

CHAIRS WITH A HISTORY

In the Board Room of Legacy House, Melbourne there are 20 chairs that have on their backs a representation of the white over red diamond colour patch of 24 Battalion, 1st AIF. In addition, each chair has on it a small brass plate with the name of a 24 Battalion officer who died on active service or soon after the Great War.

These chairs (and the Board Room table) once belonged to the Officers' Mess, 24 Battalion (the Kooyong Regiment) at the drill hall, Robinson Road, Surrey Hills. From 1928 to 1936 the CO 24 Battalion was Lt. Col. S.G. Savige, DSO MC. It was during this time that the chairs were made and used at dining-in nights. During a ceremony of remembrance, each officer stood behind his chair and called the name on its back.

During the Second War 24 Battalion - then 24/39 Battalion - was mobilised and the chairs and other furniture were placed in storage with Wridgways. 24 Battalion was not reformed after the War, so the chairs remained in storage.

A number of former members of 24 Battalion who had served in New Guinea and Bougainville joined Melbourne Legacy in the late 1940s and early 1950s. These Legatees recalled the chairs which were traced to a warehouse. Through some good work, storage charges, then grown to a substantial figure, were reduced and when Melbourne Legacy moved from Market Street to our present building on 9th May, 1956 the chairs found a permanent home. They and the table were refurbished through the efforts of two Legatees who are still active in Melbourne Legacy.

The names on the chairs are:

Lt A.L. Bacon

2Lt W.A. Baldie
enlisted 4th March, 1916, age 24 8/12; born Carlton, farmer, KIA 5th October, 1918, Montbrehain, France. C Coy.

Capt J.C.L. Biggsley

enlisted 18th August, 1914, age 26 9/12; born Richmond, military instructor, returned to Australia.

Lt P.S. Carne MSM

enlisted 4th March, 1915, age 28 7/12; born Donald, bank clerk, died of brain injuries England 25th October, 1918, suffered when thrown from a horse in France May 1918. QM 24 Bn.

Lt J.B.N. Carvick MC

born 26th February, 1889, London. Royal Navy. KIA 7th August, 1916, when a shell hit Bn HQ at Pozieres, France. A/Adjt 24 Bn.

2Lt J.R. Clark

enlisted 24th March, 1915, age 19 10/12; born Malvern, process engraver, KIA 4th August, 1916, Pozieres, France.

2Lt F.M. Coffee

born 11th April, 1887, Sydney, journalist, KIA 18th November, 1915 Lone Pine.

Lt P.G. Denton-Fethers

born 20th November, 1894, Cranbourne, pastoral student, WIA Lone Pine 29th November, 1915, KIA 3rd May, 1917 Bullecourt, France.

Lt W.S. Finlay

born 12th April, 1888, Albert Park, accountant, KIA 29th November, 1915, Lone Pine.

Capt J.H. Fletcher

born 25th March, 1893 at Bendigo, enlisted 8th March, 1915, school teacher, served at Anzac, KIA 5th October, 1918, Montbrehain, France. OC C Coy.

CHAIRS WITH A HISTORY (cont'd)

(Montbrehain was 24 Battalion's last action. In addition to Fletcher, another Company Commander was killed in this action. Both he and Fletcher had been teachers at the same technical school in Melbourne, had "bached" together, enlisted together, had consecutive regimental numbers, had accepted reduction from sergeant to private to sail with the original 24 Battalion in A Coy. At a mess function on the evening before their deaths, they sang a duet.

It was also at Montbrehain that Lt G.M. Ingram MM of Bn won his VC).

Lt A.C. Fogarty

born 28th January, 1885, Melbourne, grazier,
KIA 29th November, 1915, Lone Pine.

2Lt A.G. Gilchrist

enlisted 24th April, 1915, age 28 10/12; born Paddington,
clerk, KIA 1st September, 1918, Mont St Quentin, France.

Lt J. Harris

enlisted 15th March, 1915, age 23, Creswick,
hairdresser, KIA 3rd May, 1917, Bullecourt, France.

Lt A.J. Kerr

enlisted 19th January, 1915, age 23, born Auburn,
clerk, served at Anzac, KIA 27th July, 1916, Pozieres,
France.

Maj. C.E. Manning

born 24th October, 1879, Sydney, barrister, original
Adj't 24 Bn, WIA Lone Pine, 29th November, 1915, KIA 7th
August, 1916 when a shell hit Bn HQ at Pozieres, France, 2IC
24 Bn.

Capt G.L. Maxfield MC

born 20th March, 1890, Wonthaggi, accountant, auditor;
KIA 3rd May, 1917, Bullecourt, France. OC D Coy.

2Lt H.L. Rhynehart

enlisted 9th July, 1915, age 26, born Albury, ironmonger;
KIA 3rd May, 1917, Bullecourt, France. D Coy.

Capt W.H. Tainall

enlisted 1st April, 1915, age 30; born London, bank clerk,
served at Anzac, KIA 7th August, 1916, Pozieres, France.

2Lt R.N. Thomas

enlisted 27th March, 1915, age 25; born South Melbourne,
warehouse salesman, KIA 27th August, 1916, Mouquet Farm.

Capt C.M. Williams MC

born 2nd July, 1891, Cairns, station overseer; Lt, WIA
Lone Pine 29th November, 1915; KIA 9th October, 1917,
Passchendaele, Belgium.

All told, 40 officers of 24 Battalion 1st AIF died on active service.

The occupations and ages may be taken as typical of members of the AIF. Sadly, the rather mordant remark about newly commissioned second lieutenants - "one star, one stunt" - is proved in more than one of the names on the chairs.

At the inaugural meeting of the Club, from which arose Legacy in September 1923, eight of the fourteen members had worn the colour patch of 24 Battalion.

A Legacy link with 24 Battalion was broken on 15th February, 1984 with the death of Legatee Gordon Beith of the (then) Moorabbin Branch. Legatee Beith was an original officer of C Coy. In the ranks of C Coy was "577 Savage S.G. (cpl), Prahran, V"

Also in the original C Coy was "670 McKenzie E.J., Richmond, V". Legatee Ted McKenzie (Footscray/Sunshine) still soldiers on. "Such men, though the records of their lives are buried under a mass of tedious detail, are the engineers of victory".

Sir Walter Raleigh (1861 - 1922) (Acknowledgements to CO CARO - L/R Brett - for supplying most of the material).