



Anzac Day 2020

Reflections and experiences contributed by staff of the
Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries





Introduction

The year 2020 will be remembered as a time of new experiences in all of our lives, including how we marked major events such as Anzac Day while being in the middle of the global pandemic of COVID-19.

The sight of so many people, up and down streets, lighting up their driveways as we came together in different but equally heartfelt ways to show our respect demonstrated how important this day is to us.

This Anzac Day time capsule captures a selection of lasting memories from staff of the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) around Queensland who have shared how they commemorated the event with their family and friends. It also records how our colleagues in primary industries have been part of the Anzac spirit since World War I.

Future generations can look back and see that not even a pandemic can diminish our sense of community and pride as we recognise and thank those who served and gave their lives for Australia.



Message from the Director-General

Beth Woods

Director-General, Department of Agriculture and Fisheries

Anzac Day is a symbolic day for Australians and New Zealanders. In 2020, it was just as symbolic and highlighted how important the day is to our communities. While COVID-19 led to the cancellation of traditional Anzac Day commemorative events, we found new ways to pay our respects and most of us marked the day respectfully from our homes. At my place, along with my family members, I observed a minute's silence and reflected on those who had responded to the wars that have challenged the nations of Australia and New Zealand, and our allies.

The sound of the last post being played from radios and on instruments live from driveways was haunting and yet somehow comforting. I want to thank all the staff members who sent in poems and other messages of support for the day. I believe Anzac Day in 2020 was truly reflective of our Australian spirit. While we had to be apart, we all remained together in acknowledging our brave service men and women.

