

Australian Light Horse Project

Participants



**Jack Stacey
12th Light Horse Regiment**



**Lance Waters and Emily Roberts
Grandson and granddaughter of Jack Stacey**

Jack Stacey rode in the Charge of the Light Horse

Jack Stacey is one of the Indigenous Light Horse Troopers who have been identified as taking part in the Charge of the Light Horse at Beersheba on 31st October 1917.

“Jack Stacy was a Kamilaroi man from the Gamilaraay nation born in 1897. Even though he had rights within the Nation as being King, he still decided to leave his wife and family to represent and serve Australia and the Commonwealth in dangerous military action overseas. Even though he was not given civil rights as an Indigenous man in Australia, he was still compelled to protect the interests of Australia, because whether white Australia acknowledged it or not, it was his land and people to protect.” - Lance Waters

About Lance and Emily

Brother and sister Lance Waters and Emily Roberts are part of the Gamilaraay nation. Lance now lives in Villawood, Sydney and Emily in Canberra. Emily’s husband is also a descendant of an Indigenous Light Horse soldier, Sid Roberts.

Emily and Lance’s oral history project

Jack Stacey was born at Boomi in Nth West NSW to Jack and Ida Cubby.

Jack was the paternal and maternal grandson of Charlie “King” Cubby and Lucy Ann.

Lance and Emily have several older family members at Toomelah and Bogabilla in NSW, and they travelled there to record their family stories and would like to make a DVD about their grandfather, with the help of their nephews Sebastien and Henry Skrinisky. Sebastien is currently studying at Eora TAFE and has access to cameras and recording equipment. Henry is an IT expert with experience in editing.

“Jack Stacy served at the Charge of Beersheba. This so far has proven to be very unique. It is well documented that there were Indigenous troopers in the 11th Regiment who took flank reinforcement duties during the Charge, but Jack Stacy was in the 12th during the Charge. The 4th and 12th Regiments were both involved in the Charge. As we do our research we will extrapolate on how this came to be. We will also include stories of what Jack encountered when he returned from his military service to broken promises of the country he fought for. Jack had 3 children, 18 grandchildren, and now his descendants number in the hundreds. We will also discuss what it means to us and his other descendants that he did this, and left us this legacy, in the face of great adversity.” - Lance Waters



Tzemach Ceremony 23rd Oct 2017



Jack Stacey with wife Ruby Millicent May nee Duncan and grandchildren Stanley, Ruby, Barry, Allen and Terry Waters



Abraham’s Well near Beersheba



Charles Fitzroy Stafford
12th Light Horse regiment



Peta Flynn
Great niece of Charles Fitzroy Stafford

Charles Stafford – Light Horse Trooper

Charles Stafford is one of the Indigenous Light Horse Troopers who have been identified as taking part in the Charge of the Light Horse at Beersheba on 31st October 1917.

The Stafford Family are Darug (Warmuli Clan)/Gamilaroi descendants. Charles was one of 12 children. Two of his brothers, Clyde and John Stafford, also served in WWI and another brother Hilton served in WWII. Alfred George Stafford, Peta’s grandfather, was the youngest of the children, being 8 years old when his older brothers went to WWI. Alfred was driver to 11 Australian Prime Ministers, a friend and confidante to Sir Robert Menzies and recipient of an MBE.

Family History

Peta’s sister Michelle Flynn has been researching the family history, ever since her grandfather (Charles’ brother) gave her a box of family records and papers before he passed away 21 years ago. This gift enabled a reconnection with their Aboriginal heritage, which goes back to Black Kitty, one of the first Aboriginal children placed in the Parramatta Native Institution in 1814.

About Peta

Peta lives in Canberra and works for the public service in the Department of Defence.

Peta’s oral history project

Peta feels that her history was lost to her family and to the country. The funding provided through this award would allow her family to continue researching and writing the story of her great uncle Charles Stafford.

Peta and her sister Michelle will travel to the Coonabarabran/Binaway area to research local records and find community members who may know more of their story. Ultimately, they would like to write a book about the Stafford family.

“I believe that the service and sacrifice of Indigenous Australians in WWI needs to be acknowledged and remembered. The Rona Tranby Trust Award will help me honour my Uncle on the centenary of the Battle of Beersheba, and ensure our family’s history will not be lost to future generations.” - Peta Flynn



Re-enactment of the Charge at Beersheba 31st Oct 2017



Stafford Brothers Pin, Charles, John and Clyde



Doris, Judith & Peta, ANZAC memorial, Israel



David Mullett
1st Remount Unit, No.2 Squadron, ALH



Doris Paton
Great granddaughter of David Mullett

David's family history

David Mullett was born to James Mullett and Ellen Dutton at Lake Condah Aboriginal Reserve.

