

PART TWO

Chapter Four

Group Soldier Settlement in the County of Cumberland

This part of the thesis outlines the establishment of the six group purchase soldier settlements in the County of Cumberland, in the greater Sydney area. These settlements, all located within approximately forty miles of Sydney, were primarily for poultry, with some fruit, vegetable and viticulture on two of the settlements. Begun in 1917, all six settlements had large numbers of returned men who attempted to make a new life on these small farms. These returned soldiers put their faith in the dictum that agriculture ‘is the natural occupation of man’.¹ On their discharge they believed in their ability to earn a living and to become productive members of society once more as soldier settlers.

For men like Albert Newell and Edgar Harvey, an offer of soldier settlement land was a blessing, as neither man was physically fit enough to return to their pre-war occupations. Albert Newell was only twenty when he enlisted in January 1916. His war ended violently a year later when machine gun bullets shattered his left arm during the Somme campaign in France. Newell was discharged in March 1918, his arm amputated, disabled for life.² A return to labouring work was impossible, and continuing pain in his stump and the onset of epilepsy left him with few options for

¹ J.M. Powell, ‘Arcadia and Back: “Village Settlement” in Victoria, 1894-1913,’ *Australian Geographical Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 2, 1973, p. 139.

² National Archives of Australia: Australian Imperial Force, Base Records Office; B2455, *First Australian Imperial Force Personnel Dossiers 1914-1920*, SERN 5645 NEWELL, Albert.

supporting himself and his wife.³ Edgar Harvey was also a young man when he enlisted at the outbreak of war, nineteen, single, keen to see the world and fight the enemy. Edgar saw action with the 2nd Battalion on Gallipoli, and was evacuated from the peninsula with rheumatism and debility, rejoining his battalion in France several months later after recovering. Wounded at Fleurbaix in July 1916, his right leg later had to be amputated.⁴ When he was discharged in December 1917 after over three years service, he was twenty-three, severely disabled and had little in life to look forward to. A reasonable option for both men was to take up poultry farming as other disabled men had already done. They believed the government was trying its best to look after them, advertising blocks at Grantham, a group settlement in this study, were

to be provided for maimed or partially incapacitated men ... at a cost that is comparatively slight ... The close proximity to the railway station and the stud farm makes these blocks particularly suitable for men whose infirmities render them unfit to enter the industry otherwise than under ideal conditions.⁵

By May 1926, Edgar Harvey admitted he could no longer work his property, advising authorities he was forfeiting because of his poor health.⁶ In addition to the physical handicap of having lost a leg, he also suffered from 'lung trouble', probably a result of gassing.⁷ Albert Newell forfeited his block in 1920 because of his health, but re-applied for land at Grantham three years later, realising he was unable to work and make a living anywhere else.⁸

³ NAA: *op. cit.*, Department of Veterans' Affairs, Branch Office, New South Wales; C138, *Personal case files, single number series (Australian, 1914-1918 War)*, R9483, NEWELL, Albert.

⁴ NAA: B2455, *op. cit.*, SERN 514 HARVEY, Edgar Thomas.

⁵ *The Sydney Mail*, 14 November 1917, p. 10. The article notes 500 men were already settled on the land, informing readers that 'this settling on the land of our returned soldiers is a matter of vast importance, which deserves the co-operation of all classes of the community'.

⁶ New South Wales State Records: Department of Lands, *Returned Soldier Settlement Loan Files*, NRS 8058 [12/6899] Loan File 3020, HARVEY, Edgar Thomas. 20 May 1926, Harvey said he could no longer work without assistance, for which he could not pay.

⁷ *ibid.*

⁸ SRNSW: NRS 8058, *op. cit.*, [12/7300] Loan File 1488, WOOD, Geoffrey J. Albert Newell took over this block in mid 1923.

It will be argued in this chapter that from its inception group settlement in the County of Cumberland was not the success predicted, never deserving the praise and accolades it received from politicians and the press. On paper the advantages of small acreage, on-site instruction, and close proximity to urbanised areas were attractive for returned servicemen. In reality, settlers were burdened with large debts and little prospect of making enough profit to make a living, let alone repaying any monies. Clerical administration pettiness blighted settlers, with loan files revealing a considerable amount of this paperwork was trivial.⁹ New modern homes were poorly built, and land and stock were poor. These problems were not isolated, but occurred in all the settlements in this study. Over-riding all these problems however, was the health of soldier settlers. Their war experiences had scarred them physically and mentally, so that the shadows of the Great War remained with them throughout their lives.

Although similarities between all settlements existed, notably farm plans and homes based on those at Bankstown, there were differences that will be outlined in this chapter. However, poor soils, poor stock, and land subject to flooding impacted heavily on all the settlements and on these soldier settlers' attempts to make a living. Additionally, a significant number of the soldier settlers on all six settlements in this study had war-related disabilities that made farming for them even more difficult. The location of these settlements with proximity to the city was vital for many men who required on-going medical treatment at Randwick Hospital, in Sydney's eastern suburbs. It is argued in this thesis that they had chosen this type of soldier settlement

⁹ New South Wales Parliamentary Papers, Vol. 1, 1922, pp. 266-267. In 1920-1921, Returned Soldiers' Settlement Branch staff numbered more than 100 permanent and 130 temporary workers and handled 75,000 letters and 150,000 records.

believing it was their only choice, too disabled to return to their pre-war occupations. It was not long, however, before the cracks in group settlement became crevasses.

Unlike other settlements in country New South Wales, all six group settlements in this study had houses constructed on each block, although many men and their families had to live under canvas on-site for considerable periods before their homes were built. A new home with stock yards was further incentive for returned men with no work prospects to apply for this type of soldier settlement. This chapter will discuss these issues and provide a detailed portrait of each of the six group soldier settlements, beginning with the first to be established at Bankstown, then Grantham, Campbelltown, Chipping Norton, Hillview and finally Doonside.



*Bankstown Soldier Settlement – Married Man's Camp
Source: State Records of New South Wales*



*House on Bankstown Soldier Settlement. Note chicken yards on left, and young child on verandah.
Source: State Records of New South Wales*

Soldier settlement farms raising poultry close to the city markets were a logical extension of earlier ideas promoted by Poultry Expert, James Hadlington. In Department of Agriculture publications during the war, he advocated developing the poultry industry, arguing it was possible to make a living on a small block with little capital outlay as long as the farmer had ‘a good stock of commonsense and plenty of grit’.¹⁰ Advising a minimum land area of five acres and 800 to 1,000 laying stock was necessary, Hadlington said the best locations would encompass those parts of the County of Cumberland close to the rail line.¹¹ With this advice and the need to plan for thousands of returned men to become soldier settlers in this state, plans to establish these group settlements augured well for creating a stronger industry and settling inexperienced men on small blocks under the government’s commitment to a

¹⁰*Farmers’ Bulletin*, No. 108, New South Wales Department of Agriculture, Government Printer, 1916, p. 3; *Farmers’ Bulletin*, No. 109, pp. 20-22 quoted a paper delivered at the 8th Annual Conference of Poultry Farmers at Hawkesbury Agricultural College, June 1916, which said the monthly ‘Poultry Notes’ were issued free and would be of great help to men new to the poultry industry. The paper also said there was strong potential for expansion in the industry, to meet not only the domestic market but also to consider supplying eggs overseas.

