

Torch Relay starting point : Pozieres, France

Two Legatees mention Pozieres as pivotal in their belief in Legacy.

Legatee Brian Armstrong

Legatee Brian Armstrong, Past President of Melbourne Legacy (1937), joined Legacy in 1924 on the nomination of Pip Powell, the original secretary of Legacy. A long serving member of Legacy, he was active for 54 years.

This speech was given 28/6/1961 at a **Past Presidents' Day lunch**.

The start of his speech covered his holiday around Europe and then went on to a more serious topic.

FROM THE BULLETIN: Title: The Windmill - and after.

'With the limited time available for his address, Legatee Armstrong then moved on to the more serious part of his talk and told us of his visits to some of the old battlefields of World War 1, which hold so many memories for him and his fellow Legatees of that war.

Accompanied by Roly Goddard, a fellow 'digger' who had married a French lass and remained over there, Brian was fortunate in being able to visit and meditate on many old familiar spots which only someone like Roly Goddard can now still locate after so many years – spots which will always mean so much to 'the boys' of the first AIF.

Our speaker made special reference to the 'beautiful, but tragic' garden where so many old comrades sleep in peace.

Commenting on the many fine memorials in the area to the first AIF, Brian described a pilgrimage he made to one of these memorials – unmarked and almost unknown. He said it was dusk on Remembrance Eve as he moved up the long Roman road that commands for miles the flat country leading to the sea. On the left is Villers Brettoneux and behind Peronne and St Quentin. Here there is empty farmland, all is very quiet, and Brian came to a small paddock where there were a few cows. Here he found some blackened stones and cut into one were these words –

"The ruins of Poziere's Windmill which lies here was the centre of the struggle in this part of the Somme Battlefield in July-August 1916. It was captured on August 4th by Australian troops who fell more thickly here on this ridge than on any other battlefield of the war".

Recalling his personal feelings at that moment, Legatee Armstrong said –

"I have no doubt that each one of you had some special memory of war that is bound up with your membership of Legacy – some event, place or happening. This was one of mine – you will find the story in a book we all know *'There goes a man'*, a story of endurance, determination and incredible courage. The feeling came to me as I stood in that little enclosure that here began the long road that led to Legacy, for in the middle of that holocaust was the Victorian Brigade from which later came the first man of Legacy. I am certain that many splendid men, some of whom were my friends, whose last sight was that battered windmill, would, had the finger of fate but pointed another way, been original members of this Club. A question seemed to hang in the still air – not for me, for I was only a cypher, but for all of us for whom, in those or later years, the finger had pointed to 'LIFE' – what have you done to merit and repay your deliverance from this and similar ordeals?

And in that hour I was thankful for all men and women of goodwill who down the years have striven to give a practical and helpful interpretation to those challenging words 'Lest we forget'. I was thankful for Legacy, and uplifted, because it was within my knowledge that many of the children who had on that day been left fatherless, had come within the Legacy fold.

It seemed that poignant pile of stones, bearing no names, held an inspiration for us to draw on the example of courage and endurance of those grand men and of their fellows, who before and after them, made a like sacrifice, to overcome our own difficulties and problems that rise up like a ridge before us and seem, in prospect, so impossible to surmount.

And then the darkness had its way and I turned away from the Windmill and all that it stood for, sad and proud, and who would not be, but gratified that I was still one of the Legacy Family, and that I was still permitted to take a part, albeit a small and humble one, in this challenging and rewarding task to which long ago we set our hands."

Legatee Kem Kemsley

This speech was recalled 16 years later by Legatee AN (Kem) Kemsley. Another past president (1932-33) and a founding member of Legacy. He was part of Legacy until he died in 1983, 60 years later. He was Trustee at the Shrine of Remembrance for 54 years.

He also had profound memories of the Pozieres windmill. He recounted them at a Foundation Day luncheon in September 1977 and repeated some of Legatee Armstrong's speech.

FROM THE BULLETIN: 1977 Foundation Day Speech by Legatee Kem Kemsley

"It was my misfortune in Egypt in 1915 to be one of the few of my unit who were not permitted to go on to Gallipoli at the time my unit went, which has always been a regretful thing for me. But looking at my diary, I noticed that the first time I came under gunfire of the enemy was Pozieres in France on the 20th July 1916 which is a date some people in this room have reason to remember.

I have mentioned that for another reason, nothing to do with myself other than to say, that on that lovely sunshining morning, we went up towards the line and for the first time in my life I had seen some dead colleagues waiting to be buried. I can't describe to you the emotion and what it did to me, but from that day onwards, the war had an entirely different meaning. Till then war had been an adventure as far as I was concerned and I loved the Army and enjoyed it, but from that morning on I had an entirely different attitude because as I saw these fellows, one man still had his bayonet and his rifle in his hands, waiting beside the road, this upset me terribly.

I'll never forget this thing and that image, for nights afterwards I kept thinking about how I saw them before their mother or father or sister or brother would know their loss, and I got this spirit at that time, never knowing that it was going to apply to me so much in my Legacy years, but I put my interest in Legacy and the dedication I have given to it, back to that. Which enables me to say that the point I want to make is in my final comment. On the 28th February 1961, Brian Armstrong, one of Legacy's greatest stalwarts of all time, was standing here addressing the Club. He had just been overseas and was giving us the story of his trip. I have retained that speech because of that significant thing to me, his final comments, when he concluded with these words:

"The pilgrimage I made was to one of those memorials, unmarked and almost unknown. It was dusk on Remembrance Eve as I moved up the long Roman road that commands for miles the flat country leading to the sea. On the left is Villers Brettoneux and behind Peronne and St Quentin. Here there is empty farmland, all is very quiet. I came to a small paddock where there were a few cows. Here I

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