Images from DAF staff Anzac Day 2020



Photo credit: Neil Cliffe



Photo credit: Andrew Douglas



Photo credit: Janet Argoon



Photo credit: Neil Cliffe

Images from DAF staff Anzac Day 2020

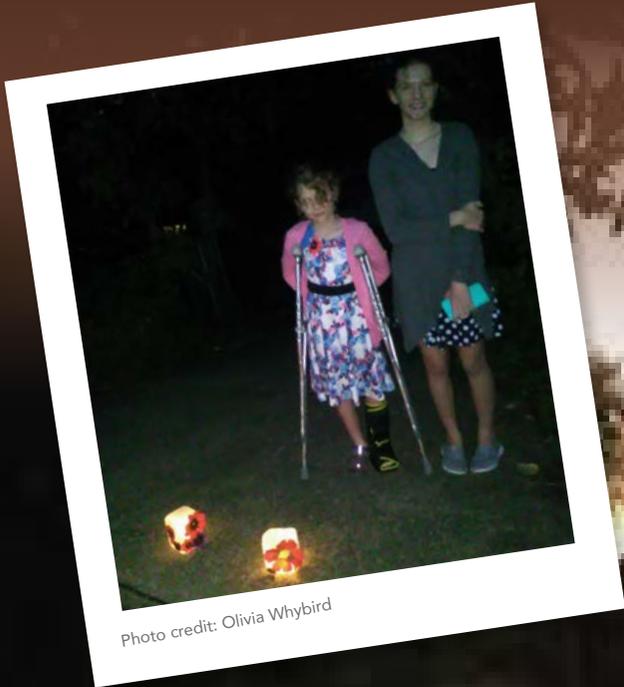


Photo credit: Olivia Whybird

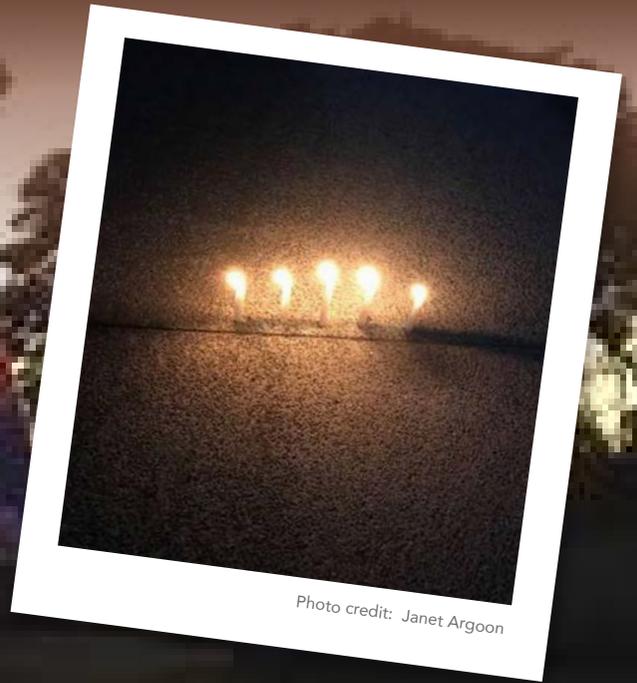


Photo credit: Janet Argoon



Photo credit: Neil Cliffe

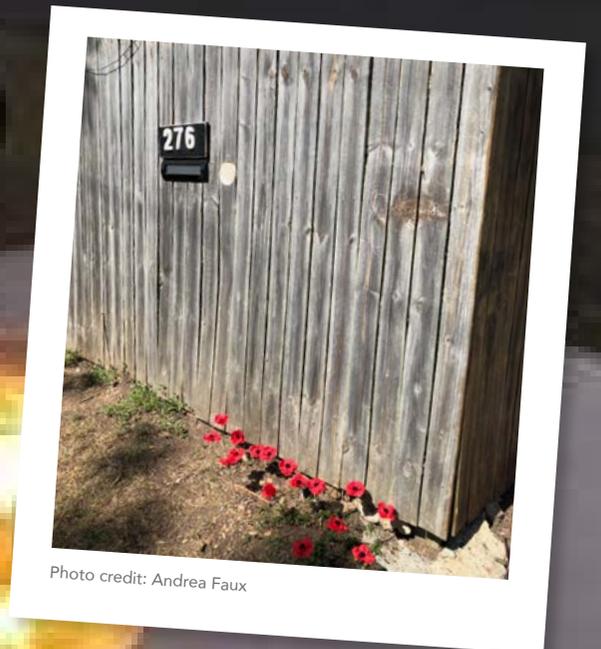


Photo credit: Andrea Faux



The Anzac on the wall

Poem by Jim Brown

Submitted by Paul McGowan

Senior Technical Officer, Department of Agriculture and Fisheries
(grandfather served in World War I, and happily made it home to marry his sweetheart)

I wandered thru' a country town, 'cos I had some time to spare,
And went into an antique shop to see what was in there.
Old bikes and pumps and kero lamps, but hidden by it all,
A photo of a soldier boy—an Anzac on the Wall.

'The Anzac have a name?' I asked. The old man answered 'No.
The ones who could have told me mate, have passed on long ago.'
The old man kept on talking and, according to his tale,
The photo was unwanted junk bought from a clearance sale.

'I asked around', the old man said, 'but no-one knows his face,
He's been on that wall twenty years ... Deserves a better place.
For some-one must have loved him, so it seems a shame somehow.'
I nodded in agreement and then said, 'I'll take him now.'

My nameless digger's photo, well it was a sorry sight
A cracked glass pane and a broken frame—I had to make it right
To prise the photo from its frame I took care just in case,
Cause only sticky paper held the cardboard back in place.

I peeled away the faded screeed and much to my surprise,
Two letters and a telegram appeared before my eyes
The first reveals my Anzac's name, and regiment of course
John Mathew Francis Stuart—of Australia's own Light Horse.

This letter written from the front ... My interest now was keen
This note was dated August 7th 1917
'Dear Mum, I'm at Khalasa Springs not far from the Red Sea
They say it's in the Bible—looks like a billabong to me.

'My Kathy wrote I'm in her prayers ... she's still my bride to be
I just can't wait to see you both, you're all the world to me.
And Mum you'll soon meet Bluey, last month they shipped him out
I told him to call on you when he's up and about.



The Anzac on the wall (continued)

'That Bluey is a larrikin, and we all thought it funny
He lobbed a Turkish hand grenade into the CO's dunny.
I told you how he dragged me wounded, in from no man's land
He stopped the bleeding, closed the wound, with only his bare hand.

'Then he copped it at the front from some stray shrapnel blast
It was my turn to drag him in and I thought he wouldn't last.
He woke up in hospital, and nearly lost his mind
Cause out there on the battlefield he'd left one leg behind.

'He's been in a bad way Mum, he knows he'll ride no more
Like me he loves a horse's back, he was a champ before.
So please Mum can you take him in, he's been like my own brother
Raised in a Queensland orphanage he never known a mother.