¹¹ *ibid.*, p. 4. More specifically, Hadlington identified these areas as Ryde to Gosford on the northern railway line, Parramatta to Emu Plains on the western line, Blacktown to Richmond on the Richmond line, Granville to Picton on the southern line and Hurstville to Waterfall on the Illawarra line.

soldier settlement scheme.¹² Contemporary newspapers carried advertisements about the ease of making money from poultry farming even with no experience in the industry, making it appear that few skills were needed to be successful. Additionally, James Hadlington's publication *Poultry Farming* was a self-help poultry book and explained everything about poultry farming, from beginning a farm to bird varieties and diseases, and was widely advertised and readily available to provide information to beginners.¹³

Begin
POULTRY
KEEPING
AND MAKE
MONEY



MONEY IN
POULTRY

You can begin in your own Back Yard!

FREE Illustrated Booklet

**The Southern School of Poultry Culture,
91 Exchange Corner,
Pitt and Bridge Sts., Sydney, N.S.W.**

Source: *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 October 1917, p. 4.

¹² *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 January 1918, p. 5, reporting the second interstate conference of The National Utility Poultry Breeders' Association; *SMH*, 16 June 1919, p. 7. Minister for Lands, Mr Ashford, on opening the poultry conference at Hawkesbury Agricultural College, said the group soldier settlements for poultry would help stabilise the industry, 'placing it upon a more permanent and satisfactory basis'; *The Mercury* (Hobart), 7 October 1919, p. 6. Report of the Tasmanian State Secretary of the RSSIL, George Foster to League's President on visits to three of the group settlements in this study; *SMH*, 10 January 1913, p. 10 reported the opening that month of the Municipal Poultry Markets in Haymarket in central Sydney, revealing the industry had only become financially viable early in the twentieth century.

¹³ *The Mercury*, 5 April 1918, p. 4.

Industry organisations supported the idea of poultry soldier settlements and were positive about their possibility of success. At the National Utility Poultry Breeders' Association of Australia interstate conference in January 1918 they declared the poultry industry was 'bounding ahead, and was going to be one of the biggest industries in the Commonwealth'. The Under-Secretary and Director of Agriculture, Mr G. Valder, told delegates that the New South Wales industry had increased in value fourfold since 1904 and confidently expected this growth to continue.¹⁴ Delegates to the conference visited Bankstown and Grantham Soldier Settlements accompanied by William Ashford where the Minister said he believed scope still existed for considerable expansion in the industry. Promising the assistance and co-operation of its members, the President of the New South Wales Utility Breeders' Association reflected both industry and community support for soldier settlers entering the industry.¹⁵

There were other significant forms of assistance for settlers on these group settlements. The land, home, yards and other improvements were to be provided, making it a ready-made enterprise for returned men.¹⁶ Each group settlement had a resident qualified foreman to help inexperienced men learn their new trade, with compulsory co-operative purchasing and selling of goods through government agencies, intended to minimise costs.¹⁷ After a trial period of three months, and within a year, the block would be confirmed to the settler by the government, after which

¹⁴ *SMH*, 10 January 1918, p. 5.

¹⁵ *SMH*, 16 January 1918, p. 9.

¹⁶ *Land for Soldiers*, W.A. Gullick, Government Printer, New South Wales, February 1918, p. 9.

¹⁷ NAA: Repatriation Department; A2479, *Correspondence file, annual single number series, 1916-1918*, 17/304 New South Wales War Council Report on Work. The Establishment of Group Settlements of Returned Soldiers, signed J.G.R. Bryant, Director Soldiers' Settlements, 17 March 1917; see also Appendix C.

five years' residency was imposed.¹⁸ Payments were to be made annually from twelve months after confirmation, including interest of approximately five per cent.¹⁹ All prospective soldier settlers were assured that 'the terms of repayment of moneys advanced [to equip farms] ... and of payment for the land, are upon a long-deferred system, the instalments being calculated upon an interest basis so moderate that they should be easily met by each settler after making due allowance for the upkeep of the farm, and for the maintenance in comfort of himself and family'.²⁰ The advance of £500, later increased to £625, was to be used for clearing and fencing or water supply, and the purchase of stock, plants and tools.²¹ These debts, classified as Class A for permanent improvements and Class B for stock and implements, were recorded in men's individual loan files, along with other indebtedness for marketing and sustenance or payment arrears.²²

All the settlements were planned under much the same specifications as the first group settlement at Bankstown. Many of the men who took up land on later settlements were still serving in the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) at the end of the war and were discharged as fit, although repatriation files and soldier settlement loan files frequently reveal another story. Largely inexperienced in farming, nearly a third

¹⁸ *Land for Soldiers*, *op. cit.*, pp. 9-10. The 1920 publication of the same name said confirmation on group settlements would be within two years, p. 20.

¹⁹ *ibid.*, p. 10. The interest rate of five per cent was noted in the February 1918 publication of this booklet, saying rate changes would be notified in the *Government Gazette*.

²⁰ *Land for Soldiers*, W.A. Gullick, Government Printer, Sydney, April 1920, p. 4.

²¹ *ibid.*, p. 11.

²² SRNSW: NRS 8058, *op. cit.*, [12/7293] Loan File 8239; Attempting to comprehend the debt balances recorded in these files, especially as figures frequently differ by just pennies, is confusing, and without regular statements provided to each settler from the Returned Soldier Settlement Branch (RSSB), would have been nearly impossible to comprehend. See, for example SRNSW: NRS 8058, *op. cit.*, [12/7052] Loan File 4941, BUCKPITT from Hillview Soldier Settlement; [12/7376] Loan File 9408, RIVERS from Bankstown Soldier Settlement; [12/6971] Loan File 3917, McNAUGHT, from Chipping Norton Soldier Settlement. McNaught's file notes that on 20 April 1922 a deputation from Chipping Norton Soldier Settlement met with F.A. Chaffey, Assistant Minister for Lands. At this meeting, local member of parliament, W.R. Fitzsimons stated that 'some men have had no statement of their affairs since they have been on the farm'.

of these men trained at Grantham or Hawkesbury Agricultural College before being allocated blocks as soldier settlers.²³

Between 250 and 300 returned men attended short courses in agriculture at Hawkesbury from 1917 until 1921, prior to taking up soldier settler farms across the state.²⁴ Discharged men were eligible to receive six months training free of charge, and at Hawkesbury staff identified the type of farming best suited to each man and 'direct[ed] their training in such a manner as to ensure their success after settling down on the blocks allotted to them'.²⁵ Approximately forty men from the group soldier settlements in this study trained at Hawkesbury for up to six months.²⁶

The next part of this chapter gives a detailed exploration of each of the group soldier settlements in this study, beginning with the first to be established at Bankstown.

