

We will remember them....

As you enter the Church through the rear doorways, half way down the wall on the right hand side is one of several reminders of the contribution and sacrifice made by members of this congregation in the two world conflicts of the 20th century.



In relation to the WW1 Honour Roll, it lists 54 individuals who attended or had a connection to the then Camberwell Methodist Church. The list includes two nurses who served overseas and returned.

The Roll also lists seven soldiers who made the ultimate sacrifice. I have looked at the names on the list since I joined the CUC congregation and, as none of the surnames were familiar to me (except for the 'Whites', but more on them later), I decided to investigate what the historical records told me about each of these people who died in the service of their country.

This was to be my first attempt at this type of research, and it proved a more daunting and demanding task than I first realised. For example, some of the initials listed on the plaque are incomplete, and as Australia was much more homogenously English-based back then, that being armed with surnames and initials only left many, many names to filter through before finding a match, eg. the National Archives list 79 Bassetts, 225 Hicks, 1153 Halls and 1297 Whites, and the filtering process does not work using initials only.

Due to the numbers listed on the Roll, I chose to give priority to identifying and documenting those who "died on service". Having said that, readers will notice that in some cases similar surnames appear among the list of those served and returned. Where possible I have tried to ascertain if people are related, and for those who are, I have included their service, and you will note that, many of those who returned suffered serious injuries which impacted on their lives long after the war finished.

I believe I have identified the correct servicemen, and you will notice unsurprisingly that they all lived less than a kilometre from the Church.

Detailed below is what I could find about them from the on-line records of the National Archives of Australia, The Australian War Memorial, The Commonwealth War Graves Commission, and several other sites related to Anzac history:

Edward (Alfred) Bassett; Edward was a salesman whose home address is shown as 9 Waterloo St., Camberwell. He was the youngest of three brothers (aged one year apart) to serve, and the first of the three to enlist.

He enlisted as a Private aged 20 years 6 months old in the 6th Aust. Infantry Battalion, and embarked on 10 September 1915, where he landed in Egypt on 7/1/1916. On 15/1/16 he was promoted to Sergeant, before being promoted again to Company Sergeant Major on the Western Front in France on 26/4/1916.

On 19/7/16, Edward Bassett was reported as missing in action at Bois Grenier, a small village about 6 kms north of Fromelles and 4 kms south of Armentieres. It was later confirmed that he had been killed by gunfire during a charge – he was seen to fall, but at the time it was impossible to retrieve his body. A scouting party was sent out later and brought back his identity disk.

Edward Bassett's name is recorded at VC Corner, the Australian Cemetery & Memorial at Fromelles. At VC Corner there are no headstones – under two large concrete crosses lie the remains of 410 Australians who were killed or died of wounds, each marked by a rose bush, and at the rear of the cemetery is a memorial wall commemorating by name 1,929 soldiers who died in the battle at Fromelles and who have no known grave. It is the only solely Australian War Cemetery in France. Edward Bassett was 21 years old when he died.



VC Corner Cemetery, Fromelles

Listed on the Roll of Honour is Edward's older brother **Arthur Brookes Bassett**, who was a travelling salesman when he enlisted on 15/8/1914, aged 20 years and eight months. On the boat travelling across the Indian Ocean, Arthur suffered a fracture of the lower end of his right humerus bone, and subsequently the removal of a tumor from a nerve in his arm. He undertook the role of Instructional Staff, as Acting Sergeant Major from March 1915 until he was medically discharged as 'unfit for active service', with a permanent disability, on 9 October 1916, 3 months after the death of his young brother.

Also listed on the Roll is Edward's oldest brother **Walter Eric Bassett**, who held an Engineering degree from Melbourne University. He was commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant in the 5th Field Company Engineers in October 1915 and embarked overseas on 24/11/1915.

On 8 November 1916 Walter was awarded the Military Cross for conspicuous gallantry at Pozieres, France. His award states that on the night of 4/5 August, he went over and constructed machine gun emplacements in captured trenches with great skill. Then, upon his own initiative, and under heavy fire, he led an infantry party and dug a communications trench, which greatly assisted the advance by allowing men to move to the forward line under cover, rather than over ground in daylight, saving many lives.

On 1 June 1917 however, Walter was wounded in action. His next of kin were advised on 18 June that he had been admitted to the 5th British Red Cross Hospital on 5/6 suffering from severe gunshot wounds to the thigh and buttock. On 19/6 they reported him 'dangerously ill', and on 7/7 he was still reported to be 'seriously ill'. By 10/7 his condition was 'progressing favourably', and on 7/8 his parents were advised that their son was being transferred to 3rd London Hospital, England. By 21/8 his condition was 'satisfactory', the same one month later and finally on 22/1/18 he was 'convalescent' – nine separate letters received home in Australia over 6 months without being able to contact your son in any way.

