Commemoration for the Lives of the Braidwood and District ANZACS

“We will remember them well”

From 1914 - 1918, 465 volunteers from Braidwood and the District joined the Australian Imperial Force in World War I. 88 lost their lives, never to return home. This is their story.
Introduction
This year, 2015, marks the centenary of the start of the Gallipoli campaign and Australia’s involvement as a nation in the greatest and most terrible conflict ever seen to that time. Australians joined their Armed Forces in large numbers. Their motives were as varied as their upbringings, from a need to save the Empire, of which Australia was an integral part, to the desire to have a great adventure.

Braidwood and district were no exception. Over the four years from 1914 to 1918, from a population of about 5000, 465 men and women from what is now the 2622 postcode area – including Braidwood, Majors Creek, Araluen, Mongarlowe, Nerriga, Ballalaba and Jembaicumbene joined the Navy or Army. Of these 377 returned to Australia. Sadly, 88 lost their lives.

A varying amount of their history is recorded in the Australian War Memorial. Some of their names, but not all, are recorded on local memorials. More is recorded in limited local histories and newspapers, not readily available to the general public; and the people who lived with and knew these distant relatives are also passing on.

The Braidwood RSL Sub Branch has collected all the information available from the Australian War Memorial and local sources, including the Braidwood Museum. Families, still resident in the district, have added their family knowledge and their precious memorabilia.

This booklet is the available story of Thomas David Merton, one of the 88 Braidwood volunteers who did not return from World War I. It contains his details as recorded in the World War I Roll of Honour, his Enlistment Papers, Field Service records, any Casualty notification, correspondence relating to his death, details of decorations won, any available photos, and, in some instances, family correspondence or recollections.

Thomas David Merton died for his country, for you and for me. Please pause a moment to remember him.

Lest We Forget.

WORLD WAR I

World War I lasted four years, from 4 August 1914 until 11 November 1918. It began after the assassination of the heir to the Austrian throne. The axis powers were Germany and Austria. Russia and France were the initial allies. When Germany invaded Belgium, Britain entered the war on the side of Russia and France.

The war was in Europe, the Western Front was in France and Belgium. The Eastern Front was Russia and Austria-Hungary. Africa was another front because of colonial possessions on that continent, and after Turkey entered the war on 1 November 1914, the Middle East became another theatre of war.

Australians generally thought of themselves as an integral part of the British Empire and the Australian Army and Navy were part of the Imperial Forces. In 1914, Australia’s Prime Minister, Andrew Fisher, immediately promised Australian support for Britain ‘to the last man and the last shilling.’ The Australian population was less than five million. 324,000 Australians served overseas. 61,720 lost their lives. 155,000 were wounded. 4,044 became prisoners of war (397 died while captive).

The first Australian troops were sent to Egypt in 1915. The ANZACS – Australian and New Zealand Army Corps – were engaged in battle on the Gallipoli Peninsula against the Turks to control the Dardanelles’ and open the way to Eastern Europe with their fateful landing on 25 April 1915.

The ANZACS were evacuated on 19-20 December 1915. The Gallipoli campaign resulted in the deaths of 7,600 Australians and the wounding of 19,000. Despite the defeat, the legend attached to the heroism, comradeship and valour of the soldiers remain a source of Australian pride and national identity.
This year, 2015, marks the centenary of the start of the Gallipoli campaign and Australia's involvement as a nation in the greatest and most terrible conflict ever seen to that time. Australians joined their Armed Forces in large numbers. Their motives were as varied as their upbringings, from a need to save the Empire, of which Australia was an integral part, to the desire to have a great adventure. Braidwood and district were no exception. Over the four years from 1914 to 1918, from a population of about 5000, 465 men and women from what is now the 2622 postcode area – including Braidwood, Majors Creek, Araluen, Mongarlowe, Nerriga, Ballalaba and Jembaicumbene joined the Navy or Army. Of these 377 returned to Australia. Sadly, 88 lost their lives. A varying amount of their history is recorded in the Australian War Memorial. Some of their names, but not all, are recorded on local memorials. More is recorded in limited local histories and newspapers, not readily available to the general public; and the people who lived with and knew these distant relatives are also passing on. The Braidwood RSL Sub Branch has collected all the information available from the Australian War Memorial and local sources, including the Braidwood Museum. Families, still resident in the district, have added their family knowledge and their precious memorabilia. This booklet is the available story of Thomas David Merton, one of the 88 Braidwood volunteers who did not return from World War I. It contains his details as recorded in the World War I Roll of Honour, his Enlistment Papers, Field Service records, any Casualty notification, correspondence relating to his death, details of decorations won, any available photos, and, in some instances, family correspondence or recollections.

