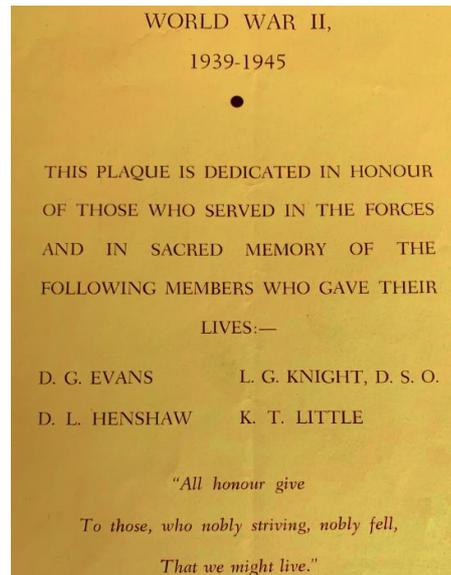
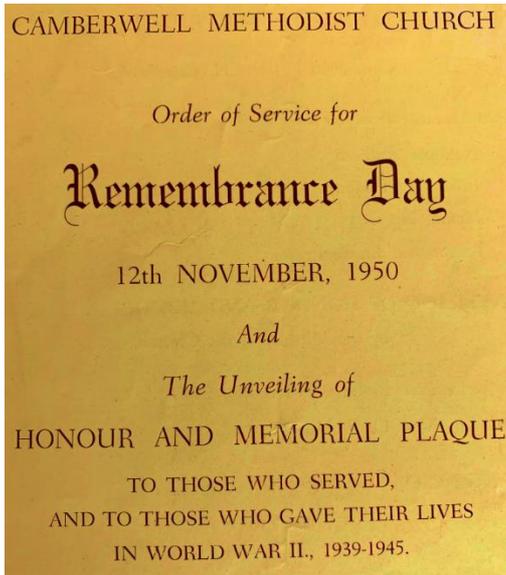


David Langford Henshaw

Preamble

There is a small plaque on the west wall of our church, beneath the World War 1 Honour Roll, which is dedicated to those members of our congregation who gave their lives in defence of our country World War 2.

The plaque was unveiled on Remembrance Day 1950. A copy of part of the order of Service is shown below:



The lives of three of the four young men listed have already been written up in previous editions of Kairos.

The following article is in memory of the last of the four, **David Henshaw**. It is a story of a family, a family tragedy, and an individual who made the ultimate sacrifice for his country.

The Henshaw Family Tree – David's parents

David Henshaw's father was **Horace Edgar Henshaw**. Horace was born in Brunswick on 2 October 1884, the youngest of nine children of William and Elizabeth Henshaw.

His mother, **Hilda Frances Langford**, was born in Richmond in 1883, the younger of two daughters of parents William and Louisa Langford, originally from Ireland.

Horace and Hilda were married on 29 November 1910, "*at the residence of the bride's parents, by the Rev. Thomas Collins (brother-in-law of the bride)*", according to *The Argus* newspaper of 17 December 1910.



The Henshaw family eventually settled into a family home at 10 Waterloo Street, Camberwell, where their children were raised.

Many readers will be familiar with Waterloo Street, off Riversdale Road on the way to Trafalgar Road, with Trinity Presbyterian Church on the corner.

The house is still standing, somewhat renovated, pictured in a photo taken earlier this year.

The Henshaw Family Connection to Camberwell Methodist Church

It has been difficult to establish the extent of the connection of the family to our church. Certainly all of Hilda and Horace's children attended Sunday School at some time, and there is evidence that they participated in the wider church - related activities available at the time (e.g. the sporting clubs).

However, initial research at the UCA Archives revealed scant reference, and more detailed research became problematic with the onset of restrictions imposed by the coronavirus. The fact that Horace spent the latter part of his life interstate may have also contributed to a loss of contact and continuity of information.

The Henshaw Family Tree – the children of Horace and Hilda Henshaw

Hilda and Horace went on to have three children, namely Audrey (born in 1912), Geoffrey (born in 1915) and David (born in 1919).

