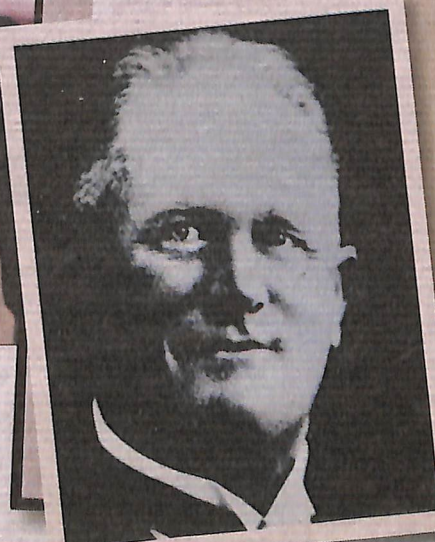




An excerpt from Percy Langford's diary

Monday, 24th May 1915

Armistice to bury dead. Hundreds of men out all over the place to bury them. They just buried them where, and as they lay. Four of our fellows were sent out for the job, as well as hundreds of others. Men were posted midway between the trenches with white flags and we buried only the men lying on our side.



Principal Martin Culkin, school captains Benazir and Andrew with Dr Ruth Bishop. Picture: CHRIS EASTMAN

Anzac gem

Trooper Percy Langford's World War I diaries bring glimpses of life for headmaster during World War I

Schools | Gilbert Gardiner

WHAT won the Cup?

That's what Dandenong High School's first headmaster Percy Langford thought about on November 2, 1915, a diary excerpt reveals.

As three-year-old colt Patrobas crossed the line in the Melbourne Cup, "Trooper" Langford was in the trenches in Gallipoli.

The excerpt is from a bound copy of Trooper Langford's World

War I diaries donated to the school by his daughter, internationally acclaimed microbiologist Ruth Bishop.

In 1973, Dr Bishop discovered the killer Rotavirus, affecting more than 500,000 children each year in developing countries around the world.

"The diaries have been largely kept in the dark, in a drawer, untouched," the Murdoch Children's Research Institute team leader said.

"His personality really comes through in his writing.

"There's a lot of humour, but a bit of tragedy — not in graphic detail — or exaggerating it, just writing about what happened to him and his friends."

The day-to-day accounts include insights from his time in the 4th Light Horse regiment in Egypt, as well as the two six-week Gallipoli campaigns.

Trooper Langford was sent home after contracting typhoid

fever and in 1919 assumed the headmaster role.

He stayed in the job as headmaster until 1934.

Dandenong High School co-captain Andrew said he was looking forward to reading the first-hand accounts of day-to-day life in the trenches.

"(I expect) the diaries to epitomise all the different aspects of the Anzac spirit, courage and determination," he said.

"It's also quite easy to get a bit

lost with all that's going on, it will be good to have this history to look back on."

Trooper Langford was a professional runner and an early member of the University Football Club, one of the teams competing in the VFL.

"He was an outstanding athlete, and not averse to backing himself with the bookies if he thought he could win," Dr Bishop joked to senior school students at an Anzac Day assembly.