



Donovan Joynt was born in 1889 in Melbourne and educated at Melbourne Grammar School. His family intended him to become a chartered accountant but he disliked office life and travelled to Mackay in northern Queensland walking the last leg of the journey from Rockhampton. Once there he worked as a labourer in the plantations and as a factory hand in the sugar mill. By the time he returned to Melbourne he had decided to become a farmer so he worked for a time in the Mallee to gain experience before taking up land in South West WA. Unfortunately he eventually fell sick and had to return to Melbourne for a rest. He was trying his hand at farming again, this time on Flinders Island, when the 1914-18 war broke out.

On enlisting Donovan Joynt, who had been in the volunteers, was selected for an officers' school and so missed the Gallipoli campaign. He went to Egypt as a junior officer and was soon posted to France where he had a brilliant war record as an officer in the line.

Back in Australia he took up land in Berwick under the Soldier Settlement Scheme but spent much of his time in Melbourne where he was a founder member of Legacy and involved in the RSL. Later he started a business in photographic and commercial art which grew slowly into The Dominion Press, one of Australia's largest printers. Having weathered the depression and the Second World War during which he commanded a number of camps in Australia, he enjoyed a series of overseas trips during the 50s and 60s visiting UK for VC celebrations and touring the USA, the USSR and Europe.

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CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Return to Australia

I returned to Australia as sports officer on the *Themisticles* – a journey of six weeks round the Cape – and upon arrival was immediately put into the Repatriation Hospital at Caulfield, Victoria, for a medical overhaul.

After my discharge from hospital I took up land under the Soldier Closer Settlement Scheme intending to run a farm on the lines of a 'gentleman farmer' with a manager and farm hands, as I had seen in England. My land, at Berwick, was very rich and, on being told it was more suitable for cattle than sheep, I was persuaded to change my mind and go in for dairying instead of importing a flock of Dorset Horn sheep for fat-lamb raising as I had intended. For a time the farm proved successful and profitable.

In the middle of the 1920s I again took up soldiering, joining the 24th Battalion of the militia, based at Surrey Hills in Victoria, but at the invitation of Colonel Tom White, who promised to make me second-in-command when I qualified by passing my 21A, I soon transferred to the 6th Battalion, City of Melbourne Regiment.

In September 1923 the Legacy Club was formed and I was present at the first luncheon during which the name Legacy was proposed by Mr P.W. Powell and carried. The speaker emphasised that the name Legacy was chosen because the members of the new organisation had accepted as a legacy the responsibility of seeing that the ideals which their comrades had died fighting for were maintained in Australia.

In the initial stages the real objectives were to preserve the interests of ex-servicemen by discovering avenues of

employment and, by mutual personal help, to assist one another in establishing successful businesses, trades or professions. In short, Legacy dedicated itself to restoring, as far as was humanly possible, those lost opportunities which were part of the price their erstwhile comrades had paid for serving their country. At that time it had nothing to do with the care of the children or the widows of ex-servicemen. In the words of the mover of the resolution which gave it its name, 'It was as a tribute to our departed comrades who made the supreme sacrifice for the sake of Australia and the Empire and so completely typified the A.I.F. spirit'. The members present at the Club's inaugural meeting accepted the name of Legacy, again to quote the words of the mover, 'in token of the heritage that has been bequeathed to us by those who nobly commenced the work that is left to us to carry on.' For some three years, these objectives remained the ideal and the motive. They were strengthened and fostered as efforts were directed towards keeping alive an undiminished sense of comradeship amongst those who remembered.

On 14 December 1926, a general meeting called by the Board of Management changed the explicit direction of the Club's activities. It widened the meaning of what it now understood as service to the fallen. This followed informal discussions by some of the more enthusiastic members. As soon as Frank Doolan suggested that the real legacies of the war were the widows and children of their deceased comrades it became obvious that he had struck the right note for which members had long been searching. At once, a committee was set up to bring forward proposals. The success of the work of this small committee termed the Deceased Soldiers' Children Welfare Committee, of which I was a member, prompted the Board to call a meeting to consider the matter. It was a full meeting of members, as word had gone round that a motion was to be proposed to make the care of the children of deceased ex-servicemen the main objective of the Club.

On the night of this special meeting I moved the motion to make the care of children the main object of the Club. This motion was carried although there was quite a lot of

opposition to it, and a rider was then proposed and carried that the original object of the Club should still be maintained.

