

at the  
archives

Wayne Doubleday



### ■ Saturday Opening

The CSU Regional Archives is currently 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 be May 7. This trial 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 enough researchers and visitors will avail themselves of this service to warrant it becoming a permanent occurrence.

# To the letter

On Monday, April 25, commemorative services will be held all over Australia to remember and acknowledge the service and sacrifice of the young men who joined the armed forces in all wars and conflicts.

Anzac Day was officially named on April 25, 1916. Ceremonies were held in Australia and over 2000 Australian and New Zealand servicemen marched through the streets of London; a London newspaper called them "the knights of Gallipoli".

Hundreds of young men from the Riverina joined the Australian Expeditionary Forces and sailed for Europe with pride and hope.

Families feared for their husbands, sons, brothers, fathers, uncles and friends and were grateful for any letters they received from them, as a symbol of their loved ones safety.

Many of these letters were published in Wagga's *The Daily Advertiser*, excerpts of just a few follow here:



These three brothers – Arthur, Charles, and George Menz of Pulletop – enlisted at the Cootamundra A.I.F. camp on February 11, 1916, joining the 35th Battalion. Just a few months later, their older and younger brothers, John and Leslie, also enlisted at the Cootamundra camp, joining the 55th Battalion. All five brothers served in France for the extent of the war, though spending various periods hospitalised, either in the field or in England. Despite illness and wounds, they all returned to Australia in 1919.

**Published November 28, 1914 – George Cowell, W Jones, T Douglas (Junee) and Reginald Touzel,**

formerly of Wagga were training together in Sydney.

George Cowell states: "I am aboard the SS Suffolk, at Albany, lying anchor waiting arrival of the remaining troop ships to form our fleet, looking around the harbour you can count 24 boats, all conveying boys of the Bulldog breed and there are about 15 or 16 boats still to come... So far it is all like a holiday, quite different to what we had for a few weeks in Sydney. It was hard, very hard, training from morning till night, I tell you it was no joke marching nine or ten miles without a stop with our full kit up (about 70lbs) before lunch ... Kind regards to Wagga

friends from all the boys. I hope we get a chance of popping a few Germans off."

**Published June 25, 1915 – Mrs Meager of Fitzmaurice Street received two letters, written by her husband in the trenches at Gallipoli Peninsula.**

Mr HRW Meager writes: "I have the opportunity of writing to you at last from the trenches, to the accompaniment of shrapnel and snipers. I do not know how much I shall be allowed to tell you about what we have done, so I shall be very non-committal in order to escape the censor... Shrapnel was strange to us all, and we were nervous of it at first. Now we combat it in the most simple way by means of a spade and we sit and smoke while it bursts and scatters all around us, as if nothing mattered, excepting the quality of the tobacco."

A long letter from Mr Meager was published in *The Daily Advertiser* the next day, June 26, 1915, where he gives a graphic description of incidents on the peninsula.



**Published June 26, 1915 – Mr and Mrs WJ Hamilton of Forsyth Street received a letter from their son from the firing line.**

Private Leslie Hamilton: "We have been here a fortnight next Sunday and the battle is still going strong. I think the best way to describe the first week would be to say we paid hell a visit for that period. I have a fairly imaginative mind, but I do not think I could concoct stories of hair-breadth escapes to come up to those which we passed through in reality. I think our boys have proved themselves heroes, and I think their doings will hold a prominent place in modern history. The boys are all in great spirit, and there is not any doubt as to our ultimate success."

**Published January 20, 1916 – Private AE Chapman writing from the front on November 11, sent season's greeting to his friends around Wagga.**

"... I have met a few Wagga lads. Some have been wounded three times and are back, and happy. Jack Ross is one. I also met J Bradley, who used to be in the post office. I also heard Mr GF Plunkett, Yerong Creek is here; also Dave McDonald. There is plenty of work for men of the

right sort; but this is no place for a loafer or a man who thinks he knows more than the people in command. This place will soon prove a man's ability."

**Published January 29, 1916 – Trooper Albert E Hurst wrote to his mother, Mrs MJ Hurst of Elizabeth Street, North Wagga, from Tripoli. He had left Mex and was a distance of 200 miles from there.**

He wrote, "We had a very dreary trip on our horses, so you can guess we were pretty tired when we got here. We were only here a day when we were called into action. There were a lot of English Yeomanry ahead of us ... they had in all 16 killed and 30 wounded for the day ... we were pretty well hemmed in and had to gallop our horses to get through, luckily, none of us were hit..."

**Published August 9, 1916**

"Writing from Egypt, Mr Donald Smith, until recently a member of the commercial staff of *The Daily Advertiser* mentions that he is doing well, 'and looking forward to a shortly expected go at the Turks'. Mr Smith joined the Mounted Rifles in New Zealand, and his company has only recently arrived in Egypt."

■ **Compiled by:**  
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## 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 02 6925 3666, email [archive@csu.edu.au](mailto:archive@csu.edu.au), or visit our website at [www.csu.edu.au/research/archives](http://www.csu.edu.au/research/archives)