives on through the series of photographs highlighting their involvement in the Expeditionary Forces.

From the outpouring of grief printed in papers across the Dandenong region, it seemed as if the entire community wept for their passing – their lads, taken far too soon and robbed of their futures.

On 20 May 1915, The Journal reported:

"On Tuesday morning widespread regret was expressed when it became known that Lt Alan Couve had succumbed to the wounds received whilst fighting with the 8th Battalion at the Dardanelles, and many messages of condolence have been received by the sorrowing relatives. The flag on the Town Hall was at half mast, in honour of the local volunteer and mourning was displayed outside the business premises in Lonsdale St."

A later report described the grief felt by the congregation at St James Church.

"Last Sunday very impressive intercessory services were held in St. James Church of England, Dandenong. The sad news of Lt Couve's death cast a shadow over the whole congregation, in fact the whole township."

The Dandenong Shire Council also felt the burden of bereavement by starting the call for the council to create a Dandenong Roll of Honour, which to this day remains in the Drum Theatre.

"At the Dandenong Shire Council meeting on Monday, the president (Cr Rain) said that before proceeding with the business of the council, he regretted to state that a second son of Mr Couve of Dandenong had been killed in action, whilst fighting for the Empire at the Dardanelles," the report said.

"It was hard indeed for Mr (Josen) Couve to have lost both his sons, and he would also move that a letter of condolence be sent from the council. Every councillor present spoke in support of the motion. The president directed the secretary to 'forward letters of condolence to the relatives of those who had been killed in action, and intimated that notice of motion would be given in regard to obtaining a Roll of Honour for the municipality'."

The final word about the well-loved Couve brothers was left to family friend Jack Walker, who published in the *South Bourke and Mornington Post* a sad edict on 21 October 1915 edition to inform the wider Dandenong community about their passing.

"Lastly, and with great reluctance, I refer to the sad loss sustained by Mr and Mrs Couve, and by many Dandenong friends, on the death of Tommy and Dutchy Couve. I can add a little to what has been said about them by telling you that from my own personal knowledge they were greatly admired by all ranks. Again and again I have talked over their short life in the AIF, with men who were under them, men who were above them and their equals in rank in the forces, and all have the same good things to tell me about them."

What a tragedy!



Edward Erskine Dilworth



Edward Dilworth and his Military Cross.

Lieutenant Edward Erskine Dilworth was remembered as a valued and efficient member of the engineering staff of the CRB. He was born in Harcourt near Castlemaine and enlisted at the age of 22. He served very late in the Anzac campaign but remained in the Middle East until April 1916 when he embarked for Marseilles. After just three months in France, he was sent to England to Officer Training School and in December 1916 he was sent back to France.

He was awarded a Military Cross² in France in 1917 and was later wounded in action in May 1918 and died of his wounds. Because of his engineering background – he had military training in bridgeworks - he was transferred to the 2nd Field Company Engineers of the British Army. The location of the action leading to the award of the Military Cross was not identified but the citation was:

*'For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty in constructing a strong point under heavy fire. He personally reconnoitred his surroundings and captured two of the enemy in a dug-out. Later when heavily shelled, he showed great devotion to duty in getting his men all into safe positions.'*³

In his war records is an inventory of his effects forwarded to his mother, who had responded to the army's request about the distribution of war medals, describing him as '... my gallant and dearly loved son'. The effects were forwarded to her in a:

'Green Valise (sealed) containing : 1 F.S Pocket Book, 1 Rug, 1 S.D. Tunic, Pr. Leggings, Pr. Breeches, ! Razor, 1 Brush, Book on French, 1 Sam Browne Belt, 2 Shirts, Pr. Spurs, Pr. Putties, 1 F.S. Cap, hair brush, Soap Tin, Clothes Brush, 1 Elastic Knee Cap, Small Attache Case containing: 1 Wallet, Sketch Book, 1 Pair of Gloves, Magnifying Glass, 1 Tie, Sketches, 1 Pr. Tussore Silk Shorts, 1 Safety Razor and Strop, 1 Molesworth Pocket Book, 1 Piece of Ypres Bell, 1 Diary, 2 Small Books of Poems, Letters, Guide Book

- 2 In the Board's Annual Report of 1918 it stated that his rank was Captain and that he was awarded a Military Medal. Although a Military Medal was mentioned once in the archives, all other references were of a Military Cross including on the copy of the citation. There was also one reference to him being a Captain but all other references to him were as Lieutenant.
- 3 In searching the records for recipients of the Military Cross, I came across the name of our family doctor in Colac, who attended my birth, Dr Keith Doig.

to Monaco, 1 Cancelled Pay Book, Italian Book, 1 Pr. Spurs, 1 Souvenir Ink Stand, 1 Housewife, 3 Keys, 1 Clothes Brush, Ash Tray, 1 Small French Dictionary, 1 Small Paint Brush. Shipped per Barunga 20.6.1918.'

Later, a sealed envelope containing a disc and chain and a gold ring was despatched.

Imagine his poor mother receiving the effects of her son who died at the age of 26. This was what was left to her. It revealed his life for its last four years. It must have broken her heart. Her last memory would have been of him leaving the bright sunlight and warmth of Harcourt only for him to be buried on the other side of the world with little chance of her ever being able to visit his grave.

Another letter on his file hardly disguises her grief. She wrote:

'Dear Sir

In reference to a printed form which I received from Defence Depart. March 21st saying His Majesty the King had awarded the M.C. for gallantry etc in the field and signed Captain Edward Erskine Dilworth, I have been wondering why that should be when it is always just Lieut. E.E. Dilworth 2nd Field Company Engineers and another thing I should like to know. The papers had in the list twice wounded. I have been very anxious for the only material I have had is that he died of wounds on 6/5/18. I was just anxious in case I may have been able to send him a message. I know the paper makes many mistakes but I would feel more satisfied if I knew. Will you kindly let me know any particulars which come to hand? These are dark times for many homes.

Yours very sincerely

Mrs H. Dilworth'

Poor woman. She was bemoaning the fact that she could have sent a message to him if she had known he was wounded. The record shows that he had been hospitalised twice - not from wounds but with sore eyes (conjunctivitis). And they made a mistake about his rank. He was a Lieutenant and not a Captain.

He is buried in Eblinghem British Cemetery near Hazebrouck in Northern France.



Eblinghem Military Cemetery, France.

Martin Brown Kerr

The Honour Roll cites 'M. Kerr' but the only person that fitted this description is Martin Brown Kerr. All the other M. Kerrs either came from interstate or their job descriptions were inappropriate or their unit did not fit. So, while I can't be certain, Martin Brown Kerr seems to fit the bill.

In the CRB tabulation he is named as a chainman, but on his enlistment form he described himself as a labourer. He was from South Melbourne and was 23 years old when he signed up on 22 August 1914. He was allocated to the 7th Battalion. His story is a sad one.

He left Australia on the on 21 October 1914 and disembarked at Alexandria in Egypt. He sailed on 'Galeka' from Alexandria to join the first wave of the Gallipoli Campaign and was wounded on landing. He was evacuated on the 'Clan McGillivray' to Malta and after his recovery he returned to Gallipoli in May 1915. He was hospitalised in August with concussion. But he was evacuated back to St Andrew's hospital in Malta with severe dysentery and this was to be the beginning of a debilitating history. They transferred him to England, firstly to the King George Hospital and the Military Convalescent Hospital at Epsom, but after two relapses he went to the County of London War Hospital.

He went back to Alexandria on 5 March 1916 to join his unit and he landed in Marseilles on the 31st. He went to hospital in the field in France for various complaints including diarrhoea, scabies, colitis and trench foot. His entire history in France was peppered with short stints at the front between hospital stays. And these were not trivial - many of them described as severe and some of them described as 'Debility'. He kept going back to France from England but during one stay in England he attended a Rifle Course and received a 1st Class with a fair working knowledge of the Lewis Gun. During this period he was promoted from Private to Corporal. Back in France in April 1918 he was wounded in action twice with a gunshot wound in the arm and shrapnel wounds causing laceration of muscles. He was again evacuated to England.

In July 1918 he was charged with a crime - 'Failing to salute an officer of His Majesty's Forces' for which he was reprimanded by Lt. Col. D.A. Lane. In August 1918 he was discharged as being unfit for duty due to chronic colitis.

There are numerous documents alluding to his failing health. They stated things like 'History of amoebic dysentery, probably cystic colitis aggravated by service during the present war'. Martin is a classical example of one of thousands of men whose most aggressive enemy was the filth and unsanitary conditions of war - not only in the field but also on the troopships. Many of their stories reveal soldiers disembarking at their destinations and going straight to hospital - and remember that the Spanish flu was just around the corner.

In Martin's file are numerous health reports describing his condition as chronic, severe and dangerous. One finding said that he was 'temporarily unfit for all services for more than 6 months'. Another said 'Incapacity one half.

Permanent Medical Referee Board recommends discharge as permanently unfit'. This latter assessment was dated one week before the Armistice.

The final report said: 'History of amoebic dysentery. Still gets attacks of dysentery, on and off, probably cystic colitis, with mucus and blood. Lost about 14 lbs weight. Has definite thickening of the colon for its whole length. Still passes blood and mucus. Is constipated followed by diarrhoea'. Martin died in 1958 at the age of 67.

Thomas Haynes Upton



I searched the Australian Archives and I could find no trace of Thomas Upton and when you read on you will understand why. Thomas Haynes Upton was born in Hawthorn in 1889. He was an exceptional student and won a scholarship to Wesley College. He was awarded an Exhibition and entered Ormond College to study civil engineering at the University of Melbourne

(B.Sc.1910; M.Sc.1912; B.C.E.1912; M.C.E. 1919). He graduated in 1910 with first-class honours and he gained practical engineering experience working for John Monash – later Sir John Monash.

In 1913 he went to England and gained experience in designing fabricated steel and reinforced concrete bridges and in 1914, while still in England, he was appointed as an assistant-engineer in the CRB. He was instructed to brief himself on modern road-making practices and materials in Britain and the United States of America before returning to Australia.

When World War I broke out, Upton was granted leave. He enlisted in the British Army in September 1914, and was posted to the Royal Naval Division as a sapper. In December he was appointed temporary lieutenant, Royal Engineers. He served on the Western Front with the 130th Field Company until he was wounded in February 1916 and evacuated to England. Back in action with the 74th Field Company, R.E., from August, he was again wounded, in March 1917, and brought to England to recover. He was attached to the R.E. Bridging School, Aire (later Monchy Cayeux), France, in December as Acting Captain. From March 1918 he performed staff duties at General Headquarters and later that year he returned to the Bridging School as chief instructor. He was mentioned in dispatches in 1916, 1918 and 1919. Demobilized from the army in April 1919, he was the recipient of the Order of the British Empire (O.B.E.) that year.

He re-joined the CRB and completed his task - which had been interrupted by the war - by returning to Australia via the USA studying the latest developments in road engineering. In 1925 he was appointed to the Main Roads Board in New South Wales. Under Upton's guidance, the Board organized the design and construction of a State-wide system of roads. The Board was dissolved in 1932

and the Department of Main Roads was formed. Upton was gazetted as an Assistant Commissioner.

In 1935 Upton was transferred to the Metropolitan Water, Sewerage and Drainage Board as President. Under Upton's direction, the Board was well on the way to eliminating a backlog of works when World War II broke out. Thereafter, many of its design and construction resources were diverted to the war effort. The largest of these works was the Captain Cook Graving Dock at Garden Island for the Royal Australian Navy. After 1945 the Water Board reverted to its statutory responsibilities – mainly to augment Sydney's water supply by the construction of Warragamba Dam on the Nepean River, which was progressing satisfactorily when Upton retired in April 1955.

Charles Quail

Charles was born in Buchan and described himself as a surveyor's assistant. He enlisted in September 1914 and his rank was Trooper. He embarked for Gallipoli and arrived in Alexandria nine days before the landing. I don't know when he landed but, in August 1915 he was evacuated from Gallipoli to a hospital in Heliopolis with severe diarrhoea. He was transferred to Helouan and re-joined his unit on Gallipoli in November 1915. A few weeks before the retreat from Gallipoli he was transferred to the NZ and Australian Division for Police. His entire war was spent in the Middle East. He was detached to the Royal Engineers Signals Base Depot as a signals instructor in Moascar in Egypt and he returned to Australia in July 1919.

His history is littered with admissions to hospital with gonorrhoea – in Malna, Mazar, Abbassia, Kantara and Masaid. The first entry for this illness was 16 December 1916 and in an entry on the 10 February 1917, it was noted 'VD ceased'. In August 1917 he was hospitalised with urethritis – an affliction which would have been brought on by the VD.

We shouldn't be too judgemental about this. He was 21 when he enlisted and his worldly experience would have been fairly limited. He survived the horrors of Gallipoli. Imagine how it must have felt for him returning to the relative security of Cairo? Many of these poor men must have thought seriously about their mortality and going to a bordello in Cairo may have been their only chance to experience being with a woman.

The Australian Army's losses to venereal disease (VD) in World War I were enormous. An estimated 63,350 VD cases occurred among the 417,000 troops of the 1st Australian Imperial Force (AIF). That is, one in seven of the soldiers who joined the AIF contracted VD at some stage of the war. That many soldiers was the equivalent of three infantry divisions. Given that the average VD treatment time was six weeks, the high number of VD infections effectively meant that for six weeks of the war the AIF commanders had lost three infantry divisions.

I want one last word about this. When I was researching the stories of these men of the CRB, there were a few others who bore this same affliction, but I have chosen not to mention it. So we shouldn't stigmatise Charles Quail. Charles died in 1940.

J.H. Travers

I could not find a record of him.

Keith Bannatyne Lewis

Keith graduated with a Diploma of Mining Engineering from the University of Melbourne in 1913. He was born in Windsor and enlisted on 6 January 1915 at the age of nearly 25. He described himself as a mining engineer and then crossed out 'mining'. He was engaged by the CRB as a draughtsman.

He embarked for the Middle East in July 1915 and arrived in Suez in August. He proceeded to Gallipoli to join the 4th Field Company Engineers but after two months he was evacuated to hospital in Malta with enteric fever. He was in hospital for six weeks and on 14th December 1915 he embarked for Australia for recovery.

In May 1916 he embarked for Plymouth where he was attached to the 2nd Australian Tunnelling Company which was deployed to France in September 1916. It states that he was in France for the entire period (except for two periods of leave) but it provides no clues as to where he was located. The Australian War Memorial indicates that the 2nd Tunnelling Company operated at Vimy, the Ypres Salient, Messines and the Belgian Coast.

Keith was promoted to Lieutenant in May 1916 and at the end of the war he was granted extended leave on pay to study geology at the Royal School of Mines in South Kensington.

Keith did not return to the CRB as his address in 1920 was care of the Maude and Yellow Girl gold mine in Glen Willis, Victoria.

