



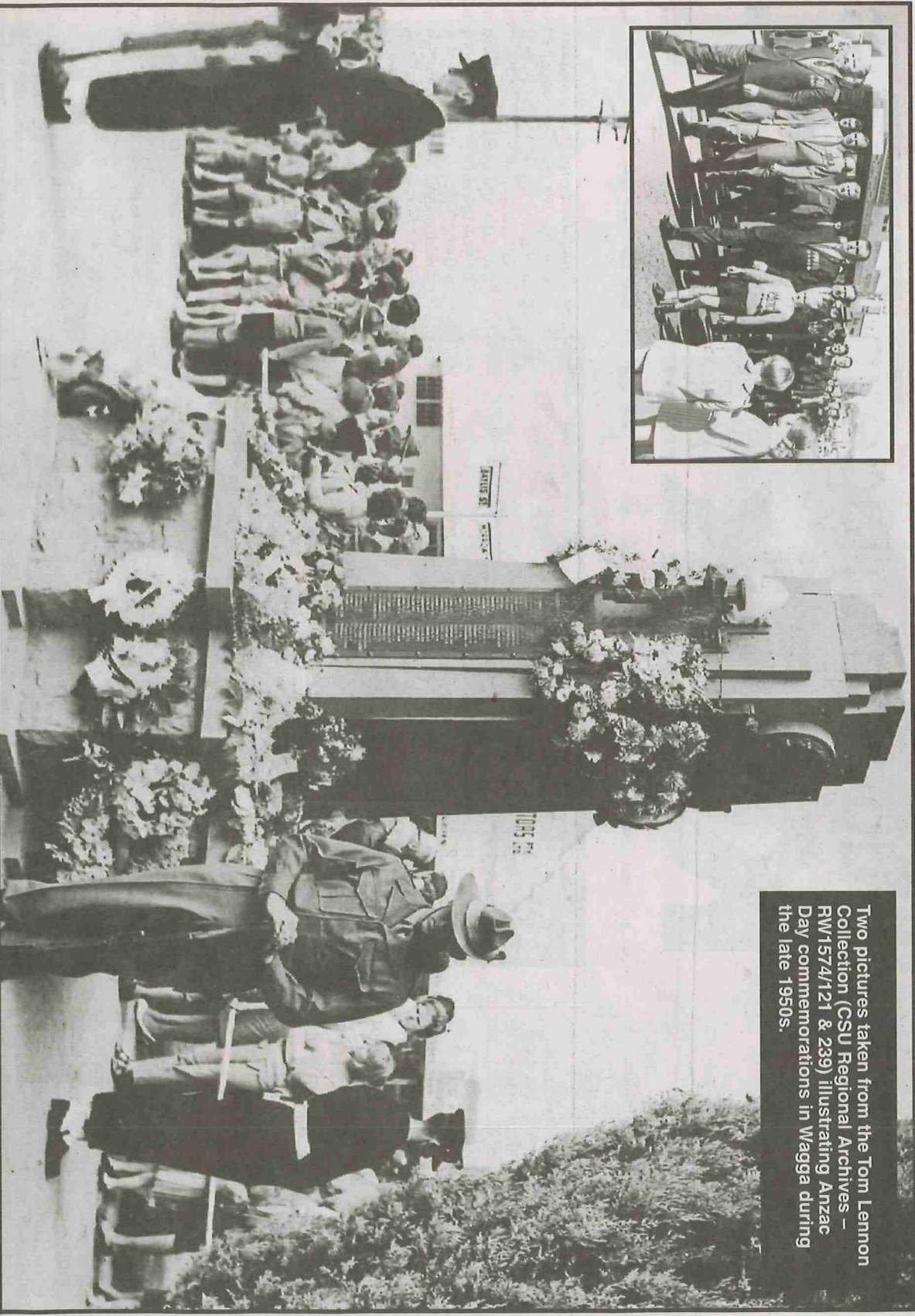
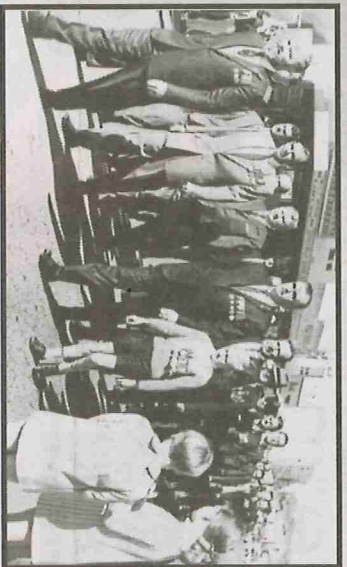
at the
archives
Wayne
Doubleday

What you should know

■ The CSU Regional Archives are open Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm. Located in the Blakemore Building at the 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 straightforward 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 the website at www.csu.edu.au/research/archives for a full listing of holdings and more detailed information.



