

PART THREE

Chapter Five

Hope

For many former members of the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) after World War I, life on the land on a small poultry or vegetable block in company with other returned men represented more than just a return to civilian life. It was hope – hope that the horrors of war could be erased, hope that the emerging new world would be more prosperous, and hope that their lives would be re-built through their own enterprise of land ownership. For a considerable number of men on these group settlements it was also their last hope. Expectations of success were, therefore, high in the beginning on these settlements.

The previous chapters of this thesis have outlined the settlements' origins and establishment and some of the issues facing settlers, such as poor quality land, stock or crops. These difficulties made earning a living from small acreages more arduous than the men had been led to believe and they often soon found themselves with little income and a massive debt. In addition to the problems of flooding and inferior land, badly constructed homes, poor communication systems, and isolation for themselves and their families, most of the men had war-related disabilities to contend with. In spite of all these challenges, these soldier settlers attempted to re-adapt to civilian life and to build a sustainable community as part of a group soldier settlement.

To support the argument of this thesis that most soldier settlers on the six group settlements in this study returned from World War I service physically and mentally

scarred, leaving them with long-term or permanent disabilities, a number of primary sources have been used to build a picture of how they struggled to make a living after the war. National Archives service records of all servicemen and women who served in the AIF in World War I are now digitised, giving researchers ready access to many facets of a serviceman's time in the military, and have provided valuable information about injuries, recovery periods and the experiences of service personnel.¹ Combined with information contained in archival records of the Returned Soldiers' Settlement Branch (RSSB) of the New South Wales Department of Lands and personal case files from the Department of Veterans' Affairs, for the first time a comprehensive picture of why so many men were unsuccessful as soldier settlers can be made.² Although previous studies of soldier settlement have acknowledged that a returned man's health often impacted on his success, thereby providing further evidence for the central argument of this thesis, the focus of Chapters Five and Six, 'Hope' and 'Despair', is to prove that these men were largely unsuccessful because of their war-related disabilities.³

¹ National Archives of Australia: Australian Imperial Force, Base Records Office; B2455, *First Australian Imperial Force Personnel Dossiers 1914-1920*.

² New South Wales State Records: Department of Lands, *Returned Soldier Settlement Loan Files*, NRS 8058; NAA: Department of Veterans' Affairs, Branch Office, New South Wales; C138, *Personal case files, single number series (Australian, 1914-1918 War)*

³ See, for example, M. Lake, *The Limits of Hope. Soldier Settlement in Victoria 1915-38*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1987, pp. 60-63, R. Sparkes, '“Forty Acres and a Crow” A Comparison of Soldier Settlement in Australia after the Two World Wars', M.A. (Hons) Thesis, University of New England, 1996, p. 10, p. 90; K. Frost, 'Soldier Settlement after World War I in South-Western Victoria', PhD Thesis, Deakin University, 2002, p. 107; L.J. Pryor, 'The Origins of Australia's Repatriation Policy', M.A. Thesis, University of Melbourne, 1932, p. 226 noted that for many returned men who became soldier settlers 'their experiences, their temperamental and physical disabilities often rendered them quite unsuitable'.

This chapter argues that in spite of their war-related injuries, the majority of group soldier settlers in the County of Cumberland worked hard to make a success of their civilian life as farmers. They saw soldier settlement as their opportunity to own their own land, to be their own boss, and were determined to make it work. This chapter will clearly show that soldier settlers on these group settlements initiated, and were participants in, many community activities and events aimed at contributing to the success of group settlements in the greater Sydney region. These men wanted to succeed and, at the outset, believed they could. This chapter focuses on government assistance through training, forming co-operatives to help settlers minimise costs and maximise profits, then moves to examine a range of community and associated institutions such as progress associations, poultry clubs, lobby groups and support groups, in addition to providing an insight into the essential role women had assisting their husbands work their block.



Bankstown Soldier Settlers

Source: *State Library of New South Wales PXB 397*



The New South Wales government also expected that this type of soldier settlement would develop its own strong community, believing inexperienced returned men would readily be prepared to help one another.⁴ A range of government propaganda publications prepared for the returning forces were engineered to influence returned men's decisions for their life after demobilisation. The men believed they would be well looked-after in civilian life. For example, *Repatriation*, the Commonwealth government's magazine, reported enthusiastically on the success of Bankstown Soldier Settlement.⁵ These reports encouraged returned men to apply for soldier settlement, giving them hope they could achieve a secure future in civilian life. For many ex-servicemen, these positive reports in a journal dedicated to assisting returned men reassimilate into the community, assured them that they would be successful soldier settlers. It was logical to believe that if returned men at Bankstown Soldier Settlement were doing well a short time after its establishment, other poultry settlements would have similar results.

No effort has been spared to give the men a good start, and as the majority of the settlers are showing aptitude and industry, the Department looks forward to seeing the men firmly established, and not only making a comfortable living but adding to the primary production, and, therefore, to the welfare and prosperity of the State.⁶

⁴ NAA : Repatriation Department; A2487, *Correspondence files, annual single number series, 1918-1929*, 1919/5467, Land Settlement – Details of State Governments Measures and Schemes. In this undated document from the New South Wales government, the benefits of group settlements included, 'The principle of Group Settlements and the consequent creation of community interests and ambitions is particularly applicable to settlers who have not had any, or only partial previous experience in farming and who are not provided with capital other than the financial assistance offered by the Government'.

⁵ *Repatriation*, 25 August 1919, p. 13.

⁶ *ibid.*

Furthermore, returned men were informed poultry from Bankstown was of premium quality and ‘the excellent prices realised for the returned men’s birds should encourage them in their venture, which should be a profitable undertaking’.⁷

As Bankstown was the first group soldier settlement in the greater Sydney region, as discussed in the previous chapter, it received considerable publicity and was used by the government as a demonstration farm to highlight the good work and advantages of this type of soldier settlement in New South Wales. Bankstown Soldier Settlement also attracted high profile visitors, boosting morale amongst the settlers. General Sir William Birdwood and Lady Birdwood, accompanied by the Governor and other dignitaries visited Bankstown Soldier Settlement in April 1920.⁸ Prime Minister Billy Hughes, ‘the little digger’, also visited the settlement. During the Prince of Wales’ visit to Sydney in May and June 1920, ex-servicemen from Bankstown Soldier Settlement were proudly chosen to provide poultry to Government House.⁹ Settlers were convinced of both community interest and support to help them become successful in their new careers. It confirmed to them that Australians recognised the sacrifices they had made, and that Australian society would help them be part of a land fit for heroes as promised.

Many soldier settlers on the settlements in this study came to their block of land and lived there with their wife and family, often for more than a year, before a home was

⁷ *ibid.*

⁸ *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 April 1920, p. 13; *SMH*, 12 April 1920, p. 1; L. Beckett, ‘The 75th Anniversary of Milperra: 1917-1992’, Bankstown Historical Society and Bankstown City Council, August 1993, p. 6.

⁹ L. Beckett, *ibid.*

built.¹⁰ It is a measure of the hope these returned men had, that in spite of their physical and psychological conditions as a result of the war, they were willing to endure living under canvas in temporary housing to realise a better life for themselves and their families. Conditions were tough, living in uncleared scrub, enduring summer and winter weather extremes. As a newspaper later noted, ‘a man who will live in a tent, or take his wife and family into the corner of a brooder and live there with 500 chickens to keep him company until he was flooded out the while he waited for a home to be built, must be given credit for an attempt to make good’.¹¹



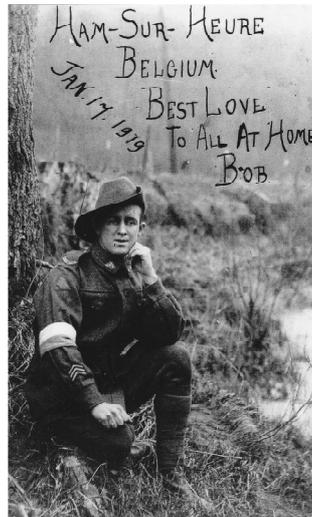
*Bankstown Soldier Settlement – temporary home. Unnamed family.
Source: courtesy Bankstown City Library No. 1076.*

The story of the Anson family illustrates this hope of achieving a good living on a small soldier settlement block close to Sydney. Robert Arthur Anson, his wife Helena

¹⁰ L. Beckett, ‘The History of Bankstown Soldier Settlement’ Part 2, *Bankstown Historical Society Journal*, Vol. 21, No. 4, October 1987, p. 11, quoting Council minutes of 28 May 1918.

¹¹ *Smith’s Weekly*, 25 June 1921, p. 23, ‘Flooded Fowlyards. Bankstown Diggers Try to Evolve the Waterproof Hen’.

and their five children came to Bankstown Soldier Settlement in February 1924.¹² Attempting to enlist in the AIF in 1915, Robert Anson was initially rejected because of limited vision in his left eye, and was finally accepted in November 1916.¹³ Healthy apart from poor sight, Robert joined his unit in Ypres in March 1917, and became ‘a human rabbit on the burrows of the Western Front’.¹⁴ Robert’s son wryly commented many years later that perhaps his father’s initial rejection was fortuitous. If he had been accepted for service in 1915 he could have shared the same fate as three cousins who now rest at Lone Pine on the Gallipoli Peninsula. Anson family history records that Robert was wounded and gassed at Amiens in March 1918, although no record of these injuries are contained in his service file. Arriving home in August 1919, Robert Anson was discharged five months later.¹⁵



Robert Arthur Anson, 'Daydreaming. I wanna go home.' Source: courtesy Bob Anson.

¹² B. Anson, family history, 1996.

¹³ NAA: Australian Imperial Force, Base Records Office; B2455, *First Australian Imperial Force Personnel Dossiers, 1914-1920*. SERN 3348 ANSON, Robert Arthur.

¹⁴ Anson, *op. cit.*

¹⁵ NAA: B2455, *op. cit.*

Returning to his pre-war trade as a carpenter, Robert worked on various sites in Sydney's suburbs. In 1923, while working on a high-rise building in the city, Robert had an accident and fell three stories to the ground. His injuries included compound fractures of both legs, and it was more than twelve months before he had sufficiently recovered to work again. Anson could never return to his trade. In spite of having no farming experience, his injuries combined with his war-related condition prompted the decision to become a soldier settler on a small-holding. Helena's father, Samuel McConnell, helped the family make the move to Bankstown Soldier Settlement, staying for two years. Samuel taught his family how to farm, physically helping Robert and his wife, before he returned to his sheep property in the Macquarie District.¹⁶ Through Samuel McConnell's unselfishness his family hoped that in spite of the injuries Robert sustained during and after the war, the Anson family would be able to work and prosper as soldier settlers in this small community.

Young Bob and his grandfather travelled alone to the new farm. They loaded most of the family's furniture onto a cart, and travelled from Croydon to the farm at Bankstown. Many years later Bob recalled that for a lad of six the hot day travelling over dry and dusty dirt roads felt like it really was 'a journey to earth's end'.¹⁷ Man and boy worked together for two weeks cleaning the house and yard before the arrival of the rest of the family. They worked hard, repairing water pipes, removing starling nests, and chopping and stacking firewood. Robert Anson was still on crutches, and would always have a pronounced limp, so was heavily reliant on his family to help with the multitude of manual tasks required to make the farm productive.

¹⁶ Anson, *op. cit.*

¹⁷ *ibid.*

In 1924, Robert and Samuel built poultry sheds and yards and planted two acres of potatoes on Block 121. Life was good. The potato crop was successful and the spruced-up property looked like a well-managed farm. The whole family were involved with digging up the potatoes, maintaining the poultry and collecting and packing eggs. Although there were always daily chores before and after school for the children, time was always found for games with other children on the settlement. Bob recalls bare-footed kids walking through the settlement's reserve to see who could go furthest through the bindii-eyes, just to win the prize of a few marbles.¹⁸ The Anson family worked hard and it brought good results. In 1927 they produced the best crop of wheat on the settlement. The area planted to wheat was just two acres, but it meant hard physical labour and when harvesting time arrived other settlers helped to scythe, stook and move it into storage.

The following year was also a good one for the Anson family. The market garden plots were well laid out and their poultry won prizes in local shows. There was enough money to enlarge the Anson's home to accommodate the growing family. Post-rail gates and sheds painted green and white not only showed that the small-holding was well-maintained, but that the Anson farm was prosperous. After four years the family was well-established and comfortable at Bankstown Soldier Settlement.¹⁹

Training – Hawkesbury Agricultural College and Grantham Stud Farm

This thesis argues that a significant number of returned men who became soldier settlers on these group settlements were too disabled by war injuries to return to their

¹⁸ Correspondence from Bob Anson to Glenys Allison, 11 January 2010, copy in possession of author.

¹⁹ *ibid.*, Unfortunately, this prosperity did not last, and Robert Anson had to find other means to support his family. What happened to the Anson family will be addressed in the following chapter.

pre-war occupations. For many, these small-holdings were their only viable option to provide a living for themselves and their families. However, at least initially, the idea of a small block and farming co-operatively with like-minded men with similar war experiences offered hope of a brighter future. The opportunity to become soldier settlers and take up their own land was an incentive to work hard to realise this dream. Convinced of the need for training and experience, at least 135 men in this study undertook training at either Hawkesbury Agricultural College or Grantham Stud Farm at Seven Hills before being allocated a soldier settlement block, as was noted in the previous chapter. Later settlers did not have this opportunity, as training was discontinued from mid-1921, prior to New South Wales filling its agreed quota of 8,405 soldier settlers.²⁰ Retraining opportunities may only have been offered to returned men for two years following the Armistice, but it is also likely concerns about the burgeoning cost of soldier settlement to state and Commonwealth governments impacted on the closure of this program.²¹

After training between three and six months at Hawkesbury Agricultural College, at least forty men took up group soldier settlement blocks in the County of Cumberland.²² In June 1917, the College journal reported returned men were training in horticulture, poultry farming, dairying, bee-keeping and pig farming.

²⁰ State Records New South Wales: Department of Lands, *Returned Soldier Settlement Miscellaneous Files*, NRS 8056 [10/13805] Poultry Special Closer Settlement; Discharged soldiers were entitled to six months re-training free of charge. Other sources, see for example, New South Wales Parliamentary Papers, Vol. 1, 1922, p. 268 and Vol. 1, 2nd Session, 1923, p. 244, note that training was discontinued as from 31 December 1920.

²¹ NAA: A2487, *op. cit.*, 1921/2687, Soldiers Land Settlement in New South Wales. Arthur Rodgers, Acting Minister for Repatriation, in response to a letter from the Federal Executive of the Returned Sailors' and Soldiers' Imperial League of Australia about concerns at the tardiness of soldier settlement in New South Wales, wrote that 'the whole position has become difficult for both State and Commonwealth alike in view of the financial stringency which is growing more acute each day', 8 March 1921.

²² Hawkesbury Agricultural College, *Annual Reports 1917 to 1921*. The numbers total 244 returned soldiers. The 1921 Report lists 293 returned soldiers received training, p. 41.

These men enjoy the comforts of a good home and are afforded every opportunity to take up light vocations in those sections suitable to their physical capabilities. It is a pleasure to state that they have so far responded well and left admirable records for exemplary conduct, earnest work, and good citizenship.²³

The Principal later reported that returned men training at Hawkesbury were a credit to the college, noting that ‘they have by their energy and capacity fully justified the provisions being made in fitting them for rural occupation’.²⁴

The University of Western Sydney archives hold some of the cards of returned servicemen who undertook special short training courses at Hawkesbury between late 1916 and mid-1921.²⁵ Many have notations showing the men were keen to learn in anticipation of a new life on the land, indications of their hopes for success in their new career. Of Richard Garlick’s six months in residence, his card records he had suffered trench fever and been gassed. It added that ‘he proved an earnest, capable pupil that seized every opportunity to gain an intimate knowledge of poultry raising. We found him trustworthy, intelligent and a willing worker’.²⁶ After completing his course, Garlick became the fourth settler on Block 125 at Bankstown Soldier Settlement in three years.²⁷ Garlick was aware other men had tried and failed on this block, but hoped he would succeed because of his training, eagerly taking up his block in August 1920.²⁸

²³ *The Hawkesbury Agricultural College Journal*, 1 June 1917, p. 76. Returned men who were training at Hawkesbury in 1917 had been discharged from the AIF as medically unfit, hence the reference to their ‘physical capabilities’; *The Hawkesbury Agricultural College Journal*, 1 March 1918, p. 33. The Principal’s Report says in part that many of the returned men who had trained at Hawkesbury were ‘maimed and rendered unsuited [by their disabilities] for other occupations’.

²⁴ *ibid.*, 1 June 1920, Principal’s Report, p. 75.

²⁵ 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.

²⁶ *ibid.*, GARLICK, Richard John. 16 April 1920 – 17 August 1920.

²⁷ See Appendix A. The previous residents on Block 125 were Thomas HARRIS, Oscar MOCKLER and John KING.

²⁸ *ibid.*

There are many stories of the ‘hope’ engendered by taking up a small soldier settlement block, and the initial optimism felt by the hundreds of ex-servicemen who became soldier settlers on these group settlements in the County of Cumberland. To support the argument that many of these men tried hard to succeed, in spite of their war-related physical or psychological problems, some of their stories and experiences will be explored in this chapter.

Another trainee at Hawkesbury, Leslie Cleal Archer Warr, had no information recorded on his student card about his aptitude for poultry-farming, but only information on his physical and mental condition. The Hawkesbury records state Warr suffered concussion and shock as a result of being blown up in a trench. He had had a complete breakdown, with the notations ‘mental case’ and ‘neurasthenia’ strongly underlined on his record card.²⁹ A member of the 4th Battalion, Warr was part of the second and third waves of the landing at Gallipoli on 25 April 1915.³⁰ He was on Gallipoli only two weeks when he was injured by a shell explosion, receiving lyddite burns to his face. Returned to Australia, Leslie Warr was discharged in January 1916.³¹ No mention is made in his service file about his psychological problems, still severe nearly four years later. His training at Hawkesbury lasted less than three months, cut short when he was offered the opportunity to take over Block 114 at Bankstown from William Prentice.³² Warr was keen to be successful, writing to the RSSB several months after coming to Bankstown that he was working eighty-four

²⁹ UWS Archives, *op. cit.*, WARR, Leslie C. Archer. 8 November 1920 – 21 January 1921. Warr received poultry and vegetable garden training.

³⁰ Australian War Memorial, *Australian Military Units – World War I*. 4th Battalion.

³¹ NAA: B2455, *op. cit.*, SERN 460 WARR, Leslie Archer Cleal.

³² See Appendix A; SRNSW: Department of Lands, *Returned Soldier Settlement Loan Files*, NRS 8058 [12/7276] Loan File 7937, WARR, L.A.C. Prentice advised he wished to leave because of ill health in January 1921. He died in March 1928.

hours a week on his farm to make it profitable. He stressed that as a returned soldier and a hard worker his only aim was to comfortably support his family.³³

Unfortunately Leslie Warr's optimism did not last. Like many of his contemporaries, Warr still suffered the psychological effects of war ten years after his discharge. In 1926 Warr was interviewed about his two years as a soldier settler, in an attempt to recoup his debt. The report said Warr was 'suffering from shell shock [which] at times renders him not able to pursue his business. At the interview we had personal evidence of his suffering, and are convinced he is not able to earn a regular living'.³⁴

Inexperienced in farming, Warr had hoped that after training and working a small block of land among other returned men he would recover his health and lead a normal life. It is important to recognise that governments also hoped men would recover their health and again become useful members of society, and by the end of the war may not have understood the long-term health ramifications of returned personnel. Leslie Warr's story of initial hopes for making a living as a soldier settler is a recurrent theme through many group settlement loan files. There were many men like Leslie Warr whose hope could not be sustained, but it is nevertheless important to recognise these men were, initially at least, optimistic, and toiled long and hard before admitting their defeat.

³³ *ibid.*, letter 29 October 1921.

³⁴ *ibid.*, Soldiers' Settlement Appraisement Board report, 12 August 1926. Forfeiting in January 1923, in January 1925 Warr was advised his debt was £628/4/5. His debt was written off in November 1927.

Two months after his discharge, Frank Harold Carrett began a six month training course at Hawkesbury Agricultural College in market gardening and fruit-growing.³⁵ This was to be the beginning of a better life for Frank and his wife Ellen, as they had spent little time together, marrying shortly before Frank embarked for overseas service.³⁶ Frank believed if he was allocated a soldier settlement farm after training, he could put his war experiences behind him and forget the horrors of those years. On his enlistment papers Frank said he previously served five years in the military at Watts Naval Training School.³⁷ Watts, a Dr Barnardo's home for orphan and destitute boys at North Eltham in Norfolk, England, trained boys for a life at sea.³⁸ With this background, it is not known why Frank chose to enlist in the army rather than the navy, nor is it known when he arrived in Australia.

Carrett was a member of the 20th Battalion, among the first Australian forces in April 1916 sent into action near Fromelles on the Western Front.³⁹ The German army concentrated their forces in this area soon after, and Frank Carrett was taken prisoner-of-war at Bois Grenier where, years later, he said he 'got a slight whiff of gas for which I was not treated'.⁴⁰ Ellen was notified Frank was unofficially a prisoner-of-war in Germany, and turned to the Newcastle branch of the Australian Red Cross for help. The surviving official reports note Frank was not wounded when he was taken prisoner.⁴¹ Frank was unable to substantiate his later claims of being exposed to gas poisoning. Similarly he could provide no evidence of his experiences as a prisoner-of-

³⁵ NAA: Department of Veterans' Affairs, Branch Office, New South Wales; C138, *Personal case files, single number series (Australian, 1914-1918 War)*, R49843 CARRETT, Frank Harold.

³⁶ NAA: B2455, *op. cit.*, SERN 2482 CARRETT, Frank Harold.

³⁷ *ibid.*

³⁸ www.goldonion.org/photos/photo_archive_homes/pages/watts.htm, accessed 5 March 2010.

³⁹ AWM, Australian military units, *op. cit.*, 20th Battalion.

⁴⁰ NAA: C138, *op. cit.*, R49843 CARRETT, F.H.

⁴¹ AWM, *Red Cross Wounded and Missing*, 1 August 1916.

war. From Friedrieksfeld Camp he was sent to Linden Ruhr in Westphalia to work as a coal miner and boiler attendant, where he said both hands were crushed, his ribs bruised and he received head injuries. He also alleged his left upper eyelid was hurt by a blow from a pit lamp.⁴² Carrett received no medical treatment prior to discharge, and there is no official record of any injuries sustained during more than three years as a prisoner-of-war.⁴³ It is little wonder Frank wanted a quiet life above-ground after the war.

College staff reported Carrett was an intelligent, willing worker and thoroughly reliable. His six months' training provided him with enough experience to become a successful orchardist.⁴⁴ Frank waited nine months after completing training before being offered a vegetable block at Bankstown Soldier Settlement. Thomas Lusted, the previous man on Block 261, stayed at Bankstown for just one year. Although Lusted had several years' experience in market gardening, it is likely he forfeited because he had difficulty working his block and caring for his motherless three year-old son, Frederick.⁴⁵ For Frank and Ellen Carrett, their prospects now appeared rosy. They were comfortable in their new home and a second daughter, Winifred, was born in August 1921.⁴⁶ An inspector's report written several months after their arrival said

⁴² NAA: C138 R49843, *op. cit.* Carrett was repatriated to England in late November 1918, and discharged in June 1919. For more detailed information on conditions experienced by AIF prisoners of war in Europe, see P.M. Regan, 'Neglected Australians: Prisoners of War from the Western Front, 1916 to 1918', M.A. (Hons) Thesis, Australian Defence Force Academy, University of New South Wales, 2005.

