



# Bayswater Historical Society

**PRESERVE - PROTECT - PROMOTE**

## NEWSLETTER

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### **Remembrance Day 2022**

**Reflections from Bayswater - (By BHS Member Glen Cookson)**

The 11<sup>th</sup> of November is a reflective time for many including myself. My grandfather, Benjamin Thomas Hearn was amongst the first Australian troops who fought on the front line in France in 1916. He was severely wounded in the Battle of Mouquet Farm on 16 August 1916. Mouquet Farm was near the high ground of Pozieres ridge and sadly became a well-known name for many Australian families.



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### **Bayswater early history**

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When Europeans founded the Swan River Colony in 1829, they did not recognise the indigenous ownership of the land. John Septimus Roe, the colony's Surveyor General, surveyed the land along the Swan River. His survey resulted in the land being divided into long, narrow rectangular strips extending from the river. As the river was the only method of transportation in the colony's early years, each piece of land had to have river frontage. The long, narrow strips were called "ribbon grants".

## REMEMBRANCE DAY 2022

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The 11<sup>th</sup> of November is a reflective time for many including myself. My grandfather, Benjamin Thomas Hearn was amongst the first Australian troops who fought on the front line in France in 1916. He was severely wounded in the Battle of Mouquet Farm on 16 August 1916. Mouquet Farm was near the high ground of Pozieres ridge and sadly became a well-known name for many Australian families. Three Australian Divisions made nine attacks on the Germans here between 8 August and 3 September 1916. Most of the farm buildings were reduced to rubble. Below-ground stone cellars were used by the Germans as part of their defence. The Battle of Mouquet Farm, 10 August to 5 September 1916, cost the 1st, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 4th Australian Divisions over 11,000 casualties. None of the Australian attacks succeeded in capturing and holding the farm.

Sustaining severe wounds to both legs, my grandfather was 'lucky', less severe wounds would have meant he was patched up and sent back into battle. Instead, he was shipped back to London to recover, and it was 12 months before he eventually got home. And like many returned diggers his trauma, undiagnosed PTSD, changed not only Benjamin's life, but that of his family and friends



### The landscape of Mouquet Farm, October 1916.

The Vietnam War, Timor-Leste's fight for freedom and the Iraq War to hunt down the fictitious "weapons of mass destruction" are all conflicts that I witnessed from afar, though none had the devastating personal impact experienced by my grandfather.

Remembrance Day also brings into sharp focus the recent invasion of Ukraine by Russia with its ever-looming global threat and the potential risks for Australia. After the 'War to end all Wars' and with almost 20 years of world peace, it was probably inconceivable to some in 1939, PM, Robert Menzies broadcast that as Britain was at war with Germany, so too was Australia. We sincerely hope and many will pray in earnest, that this nightmare will not be repeated, and the accompanying horror endured by another generation.

### **BAYSWATER WWII** (*see Catherine May, Bayswater at War, p195-205*)

In 1940 the Bayswater Roads Board, later the Bayswater City Council, was asked to assist with a recruiting campaign. A public meeting was called and with speeches addressing the public. In early 1940 Bayswater members of the second AIF were sent overseas, including 2 years in the Middle East Campaign, and later in a gruelling tour of New Guinea. Many other Bayswater residents were 'manpowered' which meant conscripted to essential services.

On the 23 February 1942, regulations were gazetted giving local corporations, like City Councils, authority to carry out urgent works to support the war effort. Inevitably it was only a matter of time before the Bayswater community felt the personal reality and impact of war. After agreement between the Roads Board, the churches and the PMG, postal services, families began to directly receive telegrams notifying them of the reality of war casualties as it related to their loved ones. As noted in the minutes of the Roads Board, all agenda and discussions related to security and the war effort.

In January of 1942 the Slade Street Hall was blacked out and in February all local government authorities were ordered to construct air raid shelters. As reported in a previous 'Historic Bayswater' several of our senior Bayswater residents can recall several of those shelters located under Whatley Crescent and King William Streets. The Roads Board became a local Branch of the War Damage Commission. Plans were made for Bayswater to receive 255 evacuees from certain target areas and a committee of local women was established to facilitate the practicalities. Contingency plans were also made for the evacuation of Bayswater.