'But struth, I miss Australia Mum, and in my mind each day
I am a mountain cattleman on high plains far away.
I'm mustering white-faced cattle, with no camel's hump in sight
And I waltz my Matilda by a campfire every night.

'I wonder who rides Billy, I heard the pub burnt down
I'll always love you and please say hooroo to all in town'.
The second letter I could see, was in a lady's hand
An answer to her soldier son there in a foreign land.

Her copperplate was perfect, the pages neat and clean
It bore the date, November 3rd 1917.

'... 'Twas hard enough to lose your Dad, without you at the war
I'd hoped you would be home by now—each day I miss you more.

'Your Kathy calls around a lot since you have been away
To share with me her hopes and dreams about your wedding day.
And Bluey has arrived—and what a godsend he has been
We talked and laughed for days about the things you've done and seen.

'He really is a comfort, and works hard around the farm,
I read the same hope in his eyes that you won't come to harm.
McConnell's kids rode Billy, but suddenly that changed.
We had a violent lightning storm, and it was really strange.



The Anzac on the wall (continued)

'Last Wednesday, just on midnight, not a single cloud in sight,
It raged for several minutes, it gave us all a fright.
It really spooked your Billy—and he screamed and bucked and reared
And then he rushed the sliprail fence, which by a foot he cleared.

'They brought him back next afternoon, but something's changed I fear
It's like the day you brought him home, for no one can get near.
Remember when you caught him with his black and flowing mane?
Now horse breakers fear the beast that only you can tame.

'That's why we need you home son'—then the flow of ink went dry—
This letter was unfinished, and I couldn't work out why.
Until I started reading, the letter number three
A yellow telegram delivered news of tragedy.

Her son killed in action—oh—what pain that must have been
The same date as her letter—3rd November 1917
This letter which was never sent, became then one of three
She sealed behind the photo's face—the face she longed to see.

And John's home town's old timers—children when he went to war
Would say no greater cattleman had left the town before.
They knew his widowed mother well—and with respect did tell
How when she lost her only boy she lost her mind as well.

She could not face the awful truth, to strangers she would speak
'My Johnny's at the war you know, he's coming home next week.'
They all remembered Bluey, he stayed on to the end.
A younger man with wooden leg became her closest friend.

And he would go and find her when she wandered old and weak
And always softly say 'Yes dear—John will be home next week.'
Then when she died Bluey moved on, to Queensland some did say.
I tried to find out where he went, but don't know to this day.

And Kathy never wed—a lonely spinster some found odd.
She wouldn't set foot in a church—she'd turned her back on God.
John's mother left no will I learned on my detective trail.
This explains my photo's journey, of that clearance sale.





The Anzac on the wall (cont)

So I continued digging, 'cause I wanted to know more.
I found John's name with thousands, in the records of the war.
His last ride proved his courage—a ride you will acclaim
The Light Horse Charge at Beersheba of everlasting fame.

That last day in October, back in 1917
At 4 pm our brave boys fell—that sad fact I did glean.
That's when John's life was sacrificed, the record's crystal clear
But 4 pm in Beersheba is midnight over here ...

So as John's gallant spirit rose to cross the great divide,
Were lightning bolts back home, a signal from the other side?
Is that why Billy bolted and went racing as in pain?
Because he'd never feel his master on his back again?

Was it coincidental? same time—same day—same date?
Some proof of numerology, or just a quirk of fate?
I think it's more than that you know, as I've heard wiser men,
Acknowledge there are many things that go beyond our ken.

Where craggy peaks guard secrets 'neath dark skies torn asunder,
Where hoof-beats are companions to the rolling waves of thunder
Where lightning cracks like 303s and ricochets again
Where howling moaning gusts of wind sound just like dying men.

Some mountain cattlemen have sworn on lonely alpine track,
They've glimpsed a huge black stallion—Light Horseman on his back.
Yes sceptics say, it's swirling clouds just forming apparitions
Oh no, my friend you can't dismiss all this as superstition.

The desert of Beersheba—or windswept Aussie range,
John Stuart rides on forever there—now I don't find that strange.
Now some gaze upon this photo, and they often question me
And I tell them a small white lie, and say he's family.

'You must be proud of him,' they say—I tell them, one and all,
That's why he takes the pride of place—my Anzac on the Wall.



