Oatley Heritage Group Projects.

Month & Year of Topic	Topic	Written &Spoken Presenters
August 2014	World War 1 Oatley Vets	Bill Wright

Oatley's Involvement in WW1 by Bill Wright

August 2014.

Oatley like many other suburbs of a city/country town has a Memorial dedicated to those of the district that fought and died fighting for their Country or for mother England.

Oatley's War Memorial is different from most Memorials that were erected after the great war as it list those that gave their lives in the struggle for freedom.

The unveiling of Oatley War Memorial by Brigadier-General Lloyd 24 November 1924

The war was declared on the 4th August 1914 after Germany had invaded Belgium and Luxemburg and was advancing onto Paris, France. United Kingdom declared war which in turn brought Australia into the fray when Prime Minister Andrew Fisher pledged support to the British Empire.

Australia hurriedly raised a force which was given the name of Australian Naval & Expeditionary Military Force (AN&EMF) which was to attack and take the German Territories and Possessions to our immediate north. The force was sent to take German New Guinea in September 1914 which became our baptism of fire an our first loss of life, when a seaman AB, W. Wickins and Capt B. Pockley were killed in action.
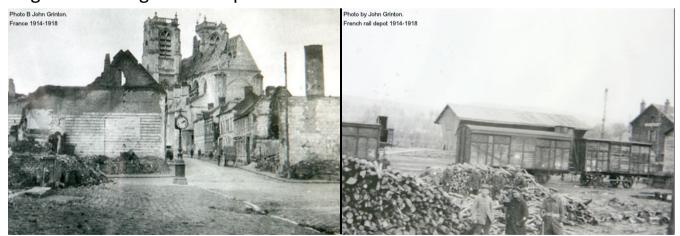
A second force was raised to serve overseas, made up of 20,000 young men who left Australia in November 1914 for Egypt to defend the Suez Canal.

The war was greeted in Australia with great enthusiasm, most young men wanted to get among the Hun before it was over, it would only last a couple of months.

The 1st AIF went into battle at Gallipoli & when the losses and wounded started to appear in the newspapers, the fight to join was on, the young had to get there to show the Turks & Germans what for.

The number of enlistments ran to over 400,000 men of which approx 60,000 were killed & some 156,00 wounded, gassed or taken prisoner. This was from a young nation of less than 5 million.

The war was now being fought in Europe, Gallipoli and the middle east, the losses of men and material was so great that the then Prime Minister Billy Hugh's tried to get conscription introduced but this failed.

Photo B John Grinton.
France 1914-1918

Photo by John Grinton.
French rail depot 1914-1918

The war was to grind on till 11th November 1918 when an Armistice was signed, but the war was not legally finished until a formal Peace Treaty was signed on the 23rd April 1923

These young men who went off to fight and did not return left behind mothers & fathers, wives, children and siblings, they were the casualties of war which were to suffer for many years after the cessation of hostilities

The youngest was 16 when he died of wounds at Llissenthoek in Belgium, he was Pte Robert Cooper James Murray from Oatley.

The oldest was 49 when he died of wounds at Gallipoli in Turkey, he was Major William Davidson of Oatley.

There are 43 names etched into our Memorial who lost their lives in this period. In 1924 there was only 21 names recorded on the memorial, partially due to at that time many of the families of the fallen did not want their names on the memorials as a reminder of their loss.

A memorial font was made and stood proudly in St. Paul's Anglican church in Neville St, Oatley. This memorial had the names engraved into marble plaques which were attached onto the sand stone body with a marble font sitting on the top. The top block was octagonal with the following verse inscribed.

'Greater love has No one than this to lay down one's life for one's friend'

The Church also has a lectern commemorating the loss of Frederick Fletcher in 1917. The lectern stands quite tall with an Eagle with its wings outstretched with a small brass plaque with this inscription.

IN LOVING MEMORY OF OUR DEAR SON & BROTHER

CORPORAL FREDERICK FLETCHER

WHO WAS KILLED IN ACTION IN FRANCE

AGE 22 YEARS

" HE FREELY OFFERED HIS LIFE AND ALL IN ANSWER TO HIS COUNTRIES CALL"

We now know the Frederick's remains were found & Identified in 2010, his remains were reinterred in Pheasants Wood Cemetery with full military honours.

There is a little side issue that occurred during the war when a body was located in 1920 and identified by a penny which was found in the man's pocket. The name W C SADLER 2762 was scratched into the penny, so the graves people identified the body and sent in papers to say where he was buried.