The Roads Board Secretary was appointed the local evacuation officer and the Board's truck was seconded to transport children should the need arise. Bayswater residents were encouraged to dump heaps of old metal on open spaces, trenches were dug on the recreation ground, all to prevent enemy aircraft from landing. April and May of 1942 were perhaps the darkest and most anxious of times. Eileen Ellis recalled that when the siren went off in Bayswater, her husband George had to make for the Slade Street Hall. Her next-door neighbour would come over and then the two mothers and their children would sit under a table wedged against the middle wall of her home, covered with a mattress. The mothers would and play 'I spy' to distract their children to keep their spirits up.

Confronted with the possible invasion of Western Australia by an aggressive and well-trained Japanese army, the Commonwealth Government decided to raise an army in the Eastern States to defend the West coast. Combined with the troops already in WA this would become the Third Australian Corps. The signal unit, largely made up of youths trained in Victoria, without uniforms except for slouch hats and a total of fifty rifles which had to be shared. They left Melbourne bound for Bayswater, in April 1942 after being told to expect action against the Japanese within 3 weeks.

The 850 young men marched from Bayswater Station to the Drill Hall in Murray Street, only to find there was no camp for them. In the meantime, officers of the Corps went door to door organising billets with Bayswater residents. While residents were positive and accommodating in their response there was a sense of fear and anxiety just under the surface. One woman showed her newly billeted serviceman a rifle she kept in her house. This was not for the purpose of killing the Japanese but to shoot herself and children to avert even worse possibilities.



The Slade Street Hall was commandeered and became the mess with military vehicles parked at the back. Meanwhile various houses and facilities in Bayswater were taken over by the military. The new arrivals from Victoria while billeted in various households had meals at the Slade Street Hall mess. The residents were paid 3 pence per night for each soldier. The hospitality of the Bayswater people was fondly remembered by the many that were billeted. In more than one instance real romance blossomed and marriage resulted.



**Signalmen Alan Jones, George Goldie, and Ken Bienvenue in the front garden of their billet with Mrs Bengough's house in Slade Street**

A major communications installation was set up in a workers cottage on the corner of Coode and Armada streets. A large aerial was set up on what is now the Hillcrest Primary School. The transmitting station was in the front room of the cottage. 90% of the messages sent were deliberate scrambled messages to confuse enemy decoders. The hilly terrain of Bayswater was well suited to transmitting and receiving radio signals. Local industry was put on a war footing. New plants were constructed to manufacture military equipment. A factory running between Milne Street and Garrett Road manufactured aircraft engines.

Its hard today to imagine the Bayswater community, its priorities, fears, and culture of the 1940's. Many of the adult men were away at war, there were black outs, rationing and the constant fear of invasion. As in the 1930's depression the war united the community, however there were exceptions. The Italians already considered foreigners were further alienated and treated as the 'enemy' by many. It took many years for these fellow Australians to overcome the trauma they experienced during those times. Of course, some never did.

## Bayswater Men and Women at War



**E.D. Mercer RANR (1942)**



**WX 37304 E.H. Haywood AIF (1941)**



**WX 9648 L.W. Burnett AIF (1940)**



**Amy Lovegrove WRANS**

**Remembrance Day** is an opportunity to reflect on lives lived, contributions made as well as lessons learned. The only comment my grandfather ever made about his WW1 service was that 'war is a stupid thing; it should never happen and there are no winners'. He said this only once to another uncle and never spoke to his family about the war. My grandmother's only ever comment, was, "never marry a soldier".

I feel for all those suffering from war and conflict. I think I can understand some of the complex reasons why these conflicts continue to happen. However, I remain deeply concerned that for some so little has been learnt and that without this fundamental change there are no real answers or solutions.

