

Ingleburn RSL Sub Branch History by Wack Allen (1962)

In this and future articles I will try to give you something of the past doings of the Sub -Branch since we started some thirty or so years ago.

In the first place I must take you back to a land sale, which was held on the 12th March 1921. under instructions of the Perpetual Trustee Company. The land was known as the Laycocks Estate and was bounded by Oxford, Road, Cumberland Road, Ingleburn Road [now known as Macquarie Road,] Kings Road and the railway line. On the western side of the railway line from Denham Court Road, Stanley Road to Bunberry Currant Creek. The sale was held on the block of land where our Club now stands. The block of land we are interested in at present is now known as the Ingleburn Soldiers Memorial Park, about which I will have more to say later. Up to this time Ingleburn did not have a Public Park and all sports and functions were held on vacant ground where Dr. Hallinan, A. Hayes, B. Layland and V. Klages now reside. Our present Park and Oval was first purchased by Mr. O. Black for 20 Pounds an acre, however, a few years later the Ingleburn Council, with the help of the local citizens, took over this piece of land approx. 10 acres, as an Ingleburn Park.

It was at the opening of the Park, to which all ex -servicemen were invited, that the idea of starting an R.S.L. Sub -Branch was brought forward by A. Graham, W. Hilder and H. Maze. who were at that time members of the Liverpool Sub -Branch. Soon after the Park opening they got all interested people together and it was decided to call a meeting to be held in the Scout Hall near the Ingleburn Railway Station. On the night of the meeting a fellow called Smith was present from R.S.L. Headquarters, who acted as Returning Officer at the elections for positions, which were filled by A. Graham, President, H. Maze, Secretary and W. Hilder, Treasurer. Now the Sub -Branch was on its way, we used to meet on the third Thursday of each month in the Scout Hall, rent for the Hall being nil. We made it quite pleasant by the addition of a few decorations, panes of glass, minor repairs and paint. The Sub -Branch was formed, as far as I can remember in 1926 or early 1927. I do know it was at the end of 1927 when electric power came to Ingleburn, and the Diggers had the light put on to the Scout Hall where previously we had held meetings under kerosene lamps. For the first few years the Sub-Branch went along well with always a good roll -up at meetings. The Women's Auxiliary also got under way with the first President being Sister Olive McRae who was also made a member of the Sub -Branch, being the only Nursing Sister to wear the League Badge of the Ingleburn Sub -Branch as far as I can remember. The Women's Auxiliary were a great help to the Branch in the years to come. There is one woman I would like to mention here, Mrs. Connery. On our meeting nights, in the winter when things were very cold, this woman would bring down to our meetings a billy -can of hot coffee and biscuits. She lived in the same street where our President now lives, she was also a great worker for the Diggers.

As I have already said the Sub -Branch went along very well for the first few years till about the 1930's when we were hit by the depression, then things began to get hard, no work, very little money and men on the dole. To keep our members on our books they paid their Subs. at 1/- per month so things were very hard. We soon began to get S.O.S. calls from some of our members. Where possible the Sub -Branch was always ready to help, we also received from Head Quarters two or three parcels of clothing, boots, hats etc. which were a help to those in need. One Christmas we put it on Headquarters for a hand-out from their Welfare Funds, we had some 25 members in need of help. They sent us a cheque for 2 pounds and 15 shillings, think of it, about 2/- a man. With the help of a Digger butcher [who is still in Ingleburn] who came to light with some two dozen legs of smoked mutton and a few groceries and vegetables from here and there, we were able to put a little more on the Christmas tables of those in need. We had a call for help from a Digger at Minto, a Major Douglas, who was trying to get a home on Minto Road so with the help of four Diggers with trucks we raided a burnt out cottage in Bensley Road one Friday night and got enough bricks for his foundations. Next morning a team of Sub -Branch members were on the job with tools of trade and

in no time the Major had two rooms and a kitchen on his block of land, hat house still stands, I think V. Hawes lives there now. So that is how things were done in those days. A few of the members also received loads of wood from the Sub -Branch and in cases of sickness or deaths in the family help was always ready. When the Council took over the Park they took a building block on Denham Court Road for a right of way into the Park. Some of our members thought it would be a good idea to make a garden plot there, so we put it to the Council and to our surprise the block was handed over to the Sub -Branch to be made into a garden. We set to work and planted privet hedge, roses and date palms, we also got a load of bricks to form the oval around the garden. This was all done by the Diggers. I will now tell you how we got our Memorial built there. The bricks were from the foundations of the old Church of England, which had been pulled down some years earlier, on the corner of Cumberland Road and Minto Road. We took the bricks to the garden and Mr. C. Shaw, who was 80 years of age at the time, offered to do the job for us. I think you will agree that he did a good job, and the cost to us was, in Diggers talk, Buckshee or Sweet F.A. Mr. Shaw lived in Liverpool Street near the Park gates. In the base of that Memorial a tin has been placed with cuttings of Daily papers, also the Campbelltown News, which may make interesting reading on a hundred years time or so, who knows.

