

17. PREVIOUS GUEST SPEAKER: Past Presidents' Day -  
Legatee Brian Armstrong -  
"THE WINDMILL - AND AFTER".

Last Tuesday was that very important annual occasion which we have come to know as "Past Presidents' Day" - the day when the President vacates his chair of office in favour of the senior living Past President, who is currently Legatee Eric Serman.

Seated with Eric at the head table were many of his fellow Past Presidents of Melbourne Legacy - a grand team indeed. Of course there were apologies from two or three who had been unable to "make it" on account of illness, so to them we express the hope that they will soon be fit and well again.

Having explained to the newer Legatees of the Club the significance of this special day, Legatee Serman followed custom and proceeded to "call the Past Presidents' roll" at the conclusion of which he called upon Past President Legatee Brian Armstrong, the Guest Speaker of the day, to "take over".

Brian said he would open his address on a bright note and tell us something of his travels abroad before leading up to and ending on a more serious theme.

Touching briefly on London and the vast rebuilding programme in progress there, Brian painted a concise but colourful word picture for us of the Suez Canal, Cairo and Gibraltar, before moving on to give us a much more detailed and colourful description of Southern Spain with particular references to Seville, Granada, Valencia and Barcelona. Dealing with each of these wonderful cities in turn, Brian told us of poverty and wealth living side by side, of magnificent palaces, the fortresses of Moorish days, the huge cathedrals with their treasure rooms, the old Roman forts, fine roads, olive groves and of the many customs and way of life of the Spanish people in those parts.

It did not take us long to observe, too, that Brian had been deeply impressed by his visit to Palma on Majorca, one of the twelve islands comprising the Balearic Group - a province of Spain. In fact, we felt we were aboard the ferry on which Brian and his sister had travelled across to Majorca, so descriptive was his story of the trip. Lance Nixon - we couldn't help but notice from the smile on his face - evidently cherishes very happy memories too of his stay on Majorca not so long ago.

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 A.I.F.

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

Commenting on the many fine memorials in the area to the first A.I.F., 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 leads from Amiens to Bapaume, then along a high ridge to a grassy knoll 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 ruin 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 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 has 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

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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 and 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 Serman warmly thanked Legatee Armstrong on behalf of all his fellow Legatees for a very heart-searching address, which Legatee Serman said has given us all something serious to think about.

Visitors at the Luncheon:

Mr. Williams	Introduced by Legatee	Col Williams.
Mr. Chas Mummerley	" " "	Wal Escott.
Mr. Don Parncut	" " "	Wal Purnell.

Visiting Legatees:

Legatee Harold Burn	Latrobe Valley Group.
" Jack Reeve	Geelong Club.
" Brian Breheny	Hobart Club.
" Ferd Peeg	Sydney Club.