⁴³ NAA: B2455, *op. cit.*

⁴⁴ UWS Archives AS-401 Student Card System, *op. cit.*, CARRETT, F.H.

⁴⁵ SRNSW: Department of Lands, *Closer Settlement Promotion Files*, NRS 8052, Bankstown Soldier Settlement [10/13713] Thomas Lusted's loan file is missing, leaving his story incomplete.

⁴⁶ NAA: C138 R49843, *op. cit.*

Frank was 'a trier and as game as they make them', growing beans, swedes, beet and potatoes, and expecting the season would be a good one.⁴⁷

There were a number of men on these settlements like Leonard Beckett, who immigrated from England before the war, wanting to build a better life for themselves. The war interrupted his plans to become well established as a carpenter before marrying his childhood sweetheart Maud Mary Bracey. Chasing Leonard's dream, Maud and her widowed mother had followed him from Great Yarmouth to Mosman in Sydney.⁴⁸ Enlisting in January 1915 and just six weeks before his embarkation in April, Leonard married Maud at St Clement's Church in Mosman.⁴⁹ Beckett landed with the 1st Battalion on the Gallipoli Peninsula a month after the beginning of the Dardanelles campaign. His war began and ended there when his right arm was blown off at Victoria Gully less than three months later. After surgery to amputate his arm, Leonard Beckett returned to Australia in August 1916 and continued treatment at the No 4 Australian General Hospital in Sydney until his discharge in November.⁵⁰ Leonard left Australia a fit young man. Less than six months later he was permanently disabled, unable to return to his trade. Leonard applied for a small soldier settlement farm and was among the first returned men to train at Hawkesbury Agricultural College, only weeks after his discharge.⁵¹

⁴⁷ SRNSW: NRS 8052, *op. cit.*, [10/13715] 10 October 1921, W.H. Plummer. Report on market gardens Bankstown Soldier Settlement.

⁴⁸ Jessie Street National Women's Library, Tapestry Series no. 40, 'Maud Mary Beckett'.

⁴⁹ NAA: B2455, *op. cit.*, SERN 1571 BECKETT, L.A.V.; AWM Embarkation records.

⁵⁰ *ibid.*

⁵¹ UWS Archives, *op. cit.*, BECKETT, Leonard Arthur, 20 November 1916 - 12 April 1917.

The birth of the Beckett's first child, Edith Maud, in April 1917, was cause for celebration and further belief of a good future in their adopted country.⁵² Completing his course at Hawkesbury the same month, Leonard Beckett was offered a block on Bankstown Soldier Settlement.⁵³ A new house with two bedrooms was built on the block and by the end of 1921 would accommodate Leonard and Maud, her mother and four children.⁵⁴ This slightly out-of-focus black and white photograph of the young Beckett family, taken in the early 1920s in front of their chook pens, reflects their positive attitude of a secure future as poultry farmers.



'Repatriated in Australia 1918' Source: courtesy Bankstown Historical Society.

Returned men at Campbelltown Soldier Settlement who trained at Hawkesbury Agricultural College included Walter Mullany, George Parkin and Arthur Ross. Mullany's training was interrupted by three months in Randwick Hospital, receiving ongoing treatment on his right arm which had been amputated above the elbow.⁵⁵ Wounded in the head and arms in France in July 1916, two weeks later Mullany had surgery to remove his hand and forearm which had developed gas gangrene.⁵⁶

⁵² NAA: C138, *op. cit.*, M/C 9247 BECKETT, L.A.V.

⁵³ SRNSW: NRS 8056, *op. cit.*, [10/13714] Bankstown Soldier Settlement.

⁵⁴ NAA: C138, *op. cit.*, M/C9247.

⁵⁵ UWS Archives, *op. cit.*, MULLANY, Walter Patrick, 10 September 1918 – left sick 20 December; returned 11 March 1919 - 11 June 1919.

⁵⁶ NAA: B2455, *op. cit.*, SERN 10187 MULLANY, Walter Patrick.

Mullany had already undergone several operations to remove damaged nerve endings and failed fittings for an artificial limb before beginning training in September 1918.⁵⁷ His civilian work prospects were severely limited by his war injuries, and he needed to be within reasonable access to both hospital treatment facilities and prosthetics specialists in Sydney. In spite of his obvious physical disabilities and pain, Hawkesbury instructors recorded he was keenly interested in his training and had a pleasant manner.⁵⁸ After completing his course, Walter Mullany was allocated Block 321 at Campbelltown Soldier Settlement. With hopes of a new life as a soldier settler, Walter married Ivy Frost the following year. Walter Mullany was still living on his farm in Waminda Avenue Campbelltown when he died in June 1949.⁵⁹

Enlisting in September 1915, George Parkin was medically discharged with rheumatoid arthritis in both knees fifteen months later.⁶⁰ He worked for the next three years in the offices of William Arnott Limited at Homebush before seeking medical clearance to train at Hawkesbury in pig-farming. The medical officer agreed that Parkin was fit enough, stating that it was a 'fair risk' for George.⁶¹ George hoped a life in the open air would help him recover his strength and free him of his constant cough, even more important now that George and his sweetheart Henrietta had plans to marry that year. Accepted for training, Parkin spent six months at Hawkesbury Agricultural College until September 1920 when he was offered poultry Block 326 at Campbelltown Soldier Settlement.⁶² The future looked bright as he was a young man, well trained, newly married and with a brand new home and farm at Campbelltown.

⁵⁷ NAA: C138, *op. cit.*, R10713 MULLANY, Walter Patrick.

⁵⁸ UWS Archives, *op. cit.*, MULLANY.

⁵⁹ NAA: C138 R10713, *op. cit.*

⁶⁰ NAA: B2455, *op. cit.*, SERN 5199 PARKIN, George. Discharged December 1916.

⁶¹ NAA: C138, *op. cit.*, R32656 PARKIN, George.

⁶² UWS Archives, *op. cit.*, PARKIN, George, 8 March 1920 – 8 September 1920.

Hope was soon exhausted for George. Unbeknownst to him, he had contracted tuberculosis, probably during war service, and died in June 1923, aged less than thirty.⁶³

Arthur Ernest Ross trained at Hawkesbury Agricultural College for six months from November 1918. Teachers at the College were sympathetic of returned soldiers' special needs, trying to help men overcome their psychological problems and making allowances for physical disabilities. Half-way through his training, Ross' student card records

this ex soldier is a very rowdy, discontented man. He is always creating unrest and dissatisfaction amongst his fellow ex soldiers and takes exception to everything. He is very ungrateful, domineering, and troublesome to handle. We are very patient and tolerant with him knowing he has lost an arm.⁶⁴

Three months later, the comments reveal greater optimism for Ross' future.

This man has improved very much. He has steadily settled down to discipline and work and proved a useful man. Environment has had its effect combined with judicious tactful pressure of a disciplinary character. He leaves tomorrow for good.⁶⁵

Arthur Ross had lost all hope when he was injured by shrapnel in March 1917, his left arm later amputated.⁶⁶ However, he began a new life after training at Hawkesbury Agricultural College and became a soldier settler. In January 1920, Ross was allocated Block 316 at Campbelltown Soldier Settlement, and the following year married widow Beatrice Nicol, whose husband had been killed in action in the closing

⁶³ NAA: C138 R32656, *op. cit.*; NAA: B2455 SERN 5199, *op. cit.* It is possible George Parkin was exposed to gas whilst serving at the front-line in France in May 1916 and was not treated. Many men who were gassed later developed tuberculosis; K. Blackmore, *The Dark Pocket of Time. War, Medicine and the Australian State, 1914-1935*, Lythrum Press, Adelaide, 2008, p. 6 notes medical misdiagnoses affected men's health post-war; p. 37 states the AIF had no effective gas masks until late 1917.

⁶⁴ UWS Archives, *op. cit.*, ROSS, Arthur Ernest. 14 November 1918-5 May 1919, notation 14 February 1919.

⁶⁵ *ibid.*, 4 May 1919.

⁶⁶ NAA: B2455, *op. cit.*, SERN 2214 ROSS, Arthur Ernest.

months of the war.⁶⁷ Arthur and Beatrice Ross had four children in the next five years, living on the settlement with their family until Beatrice's death in 1942.⁶⁸ Arthur remained in the family home with one of his sons until he died ten years later.⁶⁹ Life was never easy for either Walter Mullany or Arthur Ross as both men had to adapt themselves to work without a limb. Although George Parkin had no diagnosed war-related disability when he became a soldier settler, he believed the work and fresh air would help him recover his physical strength. The files of these men show their tenacity and reveal that they regained hope through becoming soldier settlers, determined to put their war experiences behind them and become successful civilians.

Among at least thirteen men from Chipping Norton Soldier Settlement who trained at Hawkesbury College were David Beveridge, John Gilbert and Charles O'Halloran.⁷⁰ All were married men, seeing soldier settlement as a means of providing a home and an income for their family. It appears that for Charles O'Halloran soldier settlement was the last chance for an ageing man with a history of physical violence and alcohol abuse. On enlistment Charles stated he was thirty-five, but was actually nearly forty-five.⁷¹ With no proof of age required in the early years of the war, Charles O'Halloran is only one of many soldier settlers on these group settlements who lowered their age on enlistment.

In March 1919, O'Halloran began three-months training at Hawkesbury Agricultural College, which was extended to six months. An undated notation from the

⁶⁷ NAA: B2455, *op. cit.*, SERN 2707 NICOL, Frank Jenner. Killed In Action 18 September 1918.

⁶⁸ NAA: C138, *op. cit.*, C24045 ROSS, Arthur Ernest.

⁶⁹ *ibid.*

⁷⁰ UWS Archives, *op. cit.*

⁷¹ NAA: B2455, *op. cit.*, SERN 2073 O'HALLORAN, Charles; NAA: C138, *op. cit.*, C22212 O'HALLORAN, C.

Repatriation Department's Medical Officer on his student card notes he was 'now fit to take up land for poultry farming'.⁷² However, another comment by the doctor reveals O'Halloran had been closely observed for some time, which suggests his psychological fitness was questionable. O'Halloran was reported for drinking and violent temper outbursts, threatening other returned men that he would soon 'be bayoneting the b-y wretches he had been fighting alongside in the trenches'.⁷³ In spite of O'Halloran's less than satisfactory record during training, six months later the family moved to Block 381 on Chipping Norton Soldier Settlement. Loan files and other official soldier settlement documents rarely mention the wives and children of soldier settlers, and how the physical and emotional problems of their returned man impacted on family life. In this instance, for Mary O'Halloran and her children, Chipping Norton Soldier Settlement represented her hope that the family could be together with Charles supporting them for the first time in fourteen years. It was an attempt to be a family again. Mary and her children had come from England to a new country and a different lifestyle, prepared to share their lives with a man they hardly knew or understood.⁷⁴ Marrying in England in 1903, Charles had sailed to Australia three years later, promising to send for his wife and children after he had found work and a home. His promises broken, his next contact with his family was when he was in England on active service with the AIF during the war.⁷⁵

John Gilbert and David Beveridge trained at Hawkesbury Agricultural College with Charles O'Halloran, hoping for a better life on the land following their war experiences. It is not known what employment, if any, Gilbert had after being

⁷² UWS Archives, *op. cit.*

⁷³ *ibid.*

⁷⁴ SRNSW: NRS 8058, *op. cit.*, [12/6975] Loan File 3970, O'HALLORAN, C.

⁷⁵ NAA: C138, *op. cit.*, C22212 O'HALLORAN, C.

discharged. Gilbert's war ended when he was evacuated with shell shock after the battle at Pozieres in northern France.⁷⁶ Two years after returning to Australia, Gilbert began a three month poultry course before taking up soldier settlement land.⁷⁷ David Beveridge's course overlapped with Gilbert's. Beveridge had been wounded in action shortly before the Armistice, receiving a severe gun-shot wound to the head.⁷⁸ Reports from Hawkesbury College on both men said they were good workers, reliable and interested in their training.⁷⁹ A group soldier settlement poultry farm would allow both men, who were nearing forty, a comfortable place to recover mentally and physically, and provide a home and an income for their families. Both Gilbert and Beveridge were actively involved in their small community to help fellow settlers, confident in the early years that soldier settlement would provide them with a secure future.

By 1924 John Gilbert was only just making living expenses. He did not give up, even after losing large numbers of young birds following heavy rains and flooding.

Confident of his eventual success, Gilbert used all his personal savings, his gratuity and borrowed money on improvements to his block. He diversified into growing vegetables, and bought a truck to take produce to market. After requesting a revision of his indebtedness in August 1926, and still trying to make ends meet, John tried to

⁷⁶ NAA: B2455, *op. cit.*, SERN 1055 GILBERT, John. Gilbert was evacuated to England for treatment in September 1916; www.awm.gov.au/units/unit_11209.asp. Military unit history 22nd Battalion, accessed 17 August 2010.

⁷⁷ UWS Archives, *op. cit.* Gilbert began his course in June 1919.

⁷⁸ *ibid.*, Beveridge's course was extended from three to six months; NAA: B2455, *op. cit.*, SERN 2576A BEVERIDGE, David.

⁷⁹ UWS Archives, *op. cit.*, David BEVERIDGE 30 April 1919 - 30 October 1919; John GILBERT 27 June 1919 - 22 September 1919.

make money with a fruit and vegetable business. Aged forty-five, John's hopes were destroyed when his home burnt down in July 1927.⁸⁰

At least ninety-four of the settlers identified for this study on these six group soldier settlements received some training at Grantham Stud at Seven Hills.⁸¹ As the accommodation for trainees at Grantham was just one 'cheap building' to house twelve men, it is reasonable to assume training was brief.⁸² This number includes four of the twenty-seven men who lived on the eleven poultry farms that were part of the Grantham Estate. It is likely that more men on these adjoining farms also trained at Grantham. However, regardless of the amount of training provided, the decision to seek instruction is proof these men attempted to gain farming skills to fit them for a life on the land. It is further evidence of the hope returned men held that their future would be brighter after the hardships and sorrows of World War I.

Thomas Buckley became a soldier settler at Bankstown Soldier Settlement in mid-1922 after training at Grantham. Although Thomas was the third returned serviceman in five years to try and make a living on the six-acre poultry block, he hoped for the best. Thomas, a Welsh-born saddler, lived with his family on the block for thirteen years. A life on a small farming block was a far cry from Buckley's earlier years. Before enlisting in the AIF in August 1914, Thomas had served twelve years in the Imperial Army. Buckley's service with the Australian army would be much shorter. Landing on the Gallipoli Peninsula with the 2nd Light Horse Brigade on 9 May 1915,

⁸⁰ SRNSW: NRS 8058, *op. cit.*, [12/6973] Loan File 3937 HALL, G.E.; GILBERT, J.

⁸¹ NAA: A2487 1923/9561, *op. cit.*

⁸² NAA: Repatriation Department; A2485, *Correspondence files, 'C' series, (Relating to Land Settlement and Local Repatriation Boards), 1918-1919; C/131, Bankstown Soldier Settlement. Letter 21 August 1918 from NSW Director of Returned Soldiers' Settlement Branch.*

his war ended six days later when a gun-shot wound caused a compound fracture of his right leg. Thomas Buckley was discharged medically unfit the following year.⁸³

Nearly forty-four when he came to Bankstown, Buckley's war injuries impacted on his ability to undertake heavy work, needing to employ boy labour on the farm.

Because his land was low-lying and subject to flooding, his egg production was always less than other farms on the settlement, yet Thomas managed to make regular repayments until the end of 1932.⁸⁴ The Buckley's efforts to remain on their farm are examined in the following chapter.

Sidney Matthew Marshall trained at Grantham before receiving a block there in September 1920.⁸⁵ Marshall was discharged from the AIF in December 1916 after an accident in Egypt when his right hand was crushed.⁸⁶ His soldier settlement loan file notes that he lost a hand and suffered injuries to his head, details not included in his service file.⁸⁷ Soldier settlement was probably Marshall's last hope. How he supported himself, his wife and four children for four years after discharge before becoming a soldier settler is unknown. Marshall and his family lived at Grantham for more than five years, forfeiting in April 1926 with a debt in excess of £1,000.⁸⁸ This large debt reveals Marshall made little or no money from his poultry farm. A year later he was unemployed, with few assets and no means to repay his debt. In May 1927, Marshall applied for Block 273 at Doonside Soldier Settlement.⁸⁹ A year after

⁸³ NAA: B2455, *op. cit.*, SERN 484 BUCKLEY, Thomas.

⁸⁴ SRNSW: NRS 8058, *op. cit.*, [12/7352] Loan File 9060 BUCKLEY, T.

⁸⁵ SRNSW: NRS 8058, *op. cit.*, [12/7300] Loan File 8355 MARSHALL, S.M.

⁸⁶ NAA: B2455, *op. cit.*, SERN 4837 MARSHALL, Sidney Matthew.

⁸⁷ SRNSW: NRS 8058 [12/7300], *op. cit.*

⁸⁸ *ibid.*, Marshall's debt was £1,370/0/2.

⁸⁹ *ibid.*; [12/7282] Loan File 8024 KEATING, Ernest. Keating vacated his block September 1926. No information has been located to indicate if this block was re-allocated, or indeed if Marshall received any other soldier settlement block.

leaving Grantham, even though unsuccessful as a poultry farmer, Marshall realised he had little hope of any other employment, and considered another soldier settlement block was his only prospect for earning a living and supporting his family. There is no record to indicate if Marshall's second application for soldier settlement was successful, although by this date government authorities were well aware of the large number of forfeitures and debts associated with the scheme, and could have decided Marshall's request was unreasonable.

David Clark Menzies, an original settler at Campbelltown Soldier Settlement, trained in poultry farming at Grantham. Aged forty-two, Menzies served in the AIF for two and a half years, and was forty-six when he came to Campbelltown with his family. Menzies was discharged in January 1918 suffering from chronic gastritis and debility from unstated causes.⁹⁰ Menzies' repatriation records note he had been gassed and ill with pleurisy, medical information which is not included in his service file.⁹¹ With his family hoping the fresh country air would cure his health, the farm was productive and repayments met until early 1922 when he was hospitalised. In spite of impaired health, authorities agreed to allow Menzies to defer payments, noting his prospects were still good. Menzies continued working his farm, making regular repayments until the beginning of the Depression.⁹² By the late 1920s he was nearly sixty, and was suffering from increasing health problems. In spite of the worsening economic situation he was determined to hold onto his farm, seeking help from many people in order not to be evicted from his home.⁹³

⁹⁰ NAA: B2455, *op. cit.*, SERN 3534 MENZIES, David Clark.

⁹¹ NAA: C138, *op. cit.*, R8766 MENZIES, David Clark.

⁹² SRNSW: NRS 8058, *op. cit.*, [12/6865] Loan File 1873 MENZIES, D.C.

⁹³ *ibid.*

Brothers Robert and Frank Telfer trained at Grantham before they both took blocks at Doonside. Familiar with the area as the family was born and raised in Parramatta, about ten miles from Doonside, neither had any farming experience.⁹⁴ Both men were professional soldiers before the war, and hoped working together would give them a better chance of success as farmers. Frank had been wounded in the thigh, and Robert whilst uninjured, suffered several bouts of lumbago and myalgia during his service, receiving on-going treatment for back problems for many years after the war.⁹⁵ The men's physical disabilities resulting from war service made the decision to farm together logical. With no resources of their own and young families to support, the Telfers believed the small soldier settlement farms would be ideal. Discharged without a pension, Frank was forced to apply to repatriation for financial assistance to move his household goods to his new property at Doonside.⁹⁶ Like so many others, the Telfer families were unable to make a success of their farms, forfeiting in September 1924.⁹⁷

Other training facilities

Henry Edward Buckpitt and Walter Henry West trained at facilities outside Sydney, and saw a small soldier settlement block as their best hope, possibly their only hope, for a healthier life. Henry Buckpitt served at Gallipoli and in France where he was wounded in the abdomen, thigh and right arm six months before the end of the war.⁹⁸

A month after being discharged in mid-1919, Buckpitt began training at Grafton

⁹⁴ www.bdm.nsw.gov.au TELFER, James and Louisa, accessed 23 August 2010.

⁹⁵ NAA: B2455, *op. cit.*, SERN 2980 TELFER, Frank Henderson; *ibid.*, SERN 2830 TELFER, Robert Woolridge; NAA: *Department of Defence*; B4747, Army Militia Service Records, attestation documents, (Form A7) alphabetical series, January 1901-December 1940, No 823, TELFER, Robert Woolridge; NAA: C138, *op. cit.*, M61844 TELFER, Robert Woolridge.

⁹⁶ *ibid.*, R64150 TELFER, Frank Henderson.

⁹⁷ SRNSW: NRS 8058, *op. cit.*, [12/7282] Loan File 8032 TELFER, F.H.

⁹⁸ NAA: B2455, *op. cit.*, SERN 1656 BUCKPITT, Henry Edward.

Experimental Farm in northern New South Wales, prior to taking up a block in the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area, 300 miles west of Sydney. Buckpitt, his wife Katherine and their family looked forward to returning to the country where he had edited newspapers before the war. Buckpitt's plans changed when doctors said he was unfit for heavy work, and his sister-in-law in Sydney died, so he decided to apply for a small soldier settlement poultry farm closer to family.⁹⁹ Although Buckpitt did not make a living from his block, his initiative and humour trying an alternate business proposition, reflect his expectations of making a success of poultry farming.

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**Fresh Eggs at 1d. per doz. under
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Source: State Records of New South Wales: Department of Lands, Soldier Settlement Loan Files, NRS 8058 [12/7052] Loan file 4941, Buckpitt, H.E.

Walter Henry West regarded poultry farming not only as his path to health, but a place where his troubled marriage could be regenerated and provide his family with the lifestyle he craved after his war experiences. West was wounded in the Third

⁹⁹ NAA: C138, *op. cit.*, R35327 BUCKPITT, Henry Edward.

Battle of Ypres in September 1917 and six months later was badly gassed at Villers-Bretonneux. He was medically discharged with 'effort syndrome', from gas and shell poisoning, leaving his lungs permanently badly damaged.¹⁰⁰ On discharge, West received a 100 per cent pension due to these disabilities.¹⁰¹ After being discharged, he continued to have medical and hospital treatment in Brisbane, and was told that the only work he was physically capable of doing was poultry farming. Following this advice, West trained at Gatton Agricultural College in Brisbane for nine months, later assuring authorities that he stayed well working in the open air.¹⁰² Enlisting and discharged in Sydney, West had named his mother, who lived in Brisbane, as next-of-kin on his attestation papers, and had likely returned to Brisbane to be with family. It remains unknown whether Walter West applied for soldier settlement in Queensland and was rejected. Most states other than New South Wales applied the selection criteria as originally agreed with the Commonwealth, probably resulting in Queensland authorities refusing West's application because of his health.¹⁰³

West's application for a poultry soldier settlement farm in Sydney was rejected. He applied for repatriation assistance to purchase a tip-cart and horse to begin his own carting business, but was again rejected. Because of his poor health, West had not been able to find regular work, and became desperate. His letter asking for reconsideration for a poultry farm ended with the plea, 'trusting this will meet with

¹⁰⁰ NAA: B2455, *op. cit.*, SERN 5471 WEST, Walter Henry.

