

## AUBURN'S WAR TIME ACTIVITIES

**Sudan War.** Sydney's greatest day 3rd March 1885. Australia's first expeditionary force set sail for the Sudan War. Seven hundred and fifty young troops embarked at Circular Quay. Mr. Thomas Simpson (later a well known Auburn Citizen) a member of the New South Wales Volunteer Forces enlisted and sailed with the Sudan Contingent. He was the first man from Auburn to see active service overseas.

**The Boxer Rebellion.** A fanatical Chinese secret society "The Boxers" had launched a bloody campaign of terror to expel "Foreign Devils" from their land. To help crush the uprising, on 8th August, 1900, the S.S. "Salamis" sailed from Woolloomooloo with 460 Volunteers of the New South Wales and Victorian Naval Brigade (A Volunteer formation). Lieut. H. Lofts, a young Officer in the Brigade, enlisted and sailed with the Contingent. Lieut. Lofts lived with his Parents, who had a Grocery business in Dartbrook Road, Auburn. After the uprising was subdued, Lofts returned home bringing back with him many Chinese souvenirs.

**The Boer War.** After considerable investigation it has been established that two men from Auburn enlisted and served in the Boer War. Mr. Bert Myers, a Trooper in the Parramatta Lancers, enlisted and served with a Mounted Corps and Mr. Houston, a resident of Auburn, enlisted and served with an Infantry Unit. Mr. Myers belonged to an early Auburn family who owned a Bread Bakery business in Harrow Road. They were one of the first bakers in Auburn to deliver bread. Little is known of Mr. Houston, except that he was related to an old Auburn family, who today know little of his history, only that after the War he returned to Auburn, then moved to Manly and there he died.

Some interesting figures are recorded here of Australia's effort in The Boer War:

Total number of Officers served	850
Total number of other Ranks served	<u>15,600</u>
Total served	16,450
Officers killed in Action	38
Other Ranks killed in Action	408
Total Casualties Killed and Wounded	
Officers	120
Other Ranks	1,280

## WORLD WAR I. 1914-1918

Without doubt the Auburn Company of the Australian Military Forces can justly claim to be the first Citizen Unit of the A.M.F. to supply a Guard on a Wartime footing in New South Wales and likely in Australia.

In the year 1914, compulsory Military Training was established in Australia. The Auburn Company formed part of 39th Infantry Regiment and was in Camp at Liverpool, during the month of August doing the 14 days continuous Military Training as required by the Defence Act.

On 4th August 1914 Great Britain declared War on Germany and Australia immediately took precautionary action to protect certain installations. On 5th August 1914 about 10 a.m. Lieutenant Perry, one Sergeant, two Corporals and 18 other ranks were ordered to proceed to the Newington Naval Magazine to guard that installation and were informed that detail orders would be given to the Guard at the Magazine. The official orders for the Guard were somewhat voluminous, but in detail 10 rounds of Small Arms Ammunition were issued to each member of the Guard, three posts were to be established, two on the Magazine Building and one Corporal and five men on the Magazine Wharf, with orders to stop any boat passing the Wharf between the

hours of 6 p.m. and 6 a.m. On the second night what could have been a serious happening occurred. About 10 p.m. a barge towed by a tug up stream, was warned by the Sentry several times to stop, but took no notice. The Sentry then fired a shot in front of the barge. The man in charge of the barge immediately stopped and made many nasty remarks, but the Corporal ordered him to come to the Wharf, which he did in a small rowing boat.

The Officer of the Guard hearing the shot fired hurried to the Wharf and arrived just as the tug man arrived. He was asked to show his documents which confirmed his statement that he was taking the large tank on the barge, full of Petrol, to the Imperial Oil Companies storage tanks (later Shell Oil Company) at the old Parramatta Wharf. The man in charge of the tug was allowed to proceed but he was instructed to report to his Company the Defence Orders. The Officer of the Guard immediately reported the incident, and it was arranged in future that the Tug Driver would give signals and show a light on the Company name clearly displayed on the barge tank when approaching the Magazine Wharf.

On the morning of the 4th Day the Auburn Guard was relieved by a Naval Guard, and was instructed to proceed to the Hawkesbury River Area and rejoin their Regiment in that locality.