Two of the children (Audrey and David) started their education at Camberwell Primary School, but beyond that there is limited information, except that Audrey attended MLC for some time. More will be said about the children individually shortly.

1939 – a good year for the Henshaw family

In June 1939, *“the engagement (was) announced of Audrey Sinclair (Henshaw), only daughter Mr and Mrs H E Henshaw of Waterloo Street, Camberwell, to Geoffrey Hutton (Brock), third son of Mr and Mrs C H Brock, of Box Hill”* (The Argus, 7 June 1939).

Audrey (pictured at right, two weeks before her wedding) was married to Captain Geoffrey Brock on Saturday 23 December 1939.

The Argus newspaper reported on the wedding, at St Mark's Church, corner of Burke and Canterbury Roads: it described the bride as wearing *“a period gown of parchment slipper satin, with a train and a Medici collar. Her Limerick lace* veil... was held with a chaplet of orange blossom, and she carried cream water-lilies shading to pale pink.”*

Of the various attendants, her brother David Henshaw was an usher. (The Argus, Monday 25 December 1939).



** For those interested, Limerick lace was a specific class of lace originating in Limerick, Ireland, birthplace of Audrey's mother.*

Geoffrey Brock was born in Box Hill, and attended Camberwell Grammar School prior to enlisting in the Army in 1924. He was commissioned as an officer in 1927, promoted to Captain in 1934, and seconded as Staff Captain at 17th Brigade headquarters in October 1939.

He enlisted in the Second Australian Imperial Force (or 2AIF, the name given to the volunteer personnel of the Australian Army in World War 2) that same month.

Brock served in Greece and the Middle East, where he was promoted to the rank of Major and awarded the Distinguished Service Order (DSO) for '*Distinguished service, zeal and efficiency*' on 8 July 1941.



* *

Also in 1939, Hilda and Horace's youngest son, **David**, commenced a Metallurgy degree. In March 1940, he quit that course to enlist in the 2AIF. He left Australia in April 1940, and subsequently served in the Middle East, Crete, Palestine throughout 1940-42, before being recalled to Australia in August 1942, prior to being re-posted to New Guinea to assist in the defence of Australia in December 1942. David's war service will be expanded on in more detail later.

* *

1943 – a truly “Annus Horribilis” for the Henshaw family

At the end of 1942, the fate of the free world hung in the balance. But despite the appalling nature of the conflict, life had so far been kind to the Henshaw family. But sadly, all of that was about to change. Unimaginably so.

In August 1943, **David Henshaw** was killed in action in New Guinea.

In October 1943, David's older brother **Geoffrey** died.

In December 1943, **Geoffrey Brock** died, leaving his wife Audrey a widow, and the sole surviving member of Hilda and Horace's family.

* *

It is probably not surprising that, on 10 September 1947, "*Hilda Frances, beloved wife of Horace E Henshaw, 10 Waterloo Street, Camberwell, mother of Audrey (Mrs Geoffrey Brock), Geoffrey (deceased), and David (2nd AIF, deceased)*", died. (The Argus, 11 September 1943). Hilda was just 64 years old.

* *

The Henshaw Family Tree -a legacy

- **Lt-Col Geoffrey Brock (son-in-law)**

After serving in Greece and the Middle East, **Geoffrey Brock** returned to Australia temporarily on 4 August 1942. On 18 September 1942 he was appointed as Commanding Officer of the 51st Battalion.

On 9 July 1943 he was appointed Commanding Officer of the 31/51st Infantry Battalion, which was responsible for defending Merauke in southern West Papua, Dutch New Guinea from Japanese attack.

On 3 December 1943, he returned to Cairns in Australia deemed medically unfit for duty, suffering from “*pneumonia, nephritis and medical dermatitis*” (War Service record).

On 19 December 1943 Lieutenant Colonel Geoffrey Brock died at a Queensland military hospital, and was buried in the Atherton War Cemetery, Atherton, Tablelands Region, approximately 100 kms south-west of Cairns. He was 36 years old.