Thomas David Merton died for his country, for you and for me. Please pause a moment to remember him. Lest We Forget.

WORLD WAR I

World War I lasted four years, from 4 August 1914 until 11 November 1918. It began after the assassination of the heir to the Austrian throne. The axis powers were Germany and Austria. Russia and France were the initial allies. When Germany invaded Belgium, Britain entered the war on the side of Russia and France. The war was in Europe, the Western Front was in France and Belgium. The Eastern Front was Russia and Austria-Hungary. Africa was another front because of colonial possessions on that continent, and after Turkey entered the war on 1 November 1914, the Middle East became another theatre of war. Australians generally thought of themselves as an integral part of the British Empire and the Australian Army and Navy were part of the Imperial Forces. In 1914, Australia's Prime Minister, Andrew Fisher, immediately promised Australian support for Britain 'to the last man and the last shilling.' The Australian population was less than five million. 324,000 Australians served overseas. 61,720 lost their lives. 155,000 were wounded. 4,044 became prisoners of war (397 died while captive).

The first Australian troops were sent to Egypt in 1915. The ANZACs – Australian and New Zealand Army Corps – were engaged in battle on the Gallipoli Peninsula against the Turks to control the Dardanelles' and open the way to Eastern Europe with their fateful landing on 25 April 1915. The ANZACS were evacuated on 19-20 December 1915. The Gallipoli campaign resulted in the deaths of 7,600 Australians and the wounding of 19,000. Despite the defeat, the legend attached to the heroism, comradeship and valour of the soldiers remain a source of Australian pride and national identity.

ROLL OF HONOUR

THOMAS DAVID MERTON

Service Number: 5136  
Rank: Private  
Unit: 33rd Australian Infantry Battalion  
Service: Australian Army  
Conflict: First World War, 1914-1918  
Date of death: 17 October 1917  
Place of death: Belgium  
Cause of death: Died of wounds  
Age at death: 19  
Place of association: Newtown, Australia  
Cemetery or memorial details: Nine Elms British Cemetery, Poperinghe, Flanders, Belgium  
Source: AWM145 Roll of Honour cards, 1914-1918 War, Army

Location on the Roll of Honour: Thomas David Merton's name is located at panel 122 in the Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial.
33rd Australian Infantry Battalion

The 33rd Battalion was formed in January 1916 at a camp established at the Armidale showground in New South Wales. The bulk of the battalion's recruits were drawn from the New England region and thus it was dubbed "New England's Own". The Battalion's first, and only, commanding officer was Lieutenant Colonel Leslie Morshead, who would become famous as the commander of the 9th Australian Division during the Second World War.

The 33rd Battalion became part of the 9th Brigade of the 3rd Australian Division. It left Sydney, bound for the United Kingdom in May 1916. Arriving there in early July, the battalion spent the next four months training. It crossed to France in late November, and moved into the trenches of the Western Front for the first time on 27 November, just in time for the onset of the terrible winter of 1916-17.

The Battalion had to wait until the emphasis of British and Dominion operations switched to the Ypres Sector of Belgium in mid-1917 to take part in its first major battle; this was the battle of Messines, launched on 7 June. The battalion held the ground captured during the battle for several days afterwards and was subjected to intense artillery bombardment. One soldier wrote that holding the line at Messines was far worse than taking it. The battalion's next major battle was around Passchendaele on 12 October. The battlefield, though, had been deluged with rain, and thick mud tugged at the advancing troops and fouled their weapons. The battle ended in a disastrous defeat.