It will be noticed these young Soldiers were required to carry full march order plus their kitbags, a very considerable load from the Magazine to Auburn Railway Station. This brought to the Writer's mind a similar happening in France while commanding a Company which was detached from the remainder of the Battalion and quartered in Billets about 1.5 miles from the Main Unit. One evening about 6 p.m. orders were received that the Battalion was to entrain at 11 a.m. the following day for the Somme Area and as all transport was already entraining, the Company would have to carry their kitbags, which contained all their personal belongings, change of clothing, boots, etc., in addition they carried 60 rounds of S.A.A., full march order etc. I immediately asked for the Battalion Band as March music is always a help to men, especially under such conditions. The Colonel readily agreed and the Band arrived early next morning.

When the Company moved off the Band struck up a very popular march tune and song at that time "Pack up your troubles in your old kitbag". The Writer overheard Sergeant Slee mumble to himself, "a lot of good that is when you have to carry the damn thing". Slee was a very-efficient and popular N.C.O., and came from a very old Lidcombe Family. His Father was the first Mayor of Rookwood (later Lidcombe). Sergeant Slee was killed later in the Battle of Pozieres.

**Patriotic Organisations.** Very soon after it was realised Australia was at War, individuals and groups of people organised socials, concerts, sports meetings, etc. to raise money for the Soldiers enlisting for War Service. On 13th August the Mayor of Auburn, Alderman W. J. Johnston, called a Public Meeting to be held at Auburn Council Chambers, to form an Auburn Women's Patriotic League.

The Meeting was well attended. The Mayoress was elected President and Miss Ruby Coulson was appointed Hon. Secretary, she immediately asked permission for the use of the large room in the old Auburn School of Arts to be used as Headquarters of the League, workroom and Store.

Sadly, the Mayor, Alderman W. J. Johnston, never knew of the wonderful work done by the Ladies he called together on 13th August 1914 for he enlisted and died on 30th July of wounds received in the Battle of Pozieres. Many letters of sympathy received by Auburn Council from Councils scattered throughout the State, were shown to Mrs. Johnston together with a letter of sympathy from Auburn Council.

**Membership grew.** At the first function held in the School of Arts gifts of money, wool, flannel, cigarettes, etc. were received. Wool was issued to make socks and flannel to make shirts and pyjamas. The Secretary, Miss Coulson, visited the Auburn School and with the Headmaster's approval taught the senior Girls to knit the top portion of a sock, leaving the turning of the heel and feet to the women to finish. In this way a large stock of socks was soon on hand.

Every Soldier leaving for the Front was given a full kit containing one flannel shirt, two pairs of socks, one balaclava helmet, a pair of gloves, a scarf, six packets of cigarettes, matches, soap, toothbrush and paste, mending kit, boracic powder, and two towels. All Soldiers' names were checked at Base records, Victoria Barracks, before being issued with kit.

November 1914, Miss Coulson requested and was granted permission to have an Honour Roll erected in the vicinity of Auburn Railway Station. The Honour Roll was of very fine design and donated and all names carefully checked before being recorded. This was the first Honour Roll connected with World War I to be erected in New South Wales. The number of Soldiers killed in Action in the 1st World War as shown on the Memorial in Auburn Park is One Hundred and Thirty Six (136).

On 22nd November, 1914, the Auburn League sent to the 13th Battalion then in camp at Liverpool, a big consignment of gifts, comprising 150 packets of cigarettes, 30 packets of cigars, numerous tins and plugs of pipe tobacco, socks, balaclava helmets, mittens, cakes of soap, tooth brushes and paste, some magazines and other very useful articles. It was the first known occasion of organised gifts in such quantities being given to Soldiers. The Secretary of the Auburn Ladies Patriotic League suggested that the 13th Battalion should receive the first consignment as the first Commissioned Officer from Auburn, also a number of men from Auburn were attached to that Battalion.

When the 13th Battalion moved to Broad-meadows, Victoria and again while in camp at Heliopolis, Egypt, further numerous gifts were received. The Auburn Ladies Patriotic League continued sending regular packages of comforts to the Liverpool Camp, also much in the way of comforts was contributed to the Red Cross till the end of the War.