Bankstown Soldier Settlement

Bankstown in south-west Sydney was the first of six soldier settlements under group purchase tenure in the County of Cumberland.²⁷ Bankstown was one of the first group settlements in New South Wales, a new and untried policy introduced by the state government, as outlined in the previous chapter.²⁸ By the end of 1919, the government planned that 1,500 men would be settled on intensive farming land, including 350

²³ See Appendix A.

²⁴ Hawkesbury Agricultural College, Annual reports 1917, 1918, 1919, 1920, 1921.

²⁵ NSWPP, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, 1919. Report of the Department of Agriculture for the Year ended 30 June 1919, p. 125.

²⁶ University of Western Sydney Archives *As-401 Student card system* [Hawkesbury Agricultural College; Hawkesbury Agricultural College of Advanced Education] 16/03/1891-31/12/1972.

²⁷ NSWPP, Vol. 1 (2nd Session) 1922, Progress Report from The Select Committee on the Soldier Settlements, p. 308.

²⁸ SRNSW: Department of Lands, *Returned Soldier Settlement Miscellaneous Files*, NRS 8056 [19/7028] Letter from Director Bryant to the Minister for Lands 4 April 1918; Report on soldier settlement in New South Wales submitted for publication to the *Sunday Times*, 7 April 1919.

poultry, 200 viticulture and 150 market gardening farms.²⁹ The Minister for Lands, William Ashford, presented a positive view to the media, praising this type of settlement.

As for group settlements, it can be said that there is no system in the world that extends so much to its settlers as are extended to the soldier settler under these conditions in New South Wales, both from the social point of view and in regard to the effort made to put them upon a sound footing.³⁰

It can be argued that New South Wales group settlement was never properly funded from the outset, as it cost up to £1,000 to establish each farm on Bankstown Soldier Settlement, when under the agreement reached with the Commonwealth each property was allowed a maximum of £500.³¹ As a result of these additional costs, soldier settlers' debts for these small farms would be considerably higher than they had been led to believe.³²

The property, Georges Hall Park Estate, was acquired by the Crown in April 1917, and became the Bankstown Soldier Settlement, a gated community for approximately fifty returned servicemen and their families.³³ The Surveyor's report is worth quoting at length because it provides a good overview of the land, and how it could be used in January 1917.

²⁹ *SMH*, 22 April 1919, p. 6; SRNSW NRS 8056 [19/7028], *op. cit.*, Office Memo from Bryant to the Minister, 29 March 1919.

³⁰ *SMH*, 23 October 1919, p. 7.

³¹ SRNSW: NRS 8056 [19/7028], *op. cit.*, 21 June 1918. Memo- Advances to Soldier Settlers, signed Bryant. The Commonwealth Government allowed up to £500 advance on unimproved blocks at this date. At Bankstown and Grantham, the cost to establish a poultry farm, not including the cost of the land, was estimated by Bryant to be £1,000.

³² *ibid.*, 'Settling our Returned Soldiers. How the Work is Progressing'. This report, although undated, appears to be from about March 1919.

³³ SRNSW: Department of Lands, *Closer Settlement Promotion Files*, NRS 8052 [10/13713] Bankstown Soldier Settlement. Crown Solicitor's Office, 21 March 1917 re Georges Hall Park Estate. The Estate was acquired under Section 197 of the Crown Lands Consolidation Act.

This property is situated about 3 ½ miles from Bankstown along the Georges River road. It is 14 miles from Sydney. A motor bus plies from Bankstown to Georges River and passes within a mile and a half from this land. The nearest post office and school is at Revesby 1 ½ miles away. The city water is adjoining the estate ... About 373 acres could be utilized by manuring for intense culture – fruit and vegetables. About 126 acres is lowlying and could be utilized for grazing after improvements. About 84 acres salt swamp practically useless. The areas referred to comprise different classes of land as follows. About 125 acres has brown loamy soil and clay subsoil, 176 acres have dark to grey sandy soil and clay subsoil, about 72 acres is very loose sandy soil, about 126 acres is clayey soil ... There is suckling timber generally on the land, with thick undergrowth ti tree scrub thorn tree scrub of the usual coastal variety. There are some matured trees of little or no value.³⁴

Georges Hall Park Estate was first offered as prospective soldier settlement land for £6,000 in late 1916, finally being purchased some months later for £5506.³⁵ In the ensuing months, inspections by Surveyor Sigmund Arnheim, the Valuer General's Department and John Bryant, newly-appointed Director of the Returned Soldiers' Settlement Board (RSSB), all agreed on the property's worth for small farming blocks for returned men.³⁶ As outlined previously, Bryant was well qualified to recommend crops for small farming ventures, with several years' experience in agriculture. In this position, Bryant had travelled widely around the state, allowing him to gain valuable knowledge about the best areas for the cultivation of all varieties of fruit. In November 1916, Bryant was transferred to the Department of Lands where he was appointed Director of the RSSB.³⁷

³⁴ *ibid.*, Report to Alienation Branch from Surveyor Sigmund F. Arnheim, 30 January 1917.

³⁵ *ibid.*, Offer to purchase from J.E. Ducker Property and Estate Agent, 28 September 1916. The offer also says 'NOTE. The price asked for this property is £6000 but I think it could be obtained a bit cheaper'.

³⁶ *ibid.*

³⁷ *SMH*, 14 November 1916, p. 5; *SMH*, 25 August 1920, p. 11. Bryant's salary with the Department of Agriculture was £350 per annum, and £450 as Director of the RSSB. The Street Royal Commission noted evidence that Bryant's appointment as Director was unusual as the position had not been advertised. In mid-1920, Bryant transferred, becoming the Publicity Officer attached to the Department of the Agent-General in London, with a salary of £800 plus a living allowance of £150.

Bryant inspected the Bankstown land twice in November 1916, with his January 1917 report recommending purchase if the estate could be acquired for a reasonable price. Bryant had seen the surveyor's plans and agreed the land would be suitable for vegetable and poultry farms. Bryant believed initially at least, tomatoes would be a good crop with the suburban train network close enough to provide good transport facilities to city and southern markets. After checking the soil types and quality he said stone fruits and grape vines would also grow well. Bryant was obviously confident of market gardening success on Bankstown Soldier Settlement, even organising manure to be delivered from another government agency to help improve the soil quality.³⁸

In Surveyor Arnheim's November 1916 report on Bankstown, he said a major factor in the land's value was proximity to Sydney markets, estimating preparation costs for a group settlement would be almost £16,000. This costing allowed for the partial clearing of native scrub and the construction of twenty-five weatherboard houses costing £400 each. Contradicting Bryant's forecasts, Arnheim noted the short life expectancy of fruit trees in the locality.³⁹ This is the only reference found to date in official documents indicating commercial fruit cultivation might be unsuited for this area. Two surveyor's reports allowed the 583 acre property to be subdivided into twenty-five farms, approximately half the number eventually established.⁴⁰ Arnheim submitted a third plan in June 1917 for Bankstown Soldier Settlement, noting the original plan for orchards and vegetable farms had been modified at Director Bryant's request. The new design for poultry farms was made with the assistance of Poultry

³⁸SRNSW: NRS 8052 [10/13713], *op. cit.*, Statement by John George Robinson Bryant, Officer in Charge of Returned Soldiers' Settlements, 30 January 1917.