In 1931 it was decided to build a brick fence with wrought iron gates at the entrance, as the straying stock did not treat our garden too kindly. This we did and these gates were opened by Major General Sir Charles Rosenthal K.C..B.,C.M.G.,D.S.O,V.D. on Sunday 25th October, 1931. The procession was from the School of Arts and consisted of The Band, Returned Men, Boy Scouts and the General Public. The dedication service was given by the Rev. J.H.MacGoun, Sen.Chaplain R.S.L. Campbelltown. At the gates a Guard of Honour was formed, with A. Graham in charge of the Returned Men, where Sir Charles came through and spoke to all men, asking which Unit they were from, he also signed all our hymn sheets. He said later that he had met all the A.I.F. as there were men from all Units of the 1st World War present. A photo was taken of all troops present by Miss E. McFarlane. I will give you a list of some of the boys in that group.

A.GRAHAM, P.MCDONALD, T.BALL, L.PIPER, W.YARDLY, T. MOSS, H. MILLER, L. ELLIS, D. UNDERWOOD, W. TOMS, J. BOLGER, W. ARDLEY, R. COOPER, W. HINDMARSH, V. CHIVERS, G.ALLEN, W. ALLEN, R. MCRAE, W. MOONEY, S. CRANE, L. KRIPPNER, W. BROADBENT, G.DOWNES. C. ASHBOURNE.

There are quite a few more that I cant place, after all 30 years is a long time.

The R.S.L. has had four life members since we started, the first, as I mentioned earlier was Sister Olive McRae also Bill Yardley. Bill died in Liverpool Hospital after he was knocked over by the bus at the gates at Ingleburn Railway Station. Bill was 80 years of age. There was also Johnny Keats who passed away about two years ago, aged 82, and the one left and still going is Charlie Pomfret, who is 81 - so old Soldiers never die, they only fade away.

We always held our Anzac Services at the Park, but several times we were washed out by rain so we decided to hold our Service at the School of Arts, and then have the procession to the Park afterwards, if raining the wreaths were taken by car.

I will give you the names of our Presidents over the years. Firstly Archie Graham, Archie at present is a Master Builder at Kiama, then came Percy Mc Donald [Glenfield] Percy has had in all nine terms as President. Stan Freeman came next, he had to give the job away when he became an M.L.A. Member for Blacktown. Stan lives in Bigge Street, Liverpool and is now President of the Liverpool Sub -Branch. Vic Chivers carried on after Stan, he is still here in Ingleburn. Then came yours truly, Wacko,

My turn was for five years, I was the last of the World War 1 Diggers for the job. Since World War 2 there has been Jim Appleby, George Kayess, Bob Noal, Keith Fraser, John Gorm and Ray Connell, who has also done five years. As you know Bob Ashby is now in the chair. Most Past Presidents are still on deck, but not so with the Past Secretaries. As far as I can remember they came in this

order: Harry Mase, Dick Underwood, Reg Cooper, Syd Massey, Jack Madgewick, Stan Crane, Cecil Ashdown, Vic Chivers, Harry Bainbridge, Joe Heskey. Joe was the last of the World War 1 Diggers to hold the job, from then on I will leave it to the younger Diggers of World War 2 to give you their names as I am not too sure how they run. The Past Secretaries who have passed away, as far as I know, are H. Mase, D. Underwood, S. Massey, J. Madgewick, H. Bainbridge and J. Heskey. We have always laid wreaths on the graves of our departed comrades in the Denham Court Cemetery, those who are laid to rest there are Col. Holman, W. Oliver, F. Oliver, G. Kerr, J. Keats and J. Heskey. These graves are always looked after and kept in good order by Digger Joe Bolger who lives not far from the cemetery. Thanks a lot Joe.

As our membership began to grow our meeting room became too small so a move was made to hold our meetings in a room, which was then at the back of the School of Arts, this gave us more breathing space and was more central to the town. We also held Socials, Dances and Concerts in the School of Arts from time to time. I have called on my old friend, Digger Vic Chivers, who will at a later date give you some of the activities which were held in that Hall. We had to keep things going to try and get in more money to carry on, we were still in the Depression and things were not too good when the war started in 1939.

