

Friends of Soldiers Walk Inc: Newsletter

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Contents

Working Bee on the Domain
Report on AGM and Quiz Night
Subscriptions
Goodbye Frank

Bicentenary Grants
Draft Management Plan
Dysart Replanting
Lt Len Wadsley 52nd Bn



Working Bee on the Domain

A working bee is scheduled for Sunday October 5th starting at 10am meeting at the carpark at the northern end of the TCA. We will once again be working with John Sawbridge from the HCC's Bush Care unit and all tools will be provided. It is recommended you bring a hat and some sturdy gloves. Work will be followed by a barbeque and drinks. Bring some gold coins to defray costs.

We have permission to clear areas around the trees within 2 metres of the canopy. We will be removing all woody vegetation and large weeds that provide competition to the trees and also represent a fire hazard. Andrew Roberts-Tissot, the Council arboriculturalist, informed us that this was needed as the Council machinery (tractors and slashers) cannot get within 2 metres of the canopies for fear of damage to the trees. The overall plan is that the Avenue will be slashed as part of the fire prevention strategy. Current practice has been for areas of the Domain to be burnt off in the autumn to prevent the build up of fuel. Obviously this cannot be done within the Avenue itself! The slashing will not only protect the Avenue but also effectively form a firebreak along the southern part of the Domain. Another all round win. Another interesting fact is that the Avenue contains an extremely rare and endangered species of native grass, *Lepidium hyssopifolium*. This thrives under the healthiest trees, which create a suppression zone that keeps taller and stronger grasses at bay, allowing the most endangered plant on the Domain sanctuary. Thus the most obvious exotic protects the rarest native!

AGM and Quiz Night

Well this was a good night and thanks to all those who attended either or both. In all the night returned \$629 of which we donated \$110 to legacy for the use of their facilities. Another quiz night is being planned. Thanks to the donors of prizes (Darby Quinn and Arthur Orchard, Senators Tony Calvert and Eric Abetz, Duncan Kerr MHR, Doug Parkinson MLC, Michael Hodgman MHA). Thanks also go to Jonathan Wood for acting as MC, Chris Duhig for the questions, Rod Hunt for beer and doing the count, Jenni Benbow and Meaghan Morton for waiting duties and Kirsty Black (cakes) and Victoria Wood (her mum's asparagus rolls) for arranging the catering and keeping everything on an even keel. A huge thanks also goes to the Hill Street store (thanks Nick and Marco) for all that fine cheese and bickies: all consumed heartily!

The AGM elected Adrian Howard as President, John Trethewey and Darby Quinn as Vice Presidents, Kirsty Black as Treasurer, Rod Hunt as Secretary and John Wadsley and Mike Wilkie as Committee members. Ian Harrison will continue to represent the RSL and Peter Sexton the City Council.

Subs are Due

Please note that Subs for 2003/2004 are now due; the princely sum of \$5 is required. Many have already paid; if you are not sure if you have paid, drop a line and make a call and we'll check. Those with internet connections note you can pay by direct deposit via internet banking, details in the accompanying email.

Goodbye Frank

Recently Adrian Howard (President), Kirsty Black (Treasurer) and Jon Trethewey (Vice President) attended our patron's funeral. Barry Wood, a former schoolteacher and Frank's biographer, read the eulogy. Barry met Frank late last year and visited him 3 to 4 times per week up to his death recording Frank's reminiscences. This is the full text of the eulogy.

Frank's life began on the 26 June, 1896. His parents, Joseph and Jessie MacDonald had eleven children. There were nine boys and two girls in the family with Frank the 2nd youngest child. The MacDonald's owned a property of 37 acres, along Castra road, near the township of Abbotsham. Here the family literally lived off the fruit of the land, for an extensive orchard measuring 1 acre, provided the basis of a healthy diet. At an early age Frank remembers the family home being destroyed by fire and having to live in the barn whilst his father rebuilt the house on top of a nearby hill. On another occasion, fire led to the premature death of his brother, Charles. As an infant, the boy suffered severe burns to his body when his clothes caught alight in front of the fireplace. Despite this personal, family tragedy, Frank says that his childhood was a happy one. He used to go fishing and shooting with his brothers. In fact he was given his first gun when he was about 5 years old. As a young boy Frank learned to practice shooting from the hip. As the years rolled on he became an expert marksman. Frank enjoyed shooting possums, rabbits and wallabies. With the hides and furs, Frank earned extra income to supplement his family's modest income.