The inscription reads:
Lieut. Colonel G. H. Brock, 31/51
Infantry Battalion, 19 December
1943, Age 36,

“Love conquers death – for love is
infinite”

Geoffrey Brock was obviously much loved by all his family. Notices were in the Melbourne newspapers in late 1943 from Audrey, Charles and Isobel Brock, and Horace and Hilda Henshaw.

- [Geoffrey Stewart Henshaw](#)

[Geoffrey Henshaw](#) was the second child of Hilda and Horace Henshaw, and was born in Brunswick in 1915. He was 4 years older than his younger brother David.

For a long time I could find no information at all regarding Geoffrey – academically, career, war service or even ‘end of life’ websites such as cemeteries. Eventually I stumbled across one reference for his name on a website that said a Geoffrey Henshaw died at a place called “Mount Park”. No other information.

In a very early life experience I had worked for a short while in a job which involved updating of hard copy records of staff at all State Government instrumentalities and institutions. I wondered if Geoffrey Henshaw was connected in some way to the then-existing Mont Park Hospital. Sadly this turned out to be correct.

Mont Park was initially established as a hospital for the insane in 1903. After World War 1, it catered mostly for mentally unwell military personnel, (soldiers who returned from war with mental health issues, e.g. shellshock, were initially certified as “lunatics”).

During the 1930’s and 1940’s Mont Park was regarded as the leading hospital for the treatment of mental illnesses. However, at the time, common diagnoses of the term ‘mental illnesses’ included conditions listed as delusional insanity, dementia, epilepsy, post-natal depression, melancholia, through to alcoholism, prostitution, and a range of conditions requiring isolation (e.g. malaria and venereal diseases). Mont Park was closed in the 1990’s.

My search took me eventually to the Public Record Office Victoria (PROV). It was a very grim search. One of the categories of Records held in the Office under the title “Family History” is “Inquests and other Coronial Records - Inquests into deaths – 1840-1985).

The PROV site states that an “*inquest is a legal inquiry held to establish the exact medical cause of death of an individual in certain circumstances. The inquest records relate to deaths that occurred when a person died suddenly, was killed, died whilst in prison,*

drowned, died whilst a patient in an asylum, or was an infant ward of the state and died under suspicious circumstances, among other circumstances”.

At the time of writing, The PROV Archive Centre in North Melbourne is closed indefinitely. As many records are still not digitalised, they require a physical visit to the Reading Room to view hard copies only, which is obviously not possible at present.

At these archives, however, there is a file pertaining to Geoffrey Henshaw. Its reference is copied below. It speaks for itself.

Geoffrey Stewart HENSHAW
Cause of death: Epilepsy; Location of inquest: Mont Park Asylum; Date of inquest: 30 Nov 1943
DATE: 1943
SERIES: [Inquest Deposition Files](#)
AGENCY: [State Coroner's Office](#)
CITATION: VPRS 24/ PO unit 1482, item 1943/1542

Finding this made me re-visit a raft of historical documents to seek some closure for Geoffrey, as his family did seem to share important family information in newspapers.

I eventually found what I was looking for, in *The Methodist Spectator* of Thursday 28 October 1943:

HENSHAW.—On 25th October, Geoffrey Stewart, after much suffering, was called Home. Beloved elder son of Mr. and Mrs. Henshaw, Waterloo St., Camberwell; affectionate brother of Audrey (Mrs. Brock) and David (killed in action in New Guinea, 21st August), and loving nephew of Mrs. Knight, Miss Langford, and Mrs. Gaylard. Brothers reunited. “Their eyes have seen the King in His beauty.”

The quotation at the end of the message is taken from Isaiah 33:17.

Geoffrey Henshaw died aged 28 years old. It seems he suffered much and had not been well for quite some time. So sad.

- [David Langford Henshaw](#)

Finally we arrive at the young man whose name is recorded for posterity at our church for his sacrifice. **David Langford** (his mother's maiden name) **Henshaw** was born on 8 April 1919, youngest child of Hilda and Horace Henshaw.

[David's War Service – \(1\) Middle East](#)



David enlisted in the AIF on 28 March 1940. In May 1940, he arrived at Gaza Ridge in (then) Palestine, where Australian troops fought alongside other allied troops against the Vichy French in Syria and Lebanon.