When the war broke out things got busy with the Sub -Branch, farewells to the boys going overseas and later on Welcome Home in which the R.S.L. played a big part. At each farewell the Sub -Branch presented every boy who left Ingleburn and Glenfield with an Eversharp silver pencil. In about 1940 the young girls of the district formed the R.S.L. Younger Set which was a big help to the Diggers at send-offs etc. Somewhere about this time the fathers of the boys who left for overseas formed what was called the Fathers Association of the R.S.L. Their officers were G. Foreman, President; P. Connell, Secretary; R. Noble, Treasurer; they also worked in with the R.S.L. It was at this time that we became the owners of the corner block of ground, which I will tell you about later.

The military had the use of our Park for a ration dump, everything went from here to the different out -posts between Botany Bay and Bulli. It was through them that our garden plot got damaged, the brickwork around the oval was all broken and the base of the Memorial cracked. The marble plaque on the gate post inscribed "Soldiers Memorial Park 1914-18" was smashed to pieces. One gate was buckled and had to be replaced, then they finished up by knocking over a gate post. So after many complaints to the Council also to the Military people from the R.S.L., the Council took over the next block of ground for an entrance to the Park they also gave them a 20 foot laneway off Aero Road on the other side of the Park. We were then able to lock our gates against traffic from the Denham Court Road.

Our first hut, which stands on the block of ground at the back of our Club Rooms, was given to the Sub -Branch by Headquarters as a gift. When the Second A.I.F. were in camp at Ingleburn this hut was built there by League Headquarters for the troops as a reading, writing and rest room, it was staffed by the members of the Liverpool, Ingleburn and Campbelltown Sub -Branches with Ingleburn playing the biggest part, being local. When the Second A.I.F. moved out the Citizens Forces took over the camp and this hut was closed. It stood empty for some months and Liverpool Sub-Branch were after it for their meeting rooms. One day in 1943 we received a letter from H.Q. telling us that we could have it and that we would have to pay for its removal. We did not knock it back but the trouble was that we had this as a gift but no ground on which to place it. At our next meeting, I was detailed to interview the local estate agent regarding a block of ground. He had four blocks on the Western side of the railway, also one near the Church of England, another alongside where the Ingleburn Fire Station now stands. However, none of these blocks suited the members as they thought the prices were a bit too high. Then they asked me if my brother George would sell us his land where the hut now stands. So I wrote to George telling him what we had been given also asking him if he would sell us his block. When I got his reply he said that for the Diggers he would sell it to us for what he paid for it twenty years earlier, 100 pounds, we then had to bargain with him and he agreed on 50 pounds down and the rest in 12 months' time.

The next thing was to get the hut moved, so we contacted several people who could remove it for us, but we decided on a Mr. Diggleman a contractor at Granville, he would do the job for 34 pounds. We had to survey the roads for the best way to get it here. This hut is 18 x 30 ft so the bridges on the Glenfield Road, Aero Road and Denham Court Road would not let us through also the overhead telephone wires at Ingleburn Station were too low to get under, so our only hope was Minto. Here again two bridges were too narrow but could be by-passed, but the Railway Gates at Minto were also too narrow. We put it to the Railway Department to move the two gate posts and lay old sleepers between the tracks to let us get through, which they agreed to do, the price being 14 pound to be paid in advance...then on a certain date at 9.20 am we were to be there to pass through as they had to have flagmen out for trains etc. Our men were there at 9 o'clock waiting, but a week or so later we received another bill from the Department 7 pound as we had kept them waiting [All Bulb!] Our Secretary got in touch with W. H. Spooner M.L.A. stating the facts, the next we heard was that the debt had been wiped so the Railways are still in debt for that amount.

We now had our own hut for meetings etc. For the next 6 years George Metcalfe Snr. and myself ran the Euchre Parties and Housie to get a bit more in the kitty. This hut contained 9 tables and 36 chairs which came in very handy for the Euchre. The hut was officially opened by Col. Hyman, State President at the time on 29th January 1944, there was quite a good roll up.

I mentioned earlier about the corner block of ground. One day Peter Connell asked me did I think the Diggers would care to have this block. I would not have been right in the head to knock that back, so I said "Yes". He then got in touch with the Perpetual Trustees as to the price etc. and the reply came back that they wanted 320 pounds for it, as this ground was still in their hands. We put a sob story over that it was wanted for the Returned Men and they dropped the price to 120 pounds cash. At the Fathers Association meeting, it was moved that a letter be sent to all residents of the District telling them what we had in mind and asking for a donation. P. Connell and myself were the official collectors. No man was more pleased than Peter was when the donations of 120 pounds was received. By the time the last amount came in we were a few bob short of 160 pounds. The Deed and Title of this block was handed over to me as, President of the R.S.L. at that time, by Mr. G. Foreman, President of the Fathers Association on the 29th January 1944 at the opening of our hut. Now we have a block of ground there which is 124 x 150 ft. The overall price 220 pounds, which I think is good buying with anyone's money.