When the time came to approach the War Widows Association and get their approval of the scheme, the Board of Management detailed the then Captain Stanley Savige and myself to address them at one of their regular monthly meetings at Anzac House, which we did. Both Savige and I approached the meeting with a certain amount of anxiety, as Legacy at that time was practically unknown by the public and our members were mostly young, unmarried men. It was decided that I should start by telling the widows what our intentions were and warm them up with the proposal, then Stan Savige was to follow with a direct question, 'Will you allow us to act as sort of step-fathers to your boys?' Savige had hardly started to speak when a woman at the back of the meeting shouted out, 'I have heard enough, you can have my young B., he is too much for me!' Roars of laughter followed the outburst, the widows needed no more argument, they leapt at the proposal and, what the Legacy Board of Management feared might be a rebuff, became enthusiastic approval. 'Boys only?' the widows asked. 'Yes,' we replied, because young as we were we all felt a bit scared to take on the girls too, but this work also was undertaken two years later and thus Legacy found its purpose.

Amongst the important things that the Club achieved in its early days was the changing of the custom at places of entertainment for the National Anthem to be played at the finish of an entertainment when many people kept moving out during its playing, to the beginning when most people were seated. I was one of a sub-committee of five members who interviewed the managers of all the theatres and the controllers of other places of entertainment and persuaded them to change to the new custom which, in all cases, was readily agreed to.

One of the greatest achievements of Legacy was the halting of a proposal to abandon the original plan for a Shrine of Remembrance in Melbourne as a National War Memorial, and substitute a Civic Square at the top of Bourke Street. The

latter proposal was backed by a leading Victorian evening newspaper and strongly supported by the Lord Mayor of Melbourne together with some members of the State Government who approved the idea of the Square and had actually prepared a Bill to requisition the properties in all the area at the top of Bourke Street between Exhibition and Spring Streets.

Acting in the absence of Mr Turnbull, the R.S.L. President, who was abroad at the time, the Returned Soldiers League had committed its organisation to supporting the Square scheme whilst others, with strong support, were advocating a Memorial Hospital. Legacy, as an organisation, had not expressed an opinion on either of the schemes, but the matter came to a head following the action of the first Patron of Legacy, General Gellibrand, who, after a luncheon address suggested that Legacy should throw its weight behind the Square scheme. Chairman of the meeting, Dr Mark Gardner immediately moved a motion that Legacy should support the Square. Silence reigned, then Kem Kemsley, a prominent and original member of Legacy, rose and said he objected to a motion being passed to support such a nebulous proposition as this without the matter being fully discussed by members. I supported Kemsley and it was agreed that the next meeting of Legacy would be spent in a full discussion to air Legacy views on the matter.

A few of us then got together, met for lunch one Saturday at the Naval and Military Club and decided on our course of action. This party consisted of Kemsley, Blackett, Doolan, Meldrum, McCrea and myself.

It was arranged that at the Legacy meeting due to be held I would propose a motion to support the Shrine of Remembrance which Kemsley would second, and others would rise in turn and support us. This was done and there were many speakers for and against us. When the usual time for closing the meeting arrived one of the opponents of the motion moved that the meeting be adjourned for further discussion. I immediately jumped on a chair and shouted, 'Whilst we fiddle, Rome burns. I move the motion now be put,' and it was, and carried enthusiastically. Then a motion

was carried, with only two dissenters, 'That the Melbourne Legacy Club, representing the returned soldiers in business in this city, whilst welcoming the Anzac Square scheme as a city improvement, cannot support it as a War Memorial and pledges its support for a Shrine of Remembrance in the Domain as the only War Memorial worthy of Victorians' unparalleled efforts in the Great War.'

Legacy then carried out a vigorous publicity campaign but made little progress with the Town Hall or Government opposition. The newspapers, with the exception of the Melbourne *Herald* which was strongly in favour of the Square, remained neutral and gave no assistance.

One night, after midnight, whilst Legatee Doolan and myself were walking down Collins Street following a Legacy function, Doolan said to me, 'You know Allan Spowers Chief Editor of the *Argus* don't you?' (The *Argus* was the leading conservative newspaper at the time.) 'Yes,' I replied, 'we were at school together.' 'Well, what about calling on him. It's 12.30 so, we will just about catch him after he finishes his editorial work on the paper for tomorrow's issue!' So we called at the *Argus*. I sent in my name and we were ushered into Spowers' office. He received us graciously and listened with interest to our story and our appeal for help from his paper. He promised to give it consideration. Nothing happened for a week, then out it came, a most enthusiastic article urging support for the Shrine of Remembrance.