In 1904, Frank started his formal education at the Ulverstone state school. Along a dusty road, it took him one and a half hours to walk to school. In total, Frank completed 7 and a half years of schooling. He excelled in mathematics, but couldn't see much sense in learning about foreign countries like England and France, for who would ever get the 'opportunity' and indeed have the 'inclination' to travel to these distant places? In particular, Frank enjoyed playing school football and cricket, and on his own account, was a demon bowler.

Frank was a cadet during school and in 1911, when compulsory military training was introduced, Frank became part of the state's militia.

Frank's first job after leaving school was at the Tasmanian state railways. He was employed as a clerk and trainee telegraphist. Here he learnt how to transmit and receive Morse code, which would prove to be an important asset for his stint in the army. Nevertheless, Frank's dream of working at the Lilico flag station was dashed, when his mentor decided to delay his retirement, which effectively put Frank out of a job. In 1912, Frank got a job as a mercery salesman, working for Cruickshank's in Reibey Street, Ulverstone including selling whalebone corsets and cotton bloomers to women. When the Great War broke out in 1914, he was one of the first to rush for enlistment. Yet, because Frank's top teeth were in such a bad state of decay, he was rejected for military service. Disgusted, Frank said that 'he didn't want to

bite the Germans. he just wanted to shoot them'. Discouraged, but not disillusioned, Frank decided to accompany one of his brothers who was making his way up to north Queensland, sugar cane cutting. Frank worked for one season and returned to Tasmania in December 1915.

On his second attempt to join the army, Frank succeeded and became a proud member of the 40th battalion - unique, because it was an all Tasmanian battalion. By mid-year of 1916, Frank was sailing out of the River Derwent

on his way to France. He arrived as that country was experiencing one of its worst winters with mud, rain, sleet, snow, shells & shrapnel. He endured it all! Frank was a brave man who served his country well.

When the war was over and he had returned to Tasmania, Frank worked in Hobart for another mercery store, this time for 'George White & Son'. However, his physical and mental health was severely taxed by the ill-effects of the war and he found it impossible to continue his employment.

In 1922 Frank moved to Melbourne, Victoria. Here, Frank attended numerous Melbourne cups. He loved horse racing! He would fish off the St Kilda pier and he enjoyed following VFL football. Slowly but surely, his health improved. A year later Frank opened a real estate business, but - in the course of his long life - he would never commit himself to purchasing property of any kind. He preferred to rent. Over the next few years, Frank became a master door-to-door salesman. He sold eureka vacuum cleaners, cigarette lighters and sold life insurance to anyone who was slightly interested. The secret of his success, Frank said, was that he treated the customer fairly and honestly. Also, Frank chose the best product on the market. He believed it was no use trying to sell anyone a lemon.

Frank regarded the best decision that he ever made was his marriage to Lillian Vaughan Payne. She already had a beautiful 5 year old girl, May, from a previous marriage and Frank took her on as his own. In 1929, the family moved to Sydney where job prospects looked brighter. Here Frank sold a kitchen product called 'the Sydney waterless cooker'. His business was thriving until the great depression took its stranglehold on the populace. "Ooh! The market died overnight. If it wasn't for that economic disaster", said Frank, "I would have been a rich man". But attaining money was never a prime concern for Frank!

In 1932, Frank was delighted to be at the opening of the Sydney Harbour Bridge, 'until some fool', he said, 'by the name of Captain de Groot spoiled the opening ceremony'. Frank wanted to throw him into the harbour, but Lil wouldn't have a bar of it. Frank tried other means to earn a living. He became a gold buyer and he would conduct business interstate. He also, as a salesman, worked for a company, 'A1' Distributors, which stocked a wide range of household products.

All too soon, Australia found itself involved in another war. Frank wanted to fight overseas again - have another crack at the Hun - but he was deemed at 44 too old by the appropriate authorities. Still Frank served in the army for 6 years at Victoria Barracks in Sydney. Even though he had a desk job, handling laborious amounts of correspondence, Frank always performed his duty to the highest degree. In 1942, Frank witnessed the Japanese submarine attack in Sydney harbour and days later had his dwelling damaged by shells from other enemy submarines.