On 28 January 1918 Walter was discharged from hospital. He resigned his commission, being designated 'permanently unfit for all services'. The War cast a long shadow in the Bassett household.

William (Charles) Hicks; William's occupation was listed as a teamster at his enlistment on 14 July 1915. He resided with his parents at 12 Denmark Hill Road, Upper Hawthorn.

He embarked overseas on 11 December 1915, travelling as part of the 12th Field Company Engineers via Alexandria to join the British Expeditionary Force in Marseilles in June 1916.

After being hospitalized with deafness and laryngitis from 5 - 11 November 1916, on 6 December 1916 he rejoined his unit in the field on the way to the Somme battlefield, in his role as a Driver.

On 7 December 1916, the 12th Field Company was busy making shell-proof dugouts, cleaning, widening and excavating trenches, digging drains, and putting in new duckboards, when Hicks, a colleague, two horses and two mules were killed by shellfire. No further information or explanation was ever added to his record.

William Hicks was reported killed in action on 7 December 1916. He is buried at Bernafay Wood British Cemetery on the Somme battlefields (pictured below), which is located some 10 kms east of Albert and 2kms south of Longueval. His personal effects, consisting of letters, photos, a purse, belt and watch were returned to his next of kin.

His father paid for a memorial plaque in 1923, on which is inscribed "the dearly loved and sadly missed son."



Bernafay Wood British Cemetery

John Lawson McMillan; John was a carpenter when he joined the Field Company Engineers as a sapper on 8/11/1914 aged 24 years. Prior to enlistment, his address was listed as 37 Clive Road, Upper Hawthorn, where he lived with his parents. He embarked from Australia on 22/12/14.

He landed at Anzac Cove, in early 1915, before being evacuated to Alexandria, and was promoted to Lance Corporal. He was promoted to Sergeant when he joined the British Expeditionary Force in France on 25 June 1916.

On 24 June 1916 however, the Allies began a week-long artillery bombardment of German defensive positions on the Somme River in northern France, in preparation for a major British-led offensive.

The battle of the Somme is the term given to series of battles fought between 1 July and 13 November 1916 along the Somme Valley in France. The initial day of the offensive, 1 July 1916, remains the most costly day in the history of the British army. It suffered almost 60,000 casualties, a third of whom were killed, and the name "Somme" has become synonymous with slaughter.

On 27/9/1916, Sergeant McMillan died in the field of a gunshot wound to the head received in the field, at No. 10 Casualty Clearing Station, Belgium.

The Casualty Clearing Station was part of the casualty evacuation chain, further back from the front line than the Aid Posts and Field Ambulances. The job of the CCS was to treat a man sufficiently for his return to duty or, in most cases, to enable him to be evacuated to a Base Hospital. It was not a place for a long-term stay.

No. 10 Casualty Clearing Station is near the town of Poperinghe, Belgium, about 12 kms west of Ypres. It was a gateway to the battlefields of the northern Ypres Salient, and used as a casualty clearing station and to rest troops from forward areas. Because of its relative importance, it was frequently targeted by long range German artillery.



No. 10 Casualty Clearing Station, Remy Siding, Poperinghe, Belgium

John McMillan is buried at Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery, Belgium, 12 kms west of Ypres. This cemetery contains 9,901 Commonwealth burials, and is the second largest Commonwealth Cemetery in Belgium.

His personal effects, when returned, included a hymn book, a pair of knee guards, a writing pad, letters and photos, and six coins (4 German).



Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery, Belgium

Prior to receiving his personal effects, John McMillan's father died, leaving his mother (and perhaps a sister) to cope with the dual loss.

Charles Henry Saloway; Charles was a salesman prior to joining the 7th Infantry Battalion as a Private. He embarked from Australia on 17/6/1915, aged 26 years old. His original address was listed as the Parsonage, Denham Street Hawthorn, where he lived with his father the Reverend H Saloway, until the Reverend moved house to 63 Campbell Road Upper Hawthorn.

Private Saloway arrived with his battalion at Gallipoli on 8/8/1915. One week later, on 15/8/15, he was listed as missing at Lone Pine. He was later determined to be killed in action at Lone Pine by a finding of a court of inquiry held in the field on 5/6/1916, based on the written testimonies of several witnesses.

These witnesses describe Charles Saloway coming out of a trench on the evening of 8 August, wounded in the arm. He was then seen falling dead off a parapet with another soldier into a trench having been hit by a bomb. There was no time to retrieve the bodies as "bombs were coming over in hundreds", so the trench was covered over with all the dead left in it. The Court of Inquiry was

“constrained to conclude that Saloway (and another soldier) died on or about the 8th or 9th August 1915”. The bodies were not located and retrieved for another 7 years.