For some reason unknown to us, General Monash could not be persuaded publicly to express his opinion regarding this controversy. Kemsley made a personal bid for his support but to no avail, though he was in agreement with us. At this time the Duke of York was visiting Australia to lay the Foundation Stone of the Federal Parliament House at Canberra and he was to be entertained to a dinner given by the Returned Soldiers League at which all the delegates of all the branches were to be present, as were all Australian Victoria Cross holders. General Monash was to give the main address. Kemsley and myself and two others decided to make another call on Sir John and assure him that if he would include in his address a pronouncement in favour of the

Shrine we would back the meeting and organise a demonstration in support. He promised to consider our proposal. We succeeded in distributing our Legacy members around the hall and arranged for me to tell Monash that all was arranged as promised.

At the ten minute break before the speeches were to commence I sidled up to Sir John and said, 'Sir, tonight would be a splendid occasion for you to make your pronouncement regarding the Shrine, because all the delegates from all the R.S.L. Branches are here and they will all listen to you and I am sure they will move to change their decision regarding support for the Anzac Square if you give them the lead.' 'Say that again, Joynt,' he said, and I repeated it, adding some extra compliments about the regard in which he was held by all ex-servicemen. 'Well, I will consider it,' he told me. I then returned to my seat and, calling the attention of the V.C.s who were all together at the one table, said to them, 'If Sir John mentions the War Memorial in his speech, start clapping.' Monash, having finished his obviously prepared speech, turned to the President, Ernest Turnbull, and said, 'Now I know the League has given its support in a certain direction to the War Memorial, but if the League cares to ask my opinion I will give a hundred reasons why they are wrong, and also a hundred reasons why the Shrine of Remembrance should be our War Memorial.'

True to my request, at the mention of the War Memorial those at my table started clapping and this was immediately taken up by the several hundred others in the audience and continued until Sir John sat down. Ernest Turnbull had no other course open to him but to turn to Sir John and invite him to attend the conference of the R.S.L. delegates in two days time. When Sir John did so he invited me to accompany him and assist him with information.

The result of this effort was a complete turn around of the League's attitude and they, as a body, came out strongly in favour of the Shrine. Legacy continued its propaganda with great thoroughness. The press devoted a large amount of space to debates and further publicity was obtained through the wireless and the oral efforts of many legates.

And so it was that at last, after three and a half years of fighting propaganda, the War Memorial Committee, on 20 May 1927, re-affirmed its original approval of both the Domain site and the design of the Memorial. Melbourne Legacy publicly expressed gratification at the result of its long campaign and it was said at the time in the press that '... It's not too much to claim that the Shrine would never have been constructed had it not been for the publicity given to it by the Legacy Club ...'

After the War Memorial Committee had reverted to its original plan the Government approved the Shrine of Remembrance proposal and voted £50,000 (\$100,000) toward the cost, as did the Melbourne City Council.

One of the main objections put forward to the Shrine scheme was that it would be too expensive to erect and it was considered unlikely that the large sum required to build the edifice, estimated at £250,000 (\$500,000), could be raised by an appeal to the public for funds. However, when the time came, the result was staggering. Despite the approaching depression, money poured in, and the scoffers who said such a large sum would never be subscribed were proved wrong.

Legacy's own public appeal was launched one Saturday night during the interval at the Capitol Theatre, with an eight minute address by myself and this action was followed by various Legacy members doing likewise at as many theatres as permission could be obtained.

I was on my farm at Berwick towards the end of October and beginning of November 1923 when news drifted through (there was no wireless in those days) that the police force throughout Victoria had refused duty and left their posts.

It was a Saturday afternoon and Melbourne city was left unprotected. In the evening looting of the big shops in Swanston Street broke out and the Lord Mayor and Premier appealed for volunteers to form a special force to maintain law and order.

It appears that on the Saturday evening, when the Lord Mayor made his appeal for helpers, volunteers poured in. The



Donovan Joynt 1950

Queen Elizabeth II speaking to Victoria Cross holders at a reception by the R.S.L. at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, 1954. The Queen has turned to the right to continue her conversation with Joynt; opposite her is McCarthy.