Pte Stanley Pickering was missing in action 4th Oct 1917, a court of enquiry was held in the field 12th March 1918 which then listed him KIA 4th Oct 1917. In Sept 1920 the Army found that W C Sadler was alive and when contacted he explained that he and Stanley Pickering were friends and that he lived in Peakhurst and Stanley lived in Letitia St Oatley and he had given the penny to Stanley so that they could remember each other after the war. Stanley Pickering's body was exhumed and reburied at Aeroplane Cemetery, Belgium in 1920 with full Military Honours.

6785 PRIVATE
S. J. PICKERING
1ST BN. AUSTRALIAN INF.
4TH OCTOBER 1917

Stanley James Pickering.
Pte, 1st Bn 1st AIF.
Oatley, 22 Yrs.
KIA, Passchendale, Belgium, 4 Oct 1917.
Aeroplane Cemetery, Ypres, Belgium

After the war in 1923 a committee was form called 'The Oatley Soldiers Memorial Committee'.

Pres, Alderman Colborne   Treas. W Desmond   Secretary W Savage

Organising Sec. Mrs. M Cole Comm. Messrs. Perry, Alf Ward, Ludwig, Cuthbertson, Phillips, Pratt, Bennett, Maddocks.

Mesdames Davidson, Perry, Peasley, Pickering, Ward, Riley, Mobb & Miss Stubbs.

Mrs. Cole suggested that the Education Dept be asked if the Oatley Committee could use the corner of the local school ground. Approval was given on the 27th Dec 1923. The Public Monuments Advisory Board approved the design on the 10th Jan 1924.

The Memorial was to be unveiled by Major-General Cox but owing to illness the ceremony was performed by Brigadier-General Lloyd. on Saturday 25th Oct 1924 at 3.15pm.

 In 1962 the Memorial was moved to its new resting place in Oatley Reserve, and was rededicated on the 31st March 1962.

The war Memorial received a refurbishment in 2009 and was rededicated on the 1st November 2009 with additional names and badges also other items where added namely a Propeller and an anchor.

There are stories behind each of the memorials souvenirs which could be used to make another a tale at some other time.

There are many stories about each man that could be told, but time has passed by and many of the family have also gone, we are left with their Legacy, FREEDOM.

Thomas Valerie (or Valyer) Cross, usually called Sergeant Cross, bought Portions 163 and 165 in Moons Avenue, and Portion 179, which was west of Lugarno Boatshed. The Cross family also owned Portions 177 and 178 which were subdivided together as the Lugarno Bay Estate in 1919. Sergeant Cross was a policeman at Hurstville, and he retired to a weatherboard house in Moons Avenue. He was Mayor of Hurstville in 1920, and took part in establishing the St. George County Council in that year. He represented Peakhurst Ward as an Alderman of the Hurstville Municipal Council from 1914-1922. In William Cross's enlistment papers his father's name is WILLIAM which is what is recorded on his birth record.
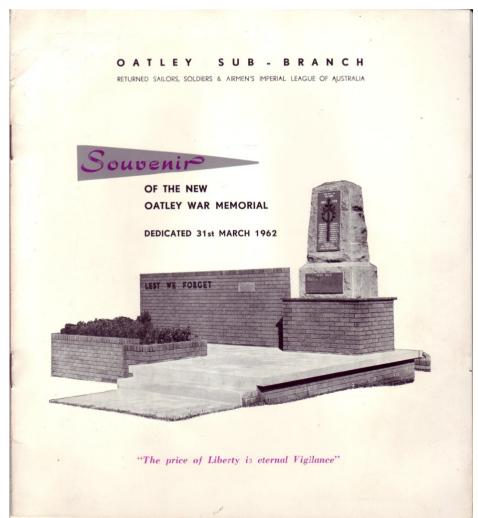
Sergeant Cross erected the monument to his son William, who was killed in action in France in 1916, during World War I. The monument originally stood outside his house in Moons Avenue, but after his death it was re-erected on another parcel of land that he owned, which is now opposite the Baptist Church.

Another son, Douglas D. Cross was later the Member of the Legislative Assembly for Georges River, which the gardens at Oatley Station were named after.

The Lone Pine Cemetery

Menin Gate, Ypres(Leper) Belgium by night.

OATLEY SUB - BRANCH

RETURNED SAILORS, SOLDIERS & AIRMEN'S IMPERIAL LEAGUE OF AUSTRALIA

Souvenir

OF THE NEW
OATLEY WAR MEMORIAL

DEDICATED 31st MARCH 1962

LEST WE FORGET

"*The price of Liberty is eternal Vigilance*"

LEST WE FORGET.

Bill Wright