In a formal letter to Charles Saloway’s father by the Army dated in 1922, it was stated that during reconstruction work being done on the peninsula after the war, *“the late soldier’s remains were recovered in the neighborhood of Lone Pine and subsequently re-interred....at the Lone Pine Cemetery. The report states identification was established by the finding in the (initial) grave of a Bible in which your son’s name was written.”*

There is a memorial plaque for Private Saloway at the Lone Pine Cemetery, which is located about ½ mile from Anzac Cove. Of the 140 men who arrived at Gallipoli with Private Saloway in August 1915, only 30 were alive by the end of the year.



Lone Pine Cemetery, Gallipoli

The keen-eyed among you who have looked at the Roll will have noticed that one of the Nurses who served also has the Saloway surname. This is in fact Charles Saloway’s older sister Olive Emma, born in Launceston but lived in Melbourne, who was aged 29 when she embarked on 6 December 1916, to land in Plymouth on 17/2/1917. From there, she proceeded to Rouen, France, where she worked until war’s end, returning home from England safely in February 1919.

In September 1917, Nurse Saloway wrote from a hospital in France to her uncle in Kyneton, after she had been at the front for 6 months. She wrote, *“it is exactly two years since my brother Charlie sailed away looking so bonny. I wish we could find out something definite about him; it would be a help. It is hard to realise we shall never see him again. How happy I would have been to have been coming over to him.”* She and her parents had another five years to wait and find out what happened to him.

PS: As there were only two nurses listed on the Roll, I tracked down the story of the second nurse, Alice Margaret Betheras. Alice lived with her family in ‘Alma’, in Alma Road Camberwell.

The website *Australian Nurses in World War I* provides brief details about Staff Nurse Alice Betheras in the Australian Army Nursing Service. Alice had trained at the Alfred Hospital for three years. On 5 November 1915 she enlisted as an army nurse and left Australia when she was 27 years old on 12 November 1915. She was attached to the First Australian General Hospital Special Reinforcements. Alice was a nurse in Egypt and France and returned to Australia on 30 December 1917. She was discharged as Medically Unfit on 27 June 1918.

However, there are two other interesting notes on Alice’s file. The first is a copy of an undated newspaper clipping, reporting that *“a 52nd birthday tea was held at the Methodist Homes for Children at Cheltenham on Saturday. More than 500 guests were welcomed by Sister Alice Betheras and Mrs F Oswald, president of the Homes. Rev T C Rentoul, president of the Methodist Conference, performed the official opening.”*

Alice was cremated at the Springvale Necropolis Cemetery on 22 May 1972, aged 85 years, and her remains scattered within the cemetery. Maybe not totally unfit, then.

Clarence (Maldon) White; Clarence (pictured below), was a public servant, living at 13 Avenue Road, Camberwell, and joined the 6th Infantry Battalion, embarking overseas on 17/6/1915.



Clarence White joined his battalion at Lone Pine on the Gallipoli peninsula on 6 August 1915. At 4pm on that day, a bombardment of the Turkish trenches commenced, and between 2 - 3 am on 7 August his battalion charged towards what was called "the German Officers Trench". Clarence was reported "missing" that day, however at a later-convened Court of Enquiry, witnesses reported that he was seen to be shot through the head and fell into a trench.

The witnesses said that the Australians had to fall back from their positions, and due to ongoing fighting, bodies were temporarily covered over where they fell. One informant at the Enquiry stated that he and Corporal White charged together, and he saw Clarence shot through the head and saw him fall. He said he sat down beside him as he fell, and Clarence said to him "*Tell the boys in the Titles Office Melbourne about my being wounded*". They were to be Clarence White's last words.

His effects were later retrieved and returned to his parents, and Clarence was pronounced by the Court of Enquiry to be no longer "missing", but "killed in action."

When Clarence White was killed on 7 August 1915, he was 22 years old. His name is recorded at the Lone Pine Memorial, on the Gallipoli peninsula, along with that of Charles Saloway. He had been with his battalion in Gallipoli for one day.

During my search of the archives, I could find no record for two names on the list, C M Hall and V M White. I approached the National Archives Reference Service to see if they could assist, but on 10 June they replied saying that based on initials and surname alone, they also could find no record of these servicemen.

All of the above people, and indeed all those listed, form part of the family history of this Church. There is a quote which says "*Bad things do happen in the world, like war, natural disasters, disease. But out of those situations always arise stories of ordinary people doing extraordinary things.*" Above are the stories of some such 'ordinary people.'

