

# NEWSLETTER

MUSWELLBROOK SHIRE LOCAL & FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY INC (Founded 11<sup>th</sup> June 1958)

Affiliated with Royal Australian Historical Society

ABN 34611778680

PO Box 450 Muswellbrook NSW 2333

Editor Lionel Ahearn

No. 2 April, 2021

## ANZAC DAY

Below are extracts from a story published in the 'The Herald' Newspaper on 25 April 2006. I, like many others, was unaware of it until Helen Ellis brought it to my attention. After some searching she found the article. As it refers to a Muswellbrook family I thought it fitting that it should be included in this Newsletter published close to ANZAC DAY.

### How seven brave sons of the Hunter answered their nation's call and went to war as a family



## Brothers in arms



For the Holdsworth boys of Muswellbrook, World War II was a duty of brotherhood.

All seven siblings – Jim, Les, Alf, Stan, Jack, Allen, and Bernie – answered the call to defend their country.

The brothers were aged between 17 and 26 when they enlisted. Two eventually died in battle.<sup>1</sup>

Jim and Les fought together in Palestine and New Guinea, where Les was shot by a sniper and carried by Jim for several kilometres before natives, known as Fuzzy Wuzzy, took over.

Alf was in the army for seven months before being discharged, the result of injuries suffered in childhood.

Stan became an anti-aircraft gunner and later re-enlisted in the air force.

Jack was a nursing orderly posted to New Guinea and later Goulburn, NSW.

Allen was a stoker on HMAS Parramatta and died when his ship was torpedoed in the Mediterranean.

Bernie survived many hours adrift after HMAS Wallaroo was sunk off the West Australian coast.<sup>2</sup>

### DETAILS ABOUT THE SOCIETY

#### Objectives:

- To collect, preserve and promote the social, cultural and physical history of Muswellbrook Shire, its environs and its people for future generations.
- to promote public access to our collections and research facilities, and
- to provide information, advice and assistance to individuals, community groups, organizations and businesses.

#### Meetings

The Society meets on the third Tuesday of each month starting at 7.00 in the Society Room at the rear of the Muswellbrook Library. All members and visitors are welcome to attend the meeting and stay for a cuppa, biscuit & a chat after.

#### Premises

The Society maintains its records in a section of Muswellbrook Library. You will find us at the rear of the Library. The Research Centre is open every Saturday from 9.30am to 1.00pm. The Research Centre may be opened at other times by appointment. Bus & tour groups are most welcome.

#### Annual Fees

Single \$25 Double \$35 Pensioner Single \$15 Pensioner Double \$25

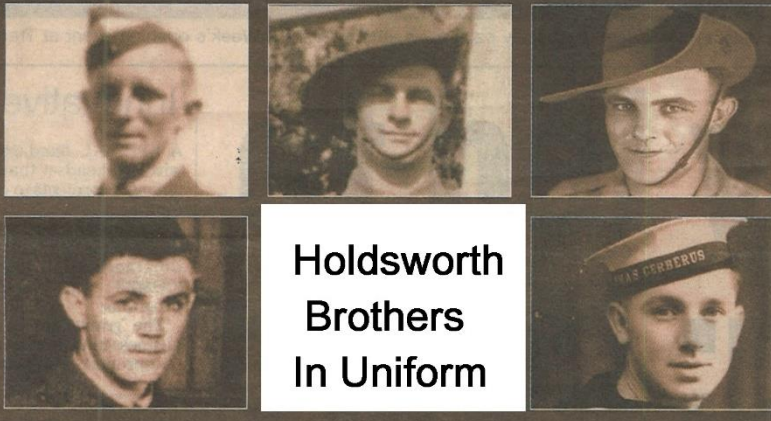
The Hon Secretary may be contacted via the post office box or email [mei2@bigpond.com](mailto:mei2@bigpond.com) The Society also has a web presence thanks to Darrin Khan and Lionel Ahearn at <http://www.mbkhistorical.org> and a research site at <http://research.mbkhistorical.org>

<sup>1</sup> The Herald. Tuesday, April 25, 2006. Page 1.

<sup>2</sup> The Herald. Tuesday, April 25, 2006. Page 4



FIGHTERS: Les, left, and Allen Holdsworth were both killed during the war.