After the war Frank continued to work as a door-to-door salesman. Under contract for the department store David Jones, he demonstrated & sold Maytag washing machines to potential customers. In the mid 1950's Frank changed his career yet again and found employment with the Yellow Express company, a transport firm. Frank was the paymaster for this large business and proved to be of such worth that the company continued to hire him until well past his retirement age. Frank was over 70 when he resigned from this position.



Having spent the last 44 years away from his home state of Tasmania, Frank and his wife decided to live in Tasmania. They stayed for two years until a call was received from Lil's sister-in-law. One of Lil's relatives was seriously ill, so unselfishly both travelled to Victoria to care for her. For 3 years Frank and his wife lived in Melbourne and during this period Frank entered the workforce again and found employment in a car yard washing & polishing vehicles. In 1972 the MacDonald's returned to Tasmania and stayed for 5 years. Frank worked in a furniture making business & was employed as a cleaner. In 1977 Frank and his wife embarked on another

interstate trip. Their daughter, May, asked her parents to come and live with her in Brisbane. The offer was accepted. But sadly - less than one year later - Frank's wife died from a brain tumour. For 11 years, Frank remained in Queensland until he decided once again to return to Tasmania.

In 1988 it looked like Frank had few options which were left open for him. In his absence, many friends and family members had died. and at 92 years of age, Frank felt somewhat alone and vulnerable. Whilst Frank contemplated his future, a relative on his sister's side, named Alan Graham, invited this elderly gent to live with him. For approximately 2 years Frank managed to remain independent, until he required urgent medical attention. For a period of one month, Frank was hospitalised, but everyday he was attended by family members. By now, Phyllis Gleeson, Frank's great niece, made a deep & lasting commitment. Although not having known Frank for long, Phyllis decided to care for her aging relative. As it turned out, this genuine & heart-felt commitment was to last 13 enriching years. Indeed, if it was not for the love and care that Frank received from Phyllis, from her family & other related members, friends included, I am sure Frank's remarkable life would not have been so long or so fulfilling.

Frank's remaining life was spent at the Eliza Purton home (for aged citizens) in Ulverstone. It was here where I first met Frank and was captivated by his unique spell. Frank was a humble man with a sense of humour. He was honest, fiercely independent, hard working, frugal, opinionated, conservative, always a gentleman. Frank was proud to be an Australian.

On behalf of Phyllis, her immediate family, and those related, each express their sincere thank you to all who showed kindness to their beloved Frank MacDonald. In particular, Phyllis desires to give a special mention of thanks to the Commonwealth Department of Veteran Affairs employees, 'Wendy Simmons & Wendy Latham. Known collectively as Wendy 1 and Wendy 2, their help and support in all matters pertaining to Frank has been gratefully appreciated. Staff Sergeant MacDonald, I salute you!

Ed note: Frank counted himself lucky feeling he should have been killed at least a dozen times and felt blessed to have had such a long life. He certainly still missed his friends who died. He was generous with his time and willing to talk to anyone who wanted to hear about that truly awful war. He liked the idea of the trees on our Soldiers' Walk as a living memorial to those who made the ultimate sacrifice.

Bicentenary Grants

Work is continuing on the web site with the current focus on getting photographs of as many soldiers as possible and to date we have about 150. If you have a photo of a relative that you would like added, please call (03) 6234 4396 or send the photo to 11 Franklin Street, West Hobart TAS 7000. Photographs will be scanned and returned. We are also interested in shots of the trees over time so if you have any photographs that may be of interest, do not hesitate to contact us.

We are also working with aerial photos to work out a final and conclusive log of the trees and to cross-check our labelling. This is slow and painstaking but we believe that we can reach a definitive conclusion on this and most importantly identify the trees that are missing and also identify the remnant trees at the Cross Roads. This is important for getting an accurate map for both the pamphlet and the web site.

Draft Management Plan

Still little movement on this front but we have hopes. Will keep you all posted; looks positive but will take time to wheel out of the garage. All missing and dead trees will be replaced.