¹⁰¹ NAA: C138, *op. cit.*, C44124 WEST, Walter.

¹⁰² SRNSW: NRS 8058, *op. cit.*, [12/7052] Loan File 4943 WEST, W.H.

¹⁰³ NAA: A2487, *op. cit.*, 1923/1299 Soldier Land Settlement – New South Wales, Senator Millen, Department of Repatriation stated 17 July 1922, 'It appears that New South Wales is at present settling soldiers on the land irrespective of their qualifications ... so far as the Federal Government is concerned it was assumed that ex-soldiers before being granted land were under the necessity of demonstrating their suitability as settlers. [New South Wales and the other States agreed on classifying applicants]... namely, (a) those who were immediately eligible, (b) those who may prove so after probationary training, (c) those who were unsuited'. Millen's statement concluded that the Commonwealth had believed New South Wales had adhered to this agreement in its soldier settlement scheme policies.

your approval as my heart and Sole [sic] is in poultry farming'.¹⁰⁴ Several months later, West was offered Block 327 at Hillview Soldier Settlement. More than two years after being badly gassed in Belgium, Walter and his family could begin to rebuild their lives on a small soldier settlement block. West's correspondence to the department reveals he continued to hope his health and personal life would improve. It is similarly clear his health was permanently affected from being gassed. He requested permission to purchase a horse and sulky because of his health, adding 'I get knocked out so easy and if it was not for my wife and son, I would not be able to carry on the poultry-farm', but his request was denied.¹⁰⁵

Walter West's hopes for a better life were short-lived. Seven months after arriving at Hillview, Walter applied to transfer his block to his brother, Frederick Harold West.¹⁰⁶ Frederick was also a returned soldier, enlisting within days of his older brother in August 1915. Frederick was wounded and gassed in 1917, then wounded again soon after returning to the front. This injury, a gun shot wound to his right hand, would prevent Frederick returning to his pre-war trade as a bootmaker.¹⁰⁷ Frederick's files provide no information about how his war-related injuries affected his health and capacity to earn a living post-war, but it is probable he suffered on-going respiratory problems from being gassed. Working as a labourer in inner-Sydney after being demobilised would have only been a short-term measure because of his permanently injured hand.¹⁰⁸ Frederick was keen to own his own home and business, and knew his

¹⁰⁴ SRNSW: NRS 8058 [12/7052], *op. cit.*

¹⁰⁵ SRNSW: NRS 8058, *op. cit.*, [12/7330] Loan File 4945 VIDAL, G.W.H. Walter West took over Vidal's block.

¹⁰⁶ SRNSW: NRS 8058, *op. cit.*, [12/7052] Loan File 4943 WEST. Frederick West's application for soldier settlement is dated the same day as his brother's transfer.

¹⁰⁷ NAA: B2455, *op. cit.*, SERN 3150 WEST, Frederick Harold. Frederick spent six months recovering from the gas attack.

¹⁰⁸ SRNSW: NRS 8058, *op. cit.*, [12/7052] Loan File 4943. Application soldier settlement – Frederick Harold West.

resources were limited, with just £60 capital and a young wife and daughter to support.¹⁰⁹ Hillview Block 327 represented that opportunity for the West family. Lily, his war bride, was a world away from working as a tram-car conductress in England, when she moved to Hillview Soldier Settlement with her husband and fifteen month-old daughter for a life on the land.¹¹⁰ Some of the difficulties Lily would have experienced are addressed later in this chapter.

There is no evidence to show that men on these group settlements who received any training, whether of a cursory nature at Grantham or for three to six months at Hawkesbury Agricultural College had greater success than inexperienced men who relied on the assistance of settlement managers.¹¹¹ It does, however, prove that the New South Wales government introduced positive initiatives to assist men return to civilian life by offering farming training courses as well as providing practical experienced assistance on-site when the men were allocated their new properties.

There is evidence that some men, latecomers to soldier settlement, who had no previous experience or training did succeed on these settlements. Their numbers are small, some were discharged from active service without any recorded injuries, other had been injured or gassed. The stories of the men in the following section all arrived on soldier settlements in the mid to late 1920s, probably following property

¹⁰⁹ *ibid.*

¹¹⁰ NAA: B2455, *op. cit.*, SERN 3150 WEST, Frederick Harold. Frederick West married Lily Parson in Exeter, England, in March 1919.

¹¹¹ *SMH*, 7 September 1920, p. 9, giving evidence to the Street Royal Commission into Soldier Settlements in September 1920, Thomas Murphy from Bankstown Soldier Settlement said in June 1917 he received seventeen days of instruction at Grantham, but no lectures on poultry farming. Similarly, Harry Rogers from Campbelltown Soldier Settlement gave evidence that his three months training from May 1919 included little instruction and was, he believed, of little value; NSWPP, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, 2nd Session 1922, Progress Report from the Select Committee on the Soldier Settlements, p. 306 noted Settler Uebel from Bankstown Soldier Settlement said Hawkesbury trainees had fared 'worse than the rest of us'.

reevaluations that would have resulted in lower debts than earlier settlers had to bear. With no loan files extant for any of these men, conclusions as to why they succeeded, where so many others did not, can be only conjecture.

Latecomers to Soldier Settlement

Thomas Farrington Braithwaite enlisted in August 1915, serving with the 11th Light Horse Regiment in Egypt and according to his service records, was uninjured during the war.¹¹² Three months after his discharge Thomas applied for assistance, unable to find work as a labourer or drover.¹¹³ By the early 1920s Thomas was living in Old Guildford, near Granville, in outer western Sydney, where his father owned a small poultry farm, and was also working for a poultry newspaper.¹¹⁴ Thomas gained valuable practical and theoretical knowledge of poultry farming from both workplaces, experience that would stand him in good stead for the rest of his life. With plans to marry, Thomas decided to apply for a soldier settlement poultry farm of his own, and was allocated Block 343 at Campbelltown Soldier Settlement.¹¹⁵

When Thomas Braithwaite took over the property from Norman Wilson it was fully stocked with 735 fowls. The Braithwaite family grew to four with the birth of two children and their hopes and their dreams of a good life on the small farm were realised. Over the next twenty years the Braithwaites increased the number of birds they carried, building more laying sheds, colony houses and feed storage capacity.¹¹⁶

¹¹² NAA: B2455, *op. cit.*, SERN 1237 BRAITHWAITE, Thomas Farrington.

¹¹³ *ibid.*, NAA: C138, *op. cit.*, M102253 BRAITHWAITE, Thomas Farrington. In his service files Braithwaite said he was a labourer, and in Repatriation files says he had been a stockman and a drover pre-war.

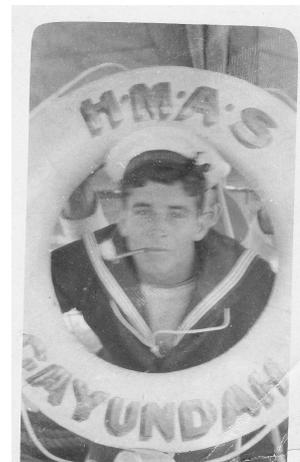
¹¹⁴ Braithwaite, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

¹¹⁵ NAA: C138, M102253, *op. cit.* Braithwaite was offered the block in February 1924. He married Ivy Muriel Neuhaus in April 1924.

¹¹⁶ *ibid.*, pp. 7-8.

By 1943 the Braithwaite farm was carrying 3,800 head of poultry, many times larger than the number men had been told they required for a good living in 1918.¹¹⁷ Thomas Braithwaite successfully ran his poultry farm for nearly forty years until 1961, and was still living in Waminda Avenue, the main street of the settlement, in 1970.¹¹⁸

Another latecomer to Campbelltown Soldier Settlement, Thomas Henry Driscoll and his family arrived at the beginning of the Depression.¹¹⁹ In July 1915 he enlisted in the AIF under this name, but was still serving in the navy under his birth name of Henry Thomas Biddulph. Believing he would see more adventure in the army, he gave his mother's maiden name to authorities, reversing his given names to avoid detection.¹²⁰



Henry Thomas Biddulph. c1914. Source: courtesy Norton family.

There must have been many times when he regretted his decision to join the army, especially after being wounded and captured at Armentieres in July 1916. Treated at

¹¹⁷ *ibid.*, p. 9.

¹¹⁸ NAA: C138 M102253, *op. cit.*

¹¹⁹ Correspondence *op. cit.* George Norton to Glenys Allison 16 March 2010, copy in possession of author.

¹²⁰ NAA: B2455, SERN 100 DRISCOLL, Henry Thomas; Correspondence George Norton, *op. cit.*

St Clotilda Hospital in Douai in France, it is likely Thomas' injuries received minimal treatment, with reports post-war of little or no nursing care given to prisoners-of-war at this hospital.¹²¹

After two years as a prisoner-of-war, Thomas was repatriated, but was not discharged for another two years, requiring several operations to correct badly set bones.¹²² After discharge, Thomas wanted to be retrained as a bootmaker, but was only offered training for boiler-making. Thomas refused, saying the work was too heavy for him because of his war-related physical disabilities, and received no further offers. Living with his wife's family at Botany in the inner industrial suburbs of Sydney, Thomas was employed at a local paper mill, but after several years the physical strain on his arm and leg demanded a change. Thomas and his wife wanted their own home, which made the offer of an established house and property at Campbelltown Soldier Settlement attractive. Thomas' brother-in-law, Richard Colliss, a returned man, often came and lived with the family to help. The Driscoll family lived and worked on their soldier settlement farm at Campbelltown for thirty years.¹²³

Another relative latecomer to soldier settlement, William Hall, took over Block 143 at Bankstown Soldier Settlement in mid-1925. The fourth man to work this block, Hall and his family stayed on the settlement until the land was subdivided for residential housing in the early 1960s.¹²⁴ Hall, a printer before enlisting, never returned to his trade. Wounded in action in France, after the war William had a milk and butter run in

¹²¹ www.yourarchives.nationalarchives.gov.uk/index.php?title=Cpt_Alan_Binnie%2C_RoyalFlying_Corps, accessed 5 April 2010. Captain Alan Binnie, an Australian serving with the British Royal Flying Corps, described his treatment in the same hospital. His arm was amputated, and he reported surgeons were 'dilatatory in their attendance' and prisoners-of-war received no nursing care.

¹²² NAA: B2455 SERN 100, *op. cit.*

¹²³ Correspondence George Norton, *op. cit.*

¹²⁴ Correspondence Neville Hall to Glenys Allison 9 December 2009, copy in possession of author.

Carlton, a suburb of Sydney, speculating with building and selling homes in the same area.¹²⁵ With his wife Margaret's family, he invested all his savings into a dairy farm at Coffs Harbour on the New South Wales mid-north coast, but the family lost everything after several bad seasons. With no money and no other prospects, William and Margaret decided to return to Sydney and apply for a soldier settlement poultry farm. It was their last hope, but their optimism was rewarded. Twenty years later they had built up the small-scale poultry farm into thirty-six intensive poultry sheds.¹²⁶

Although Samuel Cooling had been used to an outdoor life pre-war, soldier settlement was not his first choice of career following his discharge. Cooling was a gardener, an unmarried man whose next-of-kin lived in Kent in England, when he enlisted in the AIF in July 1915. He was to have an eventful war, promoted several times and wounded at least three times, as well as being gassed. In October 1917 he was awarded the Military Medal for gallantry and devotion to duty.¹²⁷ His citation states he did valuable work while serving on the Somme in 1916 to 1917, was badly wounded at Bullecourt in May 1917 and at Polygon Wood in September 1917. At Peronne in September 1918 whilst again wounded, he took command after the platoon officer was killed.¹²⁸ After discharge, Samuel Cooling was a hotel proprietor for nearly five years before taking up a soldier settlement block at Chipping Norton in September 1924.¹²⁹ Samuel decided a life on the land would hopefully improve his chest condition, as he suffered on-going respiratory problems from being gassed. In spite of his constant shortness of breath, Samuel was determined with his family's

¹²⁵ *ibid.*, NAA: B2455, *op. cit.*, SERN 15524 HALL, William. Hall was WIA in May 1917, spending seven months in hospital.

¹²⁶ Correspondence Neville Hall, *op. cit.*

¹²⁷ NAA: B2455, *op. cit.*, SERN 3261 COOLING, Samuel Frank.

¹²⁸ www.awm.gov.au/research/people/honours_and_awards/person.asp?p=409920, accessed 20 August 2010.

¹²⁹ NAA: C138, *op. cit.*, H78573 COOLING, Samuel Frank.

assistance to make a success of this undertaking. Samuel Cooling's hopes for a better life after migrating from England were realised, although perhaps not in the way he had envisaged. Samuel married and he and his wife Muriel raised a family of four children on their poultry farm, working it together until he retired in the late 1960s.¹³⁰

Co-Operatives on Group Soldier Settlements

A further initiative of the New South Wales government on group settlements was to form co-operatives, another facet of the ideal that a small community of like-minded individuals would flourish given similar goals and objectives. An integral part of group settlements from the beginning, co-operative or bulk purchasing and marketing of produce was compulsory, and was organised by RSSB staff through government offices.¹³¹ Initially, all administrative work including purchasing and selling of stock and equipment was the responsibility of the RSSB resident manager and staff, with no settler involvement. These procedures seemed logical, at first, when many settlers were inexperienced in farming techniques, as the policy was aimed at reducing costs and allowed the settler to concentrate on rearing his stock and working his property.

As early as 1920, plans for co-operative stores for ex-servicemen were mentioned in newspapers, revealing this was a popular concept in the wider community. Although these co-operative ventures were not on soldier settlements, it is noteworthy that they were mooted as facilities only for returned men.¹³² In the same period, New South Wales poultry farmers were being encouraged to form co-operatives that would make

¹³⁰ *ibid.*

¹³¹ NSWPP, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, 1924, Department of Lands Report, p. 83.

¹³² *The Mercury*, 12 August 1920, p. 8; 21 October 1920, p. 12; 18 September 1924, p. 9. The Diggers' Co-operative Stores, registered in Tasmania in late 1920, was voluntarily wound up in 1924; *SMH*, 12 April 1920, p. 7 says the Victorian Council of the RSSILA rejected plans for co-operative stores for returned men.

the industry more economically viable.¹³³ The government had recognised from the earliest days of soldier settlement that co-operative systems would work advantageously for settlers, and tried to gear them towards this area of self-sufficiency. From early 1921, the promotion of co-operative schemes for soldier settlers became more widespread, drawing the interest and involvement of community groups, including the RSSILA.¹³⁴

In June 1921, Minister for Agriculture William Dunn, a former Captain in the 35th Battalion in the AIF, announced at the Hawkesbury Agricultural College poultry conference that he would be introducing a co-operative bill in the next parliamentary session. Dunn said it would have advantages for everyone, with less production and marketing costs for the poultry farmers, and benefit the consumer because eggs would be cheaper and no longer a luxury item.¹³⁵ Following a change in government, the proposed legislation was delayed. However, at the Nationalist Party Annual Conference in 1922, support was again given to the promotion of co-operative schemes.¹³⁶ Introducing the Bill in November 1922, Sir Joseph Carruthers emphasised the value of providing for rural co-operative groups and community settlements. He said farmers were competent to clear, plant and harvest their crops, but needed help marketing their produce. Carruthers believed ‘some method must be devised to help the lame dog over the stile, though he feared there was many a lame dog who would never get over it’, indicating he considered many farmers were not good managers.¹³⁷

¹³³ *SMH*, 30 December 1920, p. 5.

¹³⁴ *SMH*, 27 January 1921, p. 6. This article also noted the RSL was preparing plans to open co-operative stores for returned men only; *SMH*, 15 March 1921, p. 5. Soldier settlers at Mirrool, near Griffith, 350 miles west of Sydney, planned to form a co-operative backed by community groups including the Fruitgrowers’ Association, the Farmers’ and Settlers’ Association and the RSSILA.

¹³⁵ www.parliament.nsw.gov.au, accessed 10 November 2010. Dunn was a member of the Labor Party; *SMH*, 20 June 1921, p. 7.

¹³⁶ *SMH*, 29 September 1922, p. 7.

¹³⁷ *SMH*, 22 November 1922, p. 14.

At the second reading of the *Co-operation, Community Settlement and Credit Bill* in late 1923, Attorney-General Sir Thomas Bavin said the legislation would help increase the state's smallholdings, making them more economical.¹³⁸ The government also hoped this legislation would stop the inexorable move to the cities, by encouraging more community settlement, and reduce the loss of rural industries and population, ideals promoting closer settlement frequently expounded over many decades as has already been identified in earlier chapters of this thesis.¹³⁹ Speaking against the Bill, Labor Party leader, Gregory McGirr, said the co-operative system would never prove successful, as most co-operatives' managers would not have the necessary skills to make the business thrive.¹⁴⁰ It is interesting to note that the New South Wales Labor Party in 1923 was diametrically opposed to similar Labor Party policies of the 1890s, as previously explored in this thesis.

McGirr's viewpoint may have been correct for the co-operatives on group settlements in this study. The co-operatives were certainly short-lived. Whilst no reasons are recorded for the winding-up of these societies, the combination of a high turnover of settlers and few men having the necessary bookkeeping skills would undoubtedly have contributed to their demise. The Minister for Lands announced that from the beginning of 1924, soldier settlers would be made responsible for their own egg

¹³⁸ New South Wales Parliamentary Debates, Vol. 94, p. 2905, p. 2907.

¹³⁹ *ibid.*, p. 2907.

¹⁴⁰ *ibid.*, p. 3077; www.parliament.nsw.gov.au, *op. cit.*, McGirr, John Joseph Gregory. McGirr served as the member for Yass, in the Southern Highlands, from 1913 until 1920, then for Cootamundra for another two years, before becoming the member for Sydney. Deputy leader of the Labor Party from 1921, he became the leader in March 1923.

marketing, virtually forcing the formation of co-operatives, rather than being an initiative instigated by the settlers.¹⁴¹

By early 1924, settlers at Hillview Soldier Settlement registered two co-operative societies, the Hillview Poultry Breeders' Co-operative Society Limited and the Hillview Rural Co-operative Society Limited.¹⁴² At least one of these co-operatives closed just eighteen months later, by which time the settlement was in serious decline.¹⁴³ At Bankstown Soldier Settlement the Milperra Poultry Breeders' Rural Co-operative Society Limited was formed in mid-1924, but with only eleven members, less than a quarter of farmers were involved.¹⁴⁴ With low membership and a resultant small purchasing power, it is difficult to comprehend why settlers did not see the advantages that greater numbers of members could bring. There is evidence a co-operative survived at Bankstown Soldier Settlement until at least the mid-1930s, involved in buying and selling poultry livestock, but no information survives about its membership numbers or names.¹⁴⁵ The Campbelltown Poultry Breeders' Rural Co-operative Society Ltd was also registered in 1924. Similar to membership at Bankstown, only nine settlers joined the co-operative, further indication the community spirit and belief that poultry would provide a good living had already dissipated.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴¹ *SMH*, 23 August 1923, p. 12.

¹⁴² SRNSW: NRS 8056, *op. cit.*, [19/7031] Hillview, No information is contained in these files about the workings of the societies; *SMH*, 31 January 1924, p. 9, notes Hillview was the first metropolitan group soldier settlement to form a co-operative.

¹⁴³ Liverpool Council Minutes, 2 June 1925. Notification of Hillview Co-operative Society's liquidation received in correspondence.

¹⁴⁴ SRNSW: NRS 8056, *op. cit.*, [19/7029] Milperra Poultry Breeders' Rural Co-operative Society Limited, Registered 17 June 1924.

¹⁴⁵ *SMH*, 22 February 1933, p. 6. The advertisement refers to the auction of 200 pairs of mixed poultry at the Co-Operative Stores, Milperra, Soldier Settlement.

¹⁴⁶ SRNSW: NRS 8056, *op. cit.*, [19/7031]

Chipping Norton Rural Co-operative Society Limited was registered in November 1924. Again, few settlers became members with Chairman Frank Lindley noting he expected membership would be less than ten. The Co-operative optimistically forecast an annual turnover of more than £3,000 with profits of £250, although it is unlikely these budgets were ever reached.¹⁴⁷ Co-operative societies operated, albeit briefly, on five of the six group settlements in the County of Cumberland. The exception was Grantham, possibly because it was considered too small. As no records are extant for these co-operatives, their profitability remains unknown.

From mid 1925, the Department of Agriculture organised lectures on co-operative societies for the benefit of all men on the land.¹⁴⁸ In October 1925, poultry breeders aiming to improve co-operative practices in the industry formed The Poultry Farmers' Association of New South Wales, among them representatives from Hillview Soldier Settlement Progress Association and the Milperra Poultry Breeders Rural Co-operative Society.¹⁴⁹

The establishment of local or district co-operative societies was strongly encouraged at the 18th Annual Poultry Conference at Hawkesbury Agricultural College in June 1926, which was attended by 600 poultry farmers.¹⁵⁰ The RSSB, in association with primary producers, remained involved in trying to improve marketing for soldier settlers. In September 1926 at the Producers' and Consumers' Conference in Bathurst, the conference secretary was RSSB Director Watson. Although no group soldier

¹⁴⁷ SRNSW: NRS 8056 [19/7029], *op. cit.*

¹⁴⁸ *SMH*, 1 June 1925, p. 9. Assistance was offered on how to register a co-operative under the new legislation.

¹⁴⁹ *SMH*, 8 October 1925, p. 9.

¹⁵⁰ *SMH*, 28 June 1926, p. 9.

settlements were represented, recommendations made at this conference about establishing an Egg Marketing Board impacted on soldier settlers on poultry farms.¹⁵¹

In a contemporary paper on the history of co-operatives in New South Wales, McConnell noted it was a working-class movement with ‘a path ... strewn with failures’.¹⁵² The journal article, written in 1929, claimed that most of the co-operative societies which had folded in the previous ten years had only been formed after the war. In explaining the failure of many co-operatives in the greater Sydney metropolitan area, McConnell said the effects of the post-war depression, inexperience and bad management, and the lack of interest of members were all contributing factors.¹⁵³ These findings concur with the history of co-operatives on these soldier settlements where low membership and administrative inexperience were common.

The failure of co-operatives on these group soldier settlements is another indication that by the mid-1920s men had lost confidence in the success of the scheme. The government’s proposal and early administration of co-operatively buying and selling produce to minimise costs for every farmer was rational and must be commended. Similarly, the men from these soldier settlements who became involved in the co-operative societies, worked to make them a financial success for themselves and others. Whilst plans to have profitable co-operatives operating on each group settlement had limited success, the returned men on these settlements worked hard to

¹⁵¹ *The Producers’ and Consumers’ Conference, NSW Bathurst September 1926*, Alfred James Kent, Government Printer, Sydney, 1926.

¹⁵² W.K. McConnell, ‘Consumer’s Co-operation in New South Wales’, *The Economic Record*, Vol. 5, No. 2, November 1929, p. 263.