He then embarked for Greece in March 1941, but this campaign was short lived as the Allies were quickly overwhelmed by the German advance.

In the chaos that followed the Allied withdrawal from Greece, his regiment was landed on Crete in June 1941, before he was lucky to be one of the few evacuated back to Palestine.

In February 1942, he was transferred to the 2/7th Battalion, 2AIF, still based in the Middle East.

Soon after, the Australian government sought the return of the 6th Division due to the direct threat of a Japanese invasion of Australia. So David headed home to Melbourne via Ceylon, arriving in August 1942.

There the 2/7th Battalion was re-built, and set off for New Guinea (after some jungle training in Queensland) in December 1942.

David's War Service – (2) New Guinea

Few military campaigns involving Australian forces have been as long or demanding as that waged against the Japanese between Wau and Salamaua, on the northern side (the Morobe Province) of Papua New Guinea, during World War II.

Today this campaign, and the Australian Soldiers' contribution and bravery, has been largely overshadowed by the dominance of other places, such as Kokoda.



For much of 1943, the ground war in New Guinea was fought in the rugged terrain around Wau and Salamaua. It was a slow, grinding campaign that acted as a magnet, drawing in Japanese troops from nearby Lae, which had become a major Japanese base after its capture in March 1942. The Salamaua magnet worked exceedingly well, substantially weakening the Japanese garrison.

Operations in New Guinea were conducted over vast and remote areas. The terrain and climate were tough and exhausting, and was as much an enemy as the Japanese.

This was to be David Henshaw's final campaign. In his Official Account of the Wau and Salamaua campaign, Sir Thomas Blamey (Commander in Chief of the Australian Military Forces) wrote:

"The Salamaua story grows in stature as the New Guinea campaign comes into perspective ...

Never have white soldiers pressed their attacks through more terrible country. The moss forests, the heart-breaking ridges, the invisible ambushes in twilight jungle, the defiant guns on mountain tops that should have been unscalable: these were the tangibles on the way to Salamaua. They brought with them the straining of bodies to exhaustion point together with hunger, disease, perennial discomfort, pain and fear."

Blamey went on to say:

"Country like this must be seen to be believed. There is no standard of comparison.

Clouds frequently cover the mountains, adding to the already ghoulish atmosphere of the sunless jungle. The tropical rains....leave a country scored with ravines. As tracks become worn, mud became knee deep and over. Clothing became sodden with rain and sweat, and only rarely could it be dried.

Such conditions of rain, mud, rotteness, stench, gloom, and above all, the feeling of being shut in by everlasting jungle and ever ascending mountains are sufficient to

fray even the strongest nerves. Add to this the tension of constant expectation of death from behind the impenetrable screen of green and nerves must be of the strongest, and morale of the highest, to live down these conditions.” This is an underpainted picture of what the Australians fought against at Salamaua – and conquered.”

The Salamaua campaign is officially regarded as one of the greatest military operations in New Guinea. (



At left is one of Damien Parer's famous photos, taken during the assault on Salamaua, showing bravery in appalling conditions (crossing a river in flood in thick jungle, in pouring rain, assisting a severely wounded comrade).

Sergeant Gordon Ayre assists Private Wally Johnson across the Francisco River, where David Henshaw fell.

(Johnson had been wounded by a Japanese grenade. Ayre was awarded the Military Medal for his actions)

Between March 1943 and April 1944, some 1,200 Australians were killed, and an estimated 35,000 Japanese died. That the Australian fatalities were so comparatively low is a testament to the army's professionalism and its mastery of jungle warfare.

The campaign to drive the Japanese out of Wau and Salamaua came to its conclusion on 19 August 1943, when the Japanese finally withdrew to the Francisco River, its last defensive position south of Salamaua. The next two weeks involved clearing the remnants out of the area, before the Japanese completely abandoned and retreated from the area.

David Henshaw is one of the 1,200 Australians who was killed in the final 'mopping up' of this campaign. He contributed to the success of the campaign, but did not live to see its finality. He was reported Killed in Action 21 August 1943. David was 24 years old.

Aftermath

David Henshaw was initially buried near where he fell at Salamaua.