³⁹*ibid.*, Surveyor Arnheim to Lands Department, 27 November 1916.

⁴⁰*ibid.*, Arnheim's reports were in November 1916 and January 1917, both prior to final purchase.

Inspector Hadlington.⁴¹ No record of Bryant's reasons for deciding against establishing orchards on this land survive, nor the rationale for doubling the number of farms originally planned.

The Valuer General's report in February 1917 emphasised that the purchase price of £5500 represented good value, especially as the property was so close to the city. However, not all Georges Hall Estate was suitable for subdivision into small farming blocks. The report noted low-lying land on the property was flooded at the time of inspection, but that it would be uneconomic to drain this portion. The Valuer-General's report commented only 300 acres contained good soils, with the remainder flood-prone or with a clay base, making it unsuitable for agriculture.⁴² This report did not affect either the previous positive opinions about the estate or its purchase. Later reports in 1922 by Mr Makin, Inspector of Agriculture, said none of the market gardening blocks were commercially viable. His report said soils were poor quality with heavy clay subsoils, information that John Bryant should have known through his own professional experience.⁴³

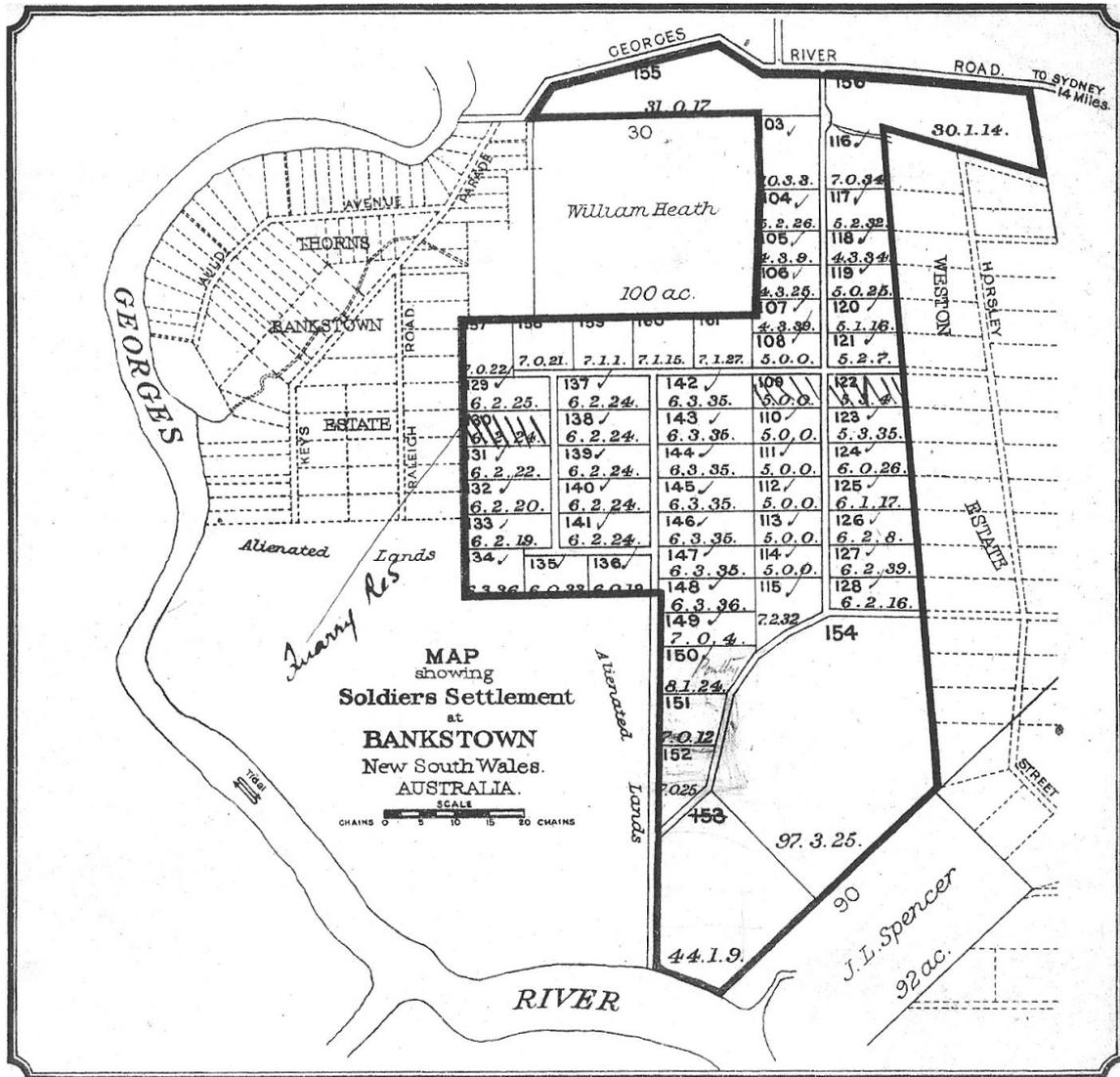
Soldiers' Group Purchase No. 14, Bankstown, had forty-eight poultry farms and eight market garden farms, ranging in size from approximately four to ten acres, with the majority between five and six acres.⁴⁴

⁴¹ *ibid.*, letter from S.F. Arnheim No. 17.35, 14 June 1917; L. Beckett, *Milperra Memories. The Origins and History of Bankstown Soldier Settlement (now Milperra) from 1917*, unpublished paper, 1984, p. 33.

⁴² SRNSW, *ibid.*, Department of Valuer-General, 16 February 1917.

⁴³ *ibid.*, 23 October 1922. Report from R.N. Makin, Inspector of Agriculture. Re Market Gardening Blocks- Bankstown Soldier Settlement.

⁴⁴ *ibid.*, Department of Lands [7228] Notification Setting Aside Lands for Soldiers' Group Purchases, 8 April 1921; see settlement map for further information on individual block sizes.



Compiled, Drawn and Printed at the Department of Lands, Sydney, N.S.W. 1918.
 No of Lith. 18,852. M.

Bankstown Soldier Settlement 1918. Source: State Records of New South Wales: Department of Lands, Closer Settlement Promotion Files, NRS 8052, Bankstown Soldier Settlement, [10/13714]

Soldier settlers had to sign a ‘Memorandum of Agreement’ agreeing to a number of conditions for group settlement, as well as specific conditions relating to either vegetable areas or poultry.⁴⁵ Conditions for vegetable growers included permanent residency, and how crops were to be initially grown and marketed under the supervision of the management.⁴⁶ Poultry farming conditions were more stringent, with complete government control over buildings, fencing and yards. One item noted

⁴⁵ SRNSW: NRS 8052, *op. cit.*, [10/13713], [10/13714], [10/13715]; Appendix B.

