

THE ANZAC EDITION – LEST WE FORGET!

“They shall not grow old as we who are left grow old
Age shall not weary them nor the years condemn
With the going down of the sun, and in the morning
We will remember them”
Lest we forget!

While most of the lacrosse fraternity may not appreciate it, the greatest adverse impact on lacrosse throughout the world, and Australia in particular, has come from the 2 world wars, where Australians selflessly volunteered to defend the Commonwealth and the free world. The two wars brought lacrosse and many other pastimes to their knees, playing numbers were drastically reduced and equipment was in short supply as it was generally imported.

After both wars, the economic conditions were very difficult, many of our players did not return, paying the ultimate sacrifice, and many of those who did return bore the physical or mental scars of their experiences, which impacted or cut short their return to lacrosse. There were also import restrictions and foreign exchange issues that made it extremely difficult to import equipment, sticks in particular, unless you could get for example Canadian dollars and had approval to import such goods, as the world was recovering from the 2 greatest jolts it had ever experienced. Even in those days there were customs duties on lacrosse sticks and equipment, notwithstanding the fact that such equipment could not be made, to the standard required, in Australia.

THE BOER WAR (South Africa)

Lacrosse was effectively introduced to South Africa by the English a couple of years prior to the outbreak of the Boer War with English and Australian soldiers serving in South Africa from 1899-1902, and over 600 Australians killed in action and many more English. This is effectively before Australia came to be, thus the soldiers were from the colonies, not a nation.

On 3 September, 1899, the introduction of lacrosse to South Africa was reported. The information came from the ex-South Australian player, P. Egerton-Warburton. "Lacrosse in this country is practically only in its infancy," wrote Egerton, "The game was started here two years ago by B.S. Cheetham an old Stockport and international player, to whose efforts the existence of the Durban club today is entirely due. Whether 1899 or thereabouts was a propitious time for establishing a new pastime in South Africa is an interesting question. The Boer War still being fought bitterly”.

The Evening Journal (Adelaide) noted “The late trooper Herbert Ernest Goodes was killed in action on May 28, 1901. The late trooper was with the Imperial Bushmen. He was admired as a lacrosse player by those who love the game, and he helped to win many a hard fought match for the Jamestown team”.

While Jamestown along with Crystal Brook were major lacrosse towns in regional South Australia in the 1800's they disappeared during the 1910's, probably due to the impact of war.

THE GREAT WAR

1914 was an ill-fated year for the world as it turned out, it opened with all the confidence and pleasure that the 1913 season had promised. On 2 May 1914 the first of the season's reports appeared in "The Australasian". "An increase of five teams was noted in Victoria, there being 55 teams entered for pennant competitions, as against 50 in 1913. The prospects of the season were bright, and Victorian players and supporters were already looking forward to the interstate match against South Australia, to be played in Melbourne on 15 August. A Victorian team was to visit Tasmania a week later".

The Victorian people may not have realised fully the international implications of the declaration of war. Indeed the first shot of the Great War was fired at Port Phillip heads (Victoria), when the fort at Portsea fired a shell across the bows of a German ship which was making a dash to escape the inevitable seizure of German assets.

Horrie Webber wrote "We, in retrospect, many years after that war, can realise that there was a far higher proportion of immigrants from Germany established in compact communities in South Australia than there were in Victoria. These people might have felt far less enthusiastic of supporting "To the last man and the last shilling" a war against the fatherland. Sabotage of shipping and railway lines was something to be considered".

The outlook in South Australia was very different from that in Victoria. Probably the decision to cancel the interstate match was more the result of war hysteria than any reasoned argument, for it is difficult to see how the cancellation of an interstate lacrosse match could have any significant effect on Australian preparations for war.

There was general excitement in New Zealand in June 1914 with the planned visit of a touring side from New South Wales that was scheduled to play Wellington, New Zealand and Auckland over two weeks in September. The excitement included a proposal from the New South Wales Association for the New Zealand sides to come in to line with the Australian rules to allow kicking and use a 5 1/2 oz ball instead of a 4 1/2 oz ball – the suggestion to use a smaller field was rejected for safety reasons. The New Zealand controlling bodies had offered a substantial financial guarantee and it was incumbent upon New South Wales to dispatch a "Strong twelve".