For the next five months the 33rd alternated between periods of rest, training, labouring, and service in the line. When the German Army launched its last great offensive in the spring of 1918, the Battalion was part of the force deployed to defend the approaches to Amiens around Villers-Bretonneux. It took part in a counter-attack at Hangard Wood on 30 March, and helped to defeat a major drive on Villers-Bretonneux on 4 April.

Later in 1918, the 33rd also played a role in the Allies' own offensive. It fought at the battle of Amiens on 8 August, during the rapid advance that followed, and in the operation that breached the Hindenburg Line at the end of September, thus sealing Germany's defeat. The 33rd Battalion disbanded in May 1919.

Private T. Merton, son of Arthur Merton, a former resident of Majors Creek, and a nephew of John Stuart, was killed in France. The soldier had recently won a Distinguished Service Medal for bravery.

Letters from the Front by Roslyn Maddrell
The 33rd Battalion was formed in January 1916 at a camp established at the Armidale showground in New South Wales. The bulk of the battalion’s recruits were drawn from the New England region and thus it was dubbed “New England’s Own”. The Battalion’s first, and only, commanding officer was Lieutenant Colonel Leslie Morshead, who would become famous as the commander of the 9th Australian Division during the Second World War.

The 33rd Battalion became part of the 9th Brigade of the 3rd Australian Division. It left Sydney, bound for the United Kingdom in May 1916. Arriving there in early July, the battalion spent the next four months training. It crossed to France in late November, and moved into the trenches of the Western Front for the first time on 27 November, just in time for the onset of the terrible winter of 1916-17.

The Battalion had to wait until the emphasis of British and Dominion operations switched to the Ypres Sector of Belgium in mid-1917 to take part in its first major battle; this was the battle of Messines, launched on 7 June. The battalion held the ground captured during the battle for several days afterwards and was subjected to intense artillery bombardment. One soldier wrote that holding the line at Messines was far worse than taking it. The battalion’s next major battle was around Passchendaele on 12 October. The battlefield, though, had been deluged with rain, and thick mud tugged at the advancing troops and fouled their weapons. The battle ended in a disastrous defeat.

For the next five months the 33rd alternated between periods of rest, training, labouring, and service in the line. When the German Army launched its last great offensive in the spring of 1918, the Battalion was part of the force deployed to defend the approaches to Amiens around Villers-Bretonneux. It took part in a counter-attack at Hangard Wood on 30 March, and helped to defeat a major drive on Villers-Bretonneux on 4 April.

Later in 1918, the 33rd also played a role in the Allies’ own offensive. It fought at the battle of Amiens on 8 August, during the rapid advance that followed, and in the operation that breached the Hindenburg Line at the end of September, thus sealing Germany’s defeat.

The 33rd Battalion disbanded in May 1919. Private T. Merton, son of Arthur Merton, a former resident of Majors Creek, and a nephew of John Stuart, was killed in France. The soldier had recently won a Distinguished Service Medal for bravery.

**Letters from the Front by Roslyn Maddrell**

9 October 1917: Belgium: Western Front (Belgium), Passchendaele Area, Passchendaele: A 4.5 inch Q.F. Howitzer gun bogged and abandoned on Westhoek Ridge during the attack at Passchendaele, in the Ypres sector. The building on the left was used as a Regimental Aid Post by the 5th Australian Infantry Brigade during the battle.
Depicts an Australian First World War recruitment poster with an image of a wounded soldier sounding his bugle for assistance as he leans over the bodies of wounded soldiers in a trench. In the background, coming over the horizon, are German soldiers. Norman Lindsay (1879-1970) was a painter, draughtsman, illustrator, cartoonist, printmaker, writer and sculptor. He joined the Sydney 'Bulletin' magazine as a staff artist, 1901-09, 1910-23 and 1932-58. During the First World War he produced jingoistic cartoons and pro-conscription posters. 'The last call' and 'Fall in', the last of the series of six Lindsay posters commissioned by Australian recruiting authorities in 1918, had not been used when the Armistice was signed. The former was drawn from photographs of the brother of Lindsay's cook and housemaid at his home at Springwood, NSW.
14 October 1917: Belgium: Western Front (Belgium), Passchendaele Area, Passchendaele: Members of the 40th Battalion taking the opportunity to 'clean up', after coming out of the trenches west of Passchendaele, in the Ypres Sector. This camp was between Dragoon and Hussar Farms, near Ypres, and was occupied by troops in a brief respite from the fighting. Note the tents in the background.