⁴⁶ *ibid.*, [10/13713]; Appendix D.

the settler's obligations for breeding poultry, saying 'each holder shall be required to hatch sufficient chickens to enable him to rear not less than six hundred (600) chickens each year and shall confine hatching operations to the period between the first day of June and the first day of October'.⁴⁷ In addition, 'no poultry stock or products from same, whether supplied by the Department or owned by the Settler, shall be sold or disposed of in any way except through the Department'.⁴⁸ These conditions were later applied to all poultry group settlements. Settlers were provided with forty head of poultry stock, supplied by Grantham Stud, and were expected to breed 600 laying hens from the original birds within two years so that they were then self-supporting.⁴⁹ Poultry Inspector Edwin Hadlington later said it had been estimated this number of birds would return £350 per annum profit.⁵⁰

There was considerable community interest in the development of Bankstown Soldier Settlement. The RSSB said Bankstown Settlement had the 'advantage of close proximity to schools, city water [and] lighting supplies', making it attractive to married men with families.⁵¹ This statement stretched the truth somewhat, as none of these services were available at the time. From March 1917, *The Soldier*, the journal of the Returned Sailors' and Soldiers' Imperial League of Australia (RSSILA), regularly reported on the development of Bankstown Settlement. Although the sale was still to be finalised, *The Soldier* noted it was expected farms on the settlement would be allocated quickly.⁵² In May, the journal reported twenty returned men were already living on the settlement, with another twenty casual workers clearing the land.

⁴⁷ *ibid.*, [10/13714]; Appendix D.

⁴⁸ *ibid.*

⁴⁹ NSWPP, Vol. 1, 1922, Progress Report, *op. cit.*, p. 291, p. 303.

⁵⁰ *ibid.*, p. 291.

⁵¹ NSWPP, Vol. 2, 1917-1918. RSSB report for the period October 1916 to 30 June 1917, p. 52.

⁵² *The Soldier*, 16 March 1917, p. 21

Bankstown Soldier Settlement, it said, would initially house fifty families, but with public expectations high, this number could increase to 300.⁵³

At the outset, accommodation at Bankstown Soldier Settlement was under canvas.

The Soldier reported

The soldiers are working splendidly and are all happy and contented. Their camp is situated in a nicely sheltered position on a gently slope, the tents being arranged in two rows ... the cooking is carried on in a gully by one of the soldiers, and a mess tent has been temporarily constructed.⁵⁴

The men were paid ten shillings a day to clear the land, and the Repatriation Department supplied tents, blankets and utensils for on-site living.⁵⁵



Clearing land for Bankstown Soldier Settlement. Source: State Records of New South Wales

⁵³ *ibid.*, 18 May 1917, p. 28, 'provisions have been made for large extensions, and three hundred families can eventually find homes there'.

⁵⁴ *ibid.*, 28 September 1917, p. 22.

⁵⁵ SRNSW: NRS 8052 [10/13713], *op. cit.*, memo from Bryant, 16 July 1918.

PIONEERING WORK AT BANKSTOWN.



CLEARING SCRUB ON THE SOLDIERS' SETTLEMENT AT BANKSTOWN, N.S.W.

There are 47 farms in this settlement, and already 48 returned soldiers are in occupation of allotments. Each farm has an area of about five acres.

*Clearing Scrub on the Soldiers' Settlement at Bankstown, NSW.
Source: The Daily Mail, 21 November 1917, p. 17.*

A year after establishment, thirty cottages had been built with another twenty-two under construction. Despite building delays in sourcing roofing materials, poultry

buildings including breeding pens, incubator rooms and brooder house were also completed by mid-1918.⁵⁶

The settlement had only five roads. Bullecourt, Amiens, Fleurbaix and Pozieres Avenues which were named after important towns or battles of World War I, and Ashford Avenue named after the incumbent Minister for Lands.⁵⁷ Ashford, Fleurbaix and Pozieres Avenues all ended at the swamp, and Bullecourt Avenue became a dead-end where it joined another property. Entry into the settlement was from Georges River Road onto Ashford Avenue.⁵⁸ At the entrance to Ashford Avenue and the end of Bullecourt Avenue were gates between four and five feet high that were locked each night.⁵⁹ Block 109, in the middle of the settlement, was set aside for administration, and would eventually hold several buildings, including two cottages, an office, a bulk store and stabling.⁶⁰ A resident manager, responsible for farming activities and advising inexperienced men lived in one of the cottages.

⁵⁶ NSWPP, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, 1918. 39th Report of the Department of Lands being for the year ended 30 June 1918, p. 907.

⁵⁷ L. Beckett, 'How Bankstown Soldier Settlement was Established 1917', *Bankstown Historical Society Journal*, Vol. 21, No. 3, July 1987, p. 23.

⁵⁸ Beckett, *Milperra Memories, op. cit.*, p. 212.

⁵⁹ Stan Coles, 7 December 2009. Correspondence in possession of the author.

⁶⁰ SRNSW: NRS 8052 [10/13713], *op. cit.*, memo 16 April 1923; NSWPP. Vol. 1, 2nd Session 1922, *op. cit.*, RSSB Report for the year ended 30 June 1922, p. 225. The store was destroyed by fire in 1922.



*Bankstown Soldier Settlement – Bullecourt Avenue.
Source: State Records of New South Wales*

Surveyor Arnheim's original design for Bankstown Soldier Settlement allowed for five one-quarter acre blocks for church sites, a School of Arts and about two acres for parkland.⁶¹ From the earliest days the mess tent was shared for church worship on alternate Sundays by the Church of England and the Methodist Church.⁶² Bankstown Soldier Settlement was therefore planned to be a small community, with all the amenities and facilities required available on-site. This concept of community will be expanded on later in the thesis. Plans to build a 'Soldiers' Church' eventuated in a Methodist Hall, but services were discontinued by the end of 1923 as congregation numbers dropped.⁶³ The Beckett family, members of the Church of England, were active in plans to build a permanent church on the settlement, presenting the

⁶¹ SRNSW: NRS 8052 [10/13713], *op. cit.*, letter from S.F. Arnheim, 23 October 1918. Correspondence No. 18.65.

⁶² Beckett, *Milperra Memories.*, *op. cit.*, p. 136.

⁶³ *The Advertiser* (Adelaide), 14 December 1918, p. 13. The Reverend James Green, President of the New South Wales Conference made an appeal for subscriptions for the new church; SRNSW: NRS 8052 [10/13713], *op. cit.*, Methodist Church to Minister for Lands, Mr W. Wearne, 11 December 1923 asking about the future of the settlement.

Archbishop with a petition that requested a new church when he visited the settlement late in 1918.⁶⁴ The Church of England's plans for a brick church were not realised with St Matthew's, a weatherboard building, eventually utilised for the community's spiritual needs.⁶⁵ No evidence has been found of churches on any of the other group settlements in this study.