Dysart Replanting

The Southern Midlands was home to a great number of Avenues: Broadmarsh, Bagdad, Dysart, Kempton, Melton Mowbray and Jericho. A large number of trees from the Dysart Avenue were cut down last year and on August 3rd this year they were replanted in a moving ceremony. The Southern

Midlands Council, realising and correcting their mistake, decided to replant four of the trees for Cpl Thomas McTye DCM (12th MG Co), and L/Cpl Mark Shearing (40th Bn KIA), and Privates Abel (2nd Tunn Co) and Eli Shearing (15th Bn). The Deputy Mayor Cr Bisdee gave a fine speech as did Ian Kennett, State President of the RSL, and Vern McTye (son of Cpl Thomas). The new trees, descended from the Gallipoli Lone pine, were planted with a blessing. A large contingent of the McTye family as well as many descendants of the Shearing boys (the eldest being Betty Lord). were present along with Michael Hodgman MHA. After the ceremony a cavalcade of cars headed for lunch at the Kempton Hall, adorned with honour boards from the Great War and the adjacent RSL club and bar. Congratulations to the families and the Council for taking this first step on the way back for the Southern Midlands Avenues. Thanks also to the RSL for their support for the families.



Lt Len Wadsley 52nd Bn

John Wadsley, a recent addition to the Committee, provided the following article originally published in Leatherwood Journal (12) August 1994

DEAR EVERYBODY AT HOME A Tasmanian's Letters from the Great War

"France 2-9-16

Dear Everybody at Home,

If you receive this I will by then have passed to the Great Beyond. We are just preparing to go in on a fairly large stunt which may be the end of a good many of us and I may be one of the number. Up to the present altho' I've been in the Firing Line and about there a good deal, have not yet participated in the actual advance and now the time comes.

"Well, I leave myself in the hands of the Almighty and trust him absolutely. You may depend on it, I've done my job and you'll have no need to be ashamed of me. I would have liked to have got back again but 'twas not meant that I should. Never mind girls, there'll be someone else to take my place.

"Am leaving this with a pal of mine who is on the reserve of officers and not going in; he will post it for me if I do not come back. Well Dad goodbye! Goodbye girls! Let the remainder of the family know I think of you all and hope to meet you all again later on. 'Tis rotten having to write this but c'est la guerre! One thing we know Fritz has a much worse time than we do, I guess there'll be great rejoicing when it is all over. We are all thoroughly sick of it.

Well goodbye again to you all, from your son and bro, Len."

This was the last letter of Lennard Lewis Wadsley, 26 years old, Lieutenant, 52nd Battalion, 4th Division AIF, killed 3 September 1916.

Len was killed in the carnage on the Somme Battlefield, at a place called Mouquet Farm near Pozieres. The War Historian C E W Bean wrote that the Pozieres Ridge was "more densely sown with Australian sacrifice than any other place on earth". 19 attacks were launched by the Australian Divisions through the mud and devastation against strongly defended objectives; in all some 23,000 dead and wounded in just seven weeks.

What was it like for a young Tasmanian orchardist to go on his longest, and ultimately his last, journey? Len's letters, written to his family in the small farming community of Cygnet, give us an insight into that time, when family meant everything and war was an adventure.

The Wadsley's had an orchard, "Pendennis", up the Golden Valley Road. The family had moved to Cygnet after the crash of the Van Diemen's Land Bank in 1891. Their original orcharding property, at Florence Heights above Moonah, had suffered so much through the bank's collapse, as did many other Tasmanian businesses and families, that they were forced to find other opportunities.

Len was obviously close to his family. His letters reflect a feeling of oneness with their lives, even

though he was in Egypt and France. He was the youngest of eight children, living on the farm with his widowed father, Wright and his sisters Dora, Gwlad and Annie. His brothers James, Ted and Arthur were working in Hobart and Launceston and Mary had married. He missed the fruit picking season and daily tasks of the farm terribly, yet he showed a cheerfulness in facing the dangers ahead; he was, perhaps, an example of the self-assured colonials eager to prove themselves in the world.

Len enlisted on 18 November 1914. He had been in the Militia for eight years and so he was automatically considered for officer rank. During 1915, as a Second Lieutenant in 1st Depot Battalion at Claremont Camp, he trained recruits.