¹⁵³ *ibid.*, pp. 267-268.

breed and exhibit superior poultry stock, competing amongst other soldier settlers and established civilian poultry-men for a recognised place in the industry.

Poultry Clubs and Shows

In the early years Bankstown Soldier Settlement poultry farmers were confident they could be successful in their new industry and were often involved in poultry shows or competitions. At the Bankstown Fancy and Utility Poultry Club annual show in 1919 soldier settlers donated the Milperra Cup for the best pair in show. At the same show the A.E. Powell Cup was awarded to the best poultry exhibit from a returned soldier.¹⁵⁴ Mr Powell was employed as manager at the settlement, and donated the trophy to encourage the men to breed superior poultry stock.¹⁵⁵ Powell was not a returned man, but had twenty-five years experience as a poultry farmer and was keen to help the men succeed.¹⁵⁶ The winner of the inaugural Powell Cup was Conrad Larsen, who worked before the war in mixed farming near Orange in central New South Wales, and trained at Grantham before coming to Bankstown Soldier Settlement.¹⁵⁷ Serving with the 35th Battalion in France in September 1916, Larsen suffered a severe bout of trench nephritis from exposure.¹⁵⁸ Conrad Larsen was among the original settlers at Bankstown, choosing not to return to the New South Wales Government Tramways after discharge.¹⁵⁹ He continued to successfully exhibit his poultry in local shows, winning prizes at the Auburn and District Poultry and Pigeon Club in 1924 and taking out the Milperra Cup in 1925.¹⁶⁰ No evidence of the

¹⁵⁴ *SMH*, 28 June 1919, p. 11.

¹⁵⁵ SRNSW: NRS 8052, *op. cit.*, [10/13713] Bankstown Soldier Settlement.

¹⁵⁶ NSWPP Vol. 1, Second Session, 1922, *op. cit.*, p. 338.

¹⁵⁷ *SMH*, 28 June 1919, p. 11; SRNSW: NRS 8052, *op. cit.*, [10/13713]; NAA: A2487, *op. cit.*, 1923/9561 Maintenance of Trainees – Grantham Stud Poultry Farm and Glen Innes Nursery, lists Larsen as a trainee at Grantham.

¹⁵⁸ NAA: B2455, *op. cit.*, SERN 3384 LARSEN, Conrad Magnus.

¹⁵⁹ *ibid.*, Larson stated he was a fitter for the Tramways.

¹⁶⁰ *SMH*, 26 May 1924, p. 9; *SMH*, 9 May 1925, p. 13.

Milperra Cup being awarded after 1925 has been discovered.¹⁶¹ In September 1933, more than fifteen years after arriving at Bankstown Soldier Settlement, Conrad Larson was still on his block.¹⁶²



*Bankstown Poultry Club undated, photo originally from The Torch newspaper.
Source: courtesy Bankstown City Library. No.1166.*

Contemporary newspapers record many men from these group settlements competing in the annual egg-laying competition at Hawkesbury Agricultural College. The New South Wales competition had been held at the college since the early twentieth century, and results were widely covered by newspapers in other states.¹⁶³ A prestigious event, it was keenly contested to find who had the best laying hen in breed. At least ten settlers from Campbelltown, Chipping Norton and Hillview entered the 1923-24 competition with more settlers entering the competition in 1925-

¹⁶¹ *SMH*, 9 May 1925, p. 13.

¹⁶² SRNSW: NRS 8058, *op. cit.*, [12/7352] Loan File 9060, BUCKLEY, T..

¹⁶³ *Brisbane Courier*, 9 April 1904, p. 5, reporting on the second competition. Reports on the result of egg-laying competitions at Hawkesbury have been located in *The Mercury* (Hobart), *The Courier-Mail* and *The Queenslander* (Queensland), *The Argus* (Victoria) and *The West Australian*.

26.¹⁶⁴ Leonard Beckett, from Bankstown Soldier Settlement, received a gold medal in the 1924-5 egg laying competition, a morale-boosting reward for his hard work and diligence.¹⁶⁵ These men remained convinced of their success as poultry farmers, gaining the confidence and proficiency to compete in open company.

In 1925, several settlers at Bankstown Soldier Settlement, including Stanley Coles and Thomas Buckley, successfully exhibited their poultry at the Bankstown Fancy and Utility Poultry Club's annual show.¹⁶⁶ Stan Coles was another original settler at Bankstown Soldier Settlement who lived on his poultry farm, Block 110, until his death in 1953.¹⁶⁷ Serving in the Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force (ANMEF) for seven months from August 1914 and re-enlisting just two weeks later, Stan was hospitalised with a dismembered finger, the result of an accident.

Hospitalised again with malaria, Stan was diagnosed with irritable heart syndrome and returned to Australia for discharge.¹⁶⁸ It is likely Stan contracted malaria during service in New Guinea, although no records are extant from his earlier period of service. Whether he had recurrent attacks of malaria and how this impaired his health is similarly unknown. Stan trained at Grantham before being allocated his block at Bankstown Soldier Settlement.¹⁶⁹ It was a year since his discharge, and Stan was keen to have a home for his growing family. His second child, named Stanley after his

¹⁶⁴ *SMH*, 23 December 1922, p. 9, D. Beveridge, J. Gilbert (Chipping Norton); A. Crowe, J.C. Hopher, R. McLean, J.C. Smith, A.E. Jerrett, P.A. Barrett, A.E. Ross, (Campbelltown); A. Falconer (Hillview); *SMH*, 11 April 1925, p. 11, C.F. Cummings, D. Beveridge, H.W. Starling (Chipping Norton); A.E. Ross, G.L. Atwell, R. Mclean, J.C. Smith, A.J. Williams, P.A. Barrett (Campbelltown); H.G. Sykes (Milperra); H. Battersby (Doonside); D.L. Meldrum, M. Mulcahy, J.F. Rankin (Grantham).

¹⁶⁵ The medal engraved as follows, 'HAC Laying Comp'n. 1924-25. won by L.A. Beckett Wt Leg. 1151 eggs' is now held by the Bankstown Historical Society.

¹⁶⁶ *SMH*, 9 May 1925, p. 13.

¹⁶⁷ Correspondence Stan J. Coles, 7 December 2009, copy in possession of author.

¹⁶⁸ NAA: B2455, *op. cit.*, SERN 42 COLES, Stanley Harold. Stan Coles served with the 20th Battalion, landing at Gallipoli in August 1915.

¹⁶⁹ NAA: A2487 1923/9561, *op. cit.*

father, was the first child born and christened at the settlement.¹⁷⁰ It was a time for great happiness and celebration, the birth of a new life that would symbolise the Coles family's new life on the land.



Stanley Harold Coles SERN 42

*Stanley John Coles. Certificate of Baptism
'born at The Soldiers Settlement on 21st Feb 1918
NB. This is the first child born and baptised on the
settlement. G.H. Martin.*

Source: courtesy S.J.Coles

It is probable the Milperra and District Fancy and Utility Poultry Club was an initiative of Bankstown soldier settlers. Its first show in 1921 was opened by the Minister for Lands, Peter Loughlin, with most of the prizes awarded to men from this settlement.¹⁷¹ As well as being good publicity for the government by showing that group soldier settlement was successful, the show gave the men added incentive to breed and exhibit top quality stock. The following year exhibitors at the Milperra and District Poultry Club's annual show were both soldier settlers and members of the wider community. Settlers were competing in open company for the chance to be recognised for breeding the best poultry. Many Bankstown soldier settlers were

¹⁷⁰ See Baptism Certificate, courtesy Stan Coles.

¹⁷¹ *SMH*, 7 March 1921, p. 7.

awarded prizes, including Stanley Coles, Ernest Foster, Robert Uebel, Frederick Chapman, Claude Harper and Frederick Selwyn. At least three Doonside settlers, Lesley Haylen, Ernest Keating and John Hartas also received prizes.¹⁷² These men worked hard in the belief that group soldier settlement would prove to be the right choice for them and their families. A social event as well as the opportunity for showcasing their achievements, these shows were an important part of life for rural communities. The 1922 show's results prove there was regular and on-going contact between the group soldier settlements in the County of Cumberland.

At the club's show in 1922, Henry George Harris received the Ypres Cup for best leghorn cockerel and the Dulwich Cup for best leghorn, with Leonard Beckett winning the Challenge Trophy for the best breeding pair.¹⁷³ For both Harris and Beckett, recognition they could breed prize-winning poultry added to their confidence that they could succeed and provide a decent livelihood for their family.¹⁷⁴

At the Campbelltown Show in 1921 the display exhibit by Campbelltown Soldier Settlement was said to have been exceptional. The newspaper, reporting on the poultry, some bred at the settlement, said 'opinion was expressed that nothing finer has been seen in any country show in New South Wales'.¹⁷⁵ Only eighteen months after its establishment, feelings remained high for continuing success in this new enterprise for returned men. Soldier settlers from this group settlement continued to exhibit and compete in the local show, keen to achieve and be accepted in the broader local community. Continuing their earlier success, in 1923 at the 22nd Annual

¹⁷² *SMH*, 18 March 1922, p. 11.

¹⁷³ *ibid.*

¹⁷⁴ NAA: C138, *op. cit.*, R/M/C/H 98296 HARRIS, Henry George; NAA: B2455, *op. cit.*, SERN 499 HARRIS/HARRISS, Henry George.

¹⁷⁵ *SMH*, 12 March 1921, p. 11.

Campbelltown Show, Campbelltown Soldier Settlers won first prize for the District Exhibit.¹⁷⁶ The exhibit was made up of primary produce grown at the settlement and assembled by a number of settlers. Even though many group settlers were by this date questioning whether they could ever successfully make their living as poultry farmers, the efforts of the families at Campbelltown to co-operatively construct an exhibit showcasing their produce and skills, reflects that hope remained. At least in the early years, Campbelltown Soldier Settlement was a community that worked hard to develop a good life for all its residents. Their involvement in the local show, a major social event of any rural district, showcased their hard work and skills for all to see.

The Waminda Poultry Farmers' Association, formed by Campbelltown soldier settlers in the early 1920s struggled to survive as a viable organisation, probably under similar circumstances to the co-operative societies mentioned earlier in this chapter. It was soon experiencing severe financial difficulties, even appealing to the RSSB for assistance that was not forthcoming.¹⁷⁷ In spite of these difficulties, which indicates that optimism for many Campbelltown settlers had dissipated, new office-bearers were elected in the hopes of reviving the group.¹⁷⁸

In spite of the Waminda Poultry Farmers' Association experiencing difficulties, individual settlers from Campbelltown Settlement continued to win prizes for their poultry at the local show. In 1924 at least five settlers were successful in exhibiting their stock, and with results listed in *The Sydney Morning Herald*, other soldier

¹⁷⁶ *SMH*, 20 February 1923, p. 7.

¹⁷⁷ *The Campbelltown News*, 18 January 1924, p. 1, President Harry Rogers commented 'we have neither money or bananas today' after meeting with RSSB Director Watson to ask for assistance.

¹⁷⁸ *ibid.*, The list includes the three men responsible for marketing at the settlement, Robert McLean, Harold Douglas Price and Clarrie Smith.

settlers and poultry farmers would have been aware of their achievements.¹⁷⁹ Patrick Annaraw Barrett, a prize winner at Campbelltown, also successfully entered his poultry in The Royal Agricultural Society Show, the largest and most prestigious show in New South Wales, and small local shows where he excelled with the poultry breed Croad Langshan.¹⁸⁰ Barrett later became President of the Croad Langshan Association of Australia.¹⁸¹ Born in Dubbo in country New South Wales, Barrett worked as a farm labourer before enlisting. Shot in the neck at Gallipoli in August 1915, he arrived home on Christmas Day 1915. Many years later, proud of having served at Gallipoli, when he applied for the Anzac Medal in 1967, Barratt wrote that he had neck wounds and nerve problems as a result of his service.¹⁸² The Anzac Medal, formally announced by Prime Minister Harold Holt in March 1967, was a bronze commemorative medallion and lapel badge issued to Australian and New Zealand veterans who served during the Gallipoli campaign.¹⁸³ Discharged more than three years before being allocated a block at Campbelltown, Barrett was again working the land, his own land. He not only hoped he would be successful, he was determined to succeed. As Barrett's loan file has not survived, it is difficult to determine his success or what impact his war injuries had on his work, although Barrett remained on his block for at least fifteen years.¹⁸⁴

In October 1925 a poultry breeders' conference was held which aimed at improving the poultry industry by discussing and resolving current issues being experienced by

¹⁷⁹ *SMH*, 31 March 1924, p. 9, W.P. Mullany, P.A. Barrett, K.K. Stewart, J.C. Smith, Rixon.

¹⁸⁰ *SMH*, 13 April 1927, p. 19; *SMH*, 13 February 1928, p. 9. Barrett won Champion Croad at the 9th Annual Show St John's Park branch of the Australian Bureau.

¹⁸¹ Correspondence George Norton to Glenys Allison, *op. cit.*

¹⁸² NAA: B2455, *op. cit.*, SERN 1808 BARRETT, Patrick. It was another nine months before Barrett was discharged, as he was likely still under medical treatment.

¹⁸³ www.awm.gov.au/encyclopedia/anzac/medallion/doc.asp, accessed 5 January 2010.

¹⁸⁴ E.J. McBarron, *The Soldiers' Settlement – (Poultry) Campbelltown, N.S.W. 1918-60*, Campbelltown and Airs Historical Society Inc., Campbelltown, 1990, p. 53 records Barratt resident at Block 337 until 1937.

poultry farmers. Conference delegates included representatives from the Milperra Poultry Breeders Rural Co-operative Society, mostly soldier settlers from Bankstown Soldier Settlement, and Francis Doran, a delegate from the Hillview Soldiers' Settlement Progress Association.¹⁸⁵ As representatives at this conference, soldier settlers were making every effort to keep abreast of the latest marketing and breeding information in the industry and become successful poultry farmers, and it is likely other group settlements were also represented. The delegates would later have informed other settlement residents of decisions made at the conference that would affect them all. The proactive involvement of men from these settlements in discussions to improve the industry is indicative of their belief they could not only succeed but could make a worthwhile contribution.

This section of the chapter has provided many examples of the efforts the returned men on these soldier settlements made to become successful in their new careers in the poultry industry. It has shown that they exhibited in many shows and competitions, keen to prove they were committed to accomplishing their goals. Initially competing amongst other soldier settlers, they soon became confident enough to compete in open company. Their efforts provide strong evidence that, in the early years after the war, these soldier settlers wanted to succeed, and worked hard to realise these ambitions. Poultry clubs and associations were not the only movements soldier settlers became involved with in their new communities, as will be revealed in the following section that discusses the establishment and role of Progress Associations on these soldier settlements.

¹⁸⁵ *SMH*, 8 October 1925, p. 9.

Progress Associations

The fact that Progress Associations were formed at these group settlements proves that the soldier settlers were serious in their attempts to build sustainable and liveable communities. They expected to succeed in their new occupations, and the formation of Progress Associations is yet another indication in their belief of the permanency and viability of group soldier settlements in the County of Cumberland. In spite of most of these settlers being forced to begin new careers after the war, as their pre-war occupations were closed to them because of their physical and psychological disabilities, they took positive steps to ensure their hopes for a better future were realised.

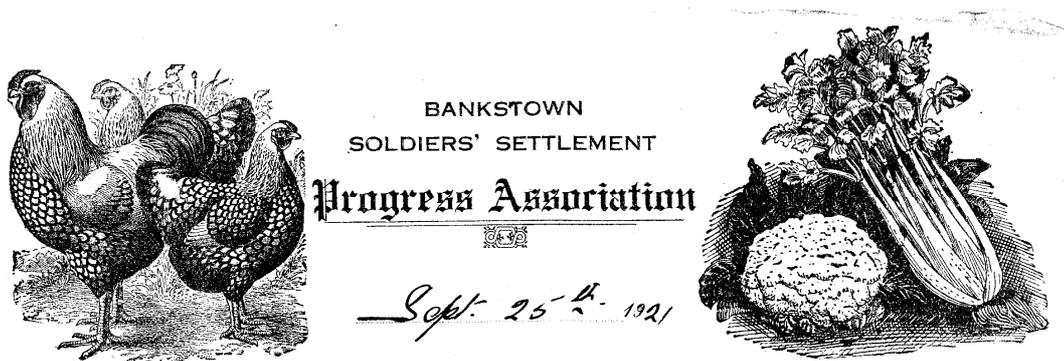
In five of the group settlements in this study Progress Associations were established by the settlers and their families to organise and promote community activities. Although no records survive showing when these associations were formed and what proportion of settlers were actively involved, evidence can be pieced together from a variety of sources. By their very name these community groups aimed to improve the lives of community members by providing support and recreational activities for everyone. Progress Associations were an indication of the permanency and public spirit of a community and became popular in this state after the development of local government in the early years of the twentieth century.¹⁸⁶ One of the roles of Progress Associations was to lobby their local council to improve services in the area, such as roads and communications, all crucial to the economic and social survival of these soldier settlement communities.¹⁸⁷ Another vital role undertaken by many Progress

¹⁸⁶ B. Kingston, *Pearl Beach and Progress. The Story of a Community and an Ideal 1929-2009*, Triple D Books, Wagga Wagga, 2009, p. 35.

¹⁸⁷ *ibid.*, p. 36; M. Garside, *Padstow Park Progress Association History 1913-2001*, Sydney, 2001. Padstow Park, known as Salt Pan until the mid-1920s, was located in the Bankstown district.

Associations was to lobby for a public school for the local area.¹⁸⁸ Progress Associations were formed across the state with these and similar objectives. Kogarah Bay Progress Association for example, formed in 1916, was very similar to the associations on these soldier settlements. Its aim was to co-operatively address the needs of the new small community and to develop a sense of both pride and belonging.¹⁸⁹ Over time this association fundraised for charities, and to build a community hall in the area for social events.¹⁹⁰

At Bankstown Soldier Settlement, a Progress Association was in evidence by early 1918. Meetings were initially held in the mess tent as the construction of permanent buildings had not been completed.¹⁹¹ Through the Progress Association residents were able to make the government project of soldier settlement their own, and demonstrate to authorities that they were positive about the future of the community. This Progress Association had their own impressive letterhead printed, graphically portraying the two types of farming undertaken on the settlement.



Source: *State Records of New South Wales: Department of Lands, Closer Settlement Promotion Files, NRS 8052, Bankstown Soldier Settlement [10/13715]*

¹⁸⁸ Lindfield. *Growth and Progress. Brief Sketch and Second Annual Report of the Lindfield Progress Association*, 1902, p. 12.

¹⁸⁹ D.J. Hatton, *The Kogarah Bay Progress Association 1921-1981*. self-published, Kogarah, 1981, p. 2.

¹⁹⁰ *ibid.*, pp. 10-16.

¹⁹¹ SRNSW: NRS 8058, *op. cit.*, [12/6854] Loan File 1228.

The Bankstown Soldier Settlement Progress Association was very active in its attempts to improve road access to the area. Bankstown Council minutes from 9 July 1918 reveal correspondence from the association complaining of the poor condition of Georges River Road.¹⁹² With the failure of local government to take any action, the association lobbied New South Wales government departments from late 1918 for a considerable period to take responsibility for improving the situation. Although a major artery, the dirt road was poorly maintained, often muddy and frequently impassable in bad weather. With the very real possibility of the settlement being isolated and unable to obtain fresh food or transport produce to market, the association represented all the residents through these submissions.¹⁹³ Keen to be involved in the local area, Bankstown Soldier Settlement Progress Association again wrote to Bankstown Council in January 1919 suggesting the naming of Georges River Road be changed to Milperra Road. It was a sensible solution to avoid confusion between similar road names in the area, and was officially adopted from March 1919.¹⁹⁴

In July 1919, Bankstown Soldier Settlement Progress Association organised special activities to mark the peace celebrations. A picnic and sports events were held during the day for the children, followed by a dance at night for the adults. At the picnic, peace medal presentations were made by Tom Dillon, the association's president.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹² L. Beckett, *The Origins and History of Bankstown Soldier Settlement (now Milperra) from 1917*, unpublished paper, 1984, 1986, p. 60.

¹⁹³ NAA: A2487, *op. cit.*, 1919/2012 Funds for road works Milperra Soldiers' Settlement, Bankstown.

¹⁹⁴ Beckett, 'Origins and History', *op. cit.*, p. 47.

¹⁹⁵ *SMH*, 12 July 1919, p. 11.

Peace medals were issued to all school children in Australia to celebrate the signing of the Treaty of Versailles marking the official end of World War I.¹⁹⁶

Bankstown Soldier Settlement Progress Association also organised many recreational activities, including picnics in the nearby Vale of Ah.¹⁹⁷ On Boxing Day each year the whole settlement gathered there for a community picnic. A similar event was held on the opposite bank of the Georges River by the Chipping Norton settlement. Without a bridge to connect the two areas, settlers and their families swam across the river so that they could socialise.¹⁹⁸ Separated by several road miles which made regular socialising difficult, these opportunities to catch up on news, exchange recipes and home remedies and see new babies must have been keenly anticipated by the men and women of both settlements.

The Vale of Ah was a popular recreational area that residents of Bankstown Soldier Settlement and the wider community regularly used, referred to in early correspondence to Council from the association as the 'Milperra Pleasure Grounds'.¹⁹⁹ Privately owned, by the mid-1920s it contained a dance hall, picnic grounds and shop. It is likely men from both Bankstown and Chipping Norton Soldier Settlements were involved in the Vale of Ah Lifesaving Club, helping to protect the youngsters swimming along this stretch of the Georges River.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁶ *Memorial Box 01. Australia in the First World War*, p. 21.

www.awm.gov.au/education/box/01_res_book.pdf, accessed 8 January 2010.

¹⁹⁷ Beckett, 'Origins and History', *op. cit.*, p. 107.

¹⁹⁸ Correspondence Bob Anson to Glenys Allison, *op. cit.*

¹⁹⁹ A. Molloy, *The History of Milperra*, Australian Media Pty Ltd, Sydney, 2006, p. 68.

²⁰⁰ *ibid.*, pp. 68-70. Bankstown Soldier Settlement picnics continued at the Vale of Ah into the 1920s, and in 1930 the Milperra Progress Association wrote asking Council to acquire the land for the whole community; Anson family history, *op. cit.*, mentions that the children of Bankstown settlement had swimming lessons at the Vale of Ah.

'The Dance' at Bankstown Soldier Settlement was also a highlight as a social occasion for the adults. Dances were first held at the Feedshed, where the men would move the bags of wheat and chaff to the walls to clear an area for the dance-floor. Later one of the school rooms was the dance hall for the night. Music was supplied by a piano and violin duo, couples dancing away the evening with the waltz and the foxtrot.²⁰¹

Even though by the mid-1920s Bankstown Soldier Settlement was in decline, the Progress Association was still active. The erection of a Memorial Hall on the settlement had been planned for some years, but little had been achieved since the foundation stone was laid in 1922.²⁰² In early 1923, both side walls of the hall were blown down in a severe wind-storm and construction work ceased. Although Walter Scott, secretary of the Progress Association confidently reported an expected completion date of August 1923, work was not resumed because of a shortage of funds.²⁰³ Many original settlers had left the settlement by this time, and it would have been difficult to motivate remaining settlers and convince them of the project's worth. The Progress Association organised special events to help raise money to build the hall, including a gymkhana and fete at the sports ground adjoining the school.²⁰⁴ Finally in mid-1926, the association decided to advertise for tenders to complete construction.²⁰⁵ The decision was later made to construct the hall using local labour,

²⁰¹ L. Beckett, 'Childhood Memories', *Bankstown Historical Society Journal*, Vol. 26, No. 4, October 1992, p. 22.

