

The CSU Regional Archives is extending its opening hours to include the first Saturday of every month. On these days, the archives will be open from 10am to 3pm. The next Saturday opening will occur on May 4. This initiative has been put in place to cater for those researchers who are unable to visit the archives on weekdays during normal business hours. It is hoped that enough researchers and visitors will avail themselves of this service to warrant it becoming a permanent occurrence.



An unknown photographer captured this image of a very early Anzac Day march in Wagga, showing soldiers who served during World War I marching down Baylis Street (from the Harold Fife Collection, RW2863).

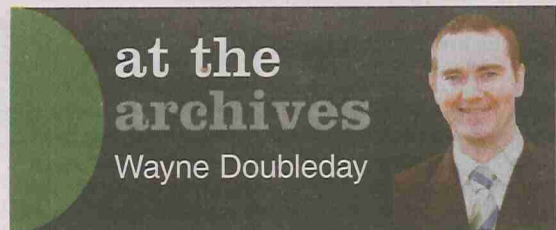
what you need to know

The CSU Regional Archives are open Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm. Located in the Blakemore Building on South Campus of the university, access can be gained via College Avenue or Hely Avenue. Members of the public are welcome to visit the search room, where professional archival staff can assist with inquiries. For those people unable to visit the archives in person, staff can provide a research service for straight-forward inquiries for a fee of \$55 per hour including copying and postage. For further information, phone 6925 3666, email archive@csu.edu.au, or visit our website at www.csu.edu.au/research/archives for a full listing of holdings and more detailed information.

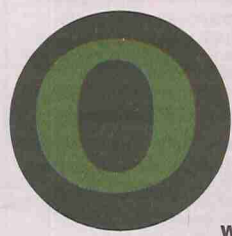
Lest we forget



Letters help remember Wagga's soldiers



at the archives
Wayne Doubleday



On April 25, people all over Australia and New Zealand will be assembling at dawn services and street marches for commemoration services to acknowledge the sacrifices men and women made by joining the armed forces in all wars

and conflicts.

Many young men from Wagga joined the Australian Expeditionary Forces in 1914 and sailed into the unknown to the Middle East and Europe after very little training.

The enlisted men eagerly awaited mail from home just as much as family and relatives at home were anxious to hear from their "boys".

The letters from the front were quite often published for everyone to read in *The Daily Advertiser*.

"It is three now months since we left Australia and I have only received three letters all told. Mail days are the only times we can raise a cheer now, for we are generally too tired after the day's training of eight to 10 hours continuous drill on the desert to do anything but lie down to sleep ... The desert gives a fellow the heartache to drill on a mass of loose sand and gravel in great hillocks as far as the eye can see. You can guess what we feel like after the day's work.

"We had a sumptuous repast on Christmas Day. There were 14 men in my tent, and the rations for dinner consisted of five bottles of wine, one tin of fruit each, also one pudding per man, fruit and nuts, and

the inevitable roast beef and potatoes." – extract of a letter written on January 13, 1915, by Senior Lance Corporal Secombe of Yathella, while on active service in Egypt (published in *The Daily Advertiser*, February 23, 1915).

"We are now camped at Tel el Keber, in the heart of the irrigation area near the Suez Canal, the scene of the big battle in the Soudan War. We form the second line of defense for the Egyptian front and will probably see some fighting here later on. We have a nice camp and the place reminds me of the fertile river flats of the Riverina in spring. We did not have Christmas in the trenches after all, but spent it aboard the P and O steamer Imla at Lemnos. I trust that long before next Christmas we are on our way back to Australia and the cruel war is over." – extract of a letter written on January 3, 1916, by Private GL O'Regan in Egypt, to his parents (published in *The Daily Advertiser*, March 4, 1916).

"We were very busy last week for a time at the beginning of the push in Flanders, working day and night, but the rain soon stopped things."

"We have been working our hardest, three tables going day and night while the latest push was on. The casualties have been very heavy. We have had 400 to 500 per day to this hospital alone for a few days." – extract of a letter written by Captain SH Weedon (who gave up his practice in Wagga to join the AMC) from the 2nd Australian General Hospital in France (published in *The Daily Advertiser*, October 11, 1917).

"This is a splendid place, right on the seashore with a lovely beach. I am doing well and hope to be back with the battalion before long. The first day I came here the head sister ... asked me where I came from ... I told her who you were and she said she knew you. It was a pleasure to meet someone from good old Wagga. It is good to be amongst our own Australian girls ... Young Jack Carswell is in this hospital. He expects to go to 'Blighty' shortly." – extract of a letter written by Private William Miller, 17th Battalion, from the 25th General Hospital in France to

his parents in Wagga (published in *The Daily Advertiser*, December 24, 1917).

Wagga's contributions

THE public of Wagga supported the local organisations such as the Red Cross League and the Wagga Soldiers' Comforts Fund.

The ladies worked tirelessly and also sold buttons for the Australian Comforts Fund, known as the War Chest Fund.

The ladies of the Wagga Soldiers' Comforts Fund (WSCF) did a wonderful service in packing comfort parcels. In October 1917, they packed parcels for several days for the 800 soldiers to whom parcels were sent, the contents of which were displayed in the windows of Hunter Bros in Fitzmaurice Street and Huthwaite's Store in Baylis Street.

The list of soldiers receiving the parcels was published in *The Daily Advertiser* on October 5, 1917.

As the packing of parcels was taking place, several soldiers home on leave in Wagga visited the rooms and the president of WSCF, Mrs EE Collins, introduced them to the lady workers.

Before leaving, the soldiers sincerely thanked the ladies, saying that the parcels made a big difference to them while on "active service".

"Private Heathwood said that he wished to personally thank the ladies of the committee. He said if they could only see the boys receive the parcels, he was sure they would be gratified. He sincerely hoped that they would go on with their good work as their efforts were thoroughly appreciated."

Corporal Ronald Birrell, Private George Stearman, Sergeant Kein and Private Freer endorsed the words of Private Heathwood. Private Freer had received a silk shirt, which had been a great comfort to him.

● References: *The Daily Advertiser*. February 13, 1915, March 4 1916, January 15 1917, October 5 1917, October 11 1917, December 24 1917; *Wagga Wagga, A History* by Sherry Morris.

● Compiled by: June Dietrich