6 November 1917: Belgium: Western Front (Belgium), Passchendaele Area, Broodseinde: The Cemetery near the cutting on the Ypres Roulers railway on Broodseinde Ridge, in the Ypres sector. Passchendaele can just be seen in the distance on the right.
AUSTRALIAN IMPERIAL FORCE.

Attestation Paper of Persons Enlisted for Service Abroad.

Name: MERTON THOMAS DAVID
Unit: 2/14th Battalion
Joined on: 27-1-16

Questions to be put to the Person Enlisting before Attestation.

1. What is your Name?
   Thomas David Merton

2. In which Parish or Town were you born?
   in or near the Town of Parramatta in the County of Monaro

3. Are you a natural born British Subject or a Naturalised British Subject? (N.B.—If the latter, papers to be shown.)
   Naturalised British

4. What is your age?

5. What is your trade or calling?

6. Are you, or have you been, an Apprentice? If so, where, to whom, and for what period?

7. Are you married?
   No

8. Who is your next of kins? (Address to be stated)
   Father: Mr. A. Merton
   Mother: Mrs. Merton

9. Have you ever been convicted by the Civil Power?

10. Have you ever been discharged from any part of His Majesty's Forces, with Ignorance, or as Inconceivable and Dishonorable, or on account of Conviction of Felony, or of a Sentence of Penal Servitude, or have you been dismissed with Disgrace from the Navy?

11. Do you now belong to, or have you ever served in, His Majesty's Army, the Marines, the Militia, the Militia Reserve, the Territorial Force, Royal Navy, or Colonial Forces? If so, state which, and if not now serving, state cause of discharge.

12. Have you stated the whole, if any, of your previous service?

13. Have you ever been rejected as unfit for His Majesty's Service? If so, on what grounds?

14. Do you understand that no Separation Allowance will be issued in respect of your service beyond an amount which together with Pay would reach eight shillings per day.

15. Are you prepared to undergo inoculation against smallpox and enteric fever?

I, Thomas Merton, do solemnly declare that the above answers made by me to the above questions are true, and I am willing and hereby voluntarily agree to serve in the Military Forces of the Commonwealth of Australia within or beyond the limits of the Commonwealth.

*And I further agree to allot not less than two-fifths of the pay payable to me from time to time during my service for the support of my wife and children.

Date: 27-1-16

Signature of person enlisted.

*This clause to be amended where necessary and should be struck out in the case of unmarried men or widowers without children under 18 years of age.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>24/11/18</td>
<td>M.O. 2.103 Received</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/12/18</td>
<td>COPY MADE FOR WAR PENSIONS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/2/19</td>
<td>CONFIRMATION RECEIVED OF OBN 6.4TH 1962. Vido 16th. 3rd. sol.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>War History Lines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30/3/20</td>
<td>POSTCARD OF MEDAL MANUFACTURED TO NEXT OF KIN E.R.M.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/4/22</td>
<td>VICTORIA WAR MEDAL 1914-15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>STAR (AUS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BRITISH WAR MEDAL 1914-15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>VICTORIA MEDAL 1914-15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FIELD SERVICE

REPORT of Death of a Soldier to be forwarded to the War Office with the least possible delay after receipt of notification of death on Army Form B. 318 or Army Form A. 36, or from other official documentary sources.

RANK OR CORPS: 3rd Battalion A.I.F. Symonds, Troop, Battery as Company

Regimental No: 51524 Rank: Private

Surname: NUTON Christian Name: Thomas David

Date: 17th October, 1917 Place: 3rd Australian Casualty Clearing Station

Date of Death: Died of wounds received in action

Nature and Date of Report: Hospital Report dated 17th October, 1917

State whether he leaves a Will or not

FOR BURIAL REPORT SEE B. 109

Signature of Officer in charge of Section

110 GREYHOUND ROAD,
HAMMERSMITH, LONDON,
W. 6.

Australian Imperial Force.