In 1966 Keith applied to the Repatriation Department for benefits due to ill health under the requirements of the Repatriation Act. I can only surmise that it may have been due to gassing.

H. W. Bartlett

I could not find a record of him.

George Charles Clowser

George was a clerk at the CRB. He was 22 years old when he enlisted in February 1915. George's history is tragic. He served in the Supply Column of the 1st Anzac Corps Troops. In October 1915 he disembarked for Rouen in France. He was a Lance Corporal. He was appointed Sergeant a year later and a Second Lieutenant a few months later.

He was admitted to hospital in the field in December 1916 with influenza and again in March 1918 with general debility (severe). He was admitted to a hospital in Boulogne and then the London General Hospital in Wandsworth. He was struck off the strength and returned to Australia. His record finishes with just one word – NEUROSIS.

This condition was coined as 'Shell Shock' during the First World War to describe the sort of stress disorder many soldiers suffered during the war. It was a reaction to the intensity of bombardment and fighting that produced a helplessness appearing variously as panic, terror, flight, or an inability to reason, sleep, walk or talk.

During the War, the concept of shell shock was ill-defined. Cases of shell shock could be interpreted as either a physical or psychological injury, or simply as a *lack of moral fibre*. The term shell shock is still used by some, but mostly it has entered into memory and it is often identified as the signature injury of the War.

In 1915 the British Army was instructed that:

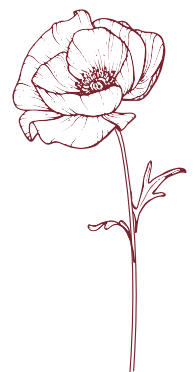
Shell-shock and shell concussion cases should have the letter 'W' prefixed to the report of the casualty, if it was due to the enemy; in that case the patient would be entitled to rank as 'wounded' and to wear on his arm a 'wound stripe'. If, however, the man's breakdown did not follow a shell explosion, it was not thought to be 'due to the enemy', and he was to [be] labelled 'Shell-shock' or 'S' (for sickness) and was not entitled to a wound stripe or a pension.

Officially, 4,984 members of the First AIF were discharged from the service because of war-related psychological trauma. However the true number will never be known as medics did not always recognise the symptoms so that many psychological casualties did not enter the historical record. Probably, too, many others did not approach authorities at all and so they will forever remain anonymous. More importantly, vital statistical evidence has been destroyed. (Richard Lindstrom, Ph.D. Thesis, Victoria University of Technology, 1997).

Shell shock. How many a brief bombardment had its long-delayed after-effect in the minds of those survivors, many of whom had looked at their companions and laughed while inferno did its best to destroy them. Not then was their evil hour; but now; now, in the sweating suffocation of nightmare, in paralysis of limbs, in the stammering of dislocated speech. Worst of all in the disintegration of those qualities through which they had been so gallant and selfless and uncomplaining - this, in the finer types of men, was the unspeakable tragedy of shell-shock. In the name of civilisation these soldiers had been martyred, and it remained for civilisation to prove that their martyrdom was not a dirty swindle.

*Siegfried Sassoon's Long Journey:
Selections from the Sherston Memoirs.*

I don't know what happened to George after his return home.



Matthew Robert Allison

Matthew was a chainman with the CRB. He was born in Buninyong and was nearly 25 when he enlisted in November 1914. He left Australia in February 1915 with the 5th Battalion. He contracted measles and was confined in Cyprus until August 1915 after which he rejoined his Battalion in the Dardanelles. He was further hospitalised at Gallipoli with diarrhoea, an unspecified illness, and frost bite. He left the Gallipoli Peninsula in early December 1915.

In July 1916 he was again admitted to hospital in Rouen in France for gun shot wounds in the arm and buttocks, and later he was evacuated to England. He returned to France in September and was appointed Lance Corporal. For some reason he was sent back to England in 1917 and while there he attended a rifle course at the School of Musketry in Tidworth and qualified as first class. He was promoted to Sergeant and proceeded back to France in December 1917.

The archives give no information of where Matthew was based but the 5th Battalion was rotated in and out of the front line and took part in a number of significant battles including at Pozieres, Ypres, Amiens and the Hindenburg Line.

Robert Stirling Moore

Robert was a civil engineer with the CRB. He lived in St Kilda and was 23 when he enlisted in 1915 - although he had been rejected earlier because of his eyesight. Prior to his enlistment he had completed an Officer's Training course and became a Sergeant. His occupation is incorrectly cited as Surveyor's Assistant in the CRB's list above.

He arrived in England in August 1916 and in the following November he was posted to France with the 10FE where so many of the CRB staff members served. On New Year's Day 1917 he was promoted in the field to Lieutenant. He was awarded the Military Cross for an action in December 1917. His citation read:

'For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty guiding a brigade to its assembly position for an attack. Owing to heavy shell fire on the roads, he led the brigade across country, his intimate knowledge of which enabled him to accomplish a very difficult task.'

He was hospitalised a number of times – in the ship's hospital, in the field and in St Omer, Havre and Rouen (Northern France). The cause of one of these is mentioned. He had tonsillitis in Rouen. The other entries just say "sick" so I don't think he was being treated for wounds. He disembarked for Australia in February 1919. I suspect that sickness dogged his life and it was probably due to gassing. In 1960 he made an application to the Repatriation Department for benefits under the Repatriation Act.

Vivian George Taylor

There were over two thousand references to the name 'Taylor' in the archives for the First World War but there was only one with the initials V.G. – Vivian George. There is no record that he worked for the CRB but that is not unusual – nor did many of the others I investigated. However you can have a fairly confident feeling when they describe themselves as an engineer, public servant, accountant or the like. I am fairly confident that Vivian George is the Taylor V.G. on the CRB Roll of Honour.

Taylor was born in Healesville and joined when he was 24 years old. He described himself as a labourer but in a CRB Annual Report reporting his death it indicated that Taylor was a chainman in a survey gang. He was a Lance Corporal in the 6/23rd Battalion. He embarked from Australia in October 1916 for Egypt.

It is clear that Vivian suffered ill health. He was not a robust man. He was five feet seven inches tall, ten stone in weight and had a chest measurement of 34 inches. His Service and Casualty Form shows that he was hospitalised eleven times in T.E. Kebir, Cairo, Heliopolis, Alexandria, T.E. Kebir (again) England, Etaples, Belgium, Havre as well as in the field in France. In the second hospitalisation at T. E. Kebir it recorded 'permanently in sanitary section'. In Cairo it said "rheumatism". In Heliopolis it said "congestion of lung severe". In Havre, he spent 27 days in hospital. In August 1916 it says he was wounded in action but provides no further details.

His last hospitalisation was in December 1917 and the last entry in his record said: "Killed in Action" with a date of 5/7/18. He completed a will leaving all his effects to his mother. These were: 2 wallets, 2 coins, photos, cards, 1 fountain pen, 1 Y.M.C.A. wallet and letters. It breaks your heart.

The archive states that he was buried in an isolated grave ¾ mile E.N.E. of Villers Brettoneux but was later reinterred in Crucifix Cemetery Plot 9 Row F Grave 8. But this was crossed out and a note inserted 'Memorial Cross Crucifix Cemetery'. However the Commonwealth War Graves had the final word by declaring that he is buried at the Villers-Brettonneux Military Cemetery.



Villers-Brettonneux Military Cemetery

E.M. Furmiston

I could not find a record of him.

Rolf Frederick Jansen

Rolf joined the Board as a clerk in 1915 but he enlisted only a few months later when he was nearly 25 years old. He served with the AIF abroad until his return in 1919. He served in Egypt from May 1916 to November 1916 and then he was transferred to England.

There, he was promoted to Staff Sergeant and he put his clerical skills to work in the Australian Army Pay Corps and was awarded a Meritorious Service Medal. He was a Warrant Officer.

He resumed working with the CRB on his return to Australia. Rolf was appointed Assistant Secretary to the Board in 1920 and then as Secretary in 1929. He served as a Board member from 1945 to 1955. In fact his signature appears on many of the papers I researched of CRB officers who served in the Second World War.

During the Second World War Jansen joined the Volunteer Defence Corps and served as a commissioned officer. Rolf died in 1959.

Simon King

Simon was born in Dorset, England, and was 30 years old when he enlisted in July 1915. He described himself as an Engine Driver (Traction). He was a small man – 5 feet 3 ½ inches tall and 9 stone 10 lbs in weight.

He left Australia in December 1915 and served in France until the end of hostilities. He was a truck driver in the 2nd Field Company Engineers. He was hospitalised twice during this time – each time for ‘sickness’ and he was promoted to Lance Corporal in January 1919. He arrived home in June 1919.

George James Cooper

George was nearly 40 when he enlisted. He described himself as a Road Inspector. He was born in Heathcote but his mother, his next of kin, lived in Woori Yallock.

George was not married. He served in the 12th Field Company Engineers in France and was wounded twice – firstly a gunshot wound in the elbow and secondly the result of a shell explosion. He was also hospitalised in Heliopolis en route to France with a fever.

He served in France and was wounded in action in February 1918 and evacuated to England. He was sent back to France in October 1918 just before the Armistice and returned to Australia in April 1919.



Harold Dunstan Page

Harold was a tally clerk. He was born in Bathurst NSW and was 25 when he enlisted at the end of 1915. He was attached to the 14th Battalion.

His file is somewhat enigmatic in that he seems to have served overseas in Egypt and England only. France is not mentioned. But the very last entry on his embarkation to Australia simply states ‘DEBILITY’.

He died in 1952.

Robert Hazel Smith

Robert described himself as a road engineer (as distinct from an overseer as stated in the CRB tabulation). He was born in Coleraine and he was 40 in October 1915 when he joined up. He was a widower with one child. He joined the 8th Field Company Engineers. He was initially sent to Egypt after the withdrawal from Gallipoli but in June 1916 he disembarked in Marseilles.

Robert suffered from myalgia and rheumatism. Between September 1916 and February 1917 he was hospitalised in Boulogne, Etaples and Balaise in France and finally in England.

On 2 May 1917 the following entry was placed on file.

‘This is to certify that Sapper Robert Hazel Smith, 8th Field Company Engineers. Australian Imperial Force, was transferred to England, and admitted to 3rd Western General Hospital on 29th September 1916 suffering with Myalgia; returned to Australia per Hospital Ship “Karoola”, which reached Melbourne on 10th April 1917, illness being specified as Myalgia and Shell Shock.’

My heart breaks for him.

Alfred Reginald Linford

Alfred was 24 when he enlisted in May 1916. He was born in Yarrawonga and he described himself as a civil servant.

He had initially been discharged as medically unfit but was successful the second time around. In fact from November 1915 he was a Sergeant in the Pay Corps. His records show that he joined the 10th Field Engineers but, because of persistent ill health he was exempted from active service and discharged later in 1916. Despite his ill health, Alfred lived a long life and died in 1980.

William Lee Murrell

William was nearly 23 when he enlisted in January 1916. He had a B.C.E. from the University of Melbourne. He embarked for England in December 1916 and was initially billeted at Fovant in Wiltshire, England – I presume for training – and in June 1917 he proceeded to France where he served continuously until the end of the war.

He attained the rank of Lieutenant. He was hospitalised with influenza during his service. After the war he became the Executive Engineer for the Indian Service of Engineers, Patna, Bihar and Orissa. While there, he was burgled and

he wrote to the army to see if they could reissue his war medals that were stolen. I am pleased to report that he was issued with new medals.

William was hospitalised a few times due to influenza and at the end of the war, on 6 December 1918, he was hospitalised in Rouen, France, 'suffering from pyrexia of uncertain origin, seriously ill'. Pyrexia is the medical term for fever. He was taken off the seriously ill list on 27 December 1918. I suspect these illnesses were likely to have been caused by gassing.

William died in 1971.

Arthur H. Kerry

Like Simon King, Arthur was born in England – in Oxford. He was a clerk in the CRB and was 34 years old when he enlisted.

He was attached to the 10th Field Company as a 'Loader and Guide' and served in France from December 1916 until the end of the war. I have not been able to find the meaning of loader and guide. He was a Lance Corporal. Arthur died in 1966.

Edgar Moodie

Edgar was an engine driver who was born in Bannockburn. He enlisted in March 1916 at the age of 26. His mother in Geelong was his next of kin. He was in the 3rd Australian Pioneer Battalion.

He arrived in France in November 1916 and, like many of his mates, he struggled with sickness. He contracted mumps soon after his arrival in the field. He was promoted from Lance Corporal to Sergeant in August 1917. He also suffered from VD.

He was severely gassed and was twice wounded in action requiring him to be evacuated to England to hospital in Oxford. He was sent back to the front and saw out the remainder of the war. In 1961 he sought assistance from the Repatriation Department no doubt for the severe gassing he suffered.

Thomas Frederick John Kneale

Thomas was born in Ararat but lived in Prahran. He was 25 at enlistment in Wangaratta (in March 1916) and he was a clerk with the CRB. He was a Sapper in 10FE under the command of William McCormack.

He arrived in France on 23 November 1916 but he was sent to hospital in Boulogne after a week with pneumonia. He was then invalided to the 1st Southern General Hospital at Kings Heath in Birmingham with 'acute pneumonia (SEVERE)' until 4 January 1917. The Medical Report on an Invalid is almost indecipherable in a doctor's hand writing but I can discern 'Is short of breath on exertion'. The opinion of the Medical Board was that he would be fit for service after 6 months.

Another document indicated he had influenza and in another report it states bronchitis. In yet another report it states 'calculus bladder' which is a propensity for the

development of bladder stones. After a long period of recuperation in various posts in England he returned to France on 3 October 1918. In February 1919 he was demobilised to England and then returned to Australia.

Thomas's war was dogged by illness but he was not alone. Most Australian troops who succumbed to disease during the war died from respiratory tract infections – commonly influenza and pneumonia. Combined, they claimed some 3,300 Australian lives during the war, and many more were debilitated by the effects long afterwards. By 1930, almost 8,000 were receiving disability pensions for asthma, bronchitis, pleurisy or pneumonia. Thomas was one of these. In 1961 he applied for repatriation benefits – at about the same time as many of his CRB fellow soldiers – leading me to think that the deadly gas used during the war also played a part.

There is also another aspect which may have contributed. These were soldiers from a warm climate in Australia who were mobilised to France in what was one of the coldest winters Europe had experienced. I wonder whether they were kitted out properly?

Alfred Vernon Galbraith

Alfred Vernon Galbraith was Chief Clerk at the CRB. He was born in Geelong and was 25 when he enlisted in 1916. He was married to Elsie Maud. He was promoted to Lieutenant in May 1916 and to Captain in February 1917.

He was gassed in July 1917 at Messines and thereafter his record shows a lot of hospitalisation. He had pneumonia in both lungs. He left England in a hospital ship in February 1919 and in July 1919 he was discharged from hospital to undertake vocational training. One report said that he looks rather pallid and he coughs at night and in the mornings. He has walked half a mile and his heart is rather rapid after slight exertion. He was also diagnosed to be diabetic. I suspect Alfred's war extended well beyond Armistice Day in 1918. Alfred died in 1949.