### Holdsworth Brothers In Uniform

Centre, L to R: Alfred, Stan, James. Below L to R: Jack and Bernie  
Cropped from The Herald newspaper Tuesday, 25 April 2006 Page 4



The seven brothers with their Great grandfather Alfred Tabor are James Tabor, Leslie Gordon, Alfred Ronald, Stanley Adward, Jack Lawrence, Allen Roy and Bernard Thomas Holdsworth.

Notes below were edited from notes supplied by Sheila Holdsworth, 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2006

## The Sons of James and Daphne Holdsworth

**James Tabor Holdsworth**, the first born, was posted to Palestine. While Jim was assisting with the arrivals on a number of troop trains he came face to face with his brother Les. They served their time together in Palestine and returned home on leave together. After leave was finished they were posted to New Guinea. Les was wounded and carried by Jim until some Fuzzy Wuzzy took over. Les later died from his wounds.

**Leslie Gordon Holdsworth**, the second born, married Bonny Carr of Muswellbrook before going overseas. They had a little girl called Helene. She was six months old when Les first set eyes on her after leave from Palestine. He was buried in a War Cemetery in New Guinea.

**Alfred Ronald Holdsworth**, the third born, enlisted on May 27, 1941. He was discharged due to a hip injury suffered when he fell off Denman Bridge as a boy. He married Sheila Parkinson of Muswellbrook and they had two sons. Alf worked at the BHP, the Aberdeen abattoirs and then as head green keeper at Muswellbrook Golf Course.

**Stanley Edward Holdsworth**, the fourth son, worked at Muswellbrook underground coal mine before enlisting. Discharged in 1942 he then re-enlisted in the Royal Australian Air Force and was posted to Canada. On discharge he returned to his position as a coal miner. He married Avis Williams of Muswellbrook.

**Jack Laurence Holdsworth**, the fifth born, married Joan Englebrecht of Muswellbrook. He was posted to Townsville where he joined a hospital unit. He was posted to New Guinea before returning to Goulburn. After his discharge he went back to his position at Campbell & Co, Muswellbrook. They had four children. Later he and his wife purchased a coffee lounge.

**Allen Roy Holdsworth**, the sixth born, served in the Royal Australian Navy on HMAS Parramatta. He was killed when the Parramatta was torpedoed while carrying supplies to the Tobruk garrison.

**Bernard Thomas Holdsworth**, the seventh born, served in the Royal Australian Navy. He was on the HMAS Wallaroo when it was sunk in the Indian Ocean. He spent many hours in the water before being rescued. After the war he returned to Muswellbrook and started a dry cleaning business.



## Muswellbrook War Memorial Unveiled



Society Photo 1095.2

Over 1000 people were present at the ceremony of unveiling the Soldiers Memorial at Muswellbrook on Anzac Day (Wednesday 25, 1923). The ceremony was carried out in a most impressive manner and the beautiful monument seemed to bespeak the solemnity of the occasion. The memorial is considered to be one of the finest of its kind erected in the Commonwealth.

### THE PROCEEDINGS

The Mayor (Ald. W V Parkinson) presided and called on the gathering to maintain silence for one minute in respect of the fallen soldiers. The Mayor address the gathering as follows: “We are gathered here on this Anzac afternoon to do honour to our men who fought in the Great War. This memorial is erected by the people of Muswellbrook and district in honour of those men, and in sacred memory of those will never return.

It was first mooted in 1918, when the war was raging at its fiercest and the position most critical. Everybody in Australia was most distressed and at that time it was decided to wait until the war was over. A committee was appointed and their recommendation was that the memorial should be in monumental form.

The Mayor, in calling on Lieut. Colonel Cameron, D. D. O. to address the gathering said it was fitting that that gentleman should be present on such an occasion. He was a district man and a member of an honoured family and a man who had a distinguished war service.”<sup>3</sup>



The War Memorial still stands proud today and is still where Anzac Services are held each year. While this photo is not taken from exactly the same spot as the above photo due to the growth of the trees in Simpson Park glimpses of the railway station can still be seen at the far left centre. The light at the centre of the roundabout just showing in bottom right corner would be in approximately the same spot as the gas lamp in the above photo. Lionel Ahearn photo 2021

<sup>3</sup> Muswellbrook Chronicle, Friday 27 April 1923, page 1

## Getting a Doctor

This article is in the form of an extract from a letter to Albert Rose from his sister Ivy of an event that took place circa 1905. Thanks to Ian Ellis for providing this.