The money that we had over after everything was settled, was handed over to the R.S.L. funds and amounted to about 25 pounds. At a later date, I also handed in somewhere about the same amount from the Welcome Home Committee, after all our boys had returned from the 1939 - 45 war. I was also President of that Committee and it was my pleasing job to welcome back to Ingleburn some 196 boys. It was at these Welcome Homes that our Woman's Auxiliary played a big part, for which I must give them a big Thank You, they were always ready to give help to the Diggers when needed. Some of these women are well remembered by the Diggers down through the years, names such as Mrs. P. McRae, Mrs. Freeman, Mrs. Mooney, Mrs. Ellis, Mrs. Pomfret, Miss Welshman and others I may have forgotten, who passed through the Chair as Presidents of the Auxiliary.

After the War finished in 1945 building material was hard to get so we decided to try and get a building through disposals. Our first try was for the Picture Theatre in Hargrave Park at Warwick Farm. This building was steel framed, it was 60 x 210 feet and 30 ft. high, the price 2,000 pounds. Everything was going our way until the Housing Commission stepped in and stopped the sale, as they still wanted it for the people when they made Flats out of the Navy Camp. Our next try was for another building at Orange Grove down near Balmain. We went down on the Sunday morning to have a look at it, this building was 40 x 86 feet, the price 100 pounds. We had until 12 o'clock Monday to make up our minds if we would take it or not. We called a meeting of the Members of the Sub -Branch on the Sunday night and agreed to go ahead and get this building. When we went back about 11 o'clock on the Monday morning to sign on the dotted line we were told by the Caretaker that the deal was off. The Commonwealth Department had stopped the removal of this building as

they had taken it over, it was then moved to Wollongong for a temporary Telephone Exchange, so we were sunk again. It was then that the boys got busy and extended our hut, which Ray Connell spoke about at our June meeting. It was all voluntary labour and took rather a long time to complete, but we were still going ahead, and so the time came when our present building was officially opened by Major General R.G. Pollard, C.B., C.B.E., D.S.O. and what a night that was, it will be remembered by the boys for some time to come.

Now our first buildings have been removed to make room for greater things to come, which I think will compare well with any Sub -Branch in the State, so keep up the good work boys. I feel sure that every W.W. 1 Digger is pleased and proud of the W.W. 11 lads, to think they are making good use of the land etc. which we had to work hard for. I feel sure your membership will still grow, so that in a few years' time you may have to extend your Club Rooms again, but here I'll leave that to you younger boys to work out for yourselves.

Your Sub -Branch has now been going for 36 years. We have come a long way in that time and quite a lot has been done. I hope what I have written has been of some interest to the members. In the early 1950's during the Korean War a sports day was held at the Memorial Park to raise funds for the R.S.L. and Citizens parcels for the troops in Korea. Our takings for the day was 700 pounds and 10 shillings, not too bad. At a later date, we handed over to Bill Yeo at our Club Room a cheque for 325 pounds for that fund. Before I sign off I would like to give you some of the names of the old Diggers who have answered the last great Roll Call, many of them were the lads who helped bring the Sub-Branch to what it is today.

There may be some others who have passed on that I have not heard about but the names that I can remember are as follows;

Col. Heiman, W. Oliver, F. Oliver, T. Andrews, G. Downes, F. Rengger, W. Toms, J. Beddall, H. Palmer, W. Yardley, L. Wittey, T. Moss, H. Miller, J. Kennedy, W. Ardley, S. Massey, J. Joyce, W. Hadkin, R. Hawkins, G. Darling, P. Lyncham, B. Wallace, T. Moon, J. Heskey, G. Kerr, J. Keats, J. Coventry, A. Newmarsh, J. O'Sullivan, H. Bainbridge, H. Mase, R. McRea, P. Dixon, T. Turner, T. Ball, W. Mooney, J. Demery, L. Smith, H. Burton, C. Asher, A. Gurden, B. Sanders, R. Bosanquit, L. Anderson, Burton Smith, Sister O. McRea, Major Douglas.

It may also be of some interest to the boys in the first W.W.

The names of some of the boys lost were;

C. Cook, T. Hilder, G. Webber, F. Hollyoake, T. Dures, C. Throsby, H. Burton.

In W.W.I 1 there were six boys and one Sister who failed to return;

Sister S. Haultain, D. Kayess, J. Noble, R. Green, J. Rutfield, T. James, H. Donahue.

At the going down of the sun and in the morning, we will remember them.

LEST WE FORGET

WACKO

[1962]