The Winter of 1915 was very wet and Miss Coulson who visited the Liverpool Camp regularly, realising the terrible conditions under which the men were living, got Mr. Orchard, a Member of the Legislative Assembly, to accompany her on an inspect/on of the Camp. He succeeded in having conditions altered. Sleeping Huts and many amenities were built.

In addition to supplying comforts the following collections were taken up in the Town:

Hospital Saturday Fund	1914
Belgian Day, 14th May	1915
Hospital Saturday Fund	1915
Australia Day, 30th July	1915
Allies Day, 19th November	1915
Anzac Day, 25th April	1916
France's Day, 14th July	1917
Italian Red Cross Day, 28th June	1918
Homes Day, 13th September	1918
War Chest Day, 29th November	1918

All collection days were most successful in raising sums of money. Three of these days are worthy of special comment.

(1) **Australia Day, 30th July, 1915.** The sum of £600 was collected. A Certificate was sent to the Auburn Australia Day Committee (The Ladies Patriotic League).

Copy of Certificate

On behalf of the Executive Committee we certify that the sum of £600 was contributed by

## The Auburn Australia Day Committee

To the Australia Day Fund

Total sum raised in New South Wales £775,000

John J. Cohen | Joint

W. A. Holman

E. B. Harkness | Hon. Secretaries

President.

The above amount was said to be the largest contributed by any one Town in New South Wales.

The Certificate is lodged with the Auburn District Historical Society.

(2) **Anzac Day, 25th April, 1916.** The sum of One Thousand One Hundred Pounds (£1,100) was contributed to the Anzac Fund. The Ladies of the Auburn Patriotic League worked with great National feeling and Patriotism for this day.

The Auburn Council at the request of the Ladies Patriotic League closed the main business portion of Auburn Road to road traffic, when 22 stalls and two Chocolate Wheels were erected. The stalls sold everything from a needle to an anchor.

The Secretary of the League requested the Manager of the Bank of N.S.W. (Mr. Linklater) to arrange to receive money from collectors and stalls through the day and to keep his Bank open till 10 p.m. that night, which he very graciously did. The Bank Manager actually sat at a table outside the Bank till 12.15 a.m. receiving money.

The street collectors were well organised and covered the whole Auburn District. Some collectors returned to the Bank three times during the day to have their boxes emptied.

People were still on Auburn Road till early hours the next morning and young people kept bringing poultry, pet Guinea Pigs, Birds, etc. to be sold. About 10 p.m. a man from somewhere at the back of Auburn drove up with a half grown Pig. This caused the Ladies some concern, but Mr. Alban Gee's Coachman made available an empty dogpen and in the morning Mr. Gee paid a very handsome price for the Pig.

(3) **Homes Day, 13th September, 1918.** This collection day was purely a local event to raise money to build two cottages for two totally incapacitated returned Soldiers. Most of the building materials were donated and the Cottages were built by Volunteer Labour.

About this time (late 1918) the number of Soldiers returning home was rapidly increasing. To advise relatives and others of the return of Auburn Soldiers, the Secretary of the Ladies League was granted permission to have a board placed at the entrance of Auburn Railway Station on which was written particulars of Boat Arrivals and the names of Auburn men on board. Cars were rostered to meet men returning.

**Record of Soldiers who were awarded decorations or mention in Despatches for outstanding service on the Field of Battle and had enlisted from Auburn and served in the War 1914-1918:**

Lt. Col. S. L. Perry, D.S.O., M.C., M.I.D.4, Vol. Dcn.

Captain J. H. Holman, M.C., and Bar, B.E.M., M.I.D.1.

Captain R. S. Pickup, M.C.

Lieutenant H. Slocombe, M.C.

Lieutenant R. Denny, D.C.M., M.M., and Bar, M.I.D.2.

Company Sergeant Major E. R. Dawe, M.M. (later Lt Col.).

Sergeant A. A. Wood, D.C.M., M.M.

Sergeant F. Fawcett, D.C.M.

Corporal B. G. Pettit, D.C.M.

Corporal H. C. Peachey, M.M.

Private B. Wood, M.M.

Private Wheeler, M.M.

## THE SECOND WORLD WAR

Britain declared War on Germany when Britain's ultimatum expired 11 a.m. September 3rd, 1939 and after Hitler invaded Poland.