On 19 August 1914 in The Sun (Sydney) "Point" wrote "In response to a cabled inquiry from the Wellington Association, the New South Wales controlling body has replied that owing to the unsettled conditions, the proposed tour of the Dominion must be abandoned for this season. The decision was arrived at after very serious consideration, as it was recognized that the cancellation of arrangements of the New Zealand end would inconvenience the Auckland and Wellington associations. However in view of the fact that all leave in the civil service had been stopped, thus affecting many members of the selected team, and the fact that the shipping company could not guarantee a sailing to fit in with the itinerary as originally drawn up, the position was forced upon the Sydney association. It was expected that the tour of the N.S.W. players would give lacrosse in New Zealand a great fillip. I hope that although the tour is abandoned this year the N.S.W. Association will later on keep faith with the Dominion". Sadly the intended trip never took place and lacrosse did not resume in New Zealand after WW1.

W.A. was to host the A.L.C. carnival in 1915 but WW1 intervened with a call to arms that severely depleted senior playing numbers. Lacrosse in W.A. went into recess from 1915-19, with 136 registered players enlisting for war service, sadly with 24 of

them not returning. That was a very substantial number of players to take from a very small number of senior participants.

Around 420,000 Australians enlisted for service, representing 38.7% of the male population between the ages of 18-44. The enlistment of Australians for WW1 was quite remarkable given there was no threat to Australia, but Australians enlisted to defend or support Great Britain.

Initially much of the training of the Australian troops in WW1 was to take place in England but it was decided that the overcrowded military camps in England were unsuitable for so many men over winter, so the Australians instead disembarked in Egypt on 3 December 1914, making their way to Mena Camp, a vast training facility near the great pyramids, about 16 kilometres from Cairo.

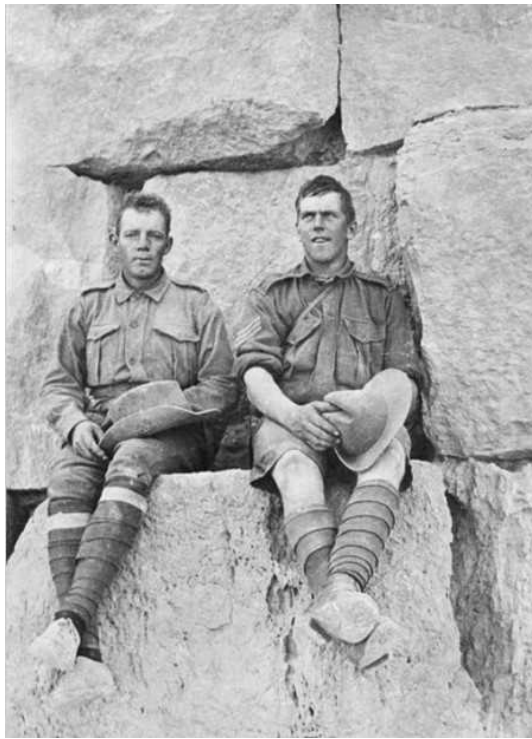
A clipping below from a Manchester newspaper circa 1915:

“The English lacrosse players who are with the 6th Manchesters in Egypt beat the Australians by 30 goals to 6 in a match at Heliopolis, between teams representing the 6th Manchesters’ and 3rd Australian Brigade. One of the Stockport players, commenting on the match, writes to the “Sportsman”: “The Australians were good crosse handlers, very fast, and put plenty of energy into their game, but they lacked something in method, which makes it the easiest thing in the world to score goals against them. It was only the charity of our chaps which prevented the score being 30 – 0, the same chivalrous feeling which makes Stockport allow the Old Boys or South Manchester to beat them occasionally. They play a similar sort of game to the South of England players, who always leave you with the feeling that you don’t know how you beat them so easily.”

What a wonderful sense of modesty!!