²⁰² Beckett, 'Origins and History', *op. cit.*, p. 218.

²⁰³ SRNSW: NRS 15318, *Files relating to licences for theatres and public halls c.1 January 1895 - 31 December 1992*, [10/53131] T2209 Milperra Memorial and Literary Institute.

²⁰⁴ L. Beckett, 'The History of Bankstown Soldier Settlement. Part 6', *Bankstown Historical Society Journal*, Vol. 22, No. 4, October 1988, p. 12.

²⁰⁵ *SMH*, 3 June 1926. Advertisement requesting tenders for the erection and completion of the hall be directed to the Hon. Secretary, R. Anson. By this date the Progress Association had changed its name to Milperra Progress Association, an indication that a sizeable proportion of the residents were no longer soldier settlers.

probably as a cost-cutting measure. Robert Anson, from Block 121, was largely responsible for building the hall over a period of time as work on his own block allowed.²⁰⁶ The hall, in Ashford Avenue, was completed and registered in March 1928, but the name was changed from Soldier Settlement Progress Association Recreation Hall to Milperra Memorial and Literary Institute.²⁰⁷ The change of name for both the hall and the Progress Association reflects the changes in the residents of the community. Eleven years after its establishment, many Bankstown Soldier Settlement farms were no longer occupied by ex-servicemen, either vacant or occupied by civilians.

Campbelltown soldier settlers formed a Progress Association within weeks of the settlement's establishment in mid-1919, to help members of the new community adjust to farming life. Similar to the association formed by Bankstown soldier settlers, it was meant to be a positive indication of the settlement's permanency.

Campbelltown Progress Association chose the name, Waminda, an aboriginal word meaning comrade, for the main road of the settlement, a name that survives to the present day.²⁰⁸ Concerned about the rising cost of living in addition to making repayments on their soldier settler loans, Campbelltown Progress Association wrote to the RSSB asking for financial consideration. This correspondence shows that the settlers had every hope of being successful at poultry farming, whilst being fully aware of the possibility of becoming overburdened with debt.²⁰⁹ It also provides evidence that Campbelltown soldier settlers recognised they had a responsibility to

²⁰⁶ Correspondence from Bob Anson to Glenys Allison, *op. cit.*

²⁰⁷ SRNSW: NRS 15318, *op. cit.*, letter from honorary secretary, Philip Haffner 7 March 1928.

²⁰⁸ A. Ross, 'The Soldier Settlement', *Campbelltown and Airds Historical Society Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 1949, p. 83. Arthur Ross was an original settler.

²⁰⁹ SRNSW: NRS 8056 [19/7025], *op. cit.*, Letter to RSS from Campbelltown Soldiers' Settlement Progress Association, 16 August 1919.

repay this debt, rather than claiming that soldier settlement land was owed to them by a grateful nation.

One role undertaken by the Progress Association at Hillview Soldier Settlement was to proactively protect the business interests of its members. President Alexander Falconer wrote to *The Sydney Morning Herald* in July 1923 slamming reports of poor quality poultry on soldier settlement properties. Falconer emphatically stated produce from this settlement was considered amongst the best in the state.²¹⁰ Whilst Alexander Falconer stayed at Hillview for only four years, he clearly had hopes of succeeding in his new profession, encouraging other Hillview soldier settlers to do the same. He named his property 'Falcon Utility and Stud Poultry Farm' and proudly noted in his letter to the newspaper that poultry from his own farm was prize-winning. He added that in 1922 he achieved good results in the laying competition at Hawkesbury Agricultural College, a prestigious event reported across the country.²¹¹

At this time Falconer was very positive about his future, especially in light of his physical disabilities. Employed prior to enlistment as a ship's rigger at the steel works in Newcastle, after serving eight years with the British army, Alexander Falconer's world changed forever at Fleurbaix in France in July 1916 when he was wounded in action, his right leg later amputated.²¹² He would never be able to return to either of his pre-war professions. Alexander applied for a poultry farm shortly after being discharged in May 1917, and was offered a trial on a poultry farm soon after. He did not take up the offer, requesting the trial be postponed because his artificial leg had

²¹⁰ *SMH*, 11 July 1923, p. 15.

²¹¹ SRNSW: NRS 8058, *op. cit.*, [12/7052] Loan File 4943, Loan File 5325; *SMH*, 11 July 1923, p. 15.

²¹² NAA: B2455, *op. cit.*, SERN 2992 FALCONER, Alexander. Falconer had served with the Highland Light Infantry.

not been completed by the limb-maker. With no other offer of a soldier settlement block for two years, it is probable Falconer withdrew his application because of continuing problems with his prosthesis. In mid-1919 he was offered a block at Weston Soldier Settlement near Maitland, over a hundred miles from Sydney, but refused it saying he needed to be close to the city for on-going repairs and adjustments to his artificial leg. He had to wait until June 1920 before accepting a block at Hillview. His caution was justified, as he gave up his block in June 1924 because of continuing medical problems.²¹³ Alexander Falconer believed he could attain a semblance of normal life by becoming a soldier settler on a small poultry block, but realistically had little chance of success because of his physical disabilities.

Although there is no recorded date for the formation of a Progress Association at Doonside, evidence survives that in November 1922 Honorary Secretary Leslie Clement Haylen wrote to the RSSB requesting the department allocate land for a community hall. Haylen advised the hall would be multi-purpose, to be used as a School of Arts, a memorial hall and possibly also a temporary place of worship, as there was no permanent church nearby.²¹⁴ Doonside soldier settlers were obviously keen to have a building to use for social functions, instruction and religion. They would also have been aware of similar activities at other settlements that enriched residents' lives. The correspondence also notes Doonside soldier settlers were prepared to pay for the building costs, confident the new community would be permanent.²¹⁵

²¹³ SRNSW: NRS 8058 [12/7052], *op. cit.*, Loan File 5325.

²¹⁴ SRNSW: NRS 8051[10/13742], *op. cit.*, 2 November 1922.

²¹⁵ *ibid.*

This section has shown the important role Progress Associations played in the social and economic life of settlements. Membership and involvement with the Progress Association built a community spirit, supporting soldier settlers and their families in many ways that soldier settlers living on homestead blocks in country areas of the state were unable to experience. These Progress Associations represented a community dedicated to improving conditions for its residents, both within the settlement and in the wider district. Similarly, residents on these soldier settlements were involved in other activities in the local community, whilst never forgetting that they had a different status as returned servicemen. These activities provide further evidence that men on these group soldier settlements were making every effort to build a strong cohesive community in the hopes of creating a better future for themselves and their families.

Local community and sporting activities

Although life was hard on these group settlements, men who served in World War I were conscious of their different status in the community, and chose to highlight this by including reference to their military service in their leisure activities. Sport has always been an important feature of Australians' lives, none more so than in the immediate post-war period. The Bankstown Diggers Cricket Club provides one such example. It is likely returned men from the Bankstown area as well as settlers from Bankstown Soldier Settlement were instigators in its formation, keen to show locals and the wider community their proud links with military service for the nation.

Although not all its members were from Bankstown Soldier Settlement at the time the photo below was taken in 1922, there remained a special bond between ex-servicemen wishing to identify themselves in this way.



Bankstown Diggers Cricket Club 1922. Source: courtesy Bankstown Historical Society
 Back Row: T. Buckley, G. Dillon, P. McLeod, A. Martin, F. Browning, H. Jacobson
 Second Row: J. Newman, A. Smith (V.Capt) A. Coates (Capt, Hon. Treas), A. King, J. ?
 Front Row: A. Bray (Hon Sec), E. Stanford, R. Laing.
 Top Left: Ray Burns Senior V.Pres Top Right: Bede Brennan Pres
 Bottom Left: T. Paris Bottom Right: K. Thomson

Even though no lists of scouts from Campbelltown are extant, there is evidence that several soldier settlers' sons were members in its early years. 1st Campbelltown Scout group was registered in early 1923, and it is probable boys from the settlement were involved soon after.²¹⁶ Allan Ernest Ross, eldest child of Beatrice and Ernest Ross, belonged to this group. Jack Hepher clearly recalls being one of the scouts who carried Allan's coffin from the family's home in Waminda Avenue to the cemetery, when he died of an undiagnosed condition, aged ten in 1932.²¹⁷ The scouting fraternity formed a guard of honour of scouts, rovers and cubs at his funeral. Community support in the form of flowers and tributes from local doctor, Dr Mawson, the Methodist Ladies Church Aid, the Lodge Federation and Campbelltown

²¹⁶ C. Watson, *The Origin – the History of Scouts in Campbelltown*, Undated pamphlet, p. 4; *SMH*, 4 April 1924, p. 10 records the investiture of thirty scouts under Scoutmaster Eather. It is probable this was the first group of scouts in Campbelltown.

²¹⁷ Correspondence Jack and Lill Hepher to Glenys Allison 9 February 2010, copy in possession of author.

Public School hoped to sustain the Ross family during their grieving, revealing members of the settlement had become involved in community activities in the wider district.²¹⁸ Young boys from the soldier settlement continued to be involved with the scouting movement, evidenced by Colin Braithwaite's membership from the mid-1930s, and Jack Hepher's position as one of the scout leaders.²¹⁹

Community spirit at Campbelltown settlement was high in the early days. Christmas was a time of celebration, with a Christmas party for everyone on the settlement traditionally held in the back paddock of Patrick Barrett's Block 337. The wild cherry tree which grew close to Smith's Creek substituted as a Christmas tree and there was plenty of open grass nearby as a gathering place to await the main event. Father Christmas would appear up the slope from the creek with a big bag of goodies on his back, to the delight, and sometimes terror, of all the children on the settlement.²²⁰

A good example of community spirit and evidence that there was social contact between these group soldier settlements occurred when men worked together to build a hall at Campbelltown Settlement. In February 1920, men from Hillview Soldier Settlement helped to erect a recreation hall for the use of Campbelltown Soldier Settlement residents. It was a special occasion for the Campbelltown area with many volunteers from the wider Liverpool and Campbelltown communities also keen to assist. The building, formerly from Holsworthy Camp and donated by the Red Cross, was dismantled and taken by train to Campbelltown. A great deal of work was

²¹⁸ L. Vincent, *Tales of Old Campbelltown*, Self-published, Picton, 1998, pp. 37-38; *The Campbelltown News*, 29 July 1932, no page no.

²¹⁹ C. Braithwaite, *A Soldier Settlement Poultry Farm at Campbelltown*, Campbelltown and Airs Historical Society Inc., Campbelltown, 1998, p. 26.

²²⁰ J. Hepher, *Campbelltown Soldiers Settlement 1919-1929*, Campbelltown and Airs Historical Society Inc., Campbelltown, 1998, p. 38.

required to re-erect the hall within just one day as planned. With great fanfare, the hall was officially opened by Campbelltown Mayor, Charles Hanaford on Saturday 7 February. At the opening, one of the soldier settlers proposed a toast to the Red Cross, reminding all those present of the great work the society had undertaken ‘on the other side’ as well as for returned men.²²¹

For the families at Campbelltown Soldier Settlement their new recreation hall provided a venue for parties, dances and other activities previously missing in their community. The generous donation by the Red Cross Society and the help given by many volunteers highlighted to the Campbelltown soldier settlers that everyone hoped their new endeavours would bring them prosperity. In addition, soon after the hall was completed, Camden Red Cross made a generous donation of £50 to the settlement to purchase a piano.²²² The Progress Hall had two rooms, and the larger one was used for regular Saturday night dances for more than ten years. Musicians from around the local area were engaged to play at the dances, including violinist Kevin Rixon, one of the settlers. Dancers came from the neighbouring communities of Campbelltown, Wedderburn and Kentlyn as well as from the settlement.²²³ Pat Barrett, known in the settlement as ‘the prizefighter’, acted as the bouncer and maintained the peace.²²⁴ On Sundays, the hall would serve the settlement as a church and Sunday school. Ladies from the local Salvation Army came on horseback each week to teach Sunday School to the children. There was always one of these ladies who could play the piano, and it

²²¹ *SMH*, 13 February 1920, p. 7; McBarron, *op. cit.*, p. 31, noted the local newspaper, *The Campbelltown News*, on 20 February, said the hall was officially opened by Mrs Bursill, President of Campbelltown Red Cross.

²²² Red Cross Australian Branch, New South Wales Division Report and Financial Statement 1920-1921, p. 36.

²²³ *ibid*; Hepher, *op. cit.*, pp. 38-39.

²²⁴ Correspondence George Norton to Glenys Allison, *op. cit.*

was used to accompany the children to the songs they were taught.²²⁵ These activities brightened the lives of the adults and children on the settlement, contributing to their belief that farming life, although often difficult, was worthwhile in a caring and active community.

This part of the chapter has shown that members of each of the soldier settlements worked hard to improve everyone's lives. With community picnics, dances and Christmas parties to bring happiness and fun to their hard-working lives, soldier settlers initially believed they could build a comfortable new life to help them forget what they had lost during the war. It was not easy. The evidence that some returned men on these settlements became involved in political groups, often acting on behalf of fellow soldier settlers, reflects that poultry farming as disabled soldier settlers was always a struggle.

Political and Lobby Groups

As mentioned in Chapter Four, the Returned Sailors' and Soldiers' Imperial League of Australia (RSSILA), a support and lobbying organisation formed to represent ex-servicemen, would have provided a much-needed sounding-board and important social network for many soldier settlers, concerned that their interests and welfare were being overlooked by the general population. Its journal, *The Soldier*, keenly promoted group soldier settlements in 1917, believing that they would prove to be the right choice for many returned servicemen.²²⁶ In 1920, *The Soldier* listed sub-branches at both Bankstown and Campbelltown Soldier Settlements, although no

²²⁵ Correspondence Dorothy Maiden to Glenys Allison, 9 March 2010, copy in possession of author.

²²⁶ See for example, *The Soldier*, 16 March 1917, 18 May 1917, 28 September 1917.

record of membership is extant.²²⁷ As previously outlined in Chapter Four, the RSSILA also actively lobbied governments about selling soldier settlement blocks to immigrants, as occurred at Chipping Norton.²²⁸

Research into the history of the Liverpool sub-branch has revealed a significant number of settlers from Hillview and Chipping Norton Soldier Settlements were members of the Sailors' and Soldiers' Club of Liverpool during the 1920s or the Liverpool sub-branch from 1927. Although no concluding evidence survives, RSL researchers believe meetings of both these groups were held in the Hillview Hall located just outside the boundaries of Hillview Settlement, as it was the only community hall in the area.²²⁹ These meetings would have given settlers from several settlements not only the opportunity to socialise, but to gain information about how other groups of soldier settlers were progressing and, if necessary, plan united action with the support of a nation-wide organisation representing returned personnel.

Like the RSSILA, a group to represent all soldier settlers would, it was hoped, ensure these returned men did not become a forgotten and discarded group in society. It soon became apparent an autonomous organisation to address the concerns and problems of soldier settlers was needed. There is no evidence to prove returned men on these group soldier settlements were involved in attempts from 1920 to organise a state-wide Soldier Settlement Association, but they would certainly have known of such

²²⁷ *The Soldier*, 17 September 1920, p. 13, S.N. Spink – Bankstown Soldier Settlement; S.J. Oglesby – Campbelltown Soldier Settlement.

²²⁸ NAA: Prime Minister's Department; A458, *Correspondence files, multiple number series, second system, 1899-1939*; X394/2, Repatriation. Land Settlement.

²²⁹ Correspondence from Vic Watts to Glenys Allison, 11 August 2010, copy in possession of author. Members from Chipping Norton Soldier Settlement included - Findley, Heslop, Kelso, McMillan, McNaught, Park, Philps, Rae, Reeves, Rutledge, Stockton, O'Halloran, Welch; from Hillview Soldier Settlement – Bird, Brennan, Bugden, Bull, Dean, Doran, Kavenagh, Lucas, Moore, Nikola, Popple, Raine, Storey, Turnbull, Vidal, Medley, Ward.

plans through newspaper coverage. News that the Soldier Settlers Association of Toole's Creek at Wagga Wagga hoped to form an organisation to represent all New South Wales soldier settlers was publicised in the *Sailors' and Soldiers' Parliament* column of *Smith's Weekly*.²³⁰ The pitfalls of soldier settlers across the state, and in Victoria and Queensland were often covered in this newspaper, showing soldier settlers they were not alone in the problems they encountered.²³¹ Commenting that 'the scheme contains the germ of a great idea', the newspaper approved of the practicality of an organisation to represent all soldier settlers across the state.²³² By mid-1922 this need had gathered momentum, with *Smith's Weekly* reporting on a local conference at Gosford and another planned at Cootamundra, in the central west of the State.²³³ Urging soldier settlers to become involved, they were advised to contact Captain Adcock, President of the Gosford Returned Services League.²³⁴ Garnet Adcock, a soldier settler near Gosford, was extensively quoted by Bill Gammage in his seminal study of Australian soldiers in the Great War, *The Broken Years*.²³⁵ The Cootamundra conference agreed to form a Soldier Settlers' Progress League to serve the interests of all soldier settlers, with two members of the executive touring the state to recruit members.²³⁶

²³⁰ *Smith's Weekly*, 4 September 1920, p. 23; S. Garton, *The Cost of War. Australians Return*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1996, p. 96; C. Lloyd, J. Rees, *The Last Shilling. A History of Repatriation in Australia*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1994, p. 200. With distribution figures of over 200,000 in the 1920s and a strong influence on matters pertaining to ex-servicemen's issues, *Smith's Weekly* was widely read by returned men; *Smith's Weekly, Sailors' and Soldiers' Parliament* column. The column, written by W.B. Dalley, was in every issue from 19 July 1919, with the last column appearing 4 October 1924. From September 1924 the column appears to have been replaced by *The Unofficial History of the AIF as told by the Diggers Themselves*.

²³¹ See, for example, *Smith's Weekly*, 14 February 1920, p. 23 re-Beerburrum Settlement; 17 December 1921, p. 25 'Stranded in the Ranges. Queensland Government's Ghastly Soldier Settlement Blunder'; 23 February 1924, p. 27 ' "Happy as Hell" – in Happy Valley. Victoria's Greatest Land Bungle'.

²³² *ibid.*, 4 September 1920, p. 23.

²³³ *ibid.*, 3 June 1922, p. 25; 24 June 1922, p. 25.

²³⁴ *ibid.*, 24 June 1922, p. 25.

²³⁵ SRNSW: NRS 8052, *op. cit.*, [10/37120] File 865 Fagan's Farm; B. Gammage, *The Broken Years. Australian Soldiers in the Great War*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 2010.

²³⁶ *SMH*, 9 August 1922, p. 13, General Secretary, W.J. Sloper and Vice President, W.P. Evans.

Only three years after its establishment, Chipping Norton Soldier Settlement was in crisis. To address their concerns, in April 1922, a delegation of settlers David Beveridge, John Gilbert and Melville McNaught accompanied by the Member for Cumberland, William Fitzsimons, met with Frank Chaffey, the Assistant Minister for Agriculture and Lands to resolve issues and improve conditions for the settlers. Fitzsimons said he had visited the settlement several times and believed settlers had not received a fair deal from the government. The eighteen poultry settlers at Chipping Norton were asking for an immediate enquiry into their conditions and to receive sustenance allowances during this process.²³⁷ William Fitzsimons, newly-elected to parliament, was keen to assist returned men as members of his electorate.²³⁸ The delegates' actions show the proactive approach taken by many settlers in the early years of soldier settlement, although it is not known how successful they were in this instance. Later in 1922, David Beveridge again represented the settlement when he gave evidence to the Select Committee investigating conditions on group soldier settlements.²³⁹ Beveridge told the Committee he enjoyed the lifestyle, but admitted Chipping Norton poultry farmers were in trouble. He believed his farm was only worth half the amount of money he owed on it, as were all the other farms at the settlement.²⁴⁰ Beveridge worked hard, not just to make a success of his farm, but was prepared to represent and speak up for his whole community to try and improve conditions. Unfortunately, as Beveridge's loan file is not extant, whether his actions in lobbying government were successful on his own account remains unknown.

²³⁷ SRNSW: NRS 8058, *op. cit.*, [12/6971] Loan File 3917. McNAUGHT, Melville.

²³⁸ www.parliament.nsw.gov.au, accessed 25 January 2011. William Fitzsimons, a member of the Liberal Party, served in the Legislative Assembly from March 1922 to March 1926.

²³⁹ NSWPP, Vol. 1 2nd Session 1922, Progress Report ..., *op. cit.*, p. 339. In the report, David Beveridge's name is recorded as Beverage.

²⁴⁰ *ibid.*, pp. 339-340. Beveridge's debt was £1,800.

Thomas Ambrose Dillon and his wife, Eliza, were involved in many community activities at Bankstown Soldier Settlement. An original settler, Tom had only been ten days on Gallipoli with the 18th Battalion before being severely wounded in the back and evacuated to London for treatment. Spending nine months in hospital, no information survives about the extent of his injuries or the impact they had on his ability to earn a living in civilian life.²⁴¹ Tom Dillon stood in the 1920 Bankstown municipal elections, seeking representation for his fellow soldier settlers and neighbours, believing he could help make a better world.²⁴² Revealing the pride of his community, Dillon's nomination for council was noteworthy many years later in recollections written by the son of an original settler.

Harry Bird from Hillview settlement was also active in local politics, serving as a Councillor on Liverpool Council after spending several years establishing himself on his poultry farm.²⁴³ A hospital wardsman before enlisting, Harry Bird decided his future lay in poultry farming after the war. Discharged from the AIF in May 1918, Bird applied for soldier settlement a year later. On his application form he said he was discharged for defective vision as a result of exposure, gassing and nephritis whilst serving in France, although his service records only refer to medical discharge for poor eyesight.²⁴⁴ Harry trained at Grantham from August 1919, requesting two months later to be included in the ballot for a poultry farm at 'Chippy Norton Group Settlement'.²⁴⁵ In reply he was told that 'provided satisfactory reports are received

²⁴¹ NAA: B2455, *op. cit.*, SERN 855 DILLON, Thomas Ambrose. Dillon was discharged in November 1916.

²⁴² Beckett, 'Origins and History', *op. cit.*, p. 197; *SMH*, 23 January 1920, p. 8. Bankstown South Ward.

²⁴³ *SMH*, 5 March 1928, p. 7.

²⁴⁴ SRNSW: NRS 8058, *op. cit.*, [12/7052] Loan File 4943 BIRD, Harry; NAA: B2455, *op. cit.*, SERN 2924 BIRD, Harry.