What can we learn from remembering our past, and reflecting on our history? The following are quotes from some eminent writers: "We study history not to be clever in another time, but to be wise always." Marcus Tullius Cicero "We know that history matters, we know that it is thrilling, absorbing, fascinating, delightful and infuriating, that it is life." Stephen Fry, Making History. "The value of history is, indeed, not scientific but moral: by liberalizing the mind, by deepening the sympathies, by fortifying the will, it enables us to control, not society, but ourselves -- a much more important thing; it prepares us to live more humanely in the present and to meet rather than to foretell the future." Carl Becker, 1873-1945, U.S. Historian. "The disadvantage of men not knowing the past is that they do not know the present." G. K. Chesterton

### References:

<https://anzacportal.dva.gov.au/wars-and-missions/ww1/where-australians-served/western-front/mouquet-farm>  
<https://www.age-of-the-sage.org/history/>

Catherine May, Changes They've Seen: The City and People of Bayswater 1827-2013, p195-205

## Bayswater Early History

### Before European colonisation

Prior to European settlement, the area was inhabited by the Mooro group of the Whadjuk Noongar people. They were led by Yellagonga and inhabited the area north of the Swan River, as far east as Ellen Brook and north to Moore River. The Swan River provided fresh water and food, as well as being a place for trade. A camping ground, at least 4,500 years old, existed just north of the present-day junction of Tonkin Highway and Guildford Road. Another camping ground likely existed in the area now known as the Baigup Wetlands.

### European colonisation

When Europeans founded the Swan River Colony in 1829, they did not recognise the indigenous ownership of the land. John Septimus Roe, the colony's Surveyor General, surveyed the land along the Swan River. His survey resulted in the land being divided into long, narrow rectangular strips extending from the river. As the river was the only method of transportation in the colony's early years, each piece of land had to have river frontage. The long, narrow strips were called "ribbon grants". In 1830, the colonists travelled up the river to the land allotted to them. That year, the Swan River flooded several times, washing away crops and inundating shelters. The colonists were unlucky, as floods were not an annual occurrence. Most of these colonists either died or left the area soon after.

After it was abandoned, several other people bought the land, including Peter Broun (Location S) and William Henry Drake (Location U). With numerous other land holdings around the colony, however, they never lived on or improved the land. The last colonists, the Drummond family, left the area in 1836. By 1833, a track was cleared connecting Perth to Guildford. The track was useable by carriages, but the sandy soil made it difficult. When The Causeway opened in 1836, a route south of the river became the main route from Perth to Guildford, making the track north of the river a minor route. Because of this, the track deteriorated to the point that some people "refused to allow their horses to go for hire on this track". That track is a precursor to what is now Guildford Road.[4][5]: 21

Between 1830 and 1880, only two houses are known to have been built in the area: one owned by Frederick Sherwood, the other by John Scrivener. Neither house is still standing. The oldest remaining piece of physical evidence of European settlement in the area is an olive tree on Slade Street, supposedly planted in the 1840s and used as a place for religious services. That olive tree is now represented on the City of Bayswater's logo. A mulberry tree cut down in the 1970s had 130 growth

**Slade Street Olive Tree in 2022, planted in the 1840's and still going strong and with protection will remain a heritage icon.**







Butcher store on King William Street made of corrugated metal, built in 1906. The building still stands today and is used as a liquor store.



The Bayswater Primary School built in 1894 and still providing hundreds of young people from our local community with quality, affordable education.

### **The importance of knowing our Bayswater history**

Knowing our history, where we came from, where our family came from is not only interesting, but is something we can be proud as well as giving us an informed future direction. The world is now facing an existential challenge with climate change. Now armed with the truth of historical facts, we are now informed for the sake of our millions of young people, about the future direction we must all work towards.

#### **Reference:**

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bayswater,\\_Western\\_Australia#Before\\_European\\_colonisation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bayswater,_Western_Australia#Before_European_colonisation)

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## MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

**Note:** Our Membership Year goes from 1 September - 31 August each year. A Membership Renewal notice is also attached for your convenience. If paying via EFT, please note member sub and your name. Thank you to all those members that have recently renewed their subscription. The Society is run by volunteers and depends on membership fees and donations. Contact the secretary if you can support our aims by contributing in any way you are able.

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**Below. Leighton (Halliday) House**  
114 King William Street Bayswater



*Photography by C Middleton*



The Bayswater Historical Society Inc. was formed in 1991. It is a non-profit organization which aims to preserve the history of Bayswater district; protect the records and objects relating to the area; promote public interest in and support for the preservation of historic records, buildings, and sites. Leighton (Halliday) House is Bayswater's historic home and is used as the Society's base and museum.

***Historical Bayswater is the society's newsletter and welcomes contributions such as stories and photographs relating to the history of Bayswater to be included in future issues. Please forward all enquiries addressed to the Secretary.***