As a boy, he excelled at the Lake Condah mission school and for a time taught at the school. Family recollect that he later attended the Napier St Teachers College in Melbourne and passed his teaching exam with flying colours. He applied for a job at a school in the Melbourne suburbs but was rejected on the grounds that he was Aboriginal. This was a real blow to David and an end to his teaching aspirations.

David and his wife Maud Stephens sought an independent life outside of Aboriginal reserves.

World War 1 - service and prejudice

David enlisted with the AIF in November 1915 and served until July 1919. David and Maud experienced prejudice and difficulties not uncommon for Aboriginal people at that time. While David was deployed in military action overseas, his war income was denied to his wife, his family were removed from Lake Tyers Mission and his children were also taken away. When David returned, his application for a soldier settlement was rejected. Later, he wrote to ask about his pension and to seek a uniform to wear in the ANZAC parades, both of which were denied.

About Doris

Doris lives at Churchill, Victoria. She is a secondary school teacher and also gives lectures on Aboriginal culture and speaks at local ANZAC Day ceremonies about her great grandfather, David Mullett. There are many teachers in the family, including David.

Doris's oral history project

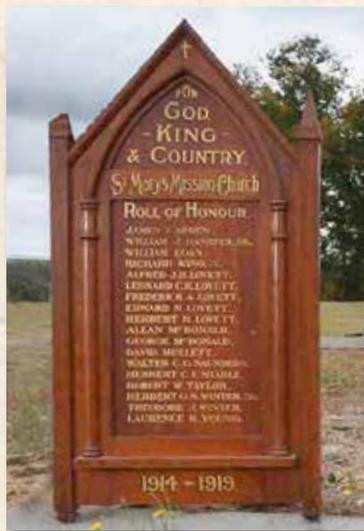
Doris grew up learning about her great grandfather from her father, who was passionate about David's story and wanted to write a book about him. Doris is continuing to research her great grandfather's story and interview older relatives who still know some of his story. She would eventually like to put the story into a book.

David Mullett's story shows a tenacious and fighting spirit, while dealing with hardship and disappointment because of prejudice and harsh government policies. This spirit, Doris says, carries on through the family today.

"The story of our great-grandfather, in the Remount Unit of the Australian Light Horse, his accomplishments in education, and his life after returning has remained in the memories of my father and aunty and shared in the family. His fighting spirit as a Gunditjmara man lives on in the family." - Doris Paton



ANZAC Museum, Beersheba



Roll of Honour at Lake Condah Mission



Ancient Well near Beersheba



**Allan McDonald
8th Light Horse Regiment**



**Judith Ahmat
Great niece of Allan McDonald**

Allan McDonald and the 8th Light Horse Regiment

Prior to Uncle Allan enlisting in World War 1, he was a farm hand around the south western Victorian district, learning his craft of a stockman from his father Alfred, who was known as a fine stockman. Judith believes that Uncle Allan's skills, knowledge and bush experience assisted with his survival in the 8th Light Horse regiment.

Uncle Allan married late in life and had no children and no direct descendants, therefore his legacy needs to be preserved and his story needs to be told.

About Judith

Judith is a proud Gunditjmara woman who grew up in Western Victoria. She moved to Wodonga in 1991 and runs her own consultant business, specialising in project management, cultural competence training for mainstream organisations, and social research.

Judith is actively involved in the local Aboriginal community. She was inducted into the Victorian Aboriginal Honour Roll in 2015 and has made an important contribution to the Wodonga Aboriginal community in the fields of health, justice, education and community services. Judith was awarded an Honorary Doctorate in Letters from La Trobe University in 2017 for her long-standing community leadership and service. She has also received a Masters of Social Work – Research by studying the intergenerational impact of government policies and administrations on a Gunditjmara family (loss and grief).

Family History

Judith has been researching her family history for many years. Judith is a descendant of Susannah McDonald, a Gunditjmara woman, whom raised two children through changing and traumatic times for Victorian

Aboriginal people during the 1850's. One of the children was Judith's great grandfather Alfred. Judith became more aware of her Uncle Allan's story when she was involved last year in a Victorian state government project researching WWI Aboriginal soldiers.