²⁴⁵ SRNSW: NRS 8058 [12/7052], *op. cit.*

from the Manager, Grantham Stud Poultry Farm, an area will be reserved for you on the Hillview Settlement'.²⁴⁶ Harry spent five months training at Grantham, and was then employed on preparatory work clearing the new soldier settlement near Liverpool. Keen to have his own home and property and begin his new life with his bride Elsie, Harry Bird had hoped for a block at Chipping Norton, but accepted the offer of Block 301 at Hillview in May 1920.²⁴⁷ Two years after being discharged, Harry finally had permanent employment. Harry Bird's expectations of a better life after the war were realised. In 1928, he successfully stood for election to Liverpool Council.²⁴⁸ As a local councillor Harry represented all the community, but he remained a strong advocate for his fellow soldier settlers, acting as their delegate at the 1930 Soldier Settlers' Conference.²⁴⁹

Local Council was not the only community group Harry Bird was involved in. In June 1925, about 600 poultry farmers attended a conference held at Hawkesbury Agricultural College. A resolution from this conference was to form a poultry farmers' association to represent the industry in New South Wales.²⁵⁰ Several soldier settlers attended, keenly discussing the ramifications of decisions, with a view to continuing their involvement by representing their industry. Harry Bird was among them, recognised by his peers as a successful poultry farmer and being nominated to the executive of the United Poultry Farmers' Association in 1928. Nominations for this executive included three soldier settlers from Bankstown.²⁵¹ The United Poultry Farmers' Association was by mid-year already a force in the industry, with a

²⁴⁶ *ibid.*

²⁴⁷ *ibid.*

²⁴⁸ *SMH*, 5 March 1928, p. 7.

²⁴⁹ *SMH*, 6 August 1930, p. 13.

²⁵⁰ *SMH*, 6 April 1928, p. 5.

²⁵¹ *SMH*, 16 March 1928, p. 9. Harry Bird was from Hillview Soldier Settlement. Bankstown soldier settlers also nominated were T. Buckley, W. Hall and A.W. Morton.

membership of 1,400 producers.²⁵² Later in 1928, when nominations were called for industry representatives for the new Egg Marketing Board, Harry Bird was one of fifteen nominations received. The Egg Marketing Board's role was to control egg marketing in the greater Sydney area through compulsory pooling. Bird was elected as one of three grower representatives. Two of the other nominations were Ernest F. Goldsmith, a former manager at Bankstown and subsequently a settler on Block 119, and Harold D. Price, a settler at Campbelltown.²⁵³ Harry Bird held his position on the Egg Marketing Board until at least 1936, and was still living at Hillview in 1940.²⁵⁴

Men were more likely to be involved in political organisations and poultry associations in early twentieth-century Australian society than women, reflected in the examples of soldier settlers involved as councillors for local government and representing other organisations. The role of women, the partners of returned men, is often ignored, in large part in soldier settlement histories because of the dearth of recorded material about their activities. There is no information about how Mary O'Halloran and Lily West, mentioned earlier in this chapter, who were both from England, fared as the wife of a soldier settler.²⁵⁵ Lily, a war bride, was only one of an unknown number of women in the same position, who had to adapt to a different lifestyle in unfamiliar circumstances.

²⁵² *SMH*, 11 June 1928, p. 9.

²⁵³ *SMH*, 13 October 1928, p. 15; SRNSW: NRS 8056 [10/13713], *op. cit.*, Goldsmith's request to purchase Block 119 was approved April 1924. Ernest Goldsmith was not a returned soldier.

²⁵⁴ *SMH*, 27 February 1936, p. 8; *SMH*, 9 March 1940, p. 7.

²⁵⁵ SRNSW: NRS 8058 [12/6975], *op. cit.*; NAA: C138 C22212, *op. cit.*; NAA: B2455, SERN 3150, *op. cit.*

Soldier Settlement Women at Home and in the Community

Soldier settlers' loan files contain few references to the physical work done by wives and children, either as compensation for the husband's disabilities or simply because they could not afford to employ labour. Soldier settlers relied heavily on their family to do farm work, unable to perform many of the regular physical tasks early twentieth century farming required. Many women on soldier settlements worked alongside their man on the property as well as attending to their domestic duties to help make a success of their new undertaking, leading one woman to explain that 'I have had more to do than a woman's fair share'.²⁵⁶ Numerous men like Ernest Keating, needed his wife's assistance as a labourer, doing a man's job, to work the farm.²⁵⁷ Serving over three years in the Australian forces after earlier service with the British military, by 1920 Ernest Henry Keating decided it was time to settle down with a home and family. Keating's war had seen him suffer from trench feet and a loose cartilage in his knee.²⁵⁸ After discharge, horse driving work was not easy to find with so many returned men unemployed, so he applied for soldier settlement, training first at Grantham before being offered a block at Doonside.²⁵⁹ After taking time to establish himself as a poultry farmer, Keating married Amelia Begley in 1923.²⁶⁰ The couple were a good team, working hard together to build up their farm and quickly repay their debts. In January 1925 he wrote to the RSSB saying they had both worked twelve hours a day for the past twenty months to realise their dream of repaying the loan within five years.

²⁵⁶ SRNSW: NRS 8058, *op. cit.*, [12/6848] Loan File 1077 MACKENZIE, A.A. Elsie Rankin to the Minister for Lands, 15 December 1931.

²⁵⁷ *ibid.*, [12/7282] Loan File 8024 KEATING, E.H.

²⁵⁸ *ibid.*; NAA: B2455, *op. cit.*, SERN 2265 KEATING, Ernest Henry; In Keating's loan file, a 1925 report notes he has only one leg, a result of war injuries. It is not known when his leg was amputated.

²⁵⁹ SRNSW: NRS 8058, *op. cit.*, [12/7282] Loan File 8024 KEATING, E.H. Keating was offered his block in March 1921.

²⁶⁰ www.bdm.gov.au, accessed 8 August 2010.

Last Tuesday she [my wife] drove the plough horse for seven hours with myself on the plough, so you will see that no woman would do that if we thought of leaving the farm.²⁶¹

Keating relied heavily on his wife's help on the farm and when he was hospitalised in late 1925, she continued to work the farm alone to the detriment of her own health.²⁶²

The physical and emotional toll on both Amelia and Ernest Keating resulted in their decision to forfeit their farm the following year.²⁶³

Leonard Beckett's wife, Maud, also led the plough horse for her husband on their poultry farm at Bankstown. Maud had a specially built wooden yoke that fitted across her shoulders with suspended kerosene tins to carry feed, eggs, firewood or water, because her husband could not do the work alone. Her other farm work included turning the handle on the chaff cutter, milking the cow and harnessing the horse and sulky, almost impossible tasks for a one-armed man to undertake.²⁶⁴ Margaret Rutledge, wife of William Rutledge from Chipping Norton Soldier Settlement, obviously did the bulk of the farm work on their property, leading an RSSB Inspector to comment that 'the wife is the mainstay of the block'.²⁶⁵ After school, children's chores included collecting firewood, feeding the fowls and cleaning out their pens, topping up kerosene in the lamps and weeding the lucerne crops, all necessary tasks to help make a living on the farm.²⁶⁶

For nearly forty years for East Hills and Milperra residents, the presence of Nurse Schwarzel on her horse signalled the impending arrival of new life. Sarah Ann

²⁶¹ SRNSW: NRS 8058, *op. cit.*, [12/7282] Loan File 8024.

²⁶² *ibid.*, memo 1 October 1925.

²⁶³ *ibid.*

²⁶⁴ Jessie Street National Women's Library, Tapestry Series, 'Maud Mary Beckett'.

²⁶⁵ SRNSW: NRS 8058, *op. cit.*, [12/6971] Loan file 3918 RUTLEDGE, William.

²⁶⁶ Beckett, 'Childhood Memories', *op. cit.*, p. 18.

Schwarzel, better known as ‘Granny’ or ‘Nurse Schwarzel’ came to East Hills with her family in the 1890s to a small orchard and vegetable farm. An untrained bush nurse and midwife, it is believed she delivered more than a thousand babies, often attending patients unable to afford to pay her a fee. She delivered many babies at Bankstown Soldier Settlement, including Stan Coles, the first baby born on the settlement. Stan recalls that she treated all ‘her babies’ as if they were part of her family.²⁶⁷ Whilst Bob Anson’s memories of Nurse Schwarzel are somewhat different, believing her to be rather severe, he remembered she was always correct in thanking his grandfather for holding her horse whilst she mounted, saying ‘thank you kindly Mr McConnell’.²⁶⁸ With the nearest doctor in the district several miles distant at Belmore, Granny Schwarzel probably also delivered many babies at Chipping Norton Soldier Settlement. After Granny Schwarzel’s death on Anzac Day 1937, a memorial commemorating her work was built.²⁶⁹ For many years the district Anzac Day march began at this memorial, an enduring reminder of her links with the local community and returned men and their families on the soldier settlements.²⁷⁰

With many soldier settlers marrying soon after they were discharged, births at soldier settlements were a regular occurrence and in similar circumstances to those outlined above at Bankstown Settlement. When John Charles (Charlie) Hepher came to Campbelltown Soldier Settlement, he and his wife Adele already had three children. As noted previously, Charlie was ‘caught up with the land idea’ and after selling the family home in Fivedock in Sydney’s western suburbs, applied for a block at

²⁶⁷ T. Schwarzel, “Granny to a Thousand Babies.” *Nurse Sarah ‘Granny’ Schwarzel 1858-1937*, self-published, Panania, 2004. Granny Schwarzel’s nursing was included in the 2001 Powerhouse Museum exhibition, ‘Births of a Nation: Women, Childbirth and Federation’.

²⁶⁸ Correspondence Bob Anson to Glenys Allison, *op. cit.*

²⁶⁹ *SMH*, 22 November 1937, p. 4.

²⁷⁰ T. Schwarzel, *op. cit.*, non-paginated.

Campbelltown Soldier Settlement even though neither he nor his wife had farming experience. Charlie had been employed with local plumber Fred Wilkinson to install downpipes and guttering on buildings at the settlement, and was impressed by its prospects.²⁷¹ The Hepher's fourth child Dorothy was born here on 17 February 1919. When Adele went into labour, Charlie tried to put the horse to the sulky to take his wife two miles into Campbelltown to the midwife's house. The horse proved uncooperative and bolted. With no alternative transport available, Adele took her suitcase and walked to town in the stifling heat to have her baby delivered by Nurse Newbury.²⁷² Nurse Newbury, matron of Kyla Private Hospital in Lithgow Street in Campbelltown, offered medical, surgical and midwifery services to the town from 1918 and assisted with many births from Campbelltown Soldier Settlement.²⁷³ The Hepher family had three more children born at the settlement, with young Jack the only boy. The size of the Hepher family was a cause for amusement for their father, who would call out if neighbours arrived during meal times, 'come in, come and see the lions being fed'.²⁷⁴

Dorothy, the baby born in the heat of 1919, recalled eighty years later her memories of life for women on Campbelltown Settlement. She said life was very, very difficult, especially if, like her mother, they were city girls. She claims her mother never really enjoyed farm life, but hoping for better times, 'buckled in and helped wherever she could'.²⁷⁵ While her husband worked hard maintaining the poultry, Adele often needed to help, in addition to her normal household chores. The two youngest children would be taken in a pram to the packing shed where Adele would wash and

²⁷¹ J. Hepher, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

²⁷² Correspondence Bruce Maiden to Glenys Allison, 20 December 2009, copy in possession of author.

²⁷³ *Campbelltown Herald*, 8 June 1918, p. 2.

²⁷⁴ Hepher, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

²⁷⁵ Correspondence Dorothy Maiden, *op. cit.*

pack the eggs in crates ready for market. As the babies were all breast-fed, Adele would continue working whilst feeding her child. Like other women, Adele used a fuel copper for washing to boil the sheets and towels and then would wring them out by hand, a long physically draining task performed every Monday. Her prized possession was a pedal sewing machine that she put to good use making dark grey flannel shirts for her husband and neighbours. The pure wool shirts were worn by the men in all seasons while they worked. Adele Hephher's sewing skills not only proved invaluable to her own family, but by making flannel shirts for her neighbours, Adele reflected a strong community spirit. Dorothy also remembers her mother always wore a home-made apron. A black Italian cloth apron was worn during the morning, and on washing day this would be replaced by a sugar bag. Italian cloth was a strong cotton fabric with a shiny finish, ideal for heavy-duty work around the house. In the afternoons, as part of Adele's efforts to be like the model housewife in the magazines, she would change into a pretty apron, sometimes one with a fancy trim. Every family kept their own supply of medicines, including the dreaded cure-all, castor oil, but in an emergency one of the settlers could always be relied upon to saddle a horse and ride into Campbelltown to fetch the local doctor, Dr Mawson brother of Antarctic explorer Douglas Mawson.²⁷⁶ In 1919 with only fifty subscribers to the telephone within a ten mile radius of the settlement, it was unlikely any soldier settler had access to this service, so relied on neighbours to help in emergencies.²⁷⁷

In addition to working within their own community several women, among them Eliza Dillon and Mary Beckett from Bankstown Soldier Settlement, were members of the Soldiers' Mothers, Wives, and Relatives Victory Association, which was active

²⁷⁶ *ibid.*

²⁷⁷ C. Liston, *Campbelltown, the Bicentennial History*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1988, p. 179.

through the 1920s.²⁷⁸ Eliza Dillon was a driving force in this group, being president of the Bankstown sub-branch.²⁷⁹ For many new settlers unfamiliar with a life on the land this group energetically worked to help ex-servicemen and their families, providing much-needed support. The Soldiers' Mothers, Wives, and Relatives Victory Association was formed soon after the end of the Great War, to provide help to dependents of 'distressed veterans'.²⁸⁰ The group's activities included monthly visits to Randwick Hospital visiting veterans, distributing fresh eggs and organising Christmas 'cheer parties'.²⁸¹ Conscious of the difficulties ex-servicemen had in civilian life, these women volunteered to help. It is likely Eliza and Maud among others, collected eggs from their settlement to take to hospitalised ex-servicemen. The group continued to be active in the Depression years, collecting unwanted clothing at Central Station in Sydney to be given to the wives and children of returned men in straitened circumstances.²⁸²

Eliza Dillon was also involved for many years in the Parents' and Citizens' Association at Milperra School. The community at Bankstown Soldier Settlement recognised the dedication and hard work made by the members of this association. From the first days of the school the Parents' and Citizens' Association was an integral part in the organisation of special activities, including programs for Anzac Day, Empire Day, Wattle Day and Armistice Day.²⁸³ After Eliza's sudden death, members of the 'Milperra Younger Set' raised funds to donate a memorial bell to the

²⁷⁸ Jessie Street National Women's Library, *op. cit.*

²⁷⁹ *SMH*, 23 July 1925, p. 7.

²⁸⁰ *SMH*, 21 November 1925, p. 10; *SMH*, 9 June 1928, p. 10.

²⁸¹ *SMH*, 9 June 1928, p. 10.

²⁸² *SMH*, 6 May 1931, p. 7.

²⁸³ Beckett, 'Origins and History', *op. cit.*, p. 107; Jessie Street National Women's Library, *op. cit.*, notes that Maud Beckett was also involved in the Parents' and Citizens' Association, the Mothers' Union and the Ladies Guild.

school in her name.²⁸⁴ Although no records have been found, this reference to the Milperra Younger Set indicates Eliza Dillon and possibly other women from Bankstown Soldier Settlement were also involved in the Australian Red Cross.²⁸⁵

Life for women on soldier settlements was a physically tiring duty, and as this part of the chapter has revealed entailed much more than household duties. With husbands disabled by war injuries, and unable to afford to pay for other labour, these women had no alternative than to help with farm work. As highlighted by Dorothy Maiden's memories of her mother's life, many city girls or war brides from England had a lot to learn to try to make a success of the enterprise. Like their men, they also worked hard.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that a large number of returned men on these group settlements hoped they would succeed as poultry farmers and smallholders. Disabled, physically or mentally by their service in World War I, they no longer had their physical strength to return to their pre-war work. A small soldier settlement farm, among men with similar experiences, that provided instruction and on-site advice appeared to be a reasonable alternative. For many, it was the only alternative. The newly-built houses would provide a home for their families, and the community would support each other's needs. Soldier settlers worked hard to achieve these dreams. They formed Progress Associations to better conditions, to lobby local and state governments for improved services, and organised social events for adults and children alike. Soldier settlers became involved in poultry clubs, competing and

²⁸⁴ SRNSW: NRS 3829 *School Files, 1876- 1979* [5/16851] letter from Headmaster Paul Nolan November 1933.

²⁸⁵ The Younger Set is a section within the Australian Red Cross for older teenage girls and young women. I am indebted to Amanda Andrews and Melanie Oppenheimer for this information.

exhibiting against other soldier settlers and the wider community, proving they could breed award-winning stock and become successful in their new careers. Family members became involved in community and voluntary groups that contributed to the well-being of their own and other communities. Initially it seemed group soldier settlement would be a success. Some did succeed, managing to survive and indeed prosper. However, the hopes and expectations for the vast majority of soldier settlers on the group settlements in the County of Cumberland were soon dashed. With war-related disabilities that made farming a challenge, the despair they faced when they recognised they could no longer continue, is the subject of the following chapter.

Chapter Six

Despair

For a significant number of returned men on the six group soldier settlements in the County of Cumberland, their hopes of a healthy and happy life on the land turned to despair all too soon. Civilian life became a struggle, a struggle that increased over time. Men damaged physically and emotionally from their war service tried the only avenue they thought could work to be self-sufficient by taking up a block and becoming soldier settlers, but they largely failed. The previous chapter, 'Hope', recounted efforts made by these men and their families to succeed. For many, group soldier settlement was their last hope to remain independent as their war-related disabilities prevented them returning to their largely physical and unskilled pre-war work. A pension, if they had one, was insufficient to support themselves and their families.

Before World War I Australia had no system for military pensioning for troops disabled during service.¹ In 1914 under the War Pensions Act, the Commonwealth accepted responsibility to care for ex-servicemen and women, defining incapacity as 'bodily or mental infirmity which wholly or in part prevents the earning of a livelihood and which results or has resulted from employment in connection with the warlike operations'.² Soldiers were assessed for a pension before being discharged, which, if granted, was typically fixed for six months and then reassessed.³

¹ A.G. Butler, *Official History of the Australian Army Medical Services 1914-1918. Vol. III. Special Problems and Services*, 1st Edn, Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 1943, p. 789.

² *ibid.*, pp. 791-792, The Act was passed 21 December 1914 and the regulations defining incapacity 25 March 1915, pp. 803-804 notes there were difficulties in interpreting the Act, indicating many ex-servicemen had problems receiving either adequate pensions or had their pension claims rejected..

³ L.J. Pryor, 'The Origins of Australia's Repatriation Policy, 1914- 1920', M.A. Thesis, University of Melbourne, 1932, p. 24.

Employment post-discharge for many returned men, both during and soon after the war, was difficult due to Australia's straitened economic conditions.⁴ Economic uncertainty and high unemployment impacted heavily on returned men who chose to become soldier settlers on the group settlements in this study, hampered as they were by war-related disabilities and with few options for making a living.⁵ War disability pensions were never a living wage, and few ex-servicemen were granted a pension for being totally and permanently incapacitated.⁶ The issue of gaining and retaining war pensions was not limited to soldier settlers, as evidenced by returned servicemen's congresses which strongly lobbied the Commonwealth for changes.⁷ A 1924 Royal Commission into repatriation found that 'the Repatriation Commission is greatly hampered by the inadequacy of records as to the exact state of health of soldiers upon discharge from service', revealing that significant numbers of ex-servicemen had not

⁴ See, for example, M. Oppenheimer, 'Alleviating Distress. The Lord Mayor's Patriotic Fund in New South Wales, 1914-20', *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, Vol. 81, Part 1, June 1995, p. 86, p. 89; R. Mendelsohn, *The Condition of the People. Social Welfare in Australia 1900-1975*, George Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1979, pp. 21-22; C.B. Schedvin, *Australia and the Great Depression. A Study of Economic Development and Policy in the 1920s and 1930s*, Sydney University Press, Sydney, 1970, p. 49, noting Australian per capita income fell heavily during the war; A.G.L. Shaw, *The Economic Development of Australia*, 5th Edn, Longmans of Australia Pty Ltd, Melbourne, 1966, p. 147; H. McQueen, 'Shoot the Bolshevik! Hang the Profiteer! Reconstructing Australian Capitalism, 1918-21' in E.L. Wheelwright & K. Buckley (eds), *Essays in the Political Economy of Australian Capitalism*, Australia and New Zealand Book Co., Sydney, 1978, p. 186, p.p. 194-195, notes not only the increased cost of living and unemployment but also the major social unrest represented by strikes, which reached over six million days in 1919; S. Macintyre, *The Oxford History of Australia, Vol. 4, 1901-1942 The Succeeding Age*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1986, p. 183, pp. 193-194; K. Frost, 'Soldier Settlement After World War I in South-Western Victoria', PhD Thesis, Deakin University, 2002, p. 75.

⁵ R. Lindstrom, 'The Australian Experience of Psychological Casualties in War 1915-1939', PhD Thesis, Victoria University of Technology, 1997, p. 237. Lindstrom argues that the pensions and sustenance payments made to ex-servicemen were, 'in many cases, totally ineffective in the face of straitened circumstances. Although their disorders were highly debilitating, many psychological casualties were not granted full benefits because in many cases the men were deemed fit for partial employment'. Although Lindstrom's argument is only about men who suffered psychological problems as a result of war service, many men on the settlements in this study who were receiving benefits only for physical disabilities were similarly affected.

⁶ Pryor, *op. cit.*, p. 27, notes Senator Millen said in 1920 there were only 150 Totally and Permanently Incapacitated ex-servicemen across Australia; M. Oppenheimer, *All Work No Pay, Australian Civilian Volunteers in War*, Ohio Productions, Walcha, 2002, pp. 66-69. Oppenheimer argues the Department of Repatriation used models developed earlier by patriotic funds for payment for permanent disabilities.

⁷ *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 December 1921, p. 6; 8 August 1922, p. 9.

satisfied examining medical officers of their right to receive benefits owing to the destruction of Australian medical treatment records by British authorities.⁸

Throughout official government reports there is no mention of physical or mental impairments of returned men on these settlements, with the exception of Grantham Soldier Settlement being set aside for men who had lost a limb. Was this an oversight or had the spectre of war-damaged men become so familiar in the post-war landscape that it was overlooked? For many soldier settlers in this study, their physical and mental war-related conditions impacted significantly on their ability to work even a small poultry farm or market garden. Knowing they returned from war less fit than when they left, combined with being allocated land unsuited to this type of farming, drove many men to despair. They thought they could manage land on a group settlement, believing there were few options available to them for earning their living and supporting their families with dignity. Too often returned men on the group soldier settlements in the County of Cumberland found they would never succeed. At least 360 returned men tried to make a living on these six settlements. At least half of them forfeited, leaving unpaid debts, often with nowhere to go and no work to go to.