Kit Store.

Inventory of Effects of
6436e, Norton, T. D., 33rd Batt’n, A.I.F.

Forwarded to:

Father:
Mr. Arthur Norton,
123, Station Street,
Newtown,
Sydney,
New South Wales.

Effects:

Ev. 3rd Echelon, France. 5.2.18. (10345).

1 Mark Note, 3 Coins, Scissors, Knife, Mirror & Comb in Case,
Wallet, Purse, Diary, Cards, Photos, Letters, Medal Ribbon.

No. of Package D/S

Checked by.
On the morning of February 23rd 1917 Private Morton displayed great gallantry, determination and initiative. At 8 am he asked and received permission to take advantage of the fog and go into No Man’s Land to snipe and examine the enemy’s wire. On nearing the German second line of wire he heard a working party picking in the trenches. He at once moved to a shell hole between the third and last line of wire, a distance of 80 yards from the enemy’s trench and 250 yards from our own. Here he distinguished himself. On the lift of the fog he saw an enemy observer whom he killed. Shortly afterwards he shot another who was observing close to the same spot. Later two more appeared one of whom pointed in Morton’s direction. He shot this man and he fell into the trench. Eventually a man jumped over the parapet and hid in the wire. This caused great commotion and talk in the enemy’s trenches. Whilst in the act of throwing a stick grenade he was shot by Private Morton. The grenade fell close by but failed to explode. A 5th man appeared and got over the parapet to throw bombs. Private Morton accounted for him before he reached the wire. The enemy then bombed from their trench and threw about 50 bombs. Private Morton meanwhile withdrew and came under heavy fire from 2 machine guns. Private Morton was also fired at by Private ‘So’ who sniped also from the enemy’s first line of wire on the right of our trench. Morton returned to one of our snipers and remained there until recalled.

[Signature]

Sgt. T. Bennett

[Stamp]
BASE RECORDS OFFICE, AIF, 29th August, 1917.

Dear Madam,

I have much pleasure in forwarding hereunder copy of extract from Supplement No. 50023 to the London Gazette of 17th April, 1917, relating to the conspicuous services rendered by your son, No. 5156 Private T. D. Merton, 33rd Battalion.

X      XX      XX

AWARDED THE DISTINGUISHED CONDUCT MEDAL

HIS MAJESTY THE KING has been graciously pleased to approve of the award of the Distinguished Conduct Medal to the undersigned soldier for acts of gallantry and devotion to duty in the field:

No. 5156 Private THOMAS DAVID MERTON.

For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty. He advanced under cover of a fog and took up a position in "No Man's Land" from which he shot five of the enemy. He has at all times displayed great courage and initiative.

X      XX      X

The above has been promulgated in Commonwealth of Australia Gazette, No. 133 of 21st August, 1917.

Yours faithfully,

Major.

Officer I/c Base Records.

Mrs. M. Merton,
125 Station Street,
Rostown,
Sydney, N.S.W.
Officer In Charge Base Records

Dear Sir,

5136a

My Son Private T. D. Morton having died of wounds on October 17th 1916 in France
I ask the Officer In Charge to write to me & send all his personal belongings to me and send on 5
he is dead. I have not received anything it would be very thankful if you could help me. He was decorated at D.C.M.

I request his medal from the King
by the same person. I do not know if
I held it on him in France. I hope
his 10 months as if anything happening
to him has come through would the
my please to please come.