Judith's oral history project

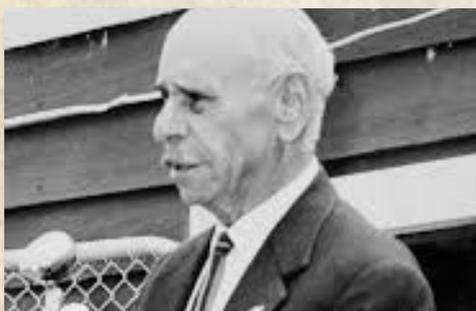
Judith has used the award to research Uncle Allan's story further and to understand the influences on him and his influence on others. She has a strong network of colleagues and family who have been able to assist with capturing Uncle Allan's story.

Judith and her family have interviewed family and community members at Framlingham and gathered information from the government records. Based on these interviews and government records, her cousin, Tom Molyneux, created and performed in a play 'The Mission', from 22nd to 29th September 2018, as part of the Melbourne Fringe Festival. The play will be touring regional Victoria in 2019 and a video has been made of the play.

<http://www.keithgow.com/2018/09/melbourne-fringe-mission-by-tom-molyneux.html>

"The Mission explores the story of Allan McDonald, as investigated by his great great nephew and fellow Gunditjmara man, award winning actor Tom Molyneux (The Nose; The Ministry), alongside award winning director James Jackson (The Nose), and in collaboration with Gunditjmara Elders and community members. This verbatim theatre piece draws strength and stories from ancestors, past and present - with a story about not giving up on what you believe in, and fighting for justice, whatever the cost."

- The Arts Review <http://artsreview.com.au/the-mission>



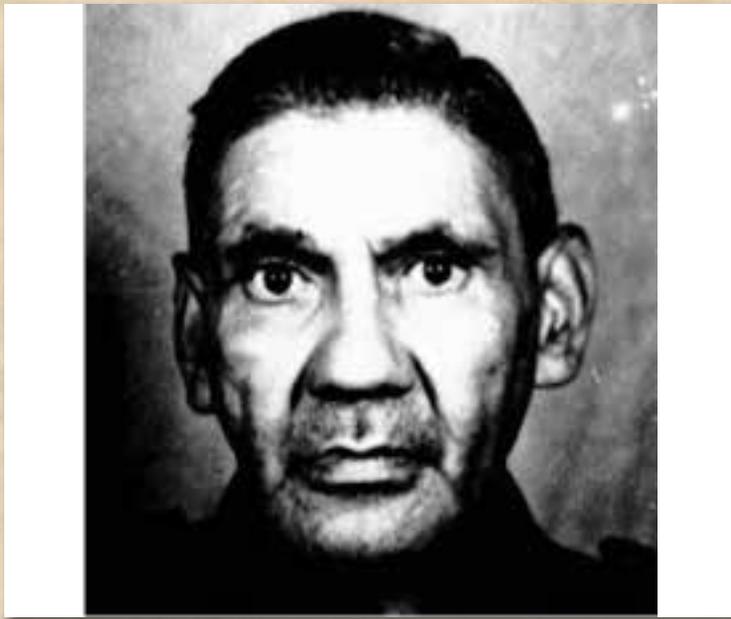
Allan McDonald, a spokesman for his community



Judith's cousin Tom Molyneux created and acted in 'The Mission'



Judith and Peta, ANZAC Memorial, Israel



Frederick Amos Lovett
4th Light Horse regiment



Ricky Morris
Grandson of Frederick Amos Lovett

A family of warriors and soldiers

The Lovett family (Fighting Gunditjmaras) from Lake Condah mission in western Victoria have had more family members serving in the military than any other Australian family. Frederick Lovett was one of five brothers who fought in WWI and he signed up again with three of his brothers for WWII.

21 members of the Lovett family have served Australia in war and peacekeeping, from the Western Front to East Timor and Afghanistan. The Department of Veteran Affairs building, the tallest building in Canberra, is named the Lovett Building in commemoration of the family's meritorious service in the armed forces.

About Ricky

Ricky is a Gunditjmarra man and works as a plumber and gasfitter, running his own business in Melbourne. He speaks at schools about Indigenous culture and his family's story. Ricky has served with the Australian Defence Force, starting his army career in the 4/19 Prince of Wales Light Horse, by coincidence the descendant unit of his grandfather's unit – the 4th Australian Light Horse Regiment. Ricky served in Afghanistan with the Royal Australian Engineers and reached the rank of Sergeant.