Many loan files contain reports from the manager or inspector saying that a settler was not a 'trier'. Little if any mention is made of the obvious disabilities the man had that would have seriously affected his capacity to work. Even into the twentieth century it was believed life in the open air would be healthy and restorative for returned men, with many references in these soldier settlers' loan files saying doctors had made this recommendation when they were discharged. However, little

⁸ Butler, *op. cit.*, p. 804.

consideration was made about how disabled men could adapt, or if their physical and mental conditions would deteriorate over time. Tuberculosis and severe respiratory conditions from gassing often developed years later. There were many men like Bertram Nicola, from Hillview Soldier Settlement, who after several months hospital treatment for gas poisoning realised he would never improve, and forfeited his block.⁹ Harry Castle, also from Hillview Soldier Settlement, suffered from shell shock and 'chest trouble' as a result of the war. Castle could only do light work and found that as his health deteriorated over the years poultry farming became too strenuous, forcing him to forfeit his farm.¹⁰

Governments, both state and Commonwealth soon became aware large numbers of soldier settlers were forfeiting, although there is no written evidence of whether authorities recognised why this was happening. Even the Pike Report of 1929 which examined Australian-wide losses provided little in the way of explanation for the Australia-wide failures, focusing on financial, rather than emotional and physical losses from the scheme.¹¹ Governments had hoped that the soldier settlement scheme across Australia would be successful, providing returned servicemen and women with benefits to prove it was a land fit for heroes. New South Wales Department of Lands files on soldier settlers in this study, often contain minutiae figures on settlers' debts, but do not reveal any of the unease the government must have been experiencing knowing that so many men had forfeited their properties.¹²

⁹ SRNSW NRS 8058, *op. cit.*, [12/7014] Loan File 5561 DYBALL, R. Nicola was in hospital from at least December 1924 until March 1925. He forfeited in May 1925.

¹⁰ *ibid.*, [12/7160] Loan File 6310 CASTLE, Harry.

¹¹ Justice Pike, *Report on Losses Due to Soldier Settlement*, H.J. Green, Government Printer, Canberra, August 1929, p. 6, p. 21. Although one of the terms of reference Pike was given was to investigate how many men had been unfit to become soldier settlers because of war disabilities, the only figures noted in his report are those from Victoria (fifty-seven). The report says some information was received from other States, but Pike considered it was not very dependable.

¹² SRNSW: NRS 8058, *op. cit.*

This chapter addresses the reasons why men on these group soldier settlements failed on their small farms. Evidence will be provided to support the argument that the hopes of many soldier settlers on the group soldier settlements in the County of Cumberland soon faded and turned to despair. It will show that in addition to problems such as poor land and poor stock which were investigated in Chapters Three and Four, the main reason these men failed was because of their war-related disabilities. It will reveal that many men were discharged as fit, and struggled to have their injuries recognised as war-related. It will also show how these disabilities increased over time, often making the physical work of farming impossible. Men failed, and either forfeited or were forced to leave their blocks and homes. This chapter will show that many of these soldier settlers forfeited after realising they would never be successful, and knowing they had little possibility of gaining permanent employment elsewhere. Returned Soldiers' Settlement Branch (RSSB) loan files provide some insight into their distress at this probability, information that is often confirmed in repatriation files.

The chapter has been divided into sections focusing on soldier settlers' physical and mental health to allow greater clarity about the range and severity of disabilities returned men on these group settlements had to try to overcome. The section on physical health includes case studies of men who suffered injuries from gunshot wounds, a separate section on the limbless who took up farms at Grantham, and is followed by case studies of men who were gassed and others who developed tuberculosis. Many returned men on these soldier settlements suffered from psychological problems, war neuroses or war alcoholism and some of their stories of attempting to build a new life on the land is investigated under the sub-title of

psychological problems. The chapter concludes that many men on these group settlements never had permanent employment after forfeiting their soldier settlement farm, revealing a small part of the enormous cost of the aftermath of World War I.

Large numbers of soldier settlers on the six group settlements in the County of Cumberland were soon forced to admit they could not succeed as farmers. Generally inexperienced, without capital, but most importantly requiring on-going medical treatment in Sydney, many returned men chose these soldier settlement blocks as a last resort, knowing their former employment was closed to them due to war-related disabilities. It is probable for these reasons that a greater number of men on these settlements came and left than in other types of soldier settlement tenure in New South Wales.

Problems associated with New South Wales soldier settlement became apparent soon after the Armistice, and the issue was covered in publications widely read by returned men such as *The Soldier* and *Smith's Weekly*. In July 1920, *The Soldier* printed a pithy summary of the plight of soldier settlers.

'Where's Ginger these days?' asked a Digger of his pal.
'Oh,' was the reply, 'he was settled on the land and then settled by the drought.'
'Is he going on the land again?' was the next question.
'Not him,' said the Digger, 'not unless he's going in his head.'¹³

The *Smith's Weekly* anecdote encapsulated what was happening to many men on these settlements within the County of Cumberland as well as countless others across the state, when it reported the following year that, 'Diggers [had] ... sowed the seeds of

¹³ *The Soldier*, 16 July 1920, p. 6. *The Soldier* was a publication of the Returned Sailors' and Soldiers' Imperial League of Australia.

hope and reaped the harvest of despair'.¹⁴ Returned men had been confidently told by state and Commonwealth governments that the soldier settlement scheme would see them comfortably settled on land of their own with little risk, as governments fulfilled their promises to make special provisions for returned soldiers after the war. Within a few short years, this hope had turned to despair for many soldier settlers. Instead of being the vehicle to ease their return to civilian life, soldier settlement became a millstone around their necks that left a large proportion of settlers across New South Wales broken in spirit and body.

Frustrated at the lack of official response to their problems, men from Bankstown Soldier Settlement contacted *Smith's Weekly*, resulting in the story line 'Bogged, Bewildered, Broke'.¹⁵ The paper reported many blocks at Bankstown were affected by poor runoff, ruining market-garden crops and inundating poultry yards during wet weather. The men had tried everything they could think of to drain the land, without success, and had run out of ideas and money to solve their problems. These problems only exacerbated men's physical and mental health issues, causing them more worries in their efforts to make a living. Unable to offer a solution, *Smith's* ensured prospective settlers were aware of conditions on some group settlements,

'My brother', writes "Wal" from the North-West, 'wants to secure a poultry farm near Sydney. Not having much capital, he wishes to get assistance from the Government. Can you please inform as to which Department he should apply?' If "Wal's" brother will get in touch with the Soldier Settlement Department he will find no difficulty in getting 'settled'. It has some admirable floating poultry farms on its hands, loaded with mortgages of £1000 and over. Perhaps it would be just as well to apply to the Navigation Department first.¹⁶

¹⁴ *Smith's Weekly*, 25 June 1921, p. 23.

¹⁵ *ibid.*, 18 June 1921, p. 23. 'Bogged, Bewildered, Broke. Settling a Soldier on a Salt-Water Farm. Costly Departmental Blunder'.

¹⁶ *Smith's Weekly*, 16 July 1921, p. 23.

Smith's also investigated Settler Murphy from Bankstown Block 161, saying his story was 'one of many chapters [and] each chapter is a rainfall and each rainfall a calamity'.¹⁷ Samuel Murphy an original settler who had been on his block three and a half years personally contacted Director Watson of the RSSB in December 1920, outlining his problems and asking for assistance. Watson replied informing Murphy his case was being thoroughly investigated and would receive prompt action, but nothing happened. Explaining that Bankstown soldier settlers had serious problems with poor runoff and drainage, *Smith's* said it could not understand how the Department expected men to become successful poultry farmers under these conditions. *Smith's* cheekily suggested authorities should consider building a cemetery 'for Diggers whom it has killed with its exasperation'.¹⁸ Samuel Murphy was forty years old, discharged after being wounded in the eye at Gallipoli, and could not support his large family working post-war as a carter.¹⁹ The combination of poor land and poor health soon took its toll. Murphy, his wife and six children gave up the struggle less than two years later and left Bankstown.²⁰

As outlined in Chapter Five, many of these soldier settlers were heavily dependent on their wives and children to help with the physical work on their farms. For example, Arthur Mobbs from Doonside Soldier Settlement relied on his wife to run the farm while he sought lighter work outside the settlement after realising he was not well

¹⁷ *Smith's Weekly*, 25 June 1921, p. 23.

¹⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁹ National Archives of Australia: Australian Imperial Force, Base Records Office; B2455, *First Australian Imperial Force Personnel Dossiers 1914-1920*, SERN 36 MURPHY, Samuel Thomas Michael.

²⁰ New South Wales Parliamentary Papers, Vol. 1 (2nd Session) 1922, Progress Report from the Select Committee on the Soldier Settlements, p. 308 – list of settlers Bankstown noting Block 161 vacant.

enough to do all the physical labour needed to care for his poultry.²¹ Mobbs was wounded at Gallipoli and hospitalised several times over the next three years in France and Belgium for unspecified injuries.²² By 1931, Mobbs' wife claimed her husband's war injuries had affected his health so seriously that he could no longer work at all. Pleading for consideration and assistance from the RSSB, his wife wrote,

I have four small children and they need clothes very bad also bedclothes. My husband has done nearly five years active service. He is feeling the effects of it now. He is not well at times. He has had no assistance of any kind since he has been back in Australia.²³

The government inspector showed no compassion, saying Mobbs should have been working the farm and had been 'leaving to[o] much to his wife who cannot do justice to the stock and rear a young family'.²⁴ The Mobbs family forfeited soon after, disappearing from official records.²⁵

Physical injuries and poor health

As has been argued throughout this thesis, many soldier settlers in this study found their return to civilian life a disaster, returning from the war with a range of physical and psychological conditions either never recognised or properly treated. They needed work and a home for their families. The war pension, if they had one, was not equal to a living wage for a single man and would never support a family. Their dreams of surviving as a soldier settler on small blocks of land within access of medical facilities proved a delusion. Former soldier settlers led transient lives after forfeiting their farm,

²¹ SRNSW: NRS 8058, *op. cit.*, [12/7401] Loan File 9906 MOBBS, Arthur.

²² NAA: B2455, *op. cit.*, SERN 1997 MOBBS, Arthur; NAA: Department of Veterans' Affairs, Branch Office, New South Wales; C138, *Personal case files, single number series (Australian, 1914-1918 War)*, R59807 MOBBS, Arthur.

²³ SRNSW: NRS 8058 [12/7401], *op. cit.*, 27 March 1931. Mobb's wife claimed he had only worked three months in the previous year and a half.

²⁴ *ibid.*, Report from Inspector Laycock 13 April 1931.

²⁵ *ibid.* The property was gazetted as vacant in January 1932.

working casually, if at all, and continued to suffer from injuries sustained during the war.²⁶ As supporting evidence of the health-related issues that impacted so acutely on these men when they attempted soldier settlement, a range of case studies will be examined in this chapter.

Earlier described in Chapter Five, 'Hope', Robert Anson and his family came to Bankstown Soldier Settlement hoping to have a comfortable home and build up a profitable business. By 1928 Robert and Helena Anson had seven children and the good life had faded. Farm produce from the poultry and vegetables brought little cash returns, and cartage for selling the tomato and bean crops barely covered costs, frustrating Helena because 'bean picking and packaging was damned, back-breaking toil for nix'.²⁷ This anecdotal information reveals that even when settlers had bumper crops, their returns were often frustratingly poor.

Official documents, including loan files, do not contain any information on the prices produce from these settlements made at market. Similarly, no records from the administration offices located on-site at these group settlements have survived. *New South Wales Official Year Books* shed little light on the growth of the poultry industry in this state immediately post-war. In 1918, the area let to poultry auctioneers at the Sydney Municipal Markets was one of the smallest allocations, and poultry had been such a small portion of the state's economy prior to this date that its results had been

²⁶ See for example, SRNSW: NRS 8058, *op. cit.*, [12/7052] Loan File 4940 VENN, C.H. and Loan File 4941 BUCKPITT, H.E.; [12/7053] Loan File 4951 PARKER, W.C.; [12/6975] Loan File 3976 DUNLOP, A.; [12/6971] Loan File 3918 RUTLEDGE, W. and Loan File 3919 PARK, J.A.; [12/7372] Loan File 9337 SYKES, H.G.; [12/7282] Loan File 8023 BURNS, A.P.; [12/6865] Loan File 1873 MENZIES, D.C.; [12/6973] Loan File 3937 GILBERT, J.; [12/7347] Loan File 9004 BURY, W.F.; [12/7378] Loan File 9438 GRAHAM, A. ; See also, for example repatriation files, NAA : C138, *op. cit.*, R/M/C/H 98296 HARRIS, H.G.; M/C9247 BECKETT, L.A.V.; R18306 COLLINS, H.H.; R40481 GRAHAM, A.; C22212 O'HALLORAN, C.; R12714 KELLY, A.J.; R52965 PARK, J.A.; R10691 HUXLEY, D.A.

²⁷ Bob Anson, family history.

combined with the dairy industry.²⁸ As late as 1926, the government statistician admitted no accurate information on poultry production across the state was available.²⁹ Although there is evidence that soldier settlers in other parts of the country had to try to contend with climatic extremes, notably the ravages of drought, no evidence has come to light in this study that lack of rainfall significantly affected the metropolitan poultry industry.³⁰

Even before the Depression hit, the poultry had been sold and Robert was trying other ways to make a living. A mail run contract soon became a liability, with poor local roads, dusty in dry weather and a boggy mess after rain, contributing to mechanical breakdowns and greater debt. The older Anson children had to help their father, delivering mail by horse and sulky after school. By the end of 1930, with no work, no income and no war service pension, the family were forced to leave Bankstown Soldier Settlement.³¹

Eighty years after leaving Bankstown Soldier Settlement, the sadness of 'a family leaving a farm and home destitute, and poor; and the Great Depression ups and downs

²⁸ H.A. Smith, Government Statistician, *The Official Year Book of New South Wales 1918*, W.A. Gullick, Government Printer, Sydney, 1920, p. 478, p. 699 notes the statistics for poultry production were not available.

²⁹ H.A. Smith, Government Statistician, *The Official Year Book of New South Wales 1925-26*, A.J. Kent, Government Publisher, Sydney, 1926, p. 584. No reference was found to production figures for viticulture, an even smaller industry in the 1920s than poultry.

³⁰ See, for example, M. McKernan, *Drought. The Red Marauder*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2005, pp. 2-15, pp. 164-168; R. Waterhouse, *The Vision Splendid. A Social and Cultural History of Rural Australia*, Curtin University Books, Fremantle, 2005; W.A. Bayley, *History of the Farmers and Settlers' Association of New South Wales*, Farmers and Settlers' Association, Sydney, 1957, p. 143, notes drought years in the state from 1920 to 1930; www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@nsf/Lookup/1301.0Feature+Article, accessed 7 August 2011, notes New South Wales experienced major droughts 1911-1916 and 1918-1920, including a severe drought in 1914-1915, with a less severe drought in 1922-1923 and intermittent drought conditions from 1926 to 1929.

³¹ *ibid.*

to follow on' linger.³² Robert was frustrated and weakened by his failure, frailties recognised many years later by his son who wrote, 'unless you have worn the shoes they wear, who limp or stumble, beneath the load they bear, one cannot know what caused the falter'.³³ This declaration recognises that Robert Anson's war experiences haunted him and affected all his family. Many other returned soldiers in this study were similarly affected physically or mentally, often failing to make a living after the peace.

As noted throughout this thesis, these group settlements had a high turnover of returned men who tried and failed as soldier settlers. Their war-related injuries or disabilities prevented them returning to pre-war occupations, with many needing close access to Randwick General Hospital for continuing treatment. An examination of multiple occupancies of blocks at Bankstown Soldier Settlement reveals a pattern. The most common reason for forfeiture or transfer was poor health as a result of war-related disabilities. The experiences of soldier settlers on Blocks 106 and 117 provide evidence in support of this argument.

Four men lived on Block 106 at Bankstown Soldier Settlement between 1917 and 1928, and at least three were returned men – Charles Stanton, George Bell and Cecil Evans.³⁴ Charles Stanton was unsuited for poultry farming, often leaving a young boy in charge of the farm. His friend, George Bell, took over the block but only lasted a year, resigning under medical advice, even though twelve months earlier a doctor had

³² Bob Anson to Glenys Allison, personal correspondence, 11 January 2010. Copy in possession of author.

³³ Bob Anson to Glenys Allison, personal correspondence, February 2010. Copy in possession of author.

³⁴ It is not known if the fourth settler, Frederick Hillier was an ex-serviceman.

declared him fit enough for poultry farming.³⁵ It is little wonder Bell could not work his poultry farm. Days after landing at Anzac Cove on Gallipoli George received multiple machine-gun bullets to his body, requiring several operations to remove them all. He was gassed at Passchendaele in October 1917, later suffering acute nephritis, spinal pains and heart palpitations.³⁶ With these injuries and the likelihood his condition would worsen over time, there were few occupations George Bell could consider post-war. He hoped he could work a small soldier settlement farm, but he was wrong. George Bell died in September 1930, aged thirty-seven.³⁷ Cecil Evans took over the block, staying just two years. Soldier settlement had seemed the best solution for supporting his family, as Cecil, the eldest of five children, became the family's bread-winner after his father was killed in action.³⁸

The settlers on Block 117 at Bankstown each stayed two years or less before recognising they would never succeed on their small farms, largely because of their war-related disabilities. William Weaire was never meant to be a farmer. He never succeeded. He was allotted Block 117 at Bankstown Soldier Settlement in its earliest days.³⁹ A career soldier, Weaire was wounded in the same offensive at Gallipoli as George Bell, suffering head, torso and foot wounds.⁴⁰ More than two years later,

³⁵ NAA : B2455, *op. cit.*, SERN 1660 STANTON, Charles Alexander. Stanton was discharged in March 1917 with a hernia; SRNSW: NRS 8058, *op. cit.*, [12/7253] Loan File 628 STANTON, Charles Alexander and BELL, George. Stanton claimed family ill health for leaving; SRNSW: Department of Lands, *Closer Settlement Promotion Files*, NRS 8052 [10/13714] Bankstown Soldier Settlement, 2 February 1920, re Bell.

³⁶ NAA: B2455, *op. cit.*, SERN DEPOT 812 22010 BELL, George. Bell served initially with the 18th Battalion and re-enlisted after being discharged. After being wounded at Gallipoli, part of his right thumb was amputated, his left arm had impaired functioning and he was deaf in one ear.

³⁷ *ibid.*

³⁸ NAA : B2455, *op. cit.*, SERN A3337 filed with WWII service file NX57239 EVANS, Cecil John. Cecil's father, John David Evans was killed in action in March 1917. Cecil enlisted in November 1916 aged sixteen. He requested a discharge for family reasons after his father's death, admitting he was still underage; SRNSW: NRS 8058, *op. cit.*, [12/7253] Loan File 7561 EVANS, Cecil.

³⁹ SRNSW: NRS 8052 [10/13714], *op. cit.*

⁴⁰ NAA: B2455, *op. cit.*, SERN 52 WEAIRE, William. Weaire had served six years previously in the army.

Weaire still required hospital treatment for these injuries, finally admitting he could not continue on his poultry farm because of his health.⁴¹ Francis Rivers similarly was unsuccessful, staying only eighteen months after Weaire forfeited.⁴² Wounded at the Somme, this severe injury resulted in Rivers having only partial use of his left hand.⁴³ His soldier settlement application notes his injuries included poisoned hands, a condition associated with gassing.⁴⁴ Rivers married five months before coming to Bankstown Settlement, and hoped the small poultry block would provide his family with a secure future in spite of his physical disabilities. Francis Rivers' disabilities increased with time, seriously affecting his earning capacity and his quality of life, forcing him to forfeit his soldier settlement block.⁴⁵ Leslie Scott, who took over from Rivers, failed in spite of assistance from other family members resident on the settlement.⁴⁶ Suffering the after-effects of a gunshot wound to his foot, concussion and gassing, Scott's post-war health and ability to work were seriously affected by his war experiences.⁴⁷ Scott lived at Bankstown Soldier Settlement for two years until he abandoned his holding, finding only casual labouring work with long periods of

⁴¹ SRNSW: NRS 8052 [10/13714], *op. cit.*, monthly report 4 November 1917 by the Manager states Weaire had spent most of October in hospital; SRNSW: NRS 8058, *op. cit.*, [12/7376] Loan File 9408 SCOTT, Leslie Ormond.

⁴² SRNSW: NRS 8052, *op. cit.*, [10/13713] Bankstown Soldier Settlement.

⁴³ NAA: B2455, *op. cit.*, SERN 2667 RIVERS, Francis Edward.

⁴⁴ SRNSW: NRS 8052 [10/13713], *op. cit.*

⁴⁵ NAA : C138, *op. cit.*, R/M 28815 RIVERS, Francis Edward. In November 1920 Repatriation files contain a medical report noting there was little possibility of improvement in the mobility and use of his hand. By 1930 Rivers estimated he had lost at least two years employment because of his war-related disabilities and was seeking an increase in his pension.

⁴⁶ SRNSW: NRS 8052 [10/13713], [10/13714] *op. cit.*, Leslie Scott took over Block 117 in August 1921. His brother, William, lived a short distance away on Block 120 and had been on the settlement since its establishment.

⁴⁷ NAA: B2455, *op. cit.*, SERN 6834 SCOTT, Leslie Ormond. In April 1918 in Abbeville in France, serving with a tunnelling company, Scott was shot in his left foot. There is no other record of injuries in this file; NAA: C138, *op. cit.*, R/M/C 24485, SCOTT, Leslie Ormond. In 1936 evidence was provided to the Repatriation Commission showing Scott had been concussed by an explosion. A fellow soldier from the same platoon in the 20th Battalion swore Scott was gassed in March 1918 at Le Touquet in Belgium. At the time the whole area was under heavy bombardment and Scott could have been buried by shell explosives and suffered concussion. A 1925 medical report made no mention of gassing, but noted Scott had a strong presence of alcohol at the time of the examination.

unemployment after he left.⁴⁸ Scott had believed a soldier settlement farm close to other family members and ex-servicemen would provide him with a livelihood, and would be work he could manage in spite of his disabilities. Like so many other men identified in this study, soldier settlement was often the only stable full-time employment former soldier settlers, like Leslie Scott, had after returning from the war.

The men on market garden blocks at Bankstown similarly had medical problems that severely impacted on their success. Frank Carrett, a soldier settler whose story was outlined in Chapter Five, never had his medical conditions recognised as war-related, and stayed only eighteen months before admitting defeat and giving up.⁴⁹ By October 1922, only three of the seven market garden blocks at Bankstown were occupied.⁵⁰ Lasting only a year, Arthur Roland Hutton had hoped farm life and fresh air would help him recover from his injuries after being shot in the head.⁵¹ Hutton too admitted defeat and forfeited, falling ill with pneumonia after his block flooded and he had tried to rescue his stock.⁵² This thesis has already outlined that many blocks on these soldier settlements had poor soils or were subject to flooding. Men like Arthur Hutton who were trying to re-build a life after the war and coping with disabilities caused by war service, suffered more frustrations and emotional distress when faced with events beyond their control. It is little wonder they broke.

⁴⁸ *ibid.*, Scott told medical officers he sometimes sold flowers in the mid-1930s in an effort to make a little money.

⁴⁹ NAA : C138, *op. cit.*, R49843. After leaving Bankstown, Carrett only had casual work for more than a year.

⁵⁰ SRNSW: NRS 8052, *op. cit.*, [10/13715] Bankstown Soldier Settlement. Inspector Makin did not expect two of the three men, Settlers Rupert Dillow and Michael Whalan, would be successful.

⁵¹ NAA: B2455, *op. cit.*, SERN 3089 HUTTON, Arthur Roland. Hutton was shot at Ypres in Belgium in September 1917. The medical report in his service file states that a 'missile went through his steel helmet and made a furrowed wound transversely across both parietal bones, causing [a] compound compressed fracture'. He was still suffering frequent headaches and vertigo when he was discharged.