There was another perspective of that match from the Journal (Adelaide) April 1915.





Above is Tom Whyte (Left) with a comrade sitting on Cheops Pyramid in Giza. Before enlisting Tom Whyte played in and represented South Australia on several occasions. He was a member of the 10th Battalion lacrosse team in Egypt and was involved in arranging lacrosse games at the Mena Camp. He represented South Australia against Queensland and then went on to captain an Australian team against an English team, both matches in April 1915.

The 10th Battalion was among the first units to land on Gallipoli in the early hours of 25 April 1915. Whyte volunteered to row one of the boats ashore, which was the most dangerous position of the lot as the rower could take no shelter. As the boat pulled up at shore, Whyte slipped over the side, he had been shot through the pelvis, and although taken to a hospital ship for treatment, he died on the way back to Alexandria, and was buried at sea.

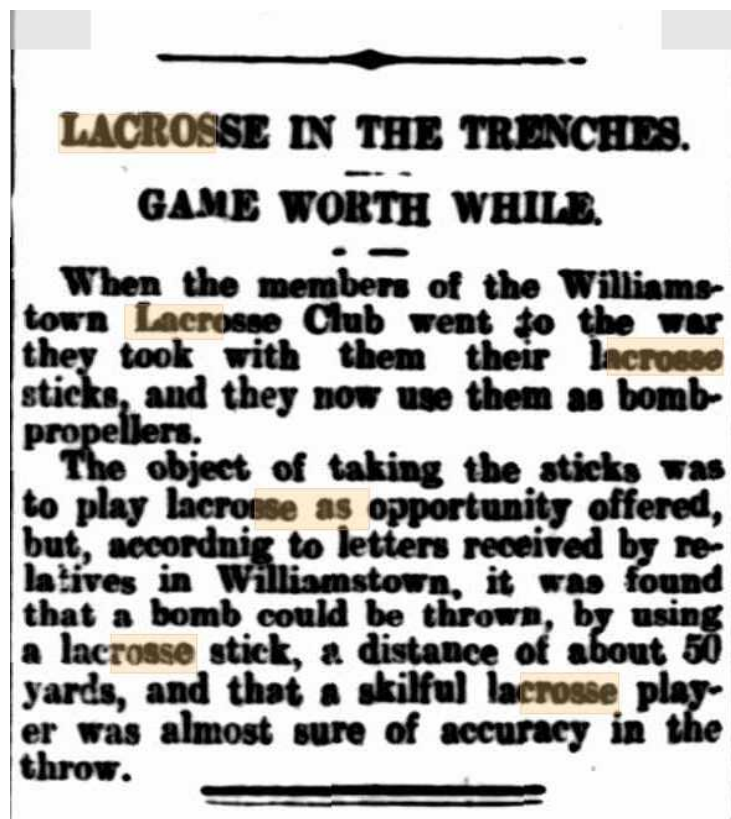
Crystal Brook (South Australia) June 6, 1915.

“Expressions of regret were heard on all sides when word was received on Saturday last that Private Roy Watson (3rd Brigade) of Crystal Brook, had been killed in the Dardanelles. Private Watson was the first man to volunteer from Crystal Brook. He was employed in the office of the Waterworks Department, and was very popular. He went to Egypt with the Light Horse Division”.

He was educated at the Crystal Brook public school and he was also connected with lacrosse, and was selected as South Australian goalkeeper in the abandoned match versus Victoria.



Above is a photo from the Mena camp in Egypt in 1915



From Stockport Lacrosse Club, England "At the end of 1914 other greater events were to take place and those loyal to the Club, and the world of sport in general proved themselves to be equally loyal to their country in her hour of need. 87 of the Club's total membership of 160 or so, gave their services to King and Country in the "Great War" of 1914-18. The names of all these members are recorded on the Roll of Honour Memorial tablet erected to their memory, and it is still there to be viewed today at the Club's headquarters. The motto inscribed reads "Patria Cara Carior Libertas" (One's Country is beloved, friendship is more precious). The inscription below reads "This tablet is placed here to commemorate those who gave their services to the War 1914-1919".