Leslie Montrose Graham

The Honour Roll says L.V. Graham but out of 842 Grahams listed in the National Archives I could not find L.V.. But I found L.M. and I'm pretty certain he is our man. He is described as a draughtsman in the CRB tabulation but in his enlistment papers he described himself as a civil engineer.

Leslie was born in Beechworth but his address on enlistment was Brighton Beach. He enlisted in March 1916 when he was 24 years old. He was placed in the 10FE as a sapper and then progressed through the ranks of Lance Corporal, Corporal and eventually Lieutenant.

He left Australia on 20 June 1916 aboard H.M.A.T. *Runic* arriving in Plymouth on 10th August 1916. He landed in France on 23 November. He spent a week in hospital with diarrhoea in Le Havre but there are no further entries about illness and wounds.



In January 1918 he was sent back to a Training School in England regarding gas warfare – he was attached to the Corps Gas School. He returned to France on 1 February 1918 and saw out the rest of the war returning to London in March 1919. He then undertook some training in road surface treatments. His file contained the following note:

'Under the authority of the Director-General of Repatriation and Demobilisation the above named officer has been granted leave of absence with pay and subsistence allowance at the rate of 6s. per day for the period from the 3rd March to 17th April 1919, to enable him to be attached to the laboratory of Col. Crompton, M.I.C.E., Consulting Engineer to the Government Roads Board, London.'

In his Medical Report dated 13 May 1919 prior to embarkation for Australia it said:

'He feels quite well. No serious illness. No serious wounds. No serious gassing.'

Leslie Wilkens White

Leslie was a 20 year old draughtsman from Carlton who joined up in March 1916. He served in The Army Medical Corps 15th Field Ambulance (AAMC). He was a Methodist but I don't know whether he chose to serve in this unit out of religious conviction or whether he was just placed there.

He trained initially at various hospitals in Melbourne – AAMC Royal Park, Glenroy Isolation, No. 5 Australian Infectious Diseases Hospital, C.H. Queenscliff (AAMC), Clearing Hospital Broadmeadows, No. 11 General Hospital, Clearing Hospital Seymour and a few others that are indecipherable. All this training took the best part of 14 months and for this period he was a private. He proceeded to Glasgow in October 1917 where he did another month of training in the AAMC Training centre before moving to Rouelles in France in November 1917.

He spent six days in hospital in January 1918 with an unspecified illness and remained in the field in France until he returned to Australia via England in June 1919.

The training that Leslie underwent was very comprehensive and he had to sit exams for which he received a 70% grade which is apparently very good. Apart from para-medical training he also studied camp sanitation, kitchens, latrines and incinerators. He also did infantry training and, of course, transport of the wounded.

He received the three medals that all of them received – the Victory Medal, the British War Medal and the 1914/18 Star. However he lost one of them under the following circumstances:

'My daughter lost my Victory Medal whilst wearing it to school on Anzac Day 1935. It became detached from her jumper as she was jumping Elster Canal, Brighton. As the canal was carrying much water at the time I had to wait until the water subsided before I could look for it, but later after much searching I could not find it.'

A duplicate medal was forwarded to him.

Les worked in the Plans and Survey Division until the 1950s.

Leonard James Herd

Leonard was the youngest staff member to enlist. He was just 18. He was a clerk. He joined up in October 1916 and disembarked in Plymouth in April 1917. In September 1917 he arrived in France as a Driver in the Field Artillery Brigade. In December he became a Gunner but in March 1918 he was returned to England for early discharge and embarkation to Australia.

At first I was puzzled by his early discharge but the following letter in the archive provided the explanation. It was written by Leslie's father to Mr A. Watt. It says:

'In reference to our conversation about my son now at Salisbury Plains, I thought I would write and tell you the following facts. My eldest son Rupert, after 2 ½ years service in the AIF was killed on the 16th June last (result of an aeroplane accident). My second son, David, was killed on 22 August last in Egypt after 15 months service. Leonard my youngest and only surviving son enlisted on his 18th birthday and sailed for England on 14th February this year. He will be 19 years old in October.

'My wife and I feel the loss of our two boys keenly and are naturally apprehensive as to the safety of the third and would like to see him engaged on home service. The boy's patriotism and loyalty is so pronounced we are loth to raise the question, but I would like to know if it would be possible to keep him out of the firing line by giving him duties in England.'

In arriving at a decision it was revealed that Rupert was accidentally killed in an air crash in Egypt and David was found drowned in the Nile. The Army acceded to Mr Herd's request and Leonard was withdrawn from service in France.

Harold Peachey Wood

23 year old Harold Wood, who described himself as engineer/draughtsman, enlisted on 4 November 1916. He lived in Canterbury.

He was sent to the Australian Flying Corps. He arrived in Plymouth in March 1917 and started at the AFC Depot in Perham Downs and the file designated him as a motor cyclist in August 1917.

He went to France in December 1917 and there is no further mention of him other than he disembarked for Australia on 6 May 1919. The CRB tabulation describes him as an air mechanic but I could not see any reference to this on the file.

He died in 1982.

Fred Goran Payne

Fred was a clerk from St Kilda who enrolled in March 1917 when he was 18 years and 9 months old. Across the top of his enrolment form, written in red ink, is "Not to embark until he attains the age of 19 years". Across the form is a diagonal line with 'Cancelled' stamped on it.

He was a Gunner in the Field Artillery. He passed his musketry training in Maribyrnong. As I delved further into his file I found a document called Statement of Service on which it was noted, "Discharged Maribyrnong As I delved further into his records there was a document entitled Statement of Service which said, "21/6/17. By direction of Divisional headquarter. He being under 18 years of age and having given false answer to same on attestation."

There was also another document on file written by the AIF to Fred's father to the effect that Fred had produced a document purporting to give his father's permission for Fred to enlist. It then asked if his father was willing for Fred to proceed to active service before the age of 19.

Even later in the file is a letter dated 21/5/17 written by Fred's father to the 3rd Military District saying:

'Re my son F.G. Payne who is in military training at Maribyrnong Camp and has not yet reached the age of 18 years. I gave my consent for him to enter the forces provided that he would not sail before he reached the age of 19 years, but I did not know at the time that he had put on his papers that he was 18 years and 9 months, his right age being then 17 years and 9 months. He told me that he would be kept in Australia until he was 19 years of age, he came home last night and told us that he had been allotted to May reinforcements and he would probably sail in some time June next. We wish him to be held in Australia until he is 19 years of age which he will reach on the 17th of June 1918 next.

My wife and I will be willing to let him sail when he reaches that age.'

Fred was discharged and had to pay back the money he was paid by the army. He wrote to the army in 1940 seeking a copy of his discharge papers which he needed because he wanted to join up again. However there is no record of him having joined up for the Second World War.

Cedric Einer Tuxen

Cedric stated on his enlistment papers that he was an engineer but the CRB tabulation states that he was a surveyor's assistant. He lived in Power Street, Hawthorn and was 24 in March 1917 when he enlisted. He was a Sapper in the 8th Field Company. I noticed too that he was tall – 6 feet. All the others listed so far were below that figure although I noticed in another entry that he was 5 feet 10 inches.

He embarked from Sydney in May 1918 for active service abroad but he spent the rest of the war in England. He proceeded to France in January 1919, after the cessation of hostilities. I suspect the sappers were involved in clearing up especially in relation to land mines. He finally arrived back in Melbourne in June 1919.

Wesley Talbot Williams

On his enrolment form he stated that he was a public servant (survey draughtsman). He was 31 and married with one child.

He enlisted in July 1917 as a sapper in the Engineer Reinforcements but I was relieved to see that he was discharged from the services in April 1918 as he was no longer required – 'not due to misconduct'.

William Dickie Birrell

An 18 year old clerk, William enlisted in at a Recruit Depot in November 1917. He commenced as a Private but in February 1918 he was promoted to Corporal.

He attended an Isolation Camp in Ascot Vale and for the rest of his training he was based at the Broadmeadows Camp.

He embarked for England in July 1918 where he remained for the rest of the war. He was promoted to Lance Corporal later in July and was discharged in October 1919.

William (Bill) Henry Neville

William lived in Albert Park and was a clerk with the CRB. He later became a Member of The Board. Bill was 20 when he joined up in the 6th General Service Reinforcements.

He was promoted to Corporal in January 1918 just a month after he enlisted. At around the same time, he disembarked for 'service abroad' but at Cape Town he was put into hospital with influenza and placed on the 'Dangerously ill' list. He was transferred to another hospital who described his condition as pneumonia 'dangerously ill'.

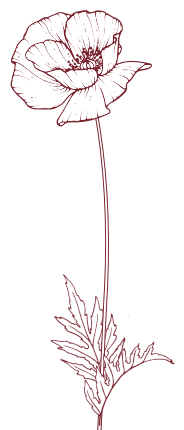
He was struck off the dangerously ill list in October 1918 and was declared medically unfit – disability caused by military service. He returned to Australia from Cape Town in December 1918.

Bill Neville would have had a very close working relationship with Rolf Jansen as he succeeded Rolf as Secretary to the Board and later, as a member of the Board. He died in 1963.

Arthur Stuart Ponting

Arthur designated himself as a surveyor (Country Roads Board) although the CRB tabulation called him an engineering pupil.

He is the last on the Roll of Honour meaning he was the last to enrol. In fact it was very close to the end of the war – October 1918. Arthur came from Warrnambool and was 18 years and 4 months but he had tried to enlist earlier but he was withdrawn by his parents, probably because they had two sons already serving. He was demobilized in December 1918.



Other CRB staff who served in the First World War

These include men who served but joined the CRB after the First World War.

Donald Victor Darwin



Donald Victor Darwin M.M. unveiling the CRB Honour Roll for the Second World War at the Exhibition Building, 1952.

Darwin was born at Redhill, South Australia in 1896. He was a 19 year-old engineering student at the time of his enlistment. He enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force on 3 January 1916 and arrived in France in November 1916 as a sapper in the 10th Field Company, Engineers. This was the company in which Major William McCormack served. In 1918, Lance Corporal Darwin was awarded a Military Medal.

His citation read:

'During the period from 28th March to 1st April, 1918, at BUIRE near ALBERT, this sapper carried out reconnaissance of Front-Line posts in daylight and accurately fixed their position at very great personal risk. This work was of great importance owing to the uncertainty of the line held by the infantry and was carried out under heavy shell and machinegun fire, and it was only his coolness and disregard for danger that he completed the task.'

*(Sgd) John Monash Major Gen.
G.O.C. Third Aust. Division*

Darwin was discharged in Melbourne on 25 May 1919 and joined the CRB. Perhaps McCormack instigated this? However he completed his engineering studies at the University of Melbourne graduating with a B.C.E. in 1922 and an M.C.E in 1926. He was appointed Assistant-Engineer in 1920 and Bridge Engineer in 1924. One of his major projects was to design the Princes Highway's crossing of the Barwon River. This was the first major bridge to be designed by the CRB.

After his appointment as Chief Engineer in 1940, he brought his versatility to the building requirements of munitions facilities and airfields in Victoria, and to defence-related constructions in the Northern Territory (including the Stuart Highway). He was appointed to the Board in 1945 and became Chairman in 1949.

After retiring in 1962, he assisted the Australian Road Research Board and that year he won the Kernot Medal. He was awarded the Imperial Service Order (ISO) in 1963 and the (Sir) Peter Nicol Russell Medal in 1966 by the Institution of Engineers, Australia, an organization he had served as President in 1957.

Caleb Grafton Roberts

Caleb was the only child of the famous Australian painter, Tom Roberts, of the Heidelberg School fame. Although he was born in Australia, he spent most of his early life in England where he attended St Paul's School, London, and the Royal Military Academy, Woolwich.



Caleb Roberts – Chairman of the Country Roads Board – 1962.

He was a good scholar and excellent sportsman and played Rugby Union at international level for the British Army. He served with the British Army in Palestine, the Western Front and northern Russia. He won the Military Cross at the Battle of St Quentin Canal where American, Australian and British troops breached the Hindenburg Line for the first time, ultimately convincing the German High Command that there was little hope of a German victory. The citation for his Military Cross reads:

'Lt. C.G. Roberts, 23rd Fd. Coy, R.E. For conspicuous gallantry and skill near Maissemy, Sept, 17-18, 1918, in taping the forming-up line on two occasions under heavy shell and machine-gun fire. His section was also employed repeatedly in consolidation under fire. On all occasions he set a fine example of courage.'

Caleb's father and William Calder, Chairman of the CRB, were friends. In fact Tom Roberts painted a portrait of Calder – reputedly from a photograph - which was hung on the wall outside the Boardroom at the head office in Kew. Caleb must have been in touch with Calder while the latter was on a study trip to England in 1924. Calder wrote to Caleb as he was returning to Australia while on board the Cunard Line's RMS Scythia.

He wrote:

"Dear Sir,

Yours of the 14th June reached me after I left London and I had no favourable opportunity of replying. Should you decide to risk a move to Australia I shall be pleased to hear from you at any time and may be able to proffer some advice.

My inquiries in England elicited the fact that professional men, particularly those in higher end positions, were being paid better salaries than in Australia i.e. relatively.

With best wishes for your success and advancement.

Yours faithfully

W Calder"



Lt. Caleb Roberts M.C.

Caleb took that risk. With no prospects other than the promise of a chat with William Calder, Caleb and his family arrived in Melbourne in 1925. That year he began his employment with the CRB as an Assistant Highway Engineer.

Roberts was promoted to highway engineer in 1928. His responsibilities included the modernizing of road-making techniques and the introduction of cheaper construction methods. In

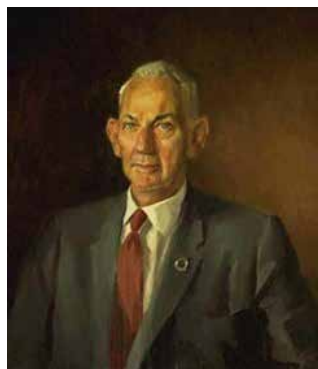
1937 he prepared the Board's first 10-year plan for highway development. From 1931 he was an engineer officer with the Citizen Military Forces and was gazetted acting Major in 1939 and called up for full-time duty. He was transferred to the Australian Intelligence Corps. While serving at Army Headquarters, Melbourne, he was raised to temporary Colonel and made Director of Military Intelligence in February 1942.

He was appointed controller of the Allied Intelligence Bureau (A.I.B.) at Douglas MacArthur's General Headquarters, South-West Pacific Area. The A.I.B. spread propaganda and conducted espionage, sabotage and guerrilla operations in enemy-held territory. By 1944 Roberts had charge of an organization comprising some 2,000 men from Australia, Britain, the Netherlands, the United States of America and countries occupied by the Japanese. It was a daunting job and he had to reconcile the aims and allegiances of the various national groups, and to deal with some highly individualistic and temperamental members of his staff.