Less than a year after the establishment of Bankstown Soldier Settlement, it was obvious a new primary school was needed as the closest, East Hills Primary School, was several miles distant. The headmaster at East Hills reported that nineteen children were already living at the settlement, and with an additional thirty homes to be built by mid-1918, the population was expected to grow considerably.⁶⁶ Parents proactively argued for a new school in or close to the settlement, with a deputation meeting the Minister for Education, Augustus James, in January 1918. Settlers Uebel, Dillon and Martin told the Minister fifty families lived on the settlement, with fifty of the seventy-seven children old enough to attend school. The Minister questioned the men about the permanency of the settlement to decide on the viability of a new school. They said Bankstown was a married man's settlement, considered by the Lands Department to be 'the show soldier settlement in the Commonwealth'.⁶⁷ Offering proof of the community spirit that already existed and their belief the settlement

⁶⁴ Beckett, 'Origins and History', *op. cit.*, pp. 135-136.

⁶⁵ SRNSW: NRS 8056 [10/13713], *op. cit.*; L. Beckett, 'The 75th Anniversary of Milperra: 1917-1992', Milperra Public School, 1992, p. 5; Beckett, *Milperra Memories*, *op. cit.*, p. 138. Although Reverend Newton from Bankstown told RSSB officials a brick church to cost £1,000 was planned, this did not eventuate. At the Service of Thanksgiving for Peace at the Sydney Showground, Church of England Archbishop John Wright, told the assembled crowd he had visited Bankstown Soldier Settlement recently and that the community had no church. A spontaneous collection was made, allowing Bankstown settlement residents to purchase a disused weatherboard church and bring it to the settlement.

⁶⁶ SRNSW: *School Files 1876-1939*, NRS 3829 [5/16851] Milperra Public School; letter from Senior Inspector Cornish to East Hills Primary School, 1 December 1917; Reply from M. McLean, Headmaster, 3 December 1917.

⁶⁷ *ibid.*, Department of Education memo, 16 January 1918. Statement by delegate Tom Dillon.

would be permanent, the men said a Progress Association and a small library were already operating.⁶⁸

These men wanted the settlement to be a success and worked to build community spirit among the families and fellow returned men. They needed it to work, but five years later Robert Uebel and Claude Martin had forfeited, unable to make a living. Claude Martin was forty when he came to Bankstown, expecting to succeed as he had been a poultry farmer before enlisting.⁶⁹ Discharged with rheumatism after serving at Gallipoli, Martin notified the RSSB he was leaving because 'my health is giving out and I cannot carry on longer'.⁷⁰ Departmental memos concur, saying Martin had relied on his wife's assistance to work the block, and her health had suffered as a result.⁷¹ Robert Uebel was discharged in September 1916 for persistent synovitis in both knees.⁷² A tramdriver before the war, Uebel trained at Grantham for his new career as a poultry farmer, keen to learn all he could to make a good life for his wife, Mary, and their children.⁷³ Uebel's admission in his soldier settlement application to being discharged for neurasthenia as well as synovitis, provides one of many examples of men from these settlements suffering mental trauma that was not recorded in their service files.⁷⁴

⁶⁸ *ibid.*

⁶⁹ SRNSW: NRS 8058, *op. cit.*, [12/7352] Loan File 9090 GALLAGHER, W.E. Gallagher took over Block 134 from MARTIN in June 1922.

⁷⁰ *ibid.*, letter from Martin to RSSB, 23 January 1922.

⁷¹ *ibid.*, memo is undated.

⁷² NAA: B2455, *op. cit.*, SERN 3193 EUBEL, Robert Northcote.

⁷³ SRNSW: NRS 8052 [10/13714], *op. cit.*; see Appendix A.

⁷⁴ *ibid.*

Approval for a school was given soon after as a ‘matter of urgency’, but progress was slow.⁷⁵ In spite of correspondence urging haste from Bankstown Soldier Settlement Progress Association, construction tenders were not called until July.⁷⁶ Naming the school caused other difficulties. The name “Bankstown Soldiers’ Settlement School” was considered ‘very cumbersome’ by the Education Department who suggested ‘Jindoola’, an Aboriginal word for iguana, giving no reason for this choice.⁷⁷ In reply, the Department of Lands said Director Bryant suggested the name ‘Milperra’ meaning ‘company’.⁷⁸ Meanings for the Aboriginal word ‘milperra’ have included a company, welcome, a place of recovery of men injured in tribal war or initiation, or a gathering of people (spelt ‘milpera’).⁷⁹ Stan Coles Jnr recalls that his father Stan, Robert Uebel and Conrad Larsen, all original settlers, chose ‘milperra’ from a list supplied by the Lands Department. His father was told the word meant ‘where flocks congregate’ and believed it was an apt name for a collection of poultry farms.⁸⁰ In October 1918, the school at Bankstown Soldier Settlement was officially approved as Milperra School, finally opening on 3 March 1919.⁸¹ By the end of the month fifty-nine children were enrolled.⁸² At least three soldier settlers at Bankstown applied for the position of cleaner at the school but their services were declined, as the position was usually

⁷⁵ SRNSW: NRS 3829 [5/16851], *op. cit.*, Report 29 January 1918. The report said the site was considered most suitable for a school, as it was the highest in the settlement, lightly timbered and level.

⁷⁶ *ibid.*, letter from the Honorary Secretary, Robert Uebel, 8 May 1918.

⁷⁷ *ibid.*, Education Department memo 13 June 1918; SRNSW: NRS 8052 [10/13713], *op. cit.*

⁷⁸ SRNSW: NRS 3829 [5/6851], *op. cit.*, Department of Lands to Education Department, 24 September 1918; memo RSS 18/14119; L. Beckett, *The 75th Anniversary of Milperra*, *op. cit.*, p. 7, says that a public meeting of settlement residents suggested and agreed to the name Milperra on 13 September 1918.

⁷⁹ Beckett, *Milperra Memories*, *op. cit.*, p. 145.

⁸⁰ Correspondence Stan Coles, *op. cit.*

⁸¹ SRNSW: NRS 3829 [5/16851], *op. cit.*, Department of Lands to Education Department, 24 September 1918, memo RSS 18/14119; The school’s opening was delayed because of the influenza epidemic; Beckett, *Milperra Memories*, *op. cit.*, p. 119; Beckett, ‘Bankstown Soldiers Settlement (Milperra) Part 3’, *Bankstown Historical Society Journal*, Vol. 22, No. 1, January 1988, p. 9. Milperra Public School remained on this site until 1975 when a new school was built in Pozieres Avenue. The original school site now forms part of the Bankstown Campus of the University of Western Sydney.

⁸² SRNSW: NRS 3829 [5/16851], *op. cit.*, report from teacher Victor Emanuel Smith, 31 March 1919.

reserved for a widow.⁸³ Although cleaner's wages were small, the regular income would have supplemented men's war pensions, providing payment for extra farm labour, especially for those men not physically robust or who were still suffering from war wounds.



Milperra Public School c1919. Source: courtesy Bankstown Historical Society

The first men to take up blocks at Bankstown Soldier Settlement had all been discharged medically unfit during the war. As most admitted to little or no farming experience, at least thirty of the original settlers received some training at either Hawkesbury Agricultural College or Grantham farm.⁸⁴ Their numbers included Leonard Beckett and Freeman Hunt who both lost arms at Gallipoli, others suffering from the effects of malaria, or from exposure in the trenches of France and Belgium.⁸⁵ Many suffered from neurasthenia, or war neuroses.⁸⁶ The son of Leonard Beckett, one of the first children to be born on the settlement, later recalled 'there were dads who

⁸³ *ibid.*, Applications from H. Langtry, H.G. Harris and C. Lloyd, February 1919.