Two pictures taken from the Tom Lennon Collection (CSU Regional Archives – RW1574/121 & 239) illustrating Anzac Day commemorations in Wagga during the late 1950s.

Wagga remembers the ...

Early days

Anzac Day is an important day for all Australians when we remember and pay tribute to those men and women who served their country, and the countless thousands who gave the ultimate sacrifice. Importantly, the manner in which we commemorate the most special of days has not changed all that significantly over the years.

The traditions established after the end of the Great War are still repeated with great pride on the April 25 each year.

Sherry Morris in her book *Wagga Wagga – A History* comments on the growing importance of Anzac Day in Wagga during the 1920s.

What is most interesting is that while the residents of Wagga remain intensely loyal to Britain and the Commonwealth, they like the rest of Australia, accepted Anzac Day as our own national day of remembrance. Likewise, the characteristics associated with the Anzac spirit fostered the popular belief that Australia as a nation was not born through Federation in 1901, but through the actions of our young men on the beaches of Gallipoli in 1915.

In the initial aftermath of World War I, Anzac Day commemorations in Wagga were disrupted significantly by the Spanish flu or influenza epidemic which was sweeping the world. On the fourth anniversary of the landings at Gallipoli in 1919, the first after the cessation of hostilities, the editorial of *The Daily Advertiser* stated: "The usual memorial gathering at the Town Hall Gardens was abandoned for this reason and there was practically no official acknowledgement of the fact that it was Anzac Day." Despite this, the editor was sure that "...there

is little doubt that the people of the district cherish the tradition established for them by those men of Australia on that far-off Sunday morning." To this effect, the large number of special church services conducted throughout the district were especially well attended.

Anzac Day in 1920 witnessed a "church parade" which is surely the precursor to the march or procession to which we are so accustomed today. Commencing at the railway station at 10.30am, the parade made its way down the main street and received a rousing reception from those people lining the streets.

After reaching the intersection of Johnston Street, the parade was broken up, with those involved moving off to their respective churches for services.

The highlight of the day, according to *The Daily Advertiser*, was the presence and participation of Mr J Gamble, reportedly 95 years of age, and a veteran of both the Crimean War (1854-56) and the first Boer War (1880-81).

In 1921, although Anzac Day had not yet been officially declared a public holiday, almost all Wagga shop keepers, employers and businesses closed for the entire day as a mark of respect.

The procession in 1921 was led by Brigadier General Thomas Blaney, who had been born in Wagga, landed at Gallipoli on the April 25, 1915 and would later reach the rank of Allied Land Forces Commander in the Pacific during World War II.

The Daily Advertiser reported that although "no great number participated in the procession...the residents of Wagga came out en masse", that all church services were extremely well attended, and the crowd in the Town Hall Gardens was estimated at 3000 people.

Anzac Day in 1921 also saw a sports carnival and tug-of-war competition staged in order to help raise funds for the erection of a Memorial

Hall and a monument or cenotaph to the fallen soldiers who did not return.

The carnival continued for a week with "sideshows including the fortune telling tent, hoopla, weight guessing, guessing the height of a pole and a confetti stall. There were hat-trimming, bed-making and nail-driving competitions, raffles and an ugly man competition and dancing to the orchestra."

Much-needed rain played havoc with Anzac Day commemorations in 1922, causing drastic alterations to the planned proceedings meaning that no outdoor ceremony could be held and crowd numbers were also adversely affected. However, the Diggers were unperturbed and made their way from the railway station to the Town Hall Gardens in the pouring rain.

The 1920s also saw Wagga complete permanent tributes to the soldiers who had served their country through the building of the cenotaph (unveiled on September 17, 1922) and the Memorial Arch (unveiled on Anzac Day 1927).

Naturally, these monuments have become the focal points of Anzac Day commemorations since. Fittingly, the site of these two monuments, previously known as the Town Hall Gardens, was renamed the Victory Memorial Gardens and dedicated to the people of Wagga by Mayor E E Collins on Anzac Day, 1981.

The editorial of *The Daily Advertiser* conveyed the following message on Anzac Day 1922: "The qualities of humility, thankfulness, courage and fortitude were the four emblems of the spirit of Anzac, and our nation would be unworthy of its status if it did not embody them in all the acts of commemoration of the sacrifices which displayed that spirit when the test came ... Anzac Day in each year is a vital reminder of a trust and a duty to be lived up to. Will we not see then that in all the affairs of our life as a nation, that the spirit of Anzac is paramount?"

References: *The Daily Advertiser* (26/4/1919, 28/4/1919, 26/4/1920, 25/4/1921, 26/4/1921, 25/4/1922 & 26/4/1922); Sherry Morris, *Wagga Wagga – A History*, Pages 143 to 144; Sherry Morris & Harold Fife, *A History of the Wagga FSL Club*, Pages 6, 9 to 11.