Official statistics credit the A.I.B with a total of 264 missions. Commando and other para-military operations accounted for more than 7,000 enemy killed, whilst nearly 1,000 surrendered following propaganda efforts by the Bureau. The Bureau also rescued more than 1,000 individuals of different allied services where it operated. The US Army Deputy Controller of the Bureau, in the book "Spy Ring, Pacific", said that Colonel Roberts was regarded by General McArthur's Headquarters as a man of "integrity, tremendous energy and fearless loyalty".

After the war Caleb resumed his position as Chief Engineer of the CRB. Following a study tour in America and Britain, he recommended the formation of a permanent road research agency which led to the establishment of the Australian Road Research Board in 1959. He was appointed as a member of the Board in 1956 and became Chairman in 1962. He retired in 1963 and died in 1965 of a rheumatic condition he acquired during the First World War.

(Sir) Louis Francis Loder



Sir Louis Loder by
Graeme Thorley 1961

Louis Loder was born in Sale in 1896. Like Donald Darwin, Louis Loder was an engineering student when he enlisted in April 1916. He embarked for England in October and in December, he was attached to the Royal Flying Corps School to train as a flyer.

He was then commissioned in the Australian Flying Corps (AFC) but he was grounded two months later

because he suffered from migraine which permanently incapacitated him from further flying. However he remained with the AFC and after promotion to Lieutenant he was sent to the Western Front where he was mentioned in despatches. He served with No. 2 Squadron as a machine-gun instructor and armament officer with the 15 Machine Gun Company 2 – 10 Reinforcements. He was terminated in 1919 and resumed his engineering studies and graduated with first-class honours.

He joined the CRB in 1924, initially as a bridge designer, and was promoted to Chief Engineer in 1928. He was appointed Chairman of the Board in 1940. He became the co-ordinator of the Victorian instrumentalities for the Allied Works Council which managed the construction of 787 miles of the Stuart Highway in the Northern Territory. In 1944 he became the Director General of Allied Works and after the cessation of the war in 1945, he was appointed the first Director-General of the Commonwealth Department of Works to look after all Federal Government infrastructure. He retired in 1961. Loder was made a Commander of the Order of the British Empire in June 1953. He was appointed a Knight Bachelor in 1962.

A teetotaller, Sir Louis was a tall, sparsely built man with a resonant voice and a finely tuned sense of propriety. As a youth he had been a keen footballer and an accomplished sprinter; in his advanced years he enjoyed tennis.

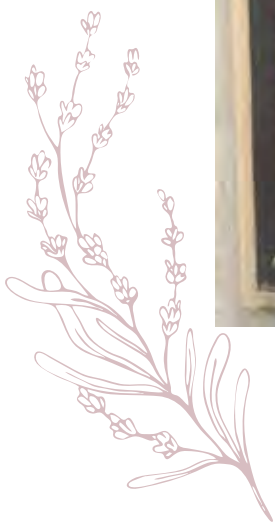
Sir Louis' son, John, also worked for the CRB but after carrying out a number of independent assignments, he combined with John Bayly to form a successful town planning and traffic engineering practice.

In the photograph of the CRB staff taken in 1930 at the Exhibition Building the following veterans of World War 1 are included: Donald V. Darwin; Rolf Jansen; Arthur Kerry; Louis Loder; W.T.B. McCormack; W.H. Neville and Caleb Roberts.



Second World War

Those who were killed in active service in the Second World War as recorded on the CRB Roll of Honour are:



In the 1941 Annual Report of the CRB the following statement was made:

'Due to enlistments in the Navy, Army, and Air Force, the calling up of trainees for national service and the transfer of a number of technical officers to Defence Departments, a strain was placed on the Board's staff. The Board desires to express its appreciation of the efforts of the staff in carrying on under considerable difficulties, involving much overtime and close concentration. Notwithstanding that the Board's normal programme of work has been considerably reduced, the diminution in the programme was offset to a large extent by the large volume of defence works carried out on behalf of the Commonwealth Government.'

The total number of officers and employees of the Board who had enlisted for active service abroad with the second A.I.F., R.A.A.F., and Naval Forces was 235.'

In the 1945 Annual Report the following statement was made:

'With deep regret the Board records that nine members of its staff paid the supreme sacrifice during the war. Each of the officers was a young man of more than ordinary ability and great promise, to whom the Board looked to fill important positions in the future. The heartfelt sympathy of the Board and staff goes out to their families in the loss they have sustained.'

During the war period 48 members of the staff and 590 employees joined the fighting services.

With the cessation of hostilities, the Board is now awaiting the release of officers and employees still in the services with a view to their returning to their normal duties.

For several years a great deal of apprehension was felt for the welfare of certain members of the Board's staff who were prisoners of war. It is with a feeling of great joy that reference can now be made to the fact that all of these officers have been released. Heartiest congratulations are offered to them and to their families on their safety, and the hope is expressed that they will not suffer any permanent disability as a result of their unenviable experiences.'

Servicemen listed on the CRB Roll of Honour of the Second World War

Oliver John Armstrong VX 29137



Oliver was nearly 32 when he enlisted at Sale in June 1940. He came from Johnsonville and he gave his vocation as bridge construction.

He was appointed Lance Sergeant while serving in Malaya and was killed in February 1942. His Burial Return certificate indicates he was killed in the Cathay Buildings in Singapore and he

was temporarily buried with a sealed bottle containing his particulars. He is now buried at the Kranji War Cemetery in Singapore.

His death was conveyed to his sister in Wantirna because the record said that his mother was not in good health. His will said 'I give all my property to Una May Armstrong to be divided as she thinks best'.



Oliver John Armstrong's burial place, Kranji War Cemetery, Singapore.

Patrick Brown VX 26172



The only Australian P. Brown that I could find on the Commonwealth War Graves database was Patrick Brown VX 26172.

He was born in Ireland and lived in Caulfield. His archive has not been digitised so I can't be sure if he is the right man. He was in the A.I.F. 2/23 Battalion and died on 5 April 1941 at

the age of 39 years. He is commemorated at the Alamein Memorial in Egypt. This record needs verification.



Private Patrick Brown and the Alamein Memorial

Alexander Peter Romilly Bruford

VX 60359

Alexander was born in Hawthorn and was killed at the age of 19 in New Guinea. He was a Lance Corporal and is buried in the Lae War Cemetery in Papua New Guinea. I could find no further details.



Lae War Cemetery

John Oswald Graham 418101

Flight Lieutenant John Oswald Graham of the Royal Australian Air Force died on 21 May 1945 aged 28 years and he is buried at Labuan War Cemetery in Malaysia. He was born in Mont Albert and had a B.Com. (Melb). His file in the National Archives has not been digitised so that this entry requires confirmation.

D. G. Green

I cannot find a record for him in either the Commonwealth Graves or the Australian Archives.

F. R. Hunter

I cannot find any information about him.

Bernard George Hutchins 408654

Leading Aircraftman Hutchins died on 14 October 1941. He was 23 years old. He is buried in the Burwood General Cemetery, Melbourne. This implies that he was killed in an accident – probably in a training exercise.



William Albert Jones VX 38713

William served in the A.I.F. 2/22nd Battalion and was killed on 1 July 1942 in New Guinea. He is commemorated at the Rabaul Memorial. He was born in London and was 40 years old when he died.

William described his occupation as 'Roadman' and for his religion he said 'Sun Worshipper'. He left Sydney on H.M.T *Zealandia* On 18 April 1941 and disembarked in Rabaul eight days later. He was reported missing a year later. His file has a dreaded stamp DECEASED and a written note 'presumed dead'. It noted that he went missing on 1/7/42 and for official purposes presumed dead. It then said 'Member on board *Montevideo Maru*.' That was the last entry in the archive.

I can throw some light on these cryptic comments. As it turns out, my cousin, Arthur Simson, also served in the 2/22nd Australian Infantry Battalion in Rabaul in New Guinea. It was known as Lark Force. They were mobilised to Rabaul to protect local airfields and provide early warning of Japanese movements through the islands. Following an overwhelming Japanese bombardment, the squadron that Lark Force was protecting was destroyed and the Battalion withdrew only to be overrun by the Japanese ground invasion where Lark Force was outnumbered five to one. Eighteen soldiers were awarded military honours in this battle including Arthur who was mentioned in despatches.

The Lark Force commander ordered a withdrawal on the basis of every man for himself. Pairs, individuals and larger groups sought escape along the coast. Some found small boats or were picked up by bigger vessels and about 400 of the 1,400 strong unit made their way back to Australia. Arthur was one of them. About 160 Australians captured by the Japanese were massacred at Tol Plantation and another 863 were interned as prisoners of war. Many of these lost their lives when an American submarine torpedoed the *Montevideo Maru* as they were being transported to Hainan Island. A few officers left behind in Rabaul were shipped to Japan where they were eventually liberated.

So William Jones perished at sea. The sinking of *Montevideo Maru* is the worst maritime disaster in Australian history.



The Rabaul Memorial in Papua New Guinea.

The Rabaul Memorial takes the form of an avenue of stone pylons leading from the entrance building to the Cross of Sacrifice. Bronze panels bearing the names are affixed to the faces of the pylons. In July 2012 a new memorial was dedicated in the grounds of the Australian War Memorial in Canberra. Designed by noted Melbourne sculptor James Parrett, it commemorates those Australians who died in the defence of Rabaul, and those who later died as prisoners in the sinking of the *Montevideo Maru*.



Rabaul and Montevideo Maru memorial in Canberra

Ernest Desmond McGeary VX 56416



Private Ernest McGeary was from Ballarat and was 25 years old when he died. He was a member of the 2/29 Battalion and he is commemorated at the Labuan memorial in Borneo, Malaysia.

He enlisted in May 1941 and described himself as a labourer. He arrived in Singapore in August 1941 and was immediately hospitalised with mumps. He got into a bit of trouble with authorities in that he was charged with "using violence to persons in whose custody he was placed in that he did violently struggle with and occasion actual bodily harm to three Privates in whose custody he had been lawfully placed". He was fined one pound.

In April 1942 he was wounded in action and in July 1942 he was listed as a Prisoner of War.

Ernest died of malaria on 21 June 1945.

Alan Martin Montgomery



Pilot Officer
Alan Montgomery

Alan was a civil engineering draughtsman at the CRB. He joined the RAAF in December 1942 at the age of 22.

He passed his flying training in July 1943 and attained the rank of Pilot Officer. He was sent to Canada to undertake further training and he disembarked from Halifax to the UK in February 1944. He was killed in a flying accident in July 1944.

Donald Roy Neave VX 27303



Donald Neave's enlistment photo

Donald was born in my old home town, Colac. He was 20 years old and a labourer. His file is very short.

He left Darwin on 17 December 1941 for Ambon and went missing on 2 February 1942. On 1 June 1942 his file is stamped PRISONER OF WAR. The last entry in his file is dated 15 September 1945 saying 'Died of Illness whilst P.O.W.' and someone has written next to it 'Dysentery'. He is buried at the Ambon War Cemetery in Indonesia.

CHARGE OFFICER'S OFFICE 3 M.L.D. VICTORIA BARRACKS		TELEGRAM MESSAGE TO BE SENT BY THE POST OFFICE		AFFEE STAFFS RECEIVED CHANGE OF ADDRESS ONLY	
VISIT NOTE NO. ALL INFORMATION TO BE OBTAINED FROM THE OFFICE OF THE CHARGE OFFICER		NAME EMPLOYER THE PRISONER MUST BE EMPLOYED IN HIS OWN COUNTRY		ADDRESS TO WHICH TO BE SENT (If the prisoner is to be sent to a different address, the name of the new address must be given)	
I HAVE TO SIGNIFY TO YOU THAT THE PRISONER IS NOT SUPPORTED BY HIS RELATIVES		I HAVE TO SIGNIFY TO YOU THAT THE PRISONER IS NOT SUPPORTED BY HIS RELATIVES		I HAVE TO SIGNIFY TO YOU THAT THE PRISONER IS NOT SUPPORTED BY HIS RELATIVES	
I HAVE TO SIGNIFY TO YOU THAT THE PRISONER IS NOT SUPPORTED BY HIS RELATIVES		I HAVE TO SIGNIFY TO YOU THAT THE PRISONER IS NOT SUPPORTED BY HIS RELATIVES		I HAVE TO SIGNIFY TO YOU THAT THE PRISONER IS NOT SUPPORTED BY HIS RELATIVES	

The telegram informing Donald's mother that he was a prisoner of war.



Ambon War Cemetery

Eric Vincent O'Keefe VX 56471



Private Eric O'Keefe

Eric Vincent O'Keefe enlisted in May 1941 at the age of 20. Although born in Swan Hill, he lived with his mother in Brighton.

In January 1942, he embarked in the SS Orcades to Batavia (Jakarta). He was reported missing in Java in April 1942 and in November 1943 he was declared a prisoner of war, 'interned in a Thai camp'. In April 1945 it was reported that he died of illness (Dysentery and Beri Beri) on or after 1/2/44. He is buried in Kanchanaburi War Cemetery in Thailand.



Kanchanaburi War cemetery.

Roy Leslie Rough VX 117208

Roy is in the staff photo of the Country Roads Board of 1930.

Major Rough served in the militia with the 24/39 Battalion from 1926 until he enlisted in 1940. He was taken on strength with the Headquarters Southern Command in June 1940 and was appointed to the rank of Major in 1942. In December 1942 he was seconded to the AIF from the militia. Rough served in Australian based postings until August 1945 when he was sent to Labuan in Brunei and attached to the British Borneo Administration Unit. On 31 August 1945 he was killed in a mine explosion and buried at Labuan Cemetery.

Roy was from East Kew. He described himself as a public servant. He was attached to the Australian Intelligence Corps and he rose to the rank of Major. He was killed

agonisingly close to the end of the War on 31 August 1945 in Brunei on Borneo.

He was awarded the Efficiency Medal.



Labuan War Cemetery – Borneo.

Eric Robert Short VX 42365

Eric was a Sapper in the Royal Australian Engineers and died in April 1945 aged 32 years old. He is also buried at Labuan in Malaysia but I can't find many more details about him. He was born in Tasmania, but his wife lived in Benalla.

Many of the personnel buried in Labuan cemetery, including Indian and Australian troops, were killed during the Japanese invasion of Borneo or the Borneo campaign of 1945. Eric was killed in the latter of these. Others were prisoners of war in the region, including a number of those who perished on the infamous Sandakan Death Marches, and many hundreds of Allied POWs (mostly British and Australian) who died during their imprisonment by the Japanese at Batu Lintang camp near Kuching were also reburied here.

Robert Neil Tucker

Pilot Officer Tucker and his navigator were killed in an accident. He was flying a Mosquito A52-29 on 31 January 1945 when it crashed during air to ground gunnery exercises near Williamtown, NSW. The cause of the crash was stated as 'Structural failure of port mainplane'.