⁸⁴ See Appendix A.

⁸⁵ NAA: B2455, *op. cit.*, SERN 1571 BECKETT, Leonard; SERN 1367 HUNT, Freeman; SERN 42 COLES, Stanley suffered malaria and irritable heart syndrome, and SERN 499 HARRIS, Henry George suffered malaria, contracted in New Guinea; SERN 311A HORSINGTON, Alfred was discharged for dilated action of the heart and SERN 3384 LARSEN, Conrad for trench nephritis.

⁸⁶ *ibid.*, Men who suffered from neurasthenia included SERN 2271 PEPPER, Charles and SERN 3193 EUBEL, Robert. Eubel's diagnosis is not mentioned in his service files.

limped, dads who had imbedded shrapnel; my dad lost an arm at Gallipoli and some of the later settlers had been gassed in France'.⁸⁷ It will be argued throughout this thesis that these men chose to become soldier settlers because their war injuries and experiences prevented their return to pre-war occupations. Rehabilitation on a small soldier settler farm was the best future they could hope for, and most tried hard to make it work.

In January 1918, the Bankstown Soldier Settlement Progress Association applied for a Post Office. Later that year, Henry Morton applied for the postmaster's position with his daughter, Olga, to assist with clerical work.⁸⁸ Telephone calls had to go through the local exchange at Liverpool, and there was only one telephone on the settlement. Although an application was made for public telephone booths in 1920, the Post Master General's Department said there was not enough use to warrant installation.⁸⁹ The Post Office was operated for some time by Mary Dalton, whose husband Herbert was an original settler.⁹⁰ Enlisting in September 1915, Herbert Dalton said he was fifty, but was more than ten years older.⁹¹ In early 1919, Herbert was admitted to Rydalmere Mental Hospital, dying four months later. Mary stayed on the farm after her husband's death but owing to ill health, left in December 1921.⁹² Eva Spink, the wife of Sydney Noel Spink took over Post Office duties, moving it to her home where she also ran a general business to supplement the family's income.⁹³ However,

⁸⁷ Beckett, 'Childhood Memories', *Bankstown Historical Society Journal*, Vol. 26, No. 4, October 1992, p. 17.

⁸⁸ Beckett, 'Bankstown Soldiers Settlement (Milperra) Part 3, *op. cit.*, p. 12; Beckett, *Milperra Memories*, *op. cit.*, pp 166-167.

⁸⁹ *ibid.*, Beckett, *Milperra Memories*, *op. cit.*, p. 218.

⁹⁰ *ibid.*

⁹¹ NAA: B2455, *op. cit.*, SERN 1217 DALTON, Herbert Percy; SRNSW: NRS 8052, *op. cit.*, [10/13714] Bankstown Soldier Settlement. Dalton's application for soldier settlement says DOB 18 December 1853. He was returned to Australia from Suez and discharged in June 1916.

⁹² *ibid.*, SRNSW NRS 8052 [10/13714]

⁹³ Beckett, *Milperra Memories*, *op. cit.*, pp. 166-167.

Sydney and his family abandoned the block in February 1923, unable to continue owing to his war-related disabilities. Spink, a veteran of Gallipoli and the Western Front, was discharged in October 1917 for debility and dilated action of the heart.⁹⁴ Both Mary Dalton and Eva Spink, whose husbands returned unfit from the war, tried to earn extra income by running a small business. In both instances their husbands had to leave the settlement, unable to continue because of their health.

In 1919, poor road conditions near the settlement was brought to the attention of state parliament with Sydney Shillingham, Member for Petersham, saying roads adjoining the settlement were no better than tracks. Member for Canterbury, George Cann agreed, saying improved road and rail services to the district would provide better access to markets and allow soldier settlers' families to be 'in closer touch with civilisation'.⁹⁵ These comments reveal that although Bankstown Settlement was only fourteen miles from the city, it was still isolated. This isolation is best summarised by a son of an original settler, who recalled 'we had no gas, no electricity, no telephone, no wireless, no public transport, no sewer, no motor cars. We walked to wherever we had to go, and that included five miles each way to the nearest railhead and shops at Bankstown'.⁹⁶ Local government officials were aware of these problems, and with roads impassable during the winter of 1919, requested extra government funding for road work, saying 'there is no doubt that if something is not done the next wet weather will isolate them so that they will neither be able to obtain provisions, nor market their produce'.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ SRNSW: NRS 8052 [10/13714], *op. cit.*

⁹⁵ New South Wales Parliamentary Debates, Vol. 77, p. 2137.

⁹⁶ Beckett, 'Childhood Memories', *op. cit.*, p. 20.

⁹⁷ NAA: Repatriation Department; A2487, *Correspondence File annual single number series, 1918-1929*; 1919/2012, Funds for road works Milperra Soldiers' Settlement, Bankstown. Letter from Municipal Council Town Clerk, Lindsay Gibson to R.B. Orchard MP, Melbourne, September 1919.

In December 1921, questions were raised in parliament about problems at Bankstown Settlement. Albert Bruntnell, Member for Parramatta, spoke of many men's failures and concern for the viability of those who remained on the poultry farms.⁹⁸ At least thirty-five men had already forfeited their blocks at Bankstown Soldier Settlement by this date.⁹⁹ Among them were Freeman Hunt, who wrote on his application that discharge was due to 'left arm gone [and] enteric fever' contracted at Lone Pine, Gallipoli.¹⁰⁰ Hunt quickly realised he was not physically capable of doing the work, forfeiting in December 1917.¹⁰¹ In November 1917, Bankstown's Manager reported William Fitzgerald's health was 'fair', with a pencilled notation saying he was an unsatisfactory settler.¹⁰² Fitzgerald was wounded in the head by shrapnel six weeks after joining the 13th Battalion on Gallipoli. Listed as dangerously ill, he endured six operations to remove fragments, leaving him with permanent disabilities.¹⁰³ Fitzgerald was 'unsatisfactory' because of his impaired health, but had attempted soldier settlement to support his family. Fitzgerald was still on his block when he died from pulmonary tuberculosis in August 1919.¹⁰⁴ Settler Albert Daniel, initially reported as suitable and physically capable, a poultry farmer before enlisting, resigned eighteen months after being allocated his block.¹⁰⁵ Suffering shell shock from his experiences in France, Daniel's mental health was still impaired three years later, unable to work in his former trade and with an unknown future.¹⁰⁶

⁹⁸ New South Wales Parliamentary Debates, Vol. 85, 22 December 1921, p. 2711.

⁹⁹ See Appendix A.

¹⁰⁰ SRNSW: NRS 8052 [10/13713], *op. cit.*

¹⁰¹ *ibid.*, Application dated 17 August 1917, vacated 17 December 1917.