It was an uncertain time, but Len tried to put the family at ease, *"...I can tell you that it won't be long before I get away, I had no idea I was so well up the list ... but this is just to prepare you for a sudden break. Now, Dad don't be downhearted. It's up to me to go if I can do any good and I have every confidence in coming through alright."*

In November Len commanded Reinforcements to the 15th Battalion transferred to Broadmeadows Camp near Melbourne. For many it was their first sea voyage. *"It was rather rough when we got into the Strait next morning, but had a cup of tea and went on deck to see how the men were faring. Poor beggars, they were ill, about 2/3 of them were down."*

The attractions of Melbourne lured many of the new soldiers. *"Leave here seems to be the trouble, was speaking to one officer and he told me out of 300 men he could only get hold of six as the remainder were absent without leave."*



Len had his fair share of fun too, *"...went to "High Jinks", it was alright, we could see the girls that were on board [the boat from Tasmania]. They were almost unrecognisable because of paint etc, but it was good, there's no error about it. I think I'll go again before the season closes."*

He was in high spirits. *"There are plenty of apples over here... but they are not a patch on Tassy's, no flavour hardly. Cherries, strawberries and other fruits are plentiful but none of them come up to those at Pendennis. ...Heaps of love to all, don't worry about me. Am feeling bonza will be alright here, remember me to all enquiring friends. Love to all, Len."*

Finally on 29 December 1915 they embarked from Williamstown. *"Everything has gone off splendidly. There are 1600 on board ... a fine lot of men"*. With the evacuation of Gallipoli only nine days before, the future of the Australian Imperial Force in the war was somewhat uncertain.

For Len and his companions the stay in Egypt was to become a frustrating interlude while strategists decided their fate.

"At Sea, 20/1/1916

Dear Everybody at Home,

Here we are still slogging along, and if we

don't get a wriggle on guess we'll arrive when the war is over, and will just turn round and come back ... dropped anchor just after dark alongside another trooper going back to Australia with wounded.

At once the native craft swarmed around and the guard had their work cut out to keep off the curio sellers ... there were coolies galore also the usual native boatmen who will dive for sixpence and come up grinning and show it to you and put it in their mouths, some of them had their mouths full in no time."

They arrived in Egypt in early February and so began a period of training in the dust, sand and heat, seeing the sights of Cairo and coping with the locals; *"... the natives thrive on filth and I always feel when near natives or near their quarters I'd like to have a good bath and change of clothing, they seem so lousy. The camp here is not too brilliant as regards freedom from insects, feel pleased I brought my sulphur bags now, they are most useful."*

What a change for the boy from the cool climes of the Huon Valley! Len was also missing some important family events.

"20/2/16 Dear Madge, What's this I hear?

During the past week I've been lucky enough to receive a budget from home and in every letter or card there was the same thing mentioned... Well, I don't know whether to congratulate you or not because if you knew Ted as I do, all you would want would be sympathy...

I hope and am sure you'll be quite happy, in fact it gives me much pleasure in placing my hands on your heads and solemnly pronouncing the Benediction 'Bless You! my children'... How did you find Pendennis... I wish I'd been home to give you a right royal welcome and to rub your face with raspberries and thus inaugurate you as one of the family."

The AIF was growing and while Len was in Egypt, a new Division, the 4th, was formed. Officers and men for the new battalions were drawn from veteran units that had served at Gallipoli and the fresh troops from Australia, thus blending experience with exuberance.

"13/3/16 ... I received a note from Hunt... he had a job for me if I was tired of Training Battalion duties, so I went to see him. He is to get a company in the 52nd Battalion in the new organisation and had been given carte blanche to select his subalterns by the Second in Command, Major D.A. Lane of Tas and he at once offered me a job... I'll like the change as I have lost all my own boys...of course the faithful James will still be in attendance as the Batman is regarded as the personal property of an officer."

On 22 April Len was promoted to full Lieutenant, *"...I'm greatly pleased and now have to prepare for my third [star], which as things are now I won't be able, unfortunately, to get unless there are a few casualties which I don't want by any manner of means."*

Finally, the 52nd had a short stint in the trenches defending the Suez Canal, *"... can tell you if Johnny Turk does come he'll get a warm reception ...all the men are quite excited at a probable chance of a scrap. All of them have been in camp for months and are quite eager for something to break the monotony."*

They were to be disappointed. In June the Battalion began its journey to the Front Line in northern France. Len's letters show a keenness and anticipation for what lies ahead. The sea voyage to Marseilles left the desert and flies behind, while the train journey to the staging areas behind the Front brought pangs of homesickness as the troops passed through green and pleasant lands.

"...it is beautiful and no wonder the French fight so for their country. All the way there is nothing but gardens and vineyards, the avenues are great and the people most hospitable."