The CRB was informed and Rolf Jansen, Secretary, corresponded with the Department of Air regarding his superannuation. There are no details about his enlistment in his file but he was married.

J. J. Turner

The only J.J. Turner I could find was in the ill-fated 2/20 Battalion which was the NSW Battalion that fought in Malaya and was overrun by the Japanese.

That poor John James Turner died on 20 February 1942 aged 34 years and commemorated at Kranji War cemetery in Singapore. I have my doubts that is the CRB's J.J. Turner so this record requires further verification.

William Douglas Willis 400166

Flying Officer William Willis was a clerk at the Country Roads Board. He was a Spitfire pilot in the Royal Australian Air Force. His file did not include enlistment details but it emphatically illustrates the formality and bureaucracy of the record keeping of the armed forces at the time.

Most of it is handwritten but there are also typed copies of some correspondence. He was not married as his next of kin is stated as his father. The most telling piece of correspondence said in part:

'Dear Sir

The information available in this Department is that Pilot Officer Willis was the pilot of a Spitfire aircraft which, with other aircraft of the same formation, was attacked by enemy fighters over Bethune, France. Four enemy aircraft were destroyed, but Pilot Officer Willis did not return to his base.

A report subsequently received by this Department through the Air Ministry, London, from the International Red Cross Society at Geneva, states that Sergeant Willis is now believed to have lost his life.'

It went on to say that the usual practice in such circumstances was to declare that he was "missing but believed to have lost his life" and said, should confirmation of his death be received, a certificate will be issued to that effect.

There was another very concise note about the incident by the Squadron Leader. He recorded the ME109s destroyed (one by Pilot Officer Truscott of Melbourne Football Club fame) but four Spitfires were missing, one of which was Willis. Willis had been flying missions for four and a half months.

A letter dated 18th September 1947 finalised the circumstances of his death. It stated:

"Whilst sweeping in the area of CONTRE-MOULINS it was learnt that a British Fighter said to be a Spitfire had crashed there in flames on the afternoon of 18/9/41. The body was taken away by the Germans to FECAMP.

No trace of this casualty could be found in FECAMP Cemetery but the records of St. MARIE-LE HAVRE state DIV. 67 Row D Grave12. 20.9.41 "WILLY AVIATEUR venant de FECAMP".

G.R.U. holds a burial card for the occupant of this grave on which are written the above quoted service particulars "P.O. W.D. Willis AUS/400166" and they are registering the grave in that name".

On 21/1/1942, a letter was sent to the Accountant, Country Roads Board, advising that this officer was reported missing and believed to be killed.

Willis was 24 years old when he died. He is buried at Ste. Marie Cemetery in Le Havre in France.



William Willis' original grave in France.



Ste. Marie Cemetery in Le Havre

It is heartbreaking to think that all these young men lost their lives, far from home and far from the people who loved them. Those who loved them would have carried their remorse to their graves and after them, they are largely forgotten.

Other CRB staff members who served in the Second World War

William (Bill) F Neville

This William F. Neville should not be confused with the William H. Neville who served in the First World War. I don't think they were related.

Bill Neville's wife, Ina, was a loyal member of the VicRoads Association after Bill died. I used to pick her up and drop her home so that she could attend our VicRoads Association functions. She was a kind, intelligent and elegant woman who lived well into her nineties. I was always a bit saddened because she and Bill had no family but she told me that she had a wide circle of friends and was not lonely. I recall that she was very friendly with Lillian Moon.

I cannot find a record for Bill. Tom Glazebrook, former Bendigo Divisional Engineer, told me that Bill had the rank of Captain and that he was the Assistant Divisional Engineer at Horsham when that Division was first formed. In the late 1950s he transferred to Geelong as Divisional Engineer where he served for about nine years before transferring to Head Office as Assistant Chief Works Engineer.

Noel Bentley Keil vx 46869

Noel and I worked together on the Snowy River Crossing Project. He was in charge of the laboratory. He was the most decent and genuinely gentle person you could ever meet. He lived on a small farm outside Lakes Entrance and he loved giving all the kids a ride on his tractor. He had a slightly nervous disposition and Dawn, his wife, explained to me that he was one of the Rats of Tobruk.

The Rats of Tobruk were soldiers of the Australian-led Allied garrison that held the Libyan port of Tobruk against the Afrika Corps, during the Siege of Tobruk in World War II. The siege started on 11 April 1941 and was relieved on 10 December 1941. The Australian War Memorial described the campaign thus:

"The second year of the war had begun with a series of impressive British and Commonwealth successes against the Italians in Libya. Australian troops led the advance. But a rapid German offensive quickly reversed these early victories. All that stopped the Germans' march on Egypt was the defiant garrison at Tobruk.

For eight long months, surrounded by German and Italian forces, the men of the Tobruk garrison, mostly Australians, withstood tank attacks, artillery barrages, and daily bombings. They endured the desert's searing heat, the bitterly cold nights, and hellish dust storms. They lived in dug-outs, caves, and crevasses.

The defenders of Tobruk did not surrender, they did not retreat. Their determination, bravery, and humour, combined with the aggressive tactics of their commanders, became a source of inspiration during some of the war's darkest days. In so doing, they achieved lasting fame as the "Rats of Tobruk".

It was the Germans who coined the Australians as rats. The Nazi propaganda machine tried to erode the defenders' morale. The Radio Berlin host, Lord Haw Haw, derisively referred to the Australians as the "poor desert rats of Tobruk" who were "caught like rats in a trap." The derogatory references were meant to dispirit the troops but it backfired. The comments appealed to the Australians' dry sense of humour and they proudly began referring to themselves as the Rats of Tobruk. They even went so far as to create an unofficial Tobruk siege campaign medal bearing the likeness of a rat and made out of scrap metal taken from a German bomber they had shot down with captured German anti-aircraft artillery.

Noel's file has not been digitised but I found his name on the Honour Roll of the Rats of Tobruk. He was born at Sorrento in 1920 and he was a Corporal.

I am proud to renew my acquaintanceship with Noel.

David Thomas Hewson and John Henry Pittard

David and John were a bit like brothers so I have joined them together. They were both born in 1924 - David in Brighton and John in Hampton. They trained together in the RAAF at Western Junction in Tasmania after which Dave was posted to Point Cook to learn to fly twin-engine Airspeed Oxfords and John to Deniliquin to fly single-engine Wirraways.

I found Dave's file in the National Archives but it has not been digitised so I could not read it. However I know that Dave went overseas when he graduated from flying school and joined a Mosquito Bomber Squadron and flew 30 missions over Berlin. He was tragically killed in a car crash in the 1960s.

John was sent to Central Flying School and served as a flying instructor.

I met both of them when I started at the CRB in 1961. David was involved in road design and John was the Advance Planning Engineer after serving a long time in Bridge Design Branch.

Noel Anderson told me a story about Dave. Apparently there was a Polish engineer/draughtsman who worked for Dave in Plans and Survey who was a wizard at maths. However his wartime experiences had left a mark on his emotional condition and he was prone to severe changes in mood. One night, Dave was contacted to say that this particular person was down at the police station as a result of some sort of altercation. Rather than leave it alone, Dave went down and sorted it all out with the police and paid the bail to enable the man to be released. Noel said that Dave knew the man's wartime history and was very supportive and protective towards him.



Robert (Bob) Stenton Swift vx 89696



Bob Swift – his enlistment photo

Bob was not quite 20 when he enlisted in Queensland in 1942. Why he enlisted in Queensland we will never know. His home address was Carpenter Street, Middle Brighton – the house he lived in all his life except for his last years in Anzac House. He gave his occupation as 'Clerk, Country Roads Board'. Bob was a lovely man who was loyal to the CRB all his life. He was my predecessor as President of the VicRoads Association.

It is impossible to imagine anyone as gentle as Bob to be in the thick of battle. One of his fellow RSL members said at his funeral:

'It always seemed to me, and others on our committee, that Bob was a gentleman in all respects – one who served Australia well in war and in peace. He was one of those thousands of young Australians who rallied to the cause to help defend Australia at a time when we were under dire threat of invasion. No doubt in common with all of those who were prepared to put their lives on the line for Australia – as Bob did, he had a strong and passionate belief in the core values of Australian society – the freedom, the way of life and all those aspects that have made Australia great and distinctive. In other words he was a true Australian.'



Bob Swift in 2016

Bob felt he should do something about this situation and enlisted in the AIF in 1941 – and was posted to our regiment - the 4th Australian Field Regiment. After training in Australia – mainly up north – we entered the battle zone in New Guinea in 1943 at Lae – and from there up the Ramu Valley to Shaggy Ridge chasing the Japanese all the way. Then it was to Bougainville in 1944 slogging it out with the Japanese until August 1945. Bob can be justly proud of his service in some of the most treacherous and inhospitable places on earth.'



Australian soldiers digging in at a newly occupied part of Shaggy Ridge on 23 January 1944.

Bob worked in the Mechanical Branch in South Melbourne and later in Syndal. He was heavily involved in providing earthmoving and road construction equipment to sites around the state, and he had an especially strong relationship with Ballarat and Horsham regions – where he regularly visited their Depots to ensure that they ran effectively.

Peter Noel Anderson, known as Noel



Warrant Officer
Peter Noel Anderson
Air Gunner No. 431490

Noel was born in Hawthorn and enlisted and trained in the RAAF in 1943. He and his fellow servicemen sailed to California and disembarked in San Francisco.

They caught a train across America to New York where they boarded the Queen Elizabeth for the Atlantic crossing to England. There were 20,000 servicemen on the ship. He said once you had queued and eaten your breakfast you had to join the next queue for your lunch.

His bomber crew was an RAAF crew that flew in the RAF's Bomber Command. They were called the 'Odd Bods'.



The 'Odd Bods' – with Noel kneeling on the right.

Noel was a wireless operator/air gunner flying missions over Europe in Wellington and later, Lancaster, bombers. Noel becomes very affectionate about the Lancaster, saying it was one of the best planes ever. Noel became a Warrant Officer and served in the UK between 1943 and 1945.

Noel joined the CRB in 1948 and worked in the Secretarial Section for two years before transferring to the Title Survey Branch and the Plans and Survey Division to become a draughtsman. He retired in 1985 after 37 years of service.

Jack Ross

Jack was a fellow draughtsman who worked for many years with Noel Anderson.

I could not find a record of him but Noel told me that Jack was a Petty Officer in the Royal Australian Navy serving in the Pacific theatre fighting the kamikaze suicide attacks of the Japanese.



John Turnbull

I could find no record for John, who was the Chief Engineering Surveyor. Noel Anderson said that he served in the Army in New Guinea.

Basil Abery

Basil joined the CRB in 1929 and had remarkable career in the variety of positions he held including; Manager of Mechanical Workshops; Asphalt Engineer; Assistant Highways Engineer; Divisional Engineer (Geelong); Chief Bridge Engineer; and Deputy Chief Engineer.

At his farewell function it was stated that during 1940 and 1941, Basil served with the RAAF but I know nothing more than that as he is not in the Australian archives.

Harold Lincoln Gray

Harold – who was the CRB's Horticultural Officer – was a student when he enlisted as an Ordinary Seaman in the Royal Australian Navy in August 1945.

Fortunately, the war finished shortly after and he did not participate in active service.

Albert Richard Kyle VX 126130

Sergeant Albert Kyle was nearly 25, and married, when he enlisted in 1942. He was an A Grade carpenter and joiner but was working as a grocer at the time.

He embarked for New Guinea in June 1943 and returned to Townsville in July 1944. He returned to New Guinea in February 1945 and was in Morotai (Indonesia) a month later and in July he was in Borneo. He returned to Australia in November 1945. For him to be moved around so much, I suspect he might have been working in military intelligence.

After the war he became a Bridge Overseer and Clerk of Works in Bairnsdale Division.

Walter (Wally) Frederick Dyall

His file in the National Archives has not been digitised but Bryan James (ex-Bairnsdale Division) said that he was a fighter pilot stationed in Darwin.

He flew Spitfires. Wally worked in Benalla Division and later transferred to Bairnsdale as Assistant Divisional Engineer. Bryan said that Wally was reluctant to talk about his war experience.

William (Bill) Peter Lindstedt

His file has not been digitised but he did write in Newsletter 151 (June 2009) that during his service with the RAAF from 1942 to 1945 he had two 'jaunts' overseas, the second of which was the liberation of the Philippines with Douglas McArthur.

They took Leyte Island and then followed on to Luzon and finished up about 80 miles north of Manila in an area occupied by the Japanese which had previously been a holiday resort for the wealthy Spanish overlords of the Philippines. He said that the Japanese had poisoned the water in the swimming pool but compared to the conditions that the Australians provided on his previous 'jaunt' in New Guinea, living with the 'Yanks' there was a luxury. Bill worked as the Industrial Officer in the Human Resources Division of the CRB.

Bryan James thought that Bill's so-called 'jaunt' in New Guinea was as a coast-watcher living close to Japanese lines and reporting back on troop movements and Japanese shipping. If so, he would have been under Caleb Roberts general leadership. Bryan said that Bill was reluctant to talk about it.

Leslie Frank Beecher

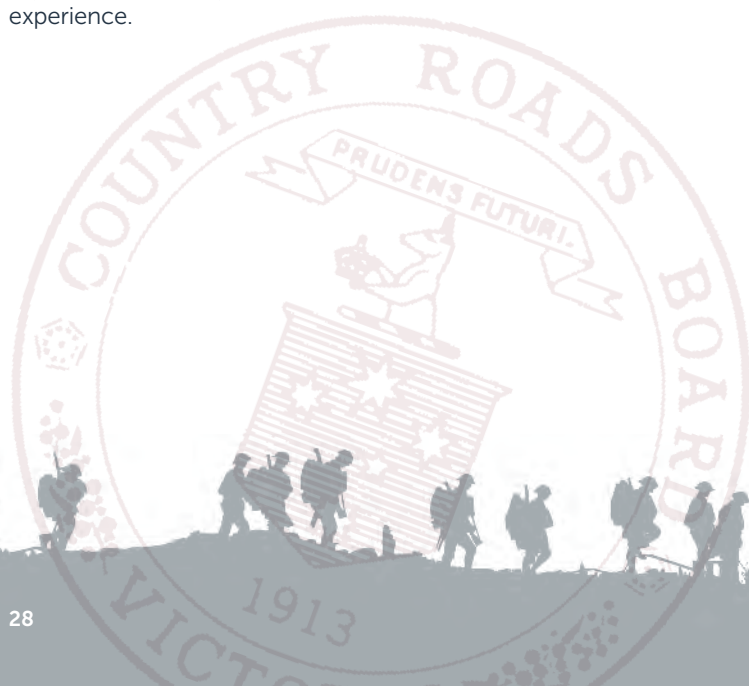
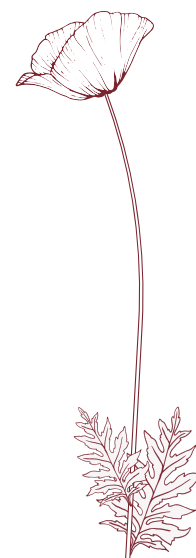
There is an archive for Les but it hasn't been digitized. The record is sparse but it says he was born in Lakes Entrance and enlisted in Springvale.