It was recognised that during the war Australian lacrosse players had assisted, to "do their bit". Of 600 playing members in Victoria as a whole, 500 enlisted, and of these 95 never returned.

Williamstown's records from 1919 state "Despite a disagreeable afternoon a large gathering of relatives and friends of lacrosse players who had "gone to the front" and "did their bit," took place last Sunday week at the Punt' Club Hall, Strand, in connection with the unveiling of an honour roll by Mr John G. Latham (A former lacrosse player and referee, who went on to become Australia's fifth Chief Justice and Attorney General in the federal government). This ornate memento to deserving players of the local club had been presented by Mr. A. W. Hick, himself, in years ago, a prominent Williamstown exponent of the pastime. The Mayor presided and Captain J. Fearon (President of the club):and Mr. Harold Balmer (General secretary of the V.L.A.) were among those present."

Of the names on the Williamstown lacrosse roll, three had made the "supreme sacrifice" - Privates E. Baker, D. McLean and A B. Taylor, with 38 soldiers from the Club returning from the conflict.

Many clubs, like Footscray, folded at the outset of both world wars, sadly many of them for the reasons set out above never returned or reactivated.

WORLD WAR 2

Women's lacrosse had just started in Victoria in 1936 and was starting to gather momentum when WW2 started in 1939, which brought an end to women's lacrosse in Australia, which didn't restart until 1962.

The Australian senior carnival was held in Brisbane in July 1939, just over a month before Germany invaded Poland.

The threat to our shores after the outbreak of WW2 resulted in many Australian men enlisting for active service. Almost 1 million Australians, both men and women, served in WW2. Lacrosse in W.A. was suspended in 1942 due to declining player availability and resources, with the supply of lacrosse sticks from North America stopped.

Former South Australian player and later A.L.C. President "Zac" Isaachsen served with distinction as an army captain in the Pacific Campaign, as did many others. Oscar Cedric "Zac" Isaachsen was a prominent barrister and solicitor in Adelaide, played lacrosse originally for Adelaide University and after university he played for Sturt, where he was awarded life membership. He was also a life member of the SALA and a Fellow of A.L.C. Prior to his tour of duty in the Pacific and New Guinea he saw active service in Syria and for his bravery and leadership he was awarded the Distinguished Service Order (DSO). Below is a photo of 2nd Lieutenant Zac Isaachsen with his charges aboard a ship in the Pacific Ocean on their way to New Ireland. When he left the army in 1945 he was a Lieutenant Colonel. He was president of A.L.C. for several years and the award for the best and fairest senior player in Australian men's lacrosse is named in his honour.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

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Former Malvern, Victorian and Australian champion Noel Jeffrey, who played in the 1959 and 1962 Australian teams, served in the Australian army from 1941 – 46, with active service in New Guinea and Bougainville. His rank was corporal, and he served in the General Transport Company (AIF). He undertook his training at Canungra, and then Townsville in Queensland before heading off to PNG.