With the outbreak of War in September 1939 the Prime Minister, Mr. R. G. Menzies, announced on 15th September the creation of a force of 20,000 men in all for service either at home or abroad and the call up of two Militia drafts each of 40,000 men.

Thus the Second A.I.F. came into being and its proud story is now history.

On 9th January, 1940, the men who had walked into Ingleburn Camp during the early days of November 1939 marched down that road again, in threes, uniformed, keeping step, proud and excited. Their final destination was a well kept secret — perhaps India, Egypt, Palestine or England — but the fact that the first large body of the Second A.I.F. was about to embark was widely known. The streets were lined with people as the troops marched to their embarkation area and the foreshores were crowded with onlookers and so the 16th Brigade Group embarked.

The Liners to transport the 16th Brigade were — The "Otranto", "Orcades", "Orford" and "Strath-na-ver", none of which had been fully converted into troopships, so they still contained some of the luxuries of peace and each carried only 1,300 to 1,600 Soldiers, not many more than their normal complement of passengers.

Next day the four transports moved out of the harbour at 3 p.m. past the Battleship "Ramillies" which was to be part of their escort. Out of sight of land they joined six other transports containing the 4th New Zealand Brigade. With "Ramillies" leading, the Cruiser "Canberra" on one flank and the "Australia" on the other, the Convoy steamed South. On some transports the men were still uncertain where they were going, but the day before the ships reached Fremantle the German Radio had announced that they were on their way to Suez.

It is not known if any Lidcombe or Auburn men sailed with the 16th Brigade.

However, both towns commenced organising patriotic societies to work for the Soldiers. The Red Cross did much both in Auburn and Lidcombe to raise money and supply comforts to men who enlisted from the towns they represented. There was not in either town a central organisation to co-ordinate the various groups formed to work for the comfort and recognition of men enlisting or returning home, which resulted in many soldiers not being recognised.

Very little is known of the activities of Patriotic groups at Auburn during the Second World War compared with the Auburn Patriotic Group during the 1st World War.

During the 2nd World War the Red Cross, Auburn, met every week at the Town Hall and made shirts, pyjamas and other comforts for the sick and wounded soldiers.

Doctor Cunynghame wrote to his Mother, Mrs. M. Cunynghame, asking to urge the Ladies to keep up the supply of shirts and pyjamas as they were much sought after in the Hospitals. He was attached to a Hospital at Noemfoor Island. He was eventually invalided home with a bad attack of dermatitis which could not be cured in the tropical climate.

A Prisoner of War Fund was organised by Red Cross Headquarters and all Branches were asked to assist, which they did willingly.

The movement was started in Auburn and organised by Mr. and Mrs. Perkins. They found collectors who called on donors every week for their donations. By this means Auburn raised more than £100 per week to provide comforts for Prisoners of War. In the first year of operation the Volunteers raised over £5,200. Mrs. Lees (Secretary) and Mrs. Cunynghame (Treasurer) went to the Town Hall every Saturday morning and Monday afternoon to receive the money from the Street Collectors.

Mrs. Lees was Secretary of Auburn Red Cross for more than 30 years until ill health forced her to resign. She received a citation from Red Cross Headquarters for her services.

Red Cross Members are still active in Auburn and manage to raise significant sums annually.

**Auburn Honour Roll 2nd A.I.F.**

The Honour Roll in the 2nd World War is not complete. On 10th November 1941 the Mayor said the signwriters had almost completed the Roll of Honour Board "which will be unveiled on 16th November 1941, but as fresh names are coming in every day there is not sufficient space on the Board for all names in hand". He recommended that an additional Board of similar design and quality be purchased and erected in the Vestibule above the Town Hall on the wall opposite to the position which will be occupied by the first Honour Roll to accommodate all additional names as received. On 20th October 1943 it was resolved that procedure in regard to the Honour Roll Board in the Town Hall be continued as at present so far as available space will allow and that consideration of an improved method of recording the names be deferred until after the end of the War.

After considerable research and enquiry it has been ascertained that only one man from Auburn was awarded a Field Decoration in the 2nd World War.

It is recorded that Sergeant G. B. J. Young received the Distinguished Flying Medal and gained his Commission for Gallantry during the first operational flight over Enemy Territory in Europe.

This Document is an extract from

“Liberty Plains A History of Auburn N.S.W.”

ISBN-0-9592628-0-6