Ricky's oral history project

Ricky is a member of the Victorian Indigenous Veteran's Association Remembrance Committee, which organises an annual service at St Kilda on 31st May, to coincide with Reconciliation Week. Ricky is very interested in his family history. He is recording the stories of two older aunties, daughters of Frederick Lovett and other family members to find out more about his grandfather.

"A unique opportunity to follow in the footsteps of those who fought and died for Australia and the diversity of Australians who put their hands up to answer the call." - Ricky Morris

Wreath at Beersheba

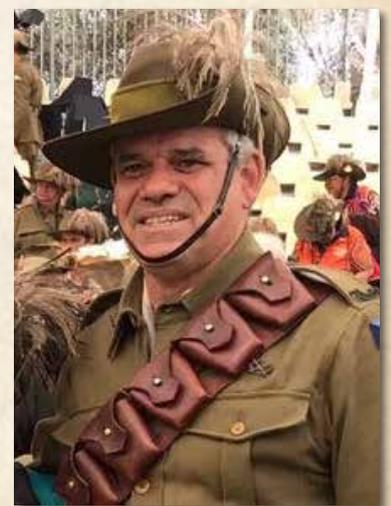
The Australian Government agreed for a wreath to be laid in honour of Indigenous soldiers, during the official ceremony at Beersheba, 31st October 2017. Ricky was chosen for this honour, because of his family's great military contribution, including his own army service. It was a highlight and a proud moment when the announcement for the wreath was made and the Indigenous descendants and their supporters rose up in the stands and cheered.



Frederick Lovett, 3rd from right, departing Port Melbourne, 1917 copy



On Gunditjmarra Country, Ricky & his aunt, Laura Bell, daughter of Frederick Lovett



Beersheba Centenary Service 31st Oct 2017





Ernest James Firth
1st Light Horse regiment

Francis Walter Bertie Firth
2nd Light Horse regiment

Ernest James Firth died in action on 3rd November 1917 and is buried at Beersheba



Terry Hutchinson
Great nephew of brothers Ernest James Firth
and Francis Walter Bertie Firth

Terry's three great uncles served in the Middle East

The Firth Brothers- Ernest James, Francis Walter Bertie (known as Bertie) and Charles Allen are from Pilliga, NSW. The three brothers served with the Light Horse, Machine Gun and Transport units in the Middle East.

Ernest Firth was killed on November 3rd, 1917, at Tel Khuweilfeh and is buried at Beersheba. Francis Firth brought a date seed back from the Middle East at the end of the War . He planted it near the kitchen window of the old family home at Pilliga NSW so his Mum could remember Ernie . The house is gone but the land is still in the family and the date palm is still there.

Every ANZAC Day, the local school pay their respects at the date palm and the extended family of Firth descendants, approximately 50 people, return to Pilliga to honour and commemorate Ernest, Francis and Charles.

About Terry

Terry grew up in Walgett and Coonamble and now lives near Bega, southern NSW, with his wife, Coral. He worked with ANZ for 30 years and was CEO of a disability service for 4 years.

Terry himself served in the army and didn't know about his Aboriginal heritage until 10 years ago. He remembers being told that the family next

door to his grandfather Joseph Bernard Firth, had their children taken away (as part of the Stolen Generations), but he was never told they were his cousins. It turns out that two of his cousins also worked as managers at the ANZ bank, including the daughter of one of the stolen generation kids from Pilliga. Terry spoke to her over the years never knowing they were related.

Terry's oral history project

Terry wanted to travel to Israel to visit the grave of his great Uncle Ernest James Firth.

His wife, Coral, is very interested in family history and has encouraged his interest. Terry is interviewing family members to learn more about the story of his great Uncle and the other Firth Brothers.

Terry's sons, Gabe and Nathan, who are interested in their family history and have experience in IT and editing, are working with Terry to record the interviews and digitise them so they can be shared via the internet.

"I feel excited and honoured to be part of this project. It means I will be the only member of my family to visit Ernie's grave. I will pay my respects and gratitude." - Terry Hutchinson



Date Palm at Pilliga from seed brough home by Bertie Firth



Terry at his great Uncle Ernie's grave, Beersheba War Cemetry



Church of St Catherine, Bethlehem



**Frank Fisher
11th Light Horse Regiment**



**Mischa Fisher and Elsie Amamoo
Granddaughter and Great granddaughter of Frank Fisher**

Frank Fisher – a family of sporting legends

Frank Fisher was in the 11th Light Horse Regiment, a regiment with a large number of Indigenous soldiers also known as the “Black Watchmen”.