Ballad of the 2020 Anzacs

Michael O'Loughlin

Senior Scientist, Quality

Biosecurity Queensland, Department of Agriculture and Fisheries

As the date rolls around, the streets will be bare
The spirit is strong, maybe stronger than last
We will never forget what you've done in the past
Today the enemy is not to be seen
The entity invisible and terribly mean
It has taken the ones that have sacrificed already
And maybe a few that aren't quite ready
This time there are no bullets flying
And it isn't the young and virile that are dying
The new weapons of choice are face masks and gloves
Diggers are doctors, nurses and medics we love
Let science and medicine win on this front
For the medical staff are bearing the brunt
So stand with me solemnly at the end of your drive
To remember the fallen and the will to survive
We will remember them
Lest we forget



Will they remember us?

Peter Frazer

Senior Inspector, Registrar of Brands
Biosecurity Queensland, Department of Agriculture and Fisheries

As I stood on the cliff face
Above a moonlit sea,
I waited for the dawn to break
Upon Gallipoli.

In the predawn stillness,
I said a silent prayer,
For all the fallen soldiers
In wars fought everywhere.

Suddenly a voice spoke,
And addressed itself to me.
'Cobber, can I stand with you
Till the sun does kiss the sea?'

I turned to see a young man
Twenty-three or twenty-four,
Dressed in faded khaki
Where no one stood before.

He said his name was Frederick
But I should call him Fred.
'Twas all the same anyway
No matter what folks said.

He said he came from Queensland,
From a place they called Paroo.
A land of sheep and cattle,
Where the wattle blossom grew.

His distinctive Aussie accent
Came through strong and low.
Much the way my Grandad spoke
Many years ago.

He said 'I've been away a while.
A bit too long, I fear.
I suppose Aussie's changed a lot
Since I came over here.'

'Tell me, does the wattle still bloom
In the western spring?
And have you smelt the gidgee smell
That the coming storm doeth bring?'

'Do they still play "Two-Up"
When the copper is away?
Oh how I miss an ice cold beer
At the closing of the day.

'We gather here each year', he said
And gestured with his hand.
'Lest we forget the reasons
We left our native land.'

And standing in the darkness
To the left and right of me.
Stood rows of khaki-clad soldiers
All staring out to sea.

'From Flanders Field we come', he said.
'Dunkirk and Normandy
From Tobruk and El Alamein,
To this Gallipoli.'

As he paused, a silent tear
Rolled down his sun tanned cheek,
Then he turned to me, with glistening eyes
And again began to speak.

'We fight for "God and Country",
Or so the billboards say.
And how the crowds cheered us,
The day we marched away.

'But the posters have long faded,
The cheering crowds have too.
And somehow we've ceased ageing,
The way men usually do.

'Will folks still remember us
If we never do go home?
Or will we be forgotten,
Condemned to ever roam?'

As I struggled to reply,
A single bugle blew,
And the sky began to glow
With the dawning hue.

For a moment I stood lost in time.
Nearly a century away,
With those soldiers clad in khaki,
As the hounds of war did bay.

And when at last, I turned to speak.
He'd vanished from sight.
He and his fellow soldiers
Had faded with the night.

But in their place, a sea of poppies
Waved to meet the day.
And as I held one in my palm,
I heard the soldier say:

'Wear the poppies to remember us
With their petals, so blood red.
And take a message to the bush for me.
Say G'day, from Paroo Fred.'

Poem by Tonia Grundy

Principal Biosecurity Officer, Department of Agriculture and Fisheries

On April 25 there'll be no Anzac Day parade
But in our hearts the day's importance has no chance to fade
The sacrifices made for us—we will remember them
We'll light a candle for the dawn; until we meet again.



Honour Board Album, Department of Agriculture and Stock, Queensland



Photo credit: Department of Agriculture and Stock

An image of the the department's Honour Board listing staff who served in World War I, which ended with the Armistice at 11am on 11 November, 1918. The board includes A.F. Bell, who rose from a 19-year-old gunner on the Western Front in 1918 to become Under-Secretary of the department in 1947.

Department of Agriculture and Stock Queensland staff, World War I



A. McDonald



R.J.W. Johns



A. P. Dodd



C.A. Clydesdale

Let us

Ode of Remembrance

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them.



Forget