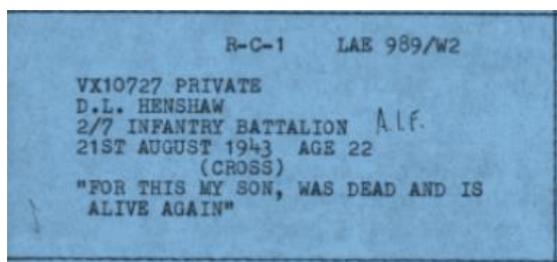
He was later re-buried at Lae War Cemetery (pictured below).



The **Lae War Cemetery**, established in 1944, is located adjacent to the Botanical Gardens in the centre of the city of Lae, the capital of Morobe Province, in Papua New Guinea. The cemetery is managed by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

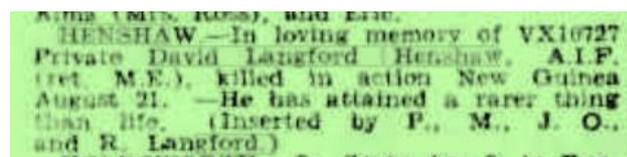
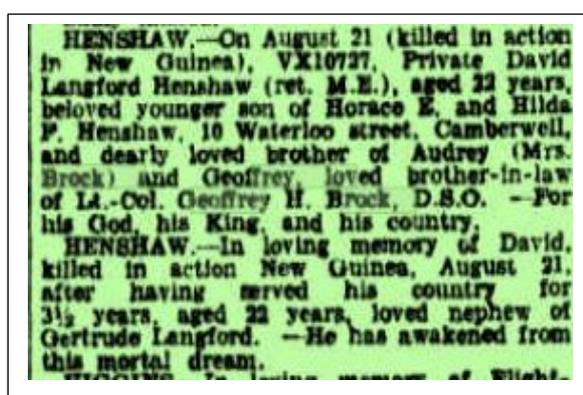
The cemetery holds the remains of over 2,800 soldiers, many of whom died in the Salamaua-Lae campaign. As the remains of missing soldiers are recovered, they are interred in the cemetery.

There is no official picture of the gravesite at Lae for David Henshaw. However I located a copy of the inscription on his memorial (below, with his age incorrect). The memorial would be identical to that for Private H Wilson, shown at right below:



The quotation is from Luke 15:24.

David was clearly much loved by his immediate and wider family, as shown below, from Notices in The Age, and at bottom, The Argus, in September 1943:



David Henshaw is truly worthy of being commemorated on our Honour Roll.

Lest We Forget

* * *

Whatever became of:

- **Horace Henshaw, David's father**

As mentioned earlier, David's mother Hilda died in September 1947, aged 64.

Initially I could find no refence for what his father did next, and no record of his death in Victoria. Widening my search, he could not be found on any other State Birth, Death and Marriage Database. I finally found him in Western Australia, on the 'findagrave' website:

Horace Edgar Henshaw	
BIRTH	2 Oct 1884 Camberwell, Boroondara City, Victoria, Australia
DEATH	3 Sep 1961 (aged 76) Nedlands, Nedlands City, Western Australia, Australia
BURIAL	<u>Karrakatta Cemetery and Crematorium</u> Karrakatta, Nedlands City, Western Australia, Australia
PLOT	Ashes scattered over garden at Karrakatta Cemetery



Karrakatta Cemetery (pictured above) first opened for burials in 1899. This historic cemetery is the final resting place of many thousands of Western Australians. The cemetery is centrally located just seven kilometres west of Perth city centre.

Notable people interred within Karamatta Cemetery include:

- Edith Cowan (first Australian woman to serve as a member of Parliament, founder of the Children's Protective Society & whose portrait appears on our fifty dollar bill);
- John Curtin (14th Prime Minister of Australia, regarded as one of our great PMs for his efforts in WW2 in defending Australia);
- Sir John Forrest (First Premier of WA);
- Sir Paul Hasluck (politician and 17th Governor General of Australia);
- Heath Ledger (actor and posthumous Oscar winner for Best Supporting Actor in his last role as The Joker in the 2008 Batman movie, "The Dark Knight."); and
- Ten (10) individual Victoria Cross recipients (eight in WW1 and two in WW2).