Frank Fisher is also the great grandfather of the Olympic gold medallist Cathy Freeman, whose grandfather was Frank (King) Fisher Junieur, a well-known rugby league player. ‘King’ Fisher played at five-eighth in representative teams for Wide Bay and in 1932 and 1936 against touring teams from Great Britain. The coach from the British team was keen to sign him up to play in Britain but the Cherbourg mission manager wouldn’t allow Frank to go.

About Mischa and Elsie

Elsie was born in Cherbourg, Queensland. She grew up on the York Peninsula in South Australia and is now based in Sydney working as an Aboriginal Cultural Officer for the Maritime Museum, Darling Harbour.

Mischa lives at Murgon, Queensland and works as a Health Worker at Cherbourg, the community that use to be the mission that her Grandfather came from.

Mischa and Elsie’s oral history project

Elsie and her husband, Damian Amamoo, a filmmaker, have produced a short video play about Frank Fisher, which they entered into Tropfest 2018. In the play Elsie plays the part of her great grandfather.

Elsie and Damian are also working with Mischa to create a website about Frank Fisher. Elsie’s niece Miranda Fisher, who works at the US MOB radio station at Cherbourg, will interview Frank Fisher’s granddaughters Mischa Fisher and Lillian Gray and these interviews will make up part of the website. Archival footage will be used from the Ration Shed Museum, Cherbourg.

“It’s an exciting opportunity to share our family history with all Australians and preserve it for future generations, but to do so while “galloping” in my Great Grandfather, Frank Fisher’s footsteps in Israel where he served 100 years ago is remarkable. I am ecstatic by the prospect of more descendants joining us to raise the awareness of Indigenous military service. This experience also allows us to acknowledge Community members before us, standing with those beside us, and creating a future for the next generation.” - Elsie Amamoo



Jerusalem



Front page The Australian



Beersheba Parade 31 Oct 2017



Alexander Stanley
11th Light Horse Regiment

Alexander Stanley served his country in two World Wars

Alexander Stanley was in the 11th Light Horse Regiment, a regiment with a large number of Indigenous soldiers. Records indicate that Alexander had four deep distinctive scars on his right and left arms, believed to be tribal initiation markings. Alexander was attached to the remount depot at Moascar before being posted to the 11th Light Horse regiment. The commanding officer of the Moascar depot at that time was the late major AB (“Banjo”) Paterson, Australia’s famous writer of bush ballads.

Alexander Stanley also served in WWII and has his name erected in the NSW Garden of Remembrance, adjacent to the War Cemetery at Rookwood, Sydney. Stanley Village at Moree, NSW, was named after Alexander, and his name is on a plaque at the entrance to the Moree RSL Club because of his contribution to both World Wars. Alexander was a proud ANZAC and was involved in ANZAC events and talks in Moree for many years. At one of these talks at the local Aboriginal mission school, he was quoted in a local newspaper.

“ANZAC Day represents the greatest day in Australia’s history. Men laid down their lives on that first ANZAC Day, and children, you should appreciate what that means. These men were from all walks of life and I am here to represent those men of ANZAC... Children, always remember you are the sons and daughters of ANZACs and can hold up your heads wherever you go.”
- Alexander Stanley

About Angela

Angela is a Gamilaraay woman from Mungindi in North-West NSW and grew up in Mungindi and Gunnedah. Her mother Kitty Stanley, and grandmother Madge Warren, along with several other Indigenous women, started the first Aboriginal Corporation in Gunnedah, called the Min Min Aboriginal Corporation. Today the Corporation is a busy housing Co-Op for



Angela Stanley
Granddaughter of Alexander Stanley

the local Aboriginal community.

Angela has volunteered her time in many community roles. These include the International Network of Churches, Christian Outreach Centre in Armidale, Wirringa Baiyia Aboriginal Women’s Legal Resource Centre in Marrickville, BIGhART Advisory Committee and Koori Radio in Armidale, the Armidale Community Drug Action Team, and the Red Chief Local Aboriginal Land Council in Gunnedah.