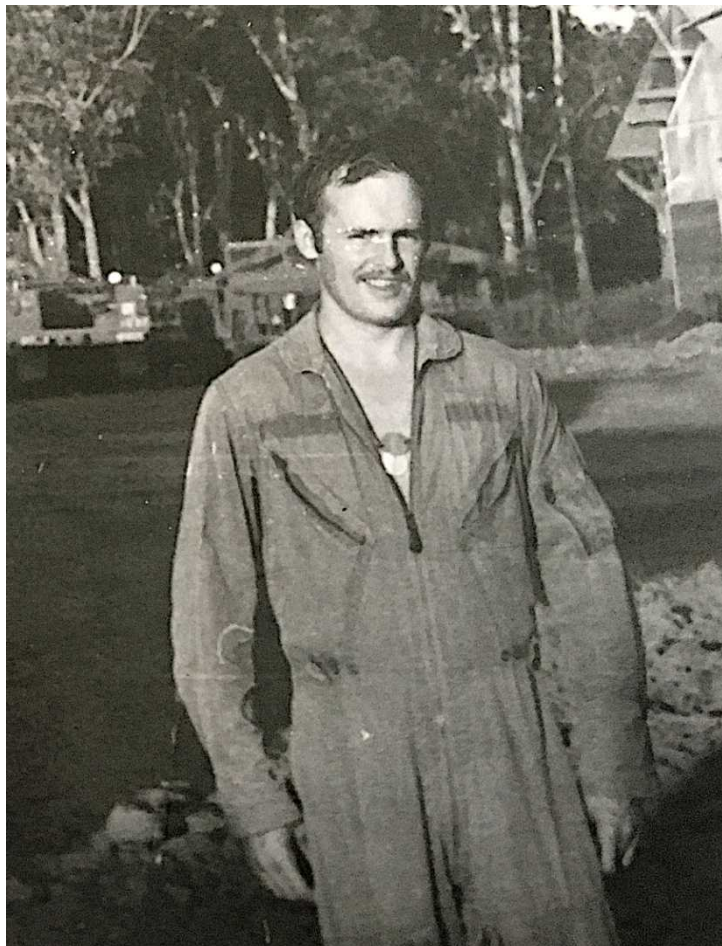
From Williamstown as written in 1946 "It is with great pride that the club looks to those members who have helped to bring victory to their country by their enlistments in the various fighting services. The following members were killed on active service: J. Flett (A.I.F.), F. Deacon (R.A.N.), J. Manderson (R.A.A.F.), F. Wadds (R.A.N.), H. Turner (R.A.A.F.), K. Barty (R.A.A.F.), and to their relatives we extend our heartfelt sympathy. Dr. R. Maynard, an old member of the club, was a prisoner-of-war in Japan for a number of years, and we now welcome him back again. Thus 96 members of the club enlisted for active duty, with 6 paying the ultimate sacrifice".

Flight Lieutenant Harold Horner was awarded a Distinguished Flying Cross for gallant service after crashing into the sea in 1942 with 4 other survivors in a Sunderland flying boat and paddling in a dinghy for 5 days before coming ashore on an island and helped to safety by natives after which they rejoined their command. Prior to the war Harold was Vice-captain of the 1939 W.A. team and represented W.A. on two other occasions, and went on to receive life membership of W.A.L.A. (1982) and was made a Fellow of the A.L.C. (1988).

National senior carnivals resumed in 1947 in Perth, with W.A. taking out the Garland McHarg trophy.

TODAY

I send a special cheerio to my fellow members who also served their nation when called upon to do so during the Vietnam War and other conflicts. I may not cover all of them but best regards to Peter Stiglich, Barry Benger, Alan Black and Eric Granger (Who served in Vietnam with Normie Rowe) who served their nation well.



Above is Eric Granger who represented Victoria and South Australia and went on to coach South Australia and do a lot of good work in administering LSA. Eric was attached to the Medical Corps in Nui Dat, his job was running the hospital kitchen catering for 50 plus staff, a 20 bed hospital, U.S. helicopter staff and daily "Medical" visitors. Eric is wearing a U.S. flying suit which he swapped for a pair of Australian "J" boots, which were superior to what the Americans wore. "We had the US "Dust off" helicopter attached to us so we flew with them a bit" said Eric.

I also pay homage to my father and grandfather, and all of the fathers and grandfathers who either paid the ultimate price or returned with more than physical scars that they would take to the grave. We also pay homage to the mothers, grandmothers and sisters who served or kept the nation going during the war, and in some cases made the ultimate sacrifice. Women like Edith Cavell (English nurse, executed for abetting English and French soldiers fleeing Belgium during WW1).

What about Nancy Wake, a Kiwi who spent most of her early years in Sydney (Nicknamed "The white mouse" for her ability to evade capture from the Germans in France), she was the Gestapo's most wanted person in France, working with the French Resistance to evacuate Australian soldiers and Jewish refugees, she was one of the most highly decorated servicewomen of WW2).

As Edwin Starr sang in 1969 "War, what is it good for, absolutely nothing! Say it again!"

Lest we forget!