William (Bill) Gill

Bill joined up the day after Japan entered the war. His background was electronics and he became involved in the installation of radar.

He was seconded to the School of Radio Physics at the University of Melbourne to assist in the development and installation of the chronograph – a portable unit to determine the wear of guns and the proofing of ammunition.

He was sent to the UK for further training and field appointments and at the end of the war he was posted to Germany. He returned to Australia to Army HQ in Melbourne and was later posted to Malaya. On his retirement from the army he joined the CRB as an Offices Service Manager.





Prisoners of war

There were many CRB staff members who were prisoners of war of the Japanese. When I first started at the CRB in the early '60s, Frank Jackson worked in an office fairly close to me. Occasionally, Ian (Paddy) O'Donnell, who was the Chairman at the time, would appear out of the blue to see Frank – a Pipe Testing Officer. Together, they entered the specifications office and closed the door behind them for half an hour. Someone explained to me that they were both prisoners of the Japanese – Frank on the Thai-Burma Railway and Paddy – at Changi.

It is impossible for anyone who didn't experience the horror of the Japanese POW camps to fully appreciate the bond that developed between men who experienced this sort of Hell and that bond extended well beyond their time in camp. I came to realise that Paddy was providing support to Frank.

Ian (Paddy) John O'Donnell VX 43938

Ian was always affectionately referred to as 'Paddy' and I will continue this tradition.

Paddy had an illustrious career at the CRB. He was Chief Bridge Engineer, Assistant Chief Engineer, Chief Engineer and Chairman of the Board from 1963 to 1971. He was born in Myrtleford in 1905. Paddy joined the CRB in 1927. He was a diminutive man. When he was Chairman of the Board he invited the Minister for Roads at the time, Sir Thomas Maltby, to open a conference. Maltby made a remark about Paddy to one of the officers, "There is not much of him, but what there is, is all above the neck". It showed the regard, even affection, he had for Paddy.

Amazingly, I could not find him in the National Archives apart from the entry shown below. I am not sure what it is exactly. At first I thought it was a Japanese record of his incarceration but why would the Japanese be interested in his birthplace and his mother's name? It is bilingual but it has been filled out in English meaning that it is for the benefit of an English reader.

On further examination, it may be a notice provided by the Japanese of Paddy's capture. The bottom, right-hand entry states 'Destination of Report' and provides Paddy's mother's name and address.



Lieutenant Colonel Ian O'Donnell was the Commander Royal Engineers 8th Division Engineers in Malaya. The 8th Division was an infantry division formed during World War II as part of the all-volunteer Second Australian Imperial Force. Consisting of three infantry brigades, the intention had been to deploy the division to the Middle East to join the other Australian divisions, but as war with Japan loomed in 1941, the division was divided into four separate forces, which were deployed in different parts of the Asia – Pacific region. All of these formations were destroyed as fighting forces by the end of February 1942 during the fighting for Singapore, and in Rabaul, Ambon, and Timor. Most members of the division became prisoners of war, waiting until the war ended in late 1945 to be liberated. One in three died in captivity.

So I know nothing of Paddy's enlistment details, his progression in the army, and his postings. I do know however that he was a Lieutenant Colonel and was captured in Malaya. He was incarcerated in the notorious Changi Prison in Singapore. According to the website of the Australian War Memorial, the name Changi is synonymous with the suffering of Australian prisoners of the Japanese during the Second World War. It went on to say that this is ironic, since for most of the war in the Pacific Changi was, in reality, one of the more benign of the Japanese prisoner-of-war camps; its privations were relatively minor compared to those of others, particularly those on the Burma–Thailand railway. Nonetheless I contend that it was horrific enough and many of its inmates did not survive its cruelty and unhygienic conditions.

Many of the POWs were sent to Changi initially, and from there they were transported to other camps such as the Burma-Thailand railway where their treatment and conditions were egregious. In the absence of a file in the National Archives and after discussion with a few colleagues, it is thought that Paddy was at least incarcerated in Changi to start with. But it is definite that he was transported to Japan. I have read in the past that it was not all that unusual for senior officers to be sent to Japan. Perhaps their captors thought that separating the officers from the rank and file made it easier for discipline – or it might be better insurance against attempts to escape. Whether Paddy spent time at another camp I cannot say with any confidence.

Tom Glazebrook recalled a story about Paddy's leadership. Paddy realized that if they were to survive in camp they had to make sure that they could maintain the highest standard of hygiene as possible. The Japanese were not the least bit interested in doing anything to help. So Paddy approached the Commander of the camp and sought his approval to provide transport for some of the prisoners so that they could go outside to scrounge some equipment from the locals. They agreed and Paddy and his men were able to gather some shovels and picks and the like. Paddy then organised his men to dig latrines and rubbish disposal pits – and to maintain them properly for the duration of their internment.



In the archives I found an entry regarding War Crimes and Trials and I noticed that VX 43938 Lieutenant Colonel Ian J. O'Donnell had submitted an affidavit and sworn statement after the cessation of the war.

Paddy received an Order of The British Empire (OBE). This was promulgated in the London Gazette in January 1942 while Paddy was presumably serving in Malaya and he must have been captured soon after. He finally received it in December 1946. Down at the bottom of the notice it indicated that he was mentioned in despatches twice. Paddy was also the recipient of the Imperial Service Order (ISO) in 1972.

I also found this charming portrait of Paddy drawn by a fellow prisoner. It is in the collection of the Australian War memorial.



Pencil portrait of Paddy drawn by Murray Griffin.

In 1950 Paddy was instrumental in establishing the 22nd Construction Regiment sponsored by the CRB, the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission and the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works. He was the first Commanding Officer. His task was to establish the unit and recruit sufficient officers, non-commissioned officers, and other ranks to create a viable unit.

Paddy's life, more than others, had many unfortunate aspects. His experience as a prisoner of war of the Japanese was exacerbated when his wife died shortly after his return to Australia leaving him to raise, single-handedly, a small



1971 - 21st Anniversary of 22nd construction Regiment. Major Tom Glazebrook, Colonel Ian O'Donnell, Major General K.D. Green and Lieutenant Colonel Bruce Addis.

family. His son, Michael, also a civil engineer, died in his 30s after an accident on a bridge construction site. Despite these setbacks, Paddy was a leader who felt at ease with people of all walks of life and he was much more outgoing than previous Board members. His big interest was the army. His assistant, Lilian Moon, said in *Reminiscences of Life in the Country Roads Board*:

'There are many men walking around today who would not be doing so if it had not been for Paddy's assistance to them in Changi during the war. With his counselling of them he was able to talk them out of things and he stood up for them against the Japanese much to his own detriment at times.'

In the same book, Norm Haylock said:

'The other characteristic of Mr O'Donnell was his heart. I have seen a contractor, in great trouble, cry before him and that seemed to melt his heart. He received very helpful treatment from Paddy. His loyalty to his staff was almost to a fault, the way he supported people he believed in.'

Paddy O'Donnell had a very soft and very loyal side which not everyone saw. When he was a Lieutenant Colonel in Malaya he had a batman who had a rough time at the hands of the Japanese, and a very serious stomach operation in the POW camp. After the war he was put on as a bridge overseer but was later caught out padding the payroll. He was sacked and for the next 15 years he struggled on working as a nightman. When Paddy became Chairman in the 1960s the man returned as a bridge overseer. Some years later I visited this man's home and found that he had a child who was very ill, requiring many costly operations, and this had been the reason for his dishonesty. Paddy had known this and had shown loyalty and softness when the occasion had warranted it by reinstating the man. He later turned out to be one of our best bridge overseers.'

R.E.V. Donaldson

Although I could find no record of him in the Australian Archives, it is on record in the history of VicRoads, *Roads for the People*, that R.E.V. Donaldson ... 'joined the Board in 1945 after service in the South West Pacific area with the Australian Imperial Force'. He succeeded Paddy O'Donnell as Chairman of the Board in 1971 after serving as Secretary and Member of the Board since 1961.

I have only just come to the realisation that I worked in the CRB for the full duration of his term as Chairman, and I didn't know his given names. Everyone referred to him either as Rev or Ted.

In *Reminiscences of Life in the Country Roads Board* the following entry appears:

'In 1940 Mr Donaldson joined the A.I.F. as a Lieutenant in the 2/14 Australian Field Regiment, Eighth Divisional Field Artillery, and saw service in the South West Pacific area. He was discharged with the rank of Major in 1945 and joined the Board's staff as a qualified accountant in September that year.'

The 2/14th Field Regiment was raised in late 1940 as part of the 8th Division. Initially it remained in Australia as a garrison force in Darwin but in late 1943 it deployed to New Guinea supporting operations on the Huon Peninsula and New Britain. From early 1945 until the end of the war, the regiment engaged in operations against the large Japanese garrison on the island. At the end of the war, the 2/14th briefly undertook garrison duties on Rabaul before returning to Australia and disbanding.



The drawing above by Roy Hodgkinson depicts six unidentified Australian soldiers involved in jungle operations, members of the Royal Australian Artillery, 2/14th Australian Field Regiment with a 25 pounder gun, on the Huon Peninsular in 1944.

John Douglas Thorpe vx 80990

Jack Thorpe was appointed to the Board in 1968 and became Deputy Chairman in 1971. He joined the Board as a junior clerk in 1926 but transferred to the engineering staff as a junior engineering assistant the following year.

He was Chairman of the Traffic Commission for 12 years and played a prominent role in developing Victoria's traffic and road safety regulations and systems as well as developing standards for design of traffic control signals and road signs now in use in Victoria.

Jack enlisted in 1941 and was appointed Officer Commanding the 2/1 Flash Spotting Battery, Royal Australian Artillery. His file in the National Archive has not been digitised so that I am unable to see where he served.

Flash spotting is a method of detecting the position of enemy guns at long range where the guns cannot be observed directly. The flashes can be observed at night as reflections from the sky. The purpose was then to call up friendly guns to destroy the enemy guns position. Theoretically this could be achieved by several observers spotting the flash from a particular gun and then plotting the intersection of the bearings.

This was extremely difficult with multiple guns firing since several observers could not be sure they were all looking at the same particular gun. This was solved by using a flashboard located at a central point fitted with a combination of buzzers and signal lights connected to

the observers by telephone wires, which operated in such a way that after a sequence of observations, all observers could be sure they were looking at the same gun flashing and its position could then be determined by triangulation.

Bill Dolamore's Bairnsdale Boys

Before the war, Frank Jackson worked in Bairnsdale Division and there were many from that office who became prisoners. Bill Dolamore, who was later to become the Divisional Engineer was one, along with Frank, and two overseers, Andy Wilson and Jack O'Keefe. They were all on the Thai-Burma Railway.

Jack O'Keefe was reputedly one of the best overseers in the region, but he developed a drinking problem. Peter Lowe, who worked in the region for a time, told me that Bill Dolamore looked after Jack fiercely and if he was having problems, Bill would immediately drop what he was doing and hop in his car and travel hundreds of kilometres to collect him and minister to his needs. Jack's welfare was more important to him than anything else.



Bill Dolamore and Frank Jackson at the Bairnsdale Office in 1936. Bill was Assistant Divisional Engineer at the time and Frank was a Junior Draughtsman.

Wilfred (Bill) Dolamore vx 27630

Captain Wilfred (Bill) Hamlin Dolamore was born in Gardiner in 1909. Bill served under Paddy O'Donnell. His file in the National Archives comprises only one entry. It is similar to Paddy's. It says it all in a way. Prisoner of War!

姓名 (Name)	馬來, Wilfred Hamlin	出生日期 (Date of Birth)	1909 April 1st
籍貫 (Nationality)	Australian	服役號碼 (Service No.)	27630
職銜 (Rank)	Captain	服役單位 (Unit)	2/14th Field Regt.
服役地點 (Place of Capture)	Malaya	被俘日期 (Date of Capture)	1942
父名 (Father's Name)	Alfred William	母名 (Mother's Name)	
本籍地 (Place of Origin)	Ballinacorney Road, Gardiner, Victoria, Australia.	職業 (Occupation)	
受難地 (Detention of Return)	Alfred William Dolamore, 27630, 2/14th Field Regt., Australia.	備註 (Remarks)	

National Archives of Australia NAA: A14171, VX27630

Bill Dolamore's only war record.

There is a bit of a mystery relating to Bill's records. Dolamore is a distinctive name and there were only four servicemen of that name in the Archives. Two of them were born in England and the other two were both born in Gardiner about 18 months apart. I suspect the other one was Bill's younger brother, Max. Max's second name was similar to Bill's but with a slightly different spelling – Hamlyn. He was an accountant at the Transport Regulation Board in Carlton. Max enlisted in August 1939 but was discharged in June 1940 and transferred to the AIF Pay Corps.

Bill spent a significant part of his career in Bairnsdale eventually becoming the Divisional Engineer. He owned a holiday house on Raymond Island in the Gippsland Lakes and after the war, Paddy O'Donnell – whose wife died shortly after Paddy returned from the horror of Changi – used to take his children down to Bill's holiday home for the Christmas holidays.

When Bill was captured and imprisoned, he had a serious wound in the ankle and it probably needed immediate attention lest it became septic in the steamy, tropical environment. Lucky for him, he was in the company of an excellent surgeon, Albert Coates. The bones in Bill's ankle were so smashed up, it was impossible to reconstruct them, so Coates fused the ankle so that Bill could still walk but he had no flexibility in his ankle. Thereafter Bill walked with a limp.



1972. Vice Regal inspection of roads in Bairnsdale Division by Sir Rohan Delacombe at Tambo Crossing, Omeo Highway. Sir Rohan and Lady Delacombe with Patrolman H. Goudie (left), Mr. W. H. Dolamore, Divisional Engineer, and Mr. R. E. V. Donaldson, Chairman (right). All three CRB men served in the A.I.F.

Frank Wolfe Jackson VX 29148



Frank's enlistment photo

Frank was born in Bairnsdale. He was 21 when he enlisted at Sale in June 1940. His occupation was a draughtsman. He trained in Albury and Seymour and was promoted to Lance Corporal. He disembarked for Singapore in February 1941 and moved directly to Malaya.

He was reported missing in March 1942 and on 9 June 1942 his record was stamped PRISONER OF WAR. Below this, in barely visible type, it said

'Rec. from Jap at Changi P.W. Camp 5/9/43 Singapore' and below that, 'Disembarked Sydney 10/10/45'. We can only wonder what the intervening period was like for Frank.