Angela is a singer/keyboard player and amateur filmmaker. She says “My personal experience, and my family’s origins, have prepared me for a life of service for the betterment of my people.”

Angela’s oral history proposal

Angela has wanted to tell her grandfather’s story for some time for both the Indigenous and wider communities. Her uncle, Robert Stanley, Alexander’s son, worked at Tranby for more than 20 years from the 1980s with the legendary Kevin Cook, Executive Director of Tranby and one of the founders of the Rona Tranby Trust. Robert gave Angela several records about Alexander before he passed away.

Angela is working with the Moree Library and the local Aboriginal Cultural Centre & Keeping Place, which has oral history recording facilities. She wants to create a photographic, film or book record of Alexander Stanley’s story.

“I deeply appreciate the opportunity to have my grandfather, Alexander Stanley’s story told – family history is very important to me, and I aim to compile the information I have in my personal possession to be put into some objective form, so that other members of my family, and indeed, members of the public, would learn of Alexander’s important and historical contribution to Australia. - Angela Stanley



Certificate Presentation at Tranby



Angela and her uncle Robert Stanley at Moree RSL



Reception at NSW Government House



James Lingwoodock
11th Light Horse Regiment



Ray Minniecon
Grandson of James Lingwoodock

James Lingwoodock and the 11th Light Horse Regiment

A deteriorating tactical situation late on the first day of the battle of Beersheba (31st October, 1917) caused the 11th's sister regiments- the 4th and the 12th- to be unleashed on Beersheba at the gallop, an action which has gone down in history as the Charge of Beersheba. The 11th, engaged on flank protection duties was too widely scattered to take part.

Another charge was mounted by the 11th and 12th regiments against Turkish positions at Sheria on 7th November, but, confronted with heavy fire, the troopers were forced to dismount and eventually withdraw.

After Gaza fell on 7th November 1917, Turkish resistance in southern Palestine collapsed. The 11th Light Horse participated in the pursuit that followed, and then spent the first months of 1918 resting and training. The 11th moved into the Jordan Valley and took part in the Es Salt raid between 29 April and 4 May and later in the victorious charge at Tzemach Railway Station on 25th Sep 1918.

James Lingwoodock joined the 11th Light Horse regiment in July 1917 and served in the Middle East from December 1917 to August 1919.

About Ray

Ray is a descendant of the Kabi Kabi nation and the Gurang Gurang nation of South-East Queensland. Ray is also a descendant of the South Sea Islander people with deep and abiding connections to the people of Ambrym Island.

Pastor Ray Minniecon has a BA in Theology from Murdoch University in Western Australia. His community work is extensive in the areas of support for disadvantaged communities and the stolen generations, Christian and Indigenous theology and support for the recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander diggers.

Ray has been instrumental in organising the "Coloured Diggers March" in Redfern every ANZAC Day, since it began 11 years ago.

Ray's oral history project

Ray has visited several communities in Queensland to interview family members who still know the stories of James Lingwoodock. He would like to make a documentary or write a book about his grandfather's story.

"The only way I can get to know him in some intimate way is to walk in his shoes and follow his path and journey. In the end, I want to tell his story, not only to my family, but also to this nation. I want this nation to give recognition, respect and honour to a number of brave and courageous soldiers who had to battle racism and prejudice to get into the army, show their true Warrior spirit when they were given the opportunity, and yet return home to a nation who did not recognise their bravery, acknowledge their contribution and respect and honour their military service." – Ray Minniecon



James & Daisy Lingwoodock and John & Alice Geary married in Brisbane, just before leaving for Palestine



Tree planting at Tzemach Ceremony 23rd Oct 2017



Riding Nikita, Negev Desert, Israel



Harry Doyle
11th Light Horse regiment



Adrian Hepi
Related by marriage to Colin Victor Leftwich
the nephew of Harry Doyle

Harry Doyle and the Black Watch

Harry Doyle was in the 20th Reinforcement of the 11th Light Horse Regiment. This reinforcement was made up of nearly all Indigenous soldiers and it was known as the Black Watch. Harry was also a member of the Yarrabah Brass Band, which was the subject of a Rona Tranby Award given to Yarrabah community leader Elverina Johnson in 2002.

Harry Doyle passed away in 1967 and was buried in an unmarked grave. Adrian, along with other family members and friends, worked hard to have a proper gravestone erected and were finally successful in 2008. Adrian's father-in-law is Grandad Colin Victor Leftwich from Cooktown, a Butchula man from Fraser Island KukulANJI and nephew of Harry Doyle.