So, Horace relocated to Western Australia, after a lifetime living in Boroondara. Why did this happen? – the lower part of the image from the 'findagrave' page provided the answer -

Family Members	
Spouses	
	Hilda Frances Langford Henshaw 1882–1947 (m. 1910)
	Violet Ethelwynne Saw Henshaw 1892–1981

Horace re-married.

Further research revealed that he remarried in 1953, in Victoria, before living the last 8 years of his life in Western Australia.

Horace married Violet Ethelwynne Smyth (nee Saw). Violet, who was born in Albany in Western Australia in 1892, and was eight years younger than Horace, had become a widow in W.A. in 1950.

Horace Henshaw died in 1961, aged 76. Violet lived a further 20 years until July 1981, losing her life aged 89 years. Violet's ashes were "scattered to the winds at the (Karrakatta) cemetery", as were Horace's.

- **Audrey Brock (David's sister)**

Audrey, after being widowed at age 31 in 1943, died on 5 January 1972. Her last address was at 81 Pleasant Road, Hawthorn East. She never remarried.

Initially I thought that a bit sad, however Audrey seems to have been a most resilient woman who cherished her immediate and wider family dearly, and ultimately left and passed on a lasting legacy to all members of her family.

Audrey became the keeper of the family's history. In her Will (it is 8 pages of fine, meticulous detail), Audrey minutely laid out and allocated a raft of financial legacies. The first of these was to her step-mother, so it is nice to know that she gave her blessing to her father's second wife. She also gave generously to all 12 of her nieces and nephews, her five god-children, and almost a dozen other cousins and friends.

She then proceeded to itemise and bequeath her most precious personal items (her husband's war medals, his DSO decoration, his gifts to herself, her prized jewellery, her mother's jewellery, a list of precious family mementos, listed down to each and every ornament and piece of furniture, pictures etc) amongst her family. Her final gift was her body "to the Anatomy Department of Melbourne University for medical research."

Audrey was generous in life, although it could not be said she had been blessed with her fair share of good luck. Even at the end of her life, the Notice in *The Age* reporting on her death, concluded with the phrase "Rest after long illness."

Audrey was only 60 years old when she died.

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Postscripts:

- ✚ Somewhat disappointingly, I could find no record of David Henshaw's family in my initial search at the UCA Archives in Malvern, which might have mentioned their association with our church. It leaves a gap in my story which I hope to follow up when the world returns to being a safer place in which to mingle.
- ✚ Digitalisation of David Henshaw's war service records at the Defence and War Service Records section of the National Archives of Australia (NAA) was not scheduled until 2023/24. However, for a fee, I discovered that the process could be expedited. So I took that option, and was rewarded with the timely digital version of David's war service file, which I have quoted from in the above document, and containing the only photo of David I could locate.
- ✚ Australian Military Historian Phillip Bradley has written several books on the Australian military campaigns in WW2 in the Pacific region. He has been described as "one of the finest chroniclers of the Australian Army's role in the New Guinea campaign". His 2010 book "*To Salamaua*" follows on from his acclaimed book "*The Battle for Wau*", both of which shine a light on the desperate struggle in appalling conditions undertaken by David Henshaw and his fellow Australians (and Americans) to help prevent a potential invasion of our country.
- ✚ Contained within the War Service record of David Henshaw was a letter written in 1993 by one of his relatives, who was seeking information on David's death, to assist in his putting together a family military history.

I commenced an on-line search for this relative, with a somewhat vague intention of perhaps contacting him to enquire after details of David's life and war service, and any photographs he might be willing to share.

My search revealed that in 2009, David's relative lived and operated a business in Marysville. The 2009 Black Saturday bushfires, which devastated the town, completely destroyed his home, his business, and all his personal effects, papers and family memorabilia, including his family war medals.

He wished to stay and re-build, however his wife could not bring herself to follow suit, and so as a final blow, the fires also cost him his marriage. Some families seem to have more than their share of tragedy. I did not pursue my search.