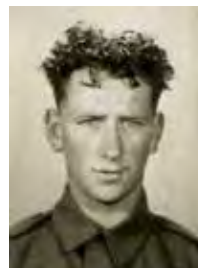
Of course there is nothing in the archives about the period of time spent as a POW but I suspect that Frank was sent to Thailand along with the other Bairnsdale boys. I don't know whether Frank returned to Bairnsdale after the war or whether he remained in Melbourne. But he stayed with the CRB and became the Pipe Testing Officer in Bridge Division. It was strange for me to read his record. It brought back a faint memory of how I used to admire Frank's handwriting – and here was its distinctive script on display in his joining up papers.

Andrew (Andy) James Wilson VX 47352

Andy – a labourer – joined up at Sale when he was 20 and arrived in Singapore in August 1941. He fought as a Gunner in Malaya and went missing in action in February 1942.

During this period he was hospitalised with appendicitis. In June 1943 his record was stamped PRISONER OF WAR. On 15 September 1944 his family received a message which said; 'Safe and well, also Dave. Send parcel and mail. Love to all at home and friends, Andy'. I don't know how he got this message out.

There is another entry in the file relating to the identity of Dave, written by Andy's father. It said: 'The "Dave" referred to would be, in all probability, Gnr. D.F. Potter VX 47359 4th Anti Tank A.I.F.. Gunner Potter and my son have been together since enlistment and my son often mentions Dave in his letters previous to him being taken prisoner'.



Gunner Andy Wilson and Gunner Dave Potter



Andy was repatriated in 1945 but Dave didn't make it home. Dave was a farm labourer in Bairnsdale and he joined up with Andy in Sale on the same day. He was 8 years older than Andy. Their files are almost identical with the ubiquitous PRISONER OF WAR stamp but, in Dave's file, it said underneath 'Died of illness (Cholera) whilst P.W. Thailand'. This must have been a shock to his family because the following message was heard over shortwave radio from Singapore on 28/10/43. It was sent to his mother. "Am safe and well but miss good Australian tucker. John is also safe. Mail and comforts would be very welcome. Love to all, from David".

Andy worked as an overseer in the CRB in Bairnsdale and by all accounts, he was a very outgoing character. He left the CRB and became the doorman at the Windsor Hotel in Melbourne, complete with a bell topper hat.



Jack Joseph O'Keefe VX 5869

I found a one page entry only for Jack O'Keefe who was born in 1918 in Garfield. His file had not been digitised.

Howard Stowe Goudie VX 144480

Howard was a long-serving Patrolman in Bairnsdale Division but he was not a Prisoner of War. He is in the photograph above showing the Vice Regal inspection. Howard was born in Warracknabeal and was 23, and married, when he joined up. He was a textile mechanic.

He served in New Guinea from March 1943 to August 1944 and was hospitalised a number of times with malaria and dermatitis. Places mentioned were Milne Bay and Lae. He came back to Queensland to attend "Tank Attack School" - if I have interpreted the handwriting correctly - and in January 1945 he was posted to New Britain and Rabaul. He was a Corporal.

William (Bill) Edward Miles VX 30505



Bill's enlistment photo

Bill was born in Dunolly and at the age of 29 he enlisted in 1940. On his Attestation Form he described himself as a road foreman and then crossed it out and inserted 'Clerk'. Bill worked in the CRB's South Melbourne store yard.

The remarkable thing about Bill's story is that before the war he had an accident and had his right foot amputated. He wore a prosthetic foot. It is alleged that he arranged someone

to do his medical for him and he was enlisted. In fact his service and casualty form states under the heading of Distinctive Marks - 'Left leg amputated below knee'.

He became a driver and was initially sent to the Middle East in January 1941. He suffered from two bouts of diarrhoea which required hospitalisation and in February 1942 he landed at Batavia (Jakarta) in Java. He was declared missing three weeks later and in August that year he was officially declared a Prisoner of War.

In August 1945 it was recorded 'Alive in Siam Recovered from Japanese' and in 1946 he was fitted with an artificial limb at Heidelberg Hospital. John Gibney said that he had a tough time in Changi and the Thai-Burma Railway. He described how the Japanese beat him with bamboo staffs and with the butts of their rifles because they accused him of cutting his foot off to avoid working.

After the war Bill went down to Bairnsdale where many CRB staff were fellow POWs. John Gibney recalled that he went down there to do some work and he stayed at the Marlo Pub with Bill. The pub had plywood walls so that you could hear people in adjacent rooms. That night, Bill was about three rooms away but he woke John up early in the morning with his screaming and thrashing around. He relived in his nightmares the horrors he went through at the hands of the Japanese. It took him about 20 years to get it out of his system.

Two other CRB officers who had different wars

Erwin Matzner

Erwin was my first boss and mentor in bridge design. I was fortunate to know him. He was a very gentle and unassuming man, spoke nine languages fluently and was a talented cellist. His war was very different to all the others listed here. He was Jewish and was captured by the Germans in his native Croatia.

He was not too sure himself as to why he was spared the fate of most Jewish captives, but I'm sure it was because of his bridge design skills. He was put to work by the Germans repairing bridges bombed by the Allied forces in the Balkans. To overcome sabotage, Erwin told me that once a bridge was repaired, the Germans tied all the engineers and other workers to the bridge, and then they test loaded the bridge. If the bridge failed, everyone went down with it - otherwise they were safe.

Peter Kozeill BEM, AO



Flight Sergeant Peter Kozeill, Polish Air Force.

Zygfryd Piotr (Peter) Koziell worked in the Procurement Section of Bridge Branch. His war was remarkable - more like a plot for a movie than real life.

Born in Poland in 1926, he was a 13-year old military cadet when war broke out in 1939. When Germany invaded Poland he became separated from his parents and was arrested by the Soviets trying to cross the border into Russia and he was sentenced to two years imprisonment in a Ukrainian camp. In

1941 the inmates were being transported from the camp to escape the invading Nazis, and the column was strafed by German planes and Peter grasped the opportunity to escape. He was just 15. He began a perilous journey across war torn Russia - jumping trains and attaching himself to travelling families, and he finally arrived in Uzbekistan.

Trying to cross into Afghanistan, he was captured by Kazakh bounty hunters. On the way to Tashkent in Uzbekistan he escaped again and joined a Polish Army Brigade which Stalin had begrudgingly allowed to form. He was sent to the Middle East where he almost died with typhoid in Iran. Somehow he managed to escape or was sent to England where he trained as an air gunner rising to the rank of Flight Sergeant in the Royal Air Force. He flew more than 60 missions over Europe. Over 17,000 Polish airmen served in Great Britain during the war.

After the war, he became involved in assisting Polish servicemen - a task he maintained all his life. He applied to migrate to the USA but, because of delays, he came to Australia with 60 Polish airmen. He started work as a clerk at the CRB and his office became the unofficial Polish Embassy in Australia where he continued his service to the Polish community. He was awarded the British Empire Medal in 1979, the Order of Australia in 1987, the Polish Gold and Silver Crosses of Merit, and the Order of Polonia Restituta - Poland's highest award.

The legacy of Sir Albert Coates – keeping the men alive

I now want to give special praise to a prominent Australian surgeon, Albert Ernest Coates (later Sir Albert Coates) for the leadership, wisdom, skill and heroism he displayed in saving hundreds of Australian lives in the horror of the Thai-Burma Railway camps.

Sir Albert had a tenuous connection to the CRB. Early in our married life, Pam and I bought our house in Claremont Crescent, Canterbury. We knew no-one in the area but a couple from around the corner befriended us, thus starting a life-long friendship. They were Margaret and Peter Roberts. Sadly, Margaret passed away early last year, but I drop in on Peter every week to enjoy a sherry or a whiskey and have a chinwag. Peter is the son of Caleb Roberts, about whom I have written earlier in this narrative, and Margaret was the eldest daughter of Sir Albert Coates. Both Sir Albert and Caleb made huge contributions in both World Wars in vastly different circumstances. It was Coates who operated on Bill Dolamore's ankle that I mentioned earlier.

When we think of medical heroes in the Japanese prisoner of war camps, we immediately think of Ernest Edward 'Weary' Dunlop – later Sir Edward. Dunlop was a man of many talents. He graduated from the University of Melbourne with first class honours in pharmacy and medicine. Although he played Australian Rules football as a youth, he turned to Rugby Union at university and became the first Victorian ever to play for the Australian Wallabies. He was a member of the first Wallaby squad to win the Bledisloe Cup away from New Zealand. He was captured in Java in 1942 and was briefly transferred to Changi before being sent to the Thai sector of the Burma-Thailand railway – where the Japanese so cruelly treated their captives.

Conditions were primitive and horrific – food was totally inadequate, beatings were frequent and severe, there were no medical supplies, and tropical diseases were rampant.

A courageous leader and compassionate doctor, he restored morale in those terrible prison camps and jungle hospitals. Dunlop defied his captors, gave hope to the sick and eased the anguish of the dying. He became, in the words of one of his men, "a lighthouse of sanity in a universe of madness and suffering". His example was one of the reasons why Australian survival rates were the highest in the camps.

But there was another Australian surgeon of shorter stature but, dare I say it, superior skill whose history was similar to Weary's. In case you think I am somewhat misled, let me quote Weary's own assessment in *The War Diaries of Weary Dunlop*.

'Lt Colonel Albert Coates was immensely my professional superior, a veteran of Gallipoli, who had taught me in medical school, and whilst my military rank was actually higher as Lt. Col. T/Col., there was no way I could be induced to 'pull rank' on him. He had become legendary in Burma and Sumatra.'



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL 117362
Albert Coates and Weary Dunlop at the Recovered Allied Prisoner-of-War and Internees Unit in 1945.

At the Australian War memorial in Canberra, Sir Albert is one of 50 Australians commemorated. This is what it says:

"Born into modest circumstances, and after leaving school at an early age, Albert Coates undertook night study and excelled as a student. In 1914 he enlisted in the 7th Battalion as a medical orderly and the following year served on Gallipoli. Later, on the Western Front, he transferred to the intelligence staff at corps headquarters.

Back in Australia following the war, he studied medicine and over the next decade established himself as a leading surgeon and academic. He was also a captain in the Australian Army Medical Corps. Then war came again; in 1941 he was appointed lieutenant colonel and Senior Surgeon to the second AIF in Malaya.

Following the Japanese landings on the Malay Peninsula, Coates moved with the 2/10th Australian General Hospital to Singapore. A few days before the city surrendered he was a part of a group ordered to Java. Their convoy was bombed; Coates was rescued and reached Sumatra. There he treated casualties and declined opportunities to leave. He became a prisoner of the Japanese and in May 1942 was sent to Burma.

Short and nuggetty, Albert Coates was courageous, honourable, and unpretentious; he became renowned for his dedication, skill and wisdom. He worked tirelessly to

help the sick and dying prisoners of war on the notorious Burma–Thailand Railway.

Conditions were deplorable, the treatment brutal, and the death rate enormous. He later described his daily work as “segregating the sick from the very sick ... curetting seventy or eighty ulcers ... and, in the afternoon, proceeding to amputate nine or ten legs”. In 1944 he became responsible for a major prisoners’ hospital in Thailand.

After the war Coates returned to Melbourne and resumed his distinguished medical career. In 1953 he was made a fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons, London, and in 1955 received a knighthood. Throughout his ordeals and achievements, he “was proud to be involved in great causes as a soldier and a citizen”.

Albert Coates was born in 1895 at Ballarat. He was the eldest of seven children His father was a postman. Albert was raised in a warm and loving family in which the virtues of service, honesty and industry were instilled. He obtained his Merit certificate at the age of 11 and became a butcher’s apprentice. When he was 14 he became an apprentice bookbinder; this would, no doubt, have satisfied his lust for learning by enabling him to read widely.

His former primary school teacher opened a night school in Ballarat and he encouraged young Albert to attend with spectacular results. The teacher⁴ coached him two nights a week in Latin, French, History, English Literature and Maths, all for three guineas a term. He passed the junior public examination with distinctions in five subjects, including French and German. By this time, Albert had decided to study medicine, but he had to take a job in the Postmaster-General’s Department in Wangaratta in order to earn some money.

Albert Coates enlisted in August 1914 and became a medical orderly in the 7th Battalion of the AIF. He served on Gallipoli and was one of the last to leave the peninsula on the night of 19/20 December 1915. His battalion was transferred to France in March 1916 and fought in the battle of the Somme. His skill as a linguist was the reason he was transferred to the intelligence staff of the 1 Anzac Corps as the Battalion’s interpreter. At the end of the war, he was invited to apply for a commission in the British Army but he preferred to return to Australia where he found employment in the office of the Commonwealth Censor in Melbourne.

4 The teacher who established the school was Leslie Morshead – later Sir Leslie Morshead – who played a huge role in both World Wars. He served as a captain at the Gallipoli landings on 25 April 1915 and as a major in the bitter fighting at Lone Pine in August. He was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel in command of the 33rd Battalion under (Sir) John Monash. A successful leader in the battles of Messines and Passchendaele in Belgium, and Villers-Bretonneux and Amiens in France, Morshead was awarded the Distinguished Service Order and mentioned in dispatches five times; in 1919 he was appointed CMG (Order of St Michael and St George) and to the French Légion d’honneur.

In the Second World War, Morshead was promoted to Major General and commanded forces in Libya and under General Rommel’s advance they eventually withdrew to Tobruk. He was the only officer to avoid capture. He commanded the fortress at Tobruk where the Australian, British, Indian and Polish troops won the important defensive battle after which they moved on to El Alamein where the Nazi juggernaut was finally defeated for the first time in the war. He came home to Australia in 1943, where he commanded forces in the north.



Western Desert, Egypt. 1942-10-12. Lieutenant-General Sir Leslie Morshead, General-Officer-Commanding A.I.F. (M.E.), pins the ribbon of the Military Medal on Private R.G. McGregor, 2/2nd Australian Machine Gun Battalion.



Albert Coates in Egypt and a studio portrait – World War 1.



Albert transferred from the Censor's Department to the GPO in Spencer Street as a postal assistant on the 10 pm to 6 am shift. This enabled him to commence his medical studies at the University of Melbourne between 1919 and 1924 and in 1924 he was offered the Stewart Lectureship in anatomy. This changed the course of his career. It was a gateway to more study, and an opportunity to develop his teaching ability.

He gained degrees in Doctor of Medicine in 1926 and Master of Surgery in 1927 and was appointed Honorary Surgeon to Outpatients at the Melbourne Hospital in the same year. Through the depression, the outpatients work and emergency surgery proved a heavy load, but as well as this he developed his reputation as a surgeon and a teacher. Coates' interest in neurosurgery led him to travel overseas in the mid 1930s. On his return he helped form a neurosurgical unit, and later in 1940 with a group of surgeons, the Neurosurgical Society of Australia.