About Adrian

Adrian is of Ngapuhi descent from his father's whanau- Hepi- Titaha Ngati Rahiri A Company 28th Maori Battalion and his mother's whanau Stewart family from the Bundjalung/Darug People of NSW.

Adrian is based in Western NSW with NSW Rural Doctors after 20 years' service with Queensland Health in Mental Health & Addiction Services and in rural and remote communities in Northern Territory, Cape York, Gulf of Carpentaria and Torres Strait Islands.

Adrian is a Clinical Nurse and Mental Health Education Practitioner with a special interest in Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in members of the armed services. After the findings of a Defence Abuse Task Force, Adrian was given a Personal Apology by the ADF in 2014 for an incident in 1987.

Adrian has worked tirelessly and as a volunteer in disaster management. This work included the Ash Wednesday fires 1982, Newcastle earthquake

1989, Cyclone Larry 2006, Queensland Floods and Cyclone Yasi 2011-2014.

Adrian has worked for and served on the Boards of several National, State and Regional bodies involved in higher education, health and community broadcasting, including the Townsville Aboriginal & Islander Media Association from 1988-2018, National Indigenous Postgraduate Aboriginal Association President from 2006- 2012, Council of Australian Postgraduate Association 2004- 2012 Chair of Equity & National Indigenous Liaison Officer. He won a Deadly Award as producer of the health show 'From the Bush' and a National Emergency Medal 2014 Citation "For Service" for his help after Cyclone Yasi & the Queensland Floods.

Adrian's oral history project

Adrian is committed to passing on the family history and stories to his children and grandchildren. He believes that this is foundational for their sense of identity and strength of spirit.

"As Grandad Colin, was diagnosed with Vascular Dementia in 2016, I gave up my Academic position and PhD to help look after Grandad - for me personally, family comes before a job or money"

"I started doing a research project with the young people I was working with, to honour the Black Diggers of WWI. I asked Grandad Colin Victor Leftwich about his uncle Harry Doyle, he gave me his blessing to do it and was very honoured to see what the young people did for this project.

For the Rona Tranby Award oral history project I will take Grandad to meet other family members of the Yarrabah Community in Queensland". - Adrian Hepi



Adrian with family, 'Granddad' Colin Leftwich front left



Harry Doyle's Grave



Speaking at an ANZAC memorial ceremony near Beersheba



Peter Ross
13th Light Horse Regiment no photo available



John Patten
Great nephew of Peter Ross

Peter Ross, an unknown story

Peter Ross was a Koori man born in Warrnambool, in the Western District of Victoria who fought with the 13th Light Horse Regiment in WWI. John has no photo of him and his story is fairly unknown, even though he is a member of a family with many well-known people, including Margaret Tucker, Geraldine Briggs, George Patten, Bill Onus, Cec Patten and John's very well known grandfather Jack Patten.

About John

John Patten is a Yorta Yorta and Bundjalung educator, multi-disciplinary artist and historian.

John has lectured on Aboriginal history and cultural practices at La Trobe University and Melbourne University. He has also delivered cultural workshops relating to traditional wood carving art practices in locations across New South Wales and Victoria.

Much of the content of his website kooirhistory.com is based on John's own knowledge and research, and stories shared with him via his family, utilising their somewhat unique perspective as participants in key narratives within the history of Koori peoples in South Eastern Australia.

John's oral history project

John has been researching his great uncle, Peter Ross, for several years now.

John is continuing to find out Peter Ross's story. In Israel he visited and documented the places that his Great Uncle Peter served during WWI, and where Peter's younger brothers including John's grandfather Jack Patten and his uncle George Patten served during WWII.

John said, before leaving for Israel "It would be an amazing and sacred experience, which would serve future generations". While in Israel he documented the journey, building toward a potential book, website or documentary, or combination of the three. John has experience as a graphic artist, filmmaker and historian.

"Knowing the stories of our ancestors and understanding their journeys is a means to help us come to terms with our own way forward. We can learn from our ancestors and Elders. History, warts and all, without the tidy narratives we sometimes employ is one of the important driving forces that gets me up in the morning and informs my work. This project looking into Uncle Peter's story is a central part to what really is a life-long passion for documenting the stories of my family and community" - John Patten



John Patten & John Maynard at Tranby



Photograph by Tiffany Garvie



Tel El Saba, Israel