Yours truly,

Nellie Morton
In Memory of
Private
Thomas David Merton
D C M
5136, 33rd Bn., Australian Infantry, A.I.F. who died on 17 October 1917 Age 19
Son of Arthur D. and Ellen Merton, of 123, Station Road, Newtown, Sydney, New South Wales. Born Major’s Creek, New South Wales.
Remembered with Honour
Nine Elms British Cemetery

Commemoated in perpetuity by
the Commonwealth War Graves Commission
Acknowledgements

Everybody responded enthusiastically to the idea of capturing the information about Braidwood’s 88 World War I veterans who lost their lives. The Braidwood RSL Sub Branch is most grateful for the support they received in carrying out this task and would like to acknowledge those of whom we are aware: Karen, Chris and Renee Nelson, Roslyn Maddrell, Karen Shea, Jill Clarke, Rod McClure, Ben and Meaghan Frohling, Diane McGrath, Us On Mondays Quilting Group, Len Mutton & Co and local shopkeepers for their World War I window displays.

Thank you to the students and teachers of Braidwood Central School and St. Bedes School who have embraced these soldiers and have honoured their memories on Anzac Day 2015.

The Braidwood RSL Sub Branch raised a good proportion of the funds for the cost of producing these booklets. The efforts of the members of the sub branch involved are very much appreciated. This money was augmented by welcome funding from the Federal Government through the ANZAC Centenary Local Grants Program and the Braidwood Community Bank.

To all those who helped in any way, many thanks. Your efforts have ensured we remember these Braidwood and District Veterans well.

Back Cover: Peace Day, 11th November 1918, Wallace Street, Braidwood.

“Wild day in Braidwood: When Braidwood woke up on Tuesday morning to find the ‘glad tidings of great joy’ awaiting it that Germany had signed the armistice and the frightful carnage of the past four years or so had come to an end it simply went mad with delight. No other words could adequately describe the excitement that followed.” “Braidwood Letters from the Front” by Roslyn Maddrell.
ROLL OF HONOUR

Alley, Clair Underwood
Archer, Fred
Backhouse, Victor John
Barnett, Frederick George
Barry, Charles Louis
Beatty, Walter Cusack
Bell, John Henry Edward
Black, George Scott
Bruce, Thomas Fraser
Byrne, Cecil John
Callan, William Henry
Catlin, Robert Henry
Clarke, Lester Thomas
Cook, Thomas John
Crandell, Christopher George
Cregan, Clarence Theodore Augustus
Cullen, Henry Thomas
Davis, John Henry
Davis, Oscar Raymond Stanley
Dawson, Edric Athol
Dayball, Arthur Joseph
Dempsey, Charles Frederick
Dempsey, Charles
Dowell, Frederick Robert
Feeney, William
Fisher, Osborne
Flack, John Foster
Garnett, Henry James
Geelan, Robert Michael
Gosling, Fred
Gough, James
Green, Francis Henry
Healy, Myrtle James
Howard, John Alexander
Huggett, William
Hunt, Frederick William
Hunt, John
Hush, Percy Alfred
Hush, Thomas
Hush, Austin Septimus
Innes, Henry George
Kelly, Herbert Albert
Kemp, Leslie Smith
Keyte, Robert

Knight, Charles Oliver
Lee, Thomas James
Lennon, James
Lupton, Spencer
Lynch, James Joseph
Matthews, Francis
McCool, Francis Leslie Neil
McDonald, Alexander Joseph
McLean, Donald
McRae, Finley Arnold
Meade, Arthur Stuart
Merton, Thomas David
Montgomery, Stanley
Moore, William
Newberry, Alwyn (Alwin) Horace James
O’Brien, Thomas Daniel
O’Reilly, John
Pooley, Edward
Rex, Horace Joseph
Riley, Frank
Roberts, Frederick Bede
Robinson, William James
Rodgers, Albert
Seidel, Alfred George
Seidel, Henry Edward
Sharpe, George Lyle
Sharpe, Reginald
Sherman, Edgar Robert
Sherman, Percy Frederick
Simmons, George
Smith (Greenwood), George
Spicer, William Henry
Steele, Alexander Norman
Stein, Daniel Godfrey
Stewart, David Walter
Styles, Reginald Lucian
Torp, Patrick Edward
Torp, Thomas Patrick
Walker, William Albert
Watt, James
Watt, Oscar Harold McClure
White, Alister
Whitelaw, Thomas Philip
Wilson, Samuel Charles

Lest We Forget