At the outbreak of the Second World War Coates, who was nearly 45, enlisted and was refused but, when the centre of action shifted closer to Australia, he was called up on 1 January 1941. A few weeks later he sailed for Singapore with the 8th Australian Division attached to a medical unit as Senior Surgeon with the rank of Lieut. Colonel.

When Singapore fell, he embarked on a coastal steamer bound for Java with patients and hospital staff. The ship was sunk and the survivors ended up in Sumatra. Coates had a number of opportunities to escape before capture. Twice he was ordered to leave by the military but he chose to stay on with his patients. In March, 1942 Sumatra surrendered to the Japanese and Coates' ordeal as a prisoner of war began.

In May 1942 Coates' moved to Burma. He was stationed at the Kilo-30 and Kilo-55 camps on the Burma-Thailand Railway where he cared for hundreds of prisoners of war under deplorable conditions. He subsequently described his medical practice at Kilo-55 to the International Military Tribunal for the Far East - in a bamboo lean-to, with his only instruments a knife, two pairs of artery forceps and a saw used by the camp butchers and carpenters.

According to some researchers, Coates saved more POW's lives than any of the other doctors in the prison camps, through his use of improvised techniques and amputations. Many more were saved by his leadership, encouragement and example. To the brutalized POW's he was simply known as Bertie.

The Australian born American historian, Gavan Daws, in his history 'Prisoners of the Japanese; POWs of World War II in the Pacific'⁵ described Coates thus:

The greatest surgeon on the railroad was an Australian named Albert Coates. He knew the history of amputations. The ancient Romans amputated, and in Europe, battlefield amputations with saw, forceps and ligatures went back to the 16th Century. Coates had done wartime amputations himself. He was on Sumatra when the Japanese invaded. It was medical chaos. Coates

was down to next to nothing in the way of surgical instruments; he had to take off legs with a chopper.

When the Japanese moved him to Burma, they told him he would have a fully equipped hospital. That was a standard Japanese lie. Coates had thousands of sick men to look after and next to nothing to work with. For several months he was moved up and down the railroad. Looking after the sick, he got sick himself, with amoebic dysentery and scrub typhus. When he was down in weight from 168 lbs to 98 lbs (7 stone or 44 kilos), the Japanese sent him to 55 Kilo, an abandoned work camp, a cluster of filthy bamboo huts but nothing more than a dump for the worst sick off the railroad (sic). He did his early rounds on a stretcher.

Mornings he spent curetting – his curette was a gynaecological one given to him by a Japanese doctor as a kind of joke. Badly ulcerated toes he cut off using scissors without anaesthetic. Morning was his time for morale building telling funny stories in between the screams coming down the row. For hygiene he had no surgical mask, and no rubber gloves, just some alcohol distilled from Burmese brandy to disinfect his hands. He had a helper, an Australian Sapper named Edward Dixon, who was a genius at improvising useful things. He had no anaesthesia, but he had a Dutch captain, C.J. van Boxtel, who was a genius at chemistry. Coates came by a small bottle of dental cocaine tablets, and van Boxtel worked out a way to make up a solution that could be injected as a spinal anaesthetic.

When to amputate, or whether to amputate at all – this was a judgment call for the POW surgeon. Coates was for action, for intervention. If anything, he was for early amputation, and on this crucial point of medical doctrine he would not have heard much argument from most other Australian doctors on the railroad, British doctors either. In their thinking, with a long delay the patient was a dead man anyway. Amputate and at least he would have a chance. Even if a man died after the operation, at least he would be leaving life in less pain, and with more dignity, his leg a clean cut stump instead of a foul, gangrenous horror.'

Coates' mantra was "Your ticket home is in the bottom of your dixie". As construction progressed on the Thai-Burma railway line, men and medicos were moved to other camps so that Coates' wisdom became a much used dictum for survival. He sometimes described it as "Your passport home", stressing that "whenever you eat rice and vomit it, eat some more. Even if you get a bad egg, eat it". Some of the men thought that he had gone troppo, but he had watched the men as they lined up to wash their dixies and saw that many dixies still contained quantities of food. Finishing their rations, he told them, would enable their bodies to absorb a modicum of sustenance which, for some of the men, would be crucial to their survival.

Late in January 1944, Coates, with his orderlies and others, was sent to the Nakompaton camp in Thailand where the Japanese had built fifty wooden huts to accommodate ten thousand men. The sick lay on grass mats on wooden

5 A very informative book but, in my view, not very well written.



platforms. Coates was in charge of this hospital and he and his medical team and voluntary aids had worked near-miracles with rudimentary methods which all too frequently involved little more than water and encouragement.

It was here that his war ended. Supplies were dropped by planes and with a good supply of food there was an immediate and discernible improvement in the health of the prisoners. As the camp opened up to visitors, villagers poured in to see for themselves the legacy of the camps. They were amazed that humans could suffer so much and survive to tell of their experiences. Sadly, many of the POWs were not so fortunate.

Albert Coates testified at the War Crimes Trials in Tokyo. In his evidence he said, *"At the 55K camp I had the opportunity to visit a jungle hospital for the Japanese troops and found it lavishly supplied with drugs and medicine of every kind. Yet, Higuchi, the so-called Japanese doctor, once issued six two-inch bandages to a hospital containing 1,200 patients"*.

He also said that until early 1943 he saw his captors' attitude as 'easy-going' neglect. He then compared it with the conditions of 1943; *"Deliberate neglect, deprivation, starvation, denial of drugs, denial of all equipment, and denial of facilities"*.

He went on to say, *"... the spectacle of emaciated skeletons of men on the one hand, and the oedematous, water-logged wrecks on the other, many with rotting, gangrenous ulcers of the legs, emitting a nauseating stench, lying in their pain and misery, was such as I never wish to witness again. The daily procession to the graveyard was a reminder to those still alive that death would soon ease their suffering. The memory of it is not easily obliterated"*.

Sir Albert was a medical mentor to Sir Edward "Weary" Dunlop, who pays tribute to him in his diaries. In his eulogy at Coates' memorial service Sir Edward Dunlop said:

"So we have this man, a master surgeon, soldier, teacher, orator, ambassador extraordinary ... a man so gifted, so full of spirit and endeavour and so courageous and who gave so much of himself to the public good and our good that his whole life is on a plane so far above the average man ... All in all I think we can say 'There was a man, we may not see his like again'"



Albert Coates serving as Principal Medical Witness for Allies at Major War Crimes Trials, Tokyo.



The Coates Family c.1934 around the time of his first wife's death. Margaret Roberts is the eldest girl on the right.



Louis Kahan's portrait of Sir Albert Coates.

Eulogy



“ We do not know this Australian’s name and we never will.

We do not know his rank or his battalion.

We do not know where he was born, nor precisely how and when he died.

We do not know where in Australia he had made his home or when he left it for the battlefields of Europe.

We do not know his age or his circumstances – whether he was from the city or the bush; what occupation he left to become a soldier; what religion, if he had a religion; if he was married or single.

We do not know who loved him or whom he loved. If he had children we do not know who they are. His family is lost to us as he was lost to them.

We will never know who this Australian was.

Yet he has always been among those whom we have honoured. We know that he was one of the 45,000 Australians who died on the Western Front. One of the 416,000 Australians who volunteered for service in the First World War. One of the 324,000 Australians who served overseas in that war and one of the 60,000 Australians who died on foreign soil. One of the 100,000 Australians who have died in wars this century.

He is all of them. And he is one of us.

This Australia and the Australia he knew are like foreign countries. The tide of events since he died has been so dramatic, so vast and all-consuming, a world has been created beyond the reach of his imagination.

He may have been one of those who believed that the Great War would be an adventure too grand to miss. He may have felt that he would never live down the shame of not going. But the chances are he went for no other reason than that he believed it was his duty – the duty he owed his country and his King.

Because the Great War was a mad, brutal, awful struggle, distinguished more often than not by military and political incompetence; because the waste of human life was so terrible that some said victory was scarcely discernible from defeat; and because the war which was supposed to end all wars in fact sowed the seeds of a second, even more terrible, war – we might think this Unknown Soldier died in vain.

But, in honouring our war dead, as we always have and as we do today, we declare that this is not true.

For out of the war came a lesson which transcended the horror and tragedy and the inexcusable folly.

It was a lesson about ordinary people – and the lesson was that they were not ordinary.

On all sides they were the heroes of that war; not the generals and the politicians but the soldiers and sailors and nurses – those who taught us to endure hardship, to show courage, to be bold as well as resilient, to believe in ourselves, to stick together.

The Unknown Australian Soldier we inter today was one of those who by his deeds proved that real nobility and grandeur belong not to empires and nations but to the people on whom they, in the last resort, always depend.”

Prime Minister the Honourable Paul Keating MP

Interment of the Unknown Soldier, Australian War Memorial

11 November 1993



Conclusion

I feel this is all I can write at the moment. The agonies of all these young men and the wasted potential of their lives has drained me. I am humbled by them. I think of the families at home suffering the grief of their lost men and women in places they have never heard of, and I despair. For most of their loved ones their final farewells would be in their sitting rooms with only their memories. Few would have had the means to travel to these distant places to stand at their soldier's grave.

Writing a story like this created a flood of emotions for me especially when I realised that soon no one will ever remember the likes of Henry Couve or Edward Dilworth. They are just names on a board and yet even in death, they were obviously outstanding young men – just like our own sons. Looking at their photographs you can see their character – honesty, adventurous and gallant. And in the dispassionate archives, the love of their families shine through the heart-breaking correspondence.

There are more stories to tell and I will add them to this record. I know of a few others who served and I would like to continue writing their stories to complete this history. Names that come to mind are Ted Howlett (ex-RAAF), Ray Jardine and Max Doig (ex-AIF). Bill Brake is another one. I have only written about the First and Second World Wars. I know one of our members, Gerry Turner, served in the Vietnam War and there may be others. If you can think of anyone else, please contact me.

I would appreciate hearing from members (about themselves or their friends or relatives) who spent time in the services and who also worked for the CRB/VicRoads – either before or after that war service. It is suggested an article of about 200 words about their time in the services and a photograph would be ideal.



Research Notes

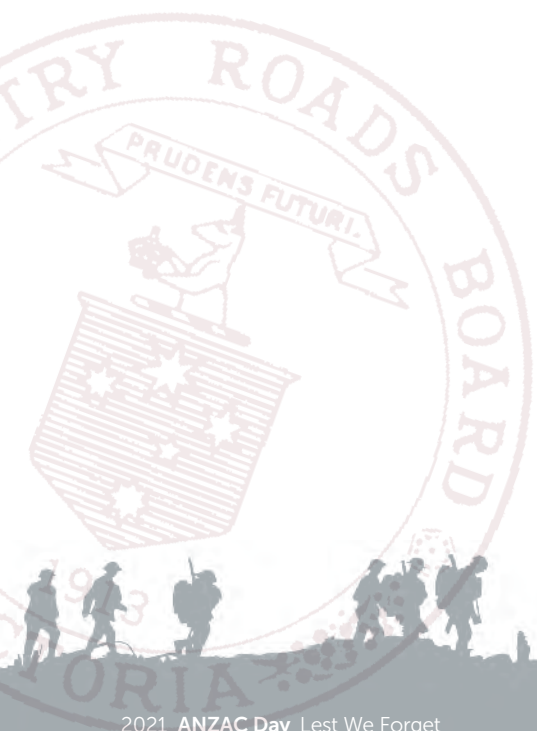
I have done my research using primary sources and articles published in previous newsletters. A lot of the information I have gained came from interrogation of the servicemen's files in the National Archives – all of which are in the public domain. But I could not find files for some of them. This may be due to anomalies in the spelling of names and confusion with initials, and some files were incomplete leading me to think they might have been mislaid or just simply disappeared in the dust of bureaucracy. There were also a few where the files had not been digitised so that it is impossible to read them on line. This usually means that no family member or researcher has had cause to pay the \$70 or so for the file to be opened.

The files in the National Archives don't describe the experiences or whereabouts of the servicemen. They provide information about the country they were in at any given time but no details of the location within the country. They show when they were hospitalised (in some cases the nature of the sickness or injury), when they were promoted (or demoted) and when they committed an offence – such as going AWOL – and the punishment. And, most tellingly, when they were declared a Prisoner of War or when they died.

In a few files (especially for the Second World War) I found portraits of the servicemen. They are very small but I have been able to enhance some of them enough to see their features. I thought they should be published despite some being of very poor quality, but some were impossible to enhance and I've had to leave them out.

There was also another problem. Most of the entries in the files are handwritten and it is difficult to decipher especially when the writing is small. Some entries are in pencil and they have faded. If I had more time I could probably do a much better job, but the research would take up more time than I can afford. I regret not having the time (or the skill) to research these stories in more detail. I suspect it would be heartbreaking but the humanity in them would outweigh the horror.

I have written a lot about some individuals and less about others. There is no bias intended. It is merely because there is more information for some than for others – and none at all for a few.



Acknowledgements

I thank the following people for their assistance:
Tom Glazebrook, Bruce Addis, Bryan James,
Peter Lowe, Noel Anderson, John Rebbechi and
Reminiscences of Life in the Country Roads Board
compiled by Peter McCullough.

References on Sir Albert Coates

Blue Haze

by Leslie Hall, Kangaroo Press

Keep the Men Alive

by Rosalind Hearder, Allen and Unwin

Prisoners of the Japanese

by Gavan Daws, Scribe Publications

The War Diaries of Weary Dunlop

by Edward Dunlop, Nelson Publishers

Remembering Weary

by Margaret Geddes, Viking

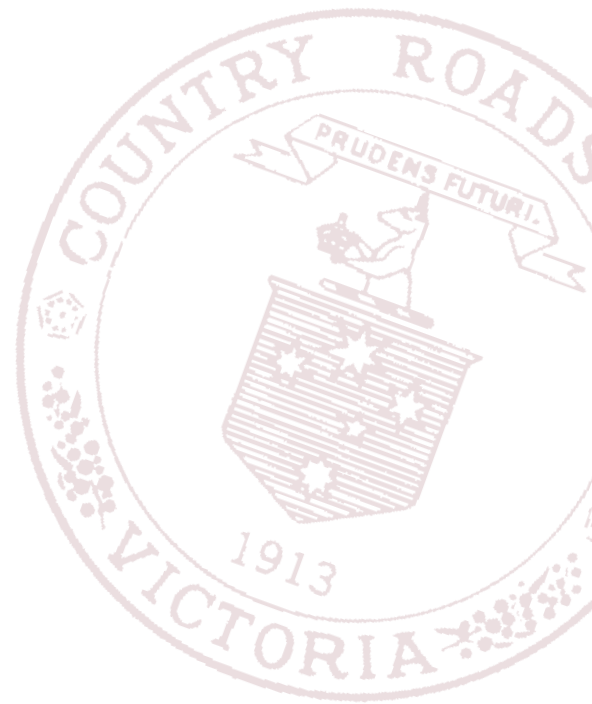


Image credits: Some images used under license from Shutterstock.com