¹⁰² SRNSW: NRS 8052 [10/13713], *op. cit.*, Monthly report, Manager Crispin, 5 November 1917.

¹⁰³ NAA: B2455, *op. cit.*, SERN 2047 FITZGERALD, William John.

¹⁰⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ SRNSW: NRS 8052 [10/13713], *op. cit.* Notation of suitability 13 February 1918. Resigned under advice Department of Repatriation Medical Officer, 17 September 1919.

¹⁰⁶ *ibid.*, The Medical Officer recommended Daniel be sent to a convalescent home. Albert Daniel's loan file is not extant.

Market garden blocks at Bankstown Settlement, deemed unsuitable for poultry, grew tomatoes, beans, cauliflowers and cabbage with little success.¹⁰⁷ Settlers Walter Frost Johnstone and Arthur Roland Hutton both failed on Block 260, each forfeiting within a year. The Departmental Medical Officer had said Johnstone was ‘fit to take up land for market gardening’, but a year later, aged less than thirty, he left, a cripple.¹⁰⁸ Arthur Hutton took over this block, but his physical war disabilities meant he too forfeited in a year.¹⁰⁹ With a wife and young son to support, Hutton, like Johnstone, was less than thirty when he was forced to admit his health would never allow him to succeed as a soldier settler.¹¹⁰ Some months after Hutton’s forfeiture, Agricultural Inspector, Mr Makin, reporting on Block 260, said ‘from a market gardener’s point of view I would not give it one moment’s consideration’.¹¹¹ A recurring theme throughout the archival records on soldier settlements in this study is not only the unsuitability of the land, but that men were forced to forfeit because their war-related disabilities affected their physical ability to farm even a small acreage.

By 1922, only three of the seven vegetable blocks were occupied. Authorities believed Settler Ashton was the only market gardener who would succeed, although he had not paid anything off his debt.¹¹² Several months later Robert Ashton was

¹⁰⁷ *SMH*, 3 March 1920, p. 3.

¹⁰⁸ SRNSW: NRS 8052 [10/13713], *op. cit.*

¹⁰⁹ *ibid.*; NAA: B2455, *op. cit.*, SERN 3089 HUTTON, Arthur Roland. Discharged with a 100 per cent disability in June 1918, Hutton received a gun-shot wound to the head at Ypres in September 1917. Army Form B.179, 6 December 1917 said a missile went through his steel helmet and made a furrowed wound transversely across both parietal bones, causing a compound depressed fracture. Hutton suffered from frequent headaches and vertigo and had suffered severe bouts of bronchitis and pneumonia whilst at Bankstown.

¹¹⁰ *ibid.*, Hutton was born 23 October 1893. It is not known how Hutton or Johnstone supported themselves after forfeiting their blocks as their loan files are not extant.

¹¹¹ SRNSW: NRS 8052 [10/13713], *op. cit.*

¹¹² SRNSW: NRS 8052 [10/13715], *op. cit.*, RSSB report, 23 October 1922. It was recommended that the unoccupied vegetable blocks be disposed of, ‘if necessary, to civilians’.

trying to transfer from his vegetable block to a poultry block, stating the work was too heavy for him.¹¹³ A poultry farmer before enlistment, Ashton was medically discharged for myalgia, having been hospitalised with trench feet and rheumatism.¹¹⁴ With no poultry farms available when he applied for soldier settlement, Ashton accepted the offer of a market garden plot. He found however that his war-related disabilities increased over time until he was physically unable to work his property. Another market gardener, Michael Whalan, was similarly affected. Raised on a market garden on the Hawkesbury River, it was assumed Whalan could manage his own farm. The odds were stacked against him. Several years older than he had admitted on enlistment, Whalan suffered shell concussion at Gallipoli, affecting his sight and leaving him deaf for two years.¹¹⁵ Whalan lived on his block for two years in a tent before his house was built, and crops were ruined by several floods, forcing him to sell some of his household furniture to meet his living expenses.¹¹⁶ Bankstown Settlement's manager confirmed Whalan's health was poor and he was not physically capable of working his block, although RSSB Inspector Moore disagreed, saying Whalan was 'a waster' and his block should be declared forfeit.¹¹⁷ Whalan was a man past his prime, who had suffered shell shock, rheumatism and shrapnel wounds serving at Gallipoli.¹¹⁸ Without a pension, Whalan had hoped that a small vegetable block would sustain him, but his physical and mental health prevented this.¹¹⁹

¹¹³ *ibid.*, March 1922.

¹¹⁴ NAA: B2455, *op. cit.*, SERN 4356 ASHTON, Robert George.

¹¹⁵ *ibid.*, SERN 667 WHALEN, Michael. Whalan's enlistment papers state he was thirty-nine years and six months. A 1937 Statutory Declaration says he was born 29 September 1869, making him forty-five on enlistment; SRNSW: NRS 8052 [10/13714], *op. cit.*, In Whalan's soldier settlement application his date of birth is given as 21 June 1867.

¹¹⁶ *ibid.*, SRNSW NRS 8052 [10/13714]

¹¹⁷ *ibid.*, Manager Goldsmith at inquiry 11 September 1922; SRNSW: NRS 8052 [10/13715], *op. cit.*, Report May 1921.

¹¹⁸ NAA: B2455, SERN 667, *op. cit.*; SRNSW: NRS 8052 [10/13714], *op. cit.*

¹¹⁹ *ibid.*, [10/13714]

Inspector Moore may have had some justification for his comments, but did not seek reasons for Whalen's condition.

The settlement went from being a showpiece to a debacle. In November 1923, the Minister was asked if reports in the *Evening News* saying only eighteen farms were occupied were correct. In reply, Minister Wearne said few soldiers remained at Bankstown, 'owing to the failure to make good under poultry-farming conditions'.¹²⁰ The Minister made no attempt to explain why so many returned men had forfeited at Bankstown. Due to the large number of unoccupied blocks, the RSSB recommended civilians be allowed to purchase blocks, and in November 1923 twenty-eight vacant blocks at Bankstown Soldier Settlement were offered for sale in the *Government Gazette*.¹²¹ By May 1924, a quarter of the thirty-five occupied blocks at Bankstown had been taken by civilians. At least eighty returned men had forfeited their block since the settlement was established.¹²² This was hardly the result the government had hoped for when it championed group settlement for returned men only a few years before.

Grantham

The smallest of the group soldier settlements in this study, Grantham's importance to the government lay in its previous reputation as a supplier of quality stud poultry, and its relatively close proximity to Sydney. Another important consideration for purchase was the potential the site had for training purposes. It was quickly realised that large

¹²⁰ New South Wales Parliamentary Debates, Vol. 93, p. 2371.

¹²¹ SRNSW: NRS 8052 [10/13713], *op. cit.*, Schedule X memo re 22 vacant blocks at Bankstown (undated; notation bottom of report to see District Surveyor's memo) 13 October 1923; Memo re disposal from Metropolitan District Surveyor; SRNSW NRS 8052 [10/13714], *op. cit.*, notification of vacant blocks *New South Wales Government Gazette*, 9 November 1923.

¹²² *ibid.*, see also Appendix A.