At first the Battalion was billeted at Fletre and Sailly near the Belgium border. They moved into the Front Line in an area called "The Nursery" where new units could become accustomed to trench life.

"The shells hurtle overhead and whistle through the air and crash up against old Fritz's parapet... you could see Fritz's trench going up to the skies, boards, posts, sand bags and dirt... one of the officers here says he'd be quite satisfied to read about it in a book, so would I. Yet there's something fascinating about it; 'tis great sport, yet awful."

In late July, after being pulled out of the Front Line and returned to billets for further training and preparations, the 13th Brigade, of which the 52nd was one of its four battalions, moved towards the Somme battlefield. *"We are A1 again and working as per usual getting ready for the next spasm, when and where it will be we know not, but suppose it will be some where in the 'great push'."*

"France 30/7/16. ... We are camped in an old orchard, the huts for the men are quite shaded from the

sun, but ours are in the open and extremely hot...I can imagine a Sunday like tonight at home, we (the girls and I) would be going to Church and Dad would be piloting Tot and Herb up the hill. The drive to church down to the Port would be at the usual pace and we would just arrive in time... "

Do I sound very homesick because I don't feel so. 'Twas just a reminiscence so jotted it down. The country here is very similar to Tassy and the evenings are just the same...My Platoon is still going strong and I get on with them better than ever since we had a spasm in the Trenches; they reckon I'm game. I wonder?"

On the night of 14 August units of the 13th Brigade attacked Mouquet Farm along with the 4th Brigade. However, the 52nd was used as a reserve and did not take part in the attack. There were a great many Tasmanians within the various battalions involved and Len was able to meet up with some of his old friends from his original unit, the 15th Battalion. This action did not prove successful and Mouquet Farm remained in German hands.

Even now this area had developed an ominous reputation as the Germans realised that the defence of Mouquet Farm determined the rest of their line at Pozieres. The farm was in name only; its buildings had now been obliterated by the intense shelling. However, the Germans had dug deep under the ruins and reinforced their positions with concrete fortifications. This position would not be won easily. Len's unit was pulled out of the line with the rest of the Brigade to rest and reinforce. But preparations were in hand to send them back in. The attrition rate was so horrendous that battalions could only hold the line for a few days before their casualties became overwhelming.

On 1 September orders were received that another attack was to be made on Mouquet Farm. The 52nd Battalion was billeted at La Boisselle, just behind the lines and began preparations for the next "stunt". 100 rounds, 2 bombs [grenades] and 2 sandbags per man were issued; reconnaissance of no-mans land was completed and troops prepared themselves for what was to come. It was to be a bloody encounter. Sergeant Roy Pollard from Len's Platoon in 'C' Company wrote to the family on 30 November 1916 on his way home after being wounded: "*... a few minutes before the charge commenced, he [Len] told me that he felt as if he would not come out of it; I admired him then more than ever I did before, because, he, believing it to be so, led us on with exceptional dash and carrying out his duty as well as any officer has ever done on the Battlefield.*"

The War Diary of the 52nd Battalion provides graphic details of that furious charge: "*...the Companies commenced their assault about 5.14 am leaving their 'Jumping Off' point very nearly at the same moment. The assault was delivered with much spirit and dash, and in some cases a short, but fierce and bloody hand to hand conflict ensued, Bayonets and rifle butts coming into free play. Each Company seized its objective and 'C' Company [Len's unit] evidently pushed forward under our own barrage. The Company Commander (Capt Ekin-Smyth) drew them back towards their objective but was unfortunately about this time mortally wounded. The Company again pushed forward and as an organised Unit ceased to exist.*"

From letters written to the family after the event, it appears Len Wadsley was wounded and placed in a shell crater. Another soldier was brought to the same place, and Len directed that this man, who was severely wounded, be taken to the rear first. When the stretcher party returned, they could find nothing of Len. It is most likely that the fury of artillery fire had buried him in the morass of mud. His body was never found.

The 52nd Battalion lost twelve officers and 438 men in that brutal encounter. The 13th Brigade lost, in total, 41 officers and 1,305 men killed or wounded. It was a high price to pay, but the troops had won, and held against numerous counter attacks, an important objective. For Len his time was over. But through his letters we can sense the spirit of this young Tasmanian who ventured across the sea to do his duty, never to return.

A big thanks to Duncan Kerr's office for photocopying.

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