Dear Brother, I often wonder if you ever heard of the little premature baby, stillborn, that nearly cost our mother her life!

Aunt Jane, Dad's sister, Mrs. Bill Ingram, was with Mum and Uncle Dan stayed with Dad all through the night. In the early hours of the morning, before we children were awake, Dad brought in a small oblong fruit box in which a little resting place was made for the little boy baby. Aunt Jane, Uncle Dan and Dad then took the baby for burial. Mum said she never saw Dad so upset. They sang over the little grave "Safe In The Arms Of Jesus".

Soon after Mum became ill with blood-poisoning and, one morning I could hear Mum calling for Neta. I ran into Mum's room and Dad was putting turpentine cloths on her. Mum told me to run as hard as I could and ask for Grannie to come. I ran off and found Lillie milking a cow. Grannie told her to let the cow out and to run and let Mum know she was coming, as she would be slower than us. Dad went off to bring a doctor from Denman. I remember Aunt Jane laying the table for tea for dad and the Doctor, but no doctor came! He told Dad he had too many urgent cases and to go home and bring Mum into him if she was still alive.

Uncle Dan came to Dad's help again and brought his van and horse. They made a bed in the van and covered the top with a tarpaulin, as it was very wet.

We were all taken in to say "Goodbye" to Mum who was so small and white with the baby's shawl around her shoulders. She was carried and placed in the van and driven off by Uncle Dan with Dad. (Well, this I vividly remember, but the reason I never knew.) On reaching Denman they had to go to the Police to see where they were to take Mum but each person refused when they heard it was blood-poisoning.

To her credit a Mrs. O'Rourke heard of their plight and although she herself had children, sent word to the Police to send Mum to her and she would care for her. There the Doctor attended to her and Mrs. O'Rourke nursed her back to life. Mum never heard her own children, so quiet they were, and on a Sunday morning, a group of Catholic people would quietly move in around her bed and pray for her recovery, then quietly move out again. Then, when she began to recover, they would assemble and pray around her bed and move out so quietly she could not hear a footstep.

At home, after tea, we would get the chairs together ready for prayers for Mum's recovery. Dad used to do his hair and comb his beard and put on his coat as though he was going to a place of worship and come to prayers as it seemed Mum's life was in the Hands of Providence.

One day, during prayers, Dad called out "there must be good news" as Fred Rose came cantering on his horse and whistling and called out "good news, Aunt Jane is on the mend." Then, next day, Tom Ingram came with the news that his mother had told him that his Aunt Jane was beyond danger and well on the way to recovery. He wouldn't even stay so anxious was he to tell Grannie the good news. They brought Grannie back on his horse and it was a day of rejoicing and thanksgiving.

When Dad asked Mrs. O'Rourke what her fee amounted to, she refused to accept money, as she said her reward was seeing the mother of her children being restored to them, as she had children of her own and knew what it meant to us all if she were to die.

Mum recalled the terrible ordeal in the journey over the rough road into Denman. Each turn of the wheels nearly made her head split open and she never thought she would see the end of the trip, so ill she was.

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### The following was really appreciated.

**Hi Heather,** I had a most successful research visit yesterday. Thank you for your help in setting it up. Also please record my gratitude for access to the society's amazing records and particular thanks to the research team of Lionel, Garry and Eve for their high level skills and such a friendly atmosphere. Altogether, Muswellbrook is most fortunate to have such a resource.

Kind regards, Prof Robert Smith, President, Richmond River Historical Society, Lismore NSW

#### Heather & Gary

Thanks for your time yesterday. Judy and I are most appreciative, me more so having scanned the documents overnight: a treasure trove! I found specific references to no less than 13 of our 16 direct family group names in the various compilations.....and we even found two photos (1894, 1921) with the Terry Tame type info re the Folpp Bridge street frontages too (at pp.30 & 31, "Early Muswellbrook....Lens"). Also found "Mollie" Coupland's wedding photo (1906) at p.42, "Little .....History, Vol 1." Paul & Judy Perkins

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### Welcome to New Members

Marlene Goodwin, Muswellbrook NSW – 2021 & 2021/22 - m/ship year

Judy & Paul Perkins , Forrest. ACT – 2021 & 2021/22 - m/ship year