⁵² SRNSW: NRS 8052 [10/13713], *op. cit.*

Claude Usher, on vegetable Block 262 fared no better than Carrett and Hutton. Claude was wounded at Menin Road at Ypres in Belgium, when a piece of shell penetrated his steel helmet, leaving him with severe headaches.⁵³ Usher was ‘a trier’, living on the settlement for two years until forced to realise his war injuries affected his health so greatly he was unable to work his block.⁵⁴ Nearly two years after forfeiting, Usher wrote,

Sir,

With reference to your letters asking me to make some payment to reduce debt incurred by me whilst at Milperra. I respectfully wish to point out that it is at present absolutely impossible. I could not undertake to pay a shilling a week with any confidence of being able to pay it. It was partly be [sic] reason of physical disability (head wound) that I left the settlement and it takes me all I know to scratch a bare living. Since leaving I have been more than half my time out of work – one period was for eleven months.

Besides I am owing [sic] other amounts for doctors fees and badly require more money for the same purpose for my wife.

Am willing to do what I can, when I have an opportunity of doing so.⁵⁵

John Park was celebrated in war, but in civilian life suffered and struggled to make a living. Highly decorated, John Alexander Park was a brave and courageous career soldier. Wounded while serving at Gallipoli, Park was officially recognised for his bravery in rescuing fellow soldiers.⁵⁶ Park later also received a Military Medal as well as being Mentioned in Despatches.⁵⁷ John Park was a courageous man under fire. His

⁵³ NAA: C138, *op. cit.*, H16939 USHER, Claude. Usher was wounded in the forehead by shrapnel. Two years later a medical report stated he was fit enough to take up land, but noted he still suffered headaches as a result of his injury.

⁵⁴ SRNSW: NRS 8052 [10/13715], *op. cit.*

⁵⁵ *ibid.*, letter to Department of Lands, attention Mr Fleming, 4 November 1923.

⁵⁶ NAA: B2455, *op. cit.*, SERN 4137 PARK, John Alexander; Australian War Memorial Medals and Honors, PARK, J.A., DCM. The citation states Park was commended for his courage and coolness in rescuing men disabled by gas fumes from an ammonal explosion at Gallipoli. He was badly gassed during his first descent into a fifteen foot deep shaft but returned several times to the mine to rescue his comrades. Whether this incident affected his health long-term is unknown.

⁵⁷ *ibid.*, During his service in France, Park was wounded in the thigh and left arm by gunshot and also suffered from trench fever. In recognition of his actions at the battle at Mouquet Farm on the night of 1 September 1916, John Park received a Military Medal. The citation states that after all the other engineers had become casualties, Park continued with his work under heavy shell fire close to the front lines. Park was also Mentioned in Despatches on another occasion.

civilian life was not so charmed. His pension claim was rejected, although he was too sick to work after being discharged.⁵⁸ Unable to settle, Park only stayed a few days at Hawkesbury Agricultural College where he had enrolled in a poultry course.⁵⁹ John Park was discharged fit by medical officers, but had not been able to find any employment because of his health, and lived with his brother and ‘trust[ed] to his generosity’ for nearly a year.⁶⁰ Walter Park, whose story began this thesis in Chapter One, had like his brother John, returned unfit from the war, suffering the after-effects of gas poisoning in addition to partial paralysis of the right side of his body.⁶¹ Walter Park probably was diagnosed with tuberculosis soon after arriving at Chipping Norton, as he requested assistance to build a verandah onto his house saying doctors had ordered him to sleep outside ‘on account of lung trouble caused by gas at the front’.⁶²

By early 1920, John Park realised few vocations were open to him and decided to apply to become a soldier settler like his brother Walter. Although John had finally been granted a pension, it appeared this would not be permanent and was not enough to support him.⁶³ Even though both Walter and John suffered physical disabilities from the war, they thought they might succeed, supporting each other and working together. It was not to be. With poor general health, a result of gassing, and a withered

⁵⁸ NAA: C138, *op. cit.*, R52965 PARK, J.A. Appeal 10 August 1919. Park said he had been an outpatient at Randwick Hospital since his discharge and was unable to work because of the effects of gas poisoning, and cramping associated with trench fever. Listing his medical history, Park said he had been wounded three times, gassed twice and been ill with trench fever and suffered from malaria which he contracted in Rabaul, New Guinea. His record says he had trench fever in June 1916, subsequently showing signs of shell shock suffering with tremors, and was gassed on the Western Front in July 1917.

⁵⁹ University of Western Sydney Archives *As-410 Student card system* [Hawkesbury Agricultural College; Hawkesbury Agricultural College of Advanced Education] 16/03/1891-31/12/1972. Park’s card notes he was twice under the influence of alcohol during the short time he was in residence.

⁶⁰ NAA: C138 R52965, *op. cit.*, statement 29 January 1920.

⁶¹ SRNSW: NRS 8058, *op. cit.* [12/7368] Loan File 3958; UWS Archives, *op. cit.*

⁶² *ibid.*, SRNSW: NRS 8058, letter from Walter Park to the RSSB, 2 September 1920.

⁶³ NAA: C138 R52965, *op. cit.*, Park was granted a half pension for six months.

arm, John Park's health deteriorated within a short time of becoming a settler at Chipping Norton Soldier Settlement.⁶⁴ Walter's health also quickly deteriorated, forcing him to surrender his block in October 1923.⁶⁵

Having been advised to 'get light work in the open' after the war, by 1924 John Park found that he could not even do that.⁶⁶ Like his brother two years earlier, he finally abandoned his block in March 1926, with only a debt of more than £1,000 to show for his six years at Chipping Norton.⁶⁷ John Park's disabilities increased.⁶⁸ Like many other returned men in this study, John Park had little permanent employment after leaving his soldier settlement farm.⁶⁹ The lack of employment possibilities due to impaired health for returned men has been a continuing theme throughout this thesis, highlighting that a significant portion of men on these settlements decided they had no alternative after the war than to become soldier settlers, and after failing, seldom had permanent employment again.

Some soldier settlers, like Charles Coles, never received pension benefits nor had their disabilities recognised as war-related. Returning to Australia with his British war bride, Charles brought his wife and son to Hillview Soldier Settlement in May 1920.⁷⁰

⁶⁴ *ibid.*, Park was hospitalised in May 1923 after being ill several times the previous year with back pains. This was diagnosed as neurasthenia, with a subsequent diagnosis of lumbago and debility due to war service. John Park was hospitalised again a year later.

⁶⁵ SRNSW: NRS 8058 [12/7368], *op. cit.*, In February 1925, Walter Park was in Randwick Hospital, with advanced tuberculosis.

⁶⁶ NAA: C138 R52965, *op. cit.*, PARK, J.A. letter from Royal Prince Alfred Hospital 15 April 1924.

⁶⁷ SRNSW: NRS 8058, *op. cit.*, [12/6971] Loan File 3919 PARK, J.A. Park's debt was £1,013/0/10. In 1927 Park was working as a cleaner with the Post Master General's Department.

⁶⁸ NAA: C138 R52965, *op. cit.* Park had many admissions to hospital and appeals for a pension increase over the next twenty years.

⁶⁹ *ibid.*

⁷⁰ NAA: B2455, *op. cit.*, SERN 662 COLE, Charles Thomas. Enlisting in October 1914, Cole was hospitalised in June 1915 with gastro-enteritis and a year later with bronchitis and lumbago. He married Evelyn Mercer, a member of the Queen Mary's Army Auxiliary Corps in Boulogne shortly after the Armistice, returning with her to Australia in July 1919; *Imperial War Museum, Information Sheet No.*

Charles died eighteen months later from acute gastritis, a duodenal ulcer, exhaustion and heart failure. His widow Evelyn applied for a war pension claiming her husband frequently had gastric problems while serving in France, and his poor health had continued after returning to Australia, but the claim was rejected.⁷¹ Evelyn had no relatives in Australia, no resources or pension, and chose to stay on the farm with her two-year old son, before remarrying in 1923 and leaving Hillview two years later.⁷²

The previous chapter discussed Thomas Buckley's initial hopes of becoming a successful poultry farmer. Unable to return to his trade as a saddler owing to war injuries sustained on the Dardanelles, Buckley believed the small poultry farm at Bankstown would provide him and his family with a secure living.⁷³ In spite of working hard, Buckley's war disabilities and the poor position of his farm which was affected by flooding, made poultry farming very difficult. Thomas was forty when he came to Bankstown Soldier Settlement and although conditions were always hard, he slowly repaid his soldier settlement debt, even during the Depression years.⁷⁴ When repayments fell into arrears Mrs Buckley tried to explain their circumstances, hoping to receive some consideration from the authorities. Her letter reveals the frustration and desperation the BUCKLEYS felt at the prospect of being forced to leave their home and their livelihood.

39. Evelyn, along with 9,000 other women, served during the war in France; SRNSW: NRS 8058, *op. cit.*, [12/7052] Loan File 4943.

⁷¹ NAA: C138: *op. cit.*, R59823 COLE, Charles Thomas. His widow argued Charles had to find employment quickly following his discharge because of her poor health, and had not found the opportunity to apply for a pension for himself.

⁷² SRNSW: NRS 8058 [12/7052], *op. cit.*, www.bdm.nsw.gov.au, accessed 26 July 2010.

⁷³ NAA: B2455, *op. cit.*, SERN 484 BUCKLEY, T. Buckley had served in the forces for twelve years prior to enlisting in the AIF in August 1914. He received a compound fracture to his leg, the result of a gunshot wound, 15 May 1915.

⁷⁴ SRNSW: NRS 8058, *op. cit.*, [12/7352] Loan File 9090. RSSB memo 4 September 1934. Until mid-1933 Thomas regularly repaid £1 a week, but was unable to continue regular payments thereafter.

... Your letter Gentlemen is very gratifying after our ten years effect [sic] on this farm. The work, time & money we have spent on this property of yours keeping it in repair for you. Apparently it will never be our[s] no matter how hard we try, & I defy any one to say we have not done our best ...

You know things have been very much harder this last twelve months for everyone, but either you can't realize the position or you won't try. People as a rule don't default nearly [sic] for the fun of it. We would be only too pleased to pay up if we had it, but the trouble is gentlemen we haven't got it.

I trust I have made myself understood hoping [sic] to have a more reasonable reply in the future.⁷⁵

Two years later, the Buckleys vacated, advising they could no longer continue because of Thomas' poor health.⁷⁶ The Buckleys had lived on Bankstown Soldier Settlement for nearly thirteen years, and because of the physical disabilities Thomas had suffered in the war, he had always needed to have extra labour to work his poultry farm, significantly reducing any profits he made.⁷⁷ Thomas Buckley was fifty-six when he left Bankstown, and it appears he was never employed again.⁷⁸ Many other men at the group settlements in this study were similarly forced to admit that their farms would never return them a living wage, and their struggles further impaired their health.

Victor Dewhurst realised soon after taking up his block at Campbelltown Soldier Settlement that becoming a farmer would not help him recover his health. As well as suffering severe injuries to his face and leg at the battle at Pozieres in July 1916, Dewhurst was diagnosed with tuberculosis in mid-1923, probably from being exposed to gas in the same campaign.⁷⁹ Unable to work his farm, he finally decided to forfeit

⁷⁵ *ibid.*, letter from Mrs T. Buckley to Department of Lands, 10 February 1933.

⁷⁶ *ibid.*, notification intention to vacate 12 April 1935. A RSSB Report 19 March 1936 said Buckley was believed to be dying. His debt was £584/2/7 and his only income was his pension of £3/6/- a fortnight. The report noted that 'it cannot be said that he was an entirely unsatisfactory settler as he tried to keep the improvements on the holding in good condition'.

⁷⁷ *ibid.*

⁷⁸ *ibid.*

⁷⁹ SRNSW: NRS 8058, *op. cit.*, [12/7310] Loan File 8506 DEWHURST, Victor. After several admissions to Randwick Hospital, in April 1923 doctors recommended 'a country change' for several months in efforts to improve his health. The following month he was diagnosed with pulmonary

because of his health stating that ‘my war disabilities compel me to seek a less strenuous, and to be hoped, more profitable occupation than poultry farming’.⁸⁰ Like so many other soldier settlers whose stories have been brought to light in this thesis, Victor struggled to make a living and to repay his debts after forfeiting his block, dying six years after leaving Campbelltown.⁸¹

Another returned man who thought soldier settlement would not only provide him with a secure future but that life in the open air would be beneficial to his health which had been severely impaired by his war experiences, was William Quelch. Discharged in March 1920, Quelch’s physical condition soon deteriorated.⁸² Like John Park, Quelch had also had a long and decorated military service, but his civilian life post-war contained no rewards. Quelch and his young family came to Bankstown Soldier Settlement in late 1922. He died less than a year later.⁸³ William wanted a home and work he could manage so he could support his wife and two baby sons, and said in his application for soldier settlement he had been discharged with ‘chest

tuberculosis requiring admission to hospital; NAA: B2455, *op. cit.*, SERN 3035 DEWHURST, Victor. Victor had been receiving treatment for injuries received at Pozieres in July 1916, gunshot wounds to his face, left wrist, left leg and lower jaw. Dewhurst’s injuries did not heal well, with a medical report in February 1917, seven months after being injured, reporting that his wound had broken down; C.E.W. Bean, *Anzac to Amiens. A Shorter History of the Australian Fighting Services in the First World War*, Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 1983, pp. 240-241, p. 249, notes bombardments of phosgene and tear gas were constant during the Pozieres campaign, and that on withdrawal many Australian troops looked ‘like men who had been in Hell’.

⁸⁰ SRNSW: NRS 8058 [12/7310], *op. cit.*, letter 24 January 1928. Dewhurst employed a pensioner for some time to look after his stock, in the hopes he would recover enough to take over the work himself.

⁸¹ *ibid.*, Dewhurst died in 1934. Dewhurst had only temporary clerical employment after forfeiting his soldier settlement block, and was repaying £2 monthly to a Campbelltown storekeeper. He had also borrowed £120 from the German Verge New South Wales Returned Soldiers Repatriation Trust Scheme; *SMH*, 30 October 1928, p. 12 reported that since beginning operations in February 1925, the German Verge had received nearly 20,000 applications for assistance; NAA: B2455, SERN 3035, *op. cit.*

⁸² NAA: B2455, *op. cit.*, SERN 349 QUELCH, William Horace. William served from August 1914, seeing action at Gallipoli and the Western Front. He received a Belgian award for bravery, the Croix de Guerre. As a result of his military service he suffered from chronic nephritis, bronchitis, asthma and emphysema.

⁸³ SRNSW: NRS 8058, *op. cit.*, [12/7186] Loan File 4277, GARLICK, Richard John. William Quelch died 10 April 1923.

trouble'.⁸⁴ The fifth returned man to try and work Block 125 in just five years, like all his predecessors, William Quelch did not succeed either. Quelch was aware several previous residents on Block 125 had been forced to leave because of poor health, but had hoped his story might be different.⁸⁵ Soldier settlement was a last desperate move for Quelch to regain his health, but like so many other men in this study, it failed. After his death William's widow Annie abandoned the farm, returning to England with her children.⁸⁶

As already discussed in Chapter Five, Cyril Rae and his father John both took up blocks at Chipping Norton Soldier Settlement. It seemed a good idea for both men to have farms on the same soldier settlement so they could share the work. Cyril was just twenty-one when he returned from service in Egypt in 1919 and was discharged without any injuries, looking forward to a good life as a soldier settler.⁸⁷ For both Cyril and John their early hopes of becoming independent land owners working together at Chipping Norton Soldier Settlement faded as their health deteriorated. On Cyril's viticulture block of over thirteen acres, crop yields were often poor, blamed on a combination of bad weather and disease.⁸⁸ Diversifying into other crops to gain more income also proved unsuccessful.⁸⁹ By the late 1920s poor market prices and crop failures dogged the men who ten years earlier had believed their futures were

⁸⁴ SRNSW: NRS 8052 [10/13714], *op. cit.* Quelch applied in April 1922. His sons were then aged two months and one year.

⁸⁵ SRNSW: NRS 8058 [12/7186], *op. cit.*; SRNSW: NRS 8052 [10/13713] [10/13714], *op. cit.*, Thomas Harris vacated December 1917 – unfit for work; Oscar Mockler advised he could not carry on without employing labour - December 1919; Richard Garlick requested a transfer because of his health.

⁸⁶ *ibid.*, The farm was abandoned a month after Quelch's death; NAA: Deputy Commissioner for Repatriation, New South Wales; C137, *Personal case file, single number series with 'R' prefix (Australian, 1914-1918 War)*, R89696 QUELCH, W.H.

⁸⁷ NAA: B2455, *op. cit.*, SERN 18590 RAE, Cyril Joseph.

⁸⁸ SRNSW: NRS 8058, *op. cit.*, [12/6979] Loan File 4033 RAE, C.J., report from Inspector Moore, 24 January 1928.

⁸⁹ *ibid.*, Moore notes Rae had a good crop of peaches, but market prices were poor.

assured.⁹⁰ John was nearing sixty and in declining health, frustrated by his farming efforts that produced little or no income, and he had no pension to rely on for a little money. To add to his worries, Cyril became ill. In August 1926 Cyril had an epileptic fit which left him with impaired memory and barely able to work his land.⁹¹ In poor health, having earned less than £3 a week over the past year and owing money to the doctor and the local council for rates, Cyril's position as a soldier settler was unsustainable.⁹² Cyril was diagnosed with cerebral syphilis and by mid-1929 his prognosis was bad. His appeal that his condition be recognised as attributable to war service was rejected.⁹³ Cyril died in August 1929, aged less than thirty.⁹⁴ Born in a small rural town 200 miles from Sydney, Cyril was just eighteen when he enlisted, expecting an adventure that would be his chance to see the world.⁹⁵ One of Australia's tourists in Egypt, Cyril became a tragic statistic of what Richard White has described as 'sun, sand and syphilis'.⁹⁶ For Cyril's father, John, life on his soldier settlement farm did not improve, as he also had to contend with poor crops and little income.⁹⁷ A younger son Harold helped work the property in the mid-1920s, but it appears that by the 1930s John was working the property alone.⁹⁸ For ten years from the mid-1930s

⁹⁰ *ibid.*, in July 1928, a report on Cyril Rae's property said five acres of vines had to be pulled out and replaced; [12/6980] Loan File 4034 RAE, John Michael, An inspector noted that a large part of the problem with low yields at Chipping Norton Soldier Settlement was that unsuitable American stock was originally provided, stock that 'will not produce table grapes of quality suitable for market', and other grafted stock failed. Vines had been planted on sandy areas, exposing roots and had also failed to thrive. In 1932, Rae's peach crop was ruined by thrip, and he only marketed forty cases, his grape crop realising just £30 at market.

⁹¹ NAA: C138, *op. cit.*, R93835 RAE, Cyril Joseph.

⁹² *ibid.*, Cyril's debt was £2,115/5/5. His earnings from the sale of fruit and vegetables had been £132 for the previous year.

⁹³ NAA: C138 R93835, *op. cit.*

⁹⁴ SRNSW: NRS 8058 [12/6879], *op. cit.*

⁹⁵ NAA: B2455, *op. cit.*, SERN 18590 RAE, Cyril.

⁹⁶ R. White, 'Sun, Sand and Syphilis: Australian Soldiers and the Orient Egypt 1914', *Australian Cultural History*, Vol. 9, 1990, pp. 49-64.

⁹⁷ SRNSW: NRS 8058, *op. cit.*, [12/6980] Loan File 4034 RAE, John Michael. Rae could not make a repayment of £100 due March 1932, stating poor quality vines had been uprooted, but replacement stock were not yet productive.

⁹⁸ *ibid.*, a report on John Rae's property in December 1926 noted a son, H.F. Rae was working the orchard.

John Rae lived at Chipping Norton Soldier Settlement only on sufferance, by his own admission making little money.⁹⁹

Returned men with a range of physical injuries came to the group soldier settlements in the County of Cumberland hoping they could succeed on a small farm close to medical attention, and supported by fellow ex-servicemen. As the examples above have shown, they were unsuccessful. Most importantly, these are not isolated stories of men whose physical health was the over-riding reason why they forfeited their farms. Similarly, men who had lost a limb during their war service struggled to work these properties. For the limbless, the long hours of physical labour in an attempt to make a bare living rarely resulted in success. Reliant on their wives and children to help with all sorts of farm chores, as revealed by the work Maud Beckett did with husband Leonard as discussed in Chapter Five, farming just five acres of land became a challenge that often proved too difficult and could not be sustained.

Arthur Ross' plans for a good life as a soldier settler were also addressed in the previous chapter. Arthur's mental state improved during training at Hawkesbury Agricultural College and by 1921 he had a poultry block at Campbelltown Soldier Settlement and had married. However, Ross continued to have physical problems, with permanent damage to his right wrist that still had not healed after several years, as well as trying to compensate for the loss of his left arm.¹⁰⁰ These severe war-related injuries to both arms would not only have made any sort of work difficult, if not

⁹⁹ *ibid.*, the loan file contains no further information after March 1932; NAA: C138, *op. cit.*, C50077 RAE, John Michael. Statement 26 February 1936. Rae claimed he earned £35 gross in 1935, and still had outstanding debts. Additionally, he had to pay for help for his invalid wife. John Rae left Chipping Norton in 1945 after his wife died, living with his son until he could no longer support him.

¹⁰⁰ NAA: C138, *op. cit.*, C24045 ROSS, Arthur. Doctor's report 22 January 1920. Dr Mawson assessed Ross' loss of potential earning power at ninety per cent. The report notes the wound to Ross' wrist had still not healed three years after the injury.

impossible for Arthur Ross, he also had to deal with the pain and worry of wounds that did not heal.

Beatrice and Arthur Ross had four children in the next five years but sadly, their eldest son, Alan Ernest Ross died aged ten on 25 July 1932.¹⁰¹ The *Campbelltown News* reported ‘young Alan was a bright and happy boy that everyone loved, and although his death was expected, the fact that he has now passed to the great beyond has filled the hearts of very many boys and girls with sad and bitter tears’.¹⁰²

Although the soldier settlement and the wider community showed their support, the death of their son was another heavy burden for Beatrice and Arthur. Ten years after Alan’s death, Beatrice died. In 1952, Arthur Ross was fifty-seven and had suffered poor health for several years. His local doctor told him his heart needed more rest, but that he believed heart failure was not imminent. Depressed by his worsening health, Arthur Ross took his own life on 25 July 1952, exactly twenty years after the death of his son. He left a note explaining his actions, saying in part,

I certainly had enough to put up with before knowing that the mainspring has broken down. That means that I will be a burden on someone.
I could not manage that ... I can’t endure any more misery (What have I to live for?)¹⁰³

Arthur Ross lived on his soldier settlement block for more than thirty years, and in spite of his disabilities, had managed to make a living for his family. Losing his son and then his wife weighed heavily on his emotions. Believing his heart problems

¹⁰¹ *ibid.*

¹⁰² L. Vincent, *Tales of Old Campbelltown*, Self-published, Picton, 1998, pp. 37-38 citing *Campbelltown News* 29 July 1932, no page number.

¹⁰³ NAA: C138 R24045, *op. cit.* Arthur Ross had been hospitalised several times at Concord Repatriation Hospital for a weak heart.

would increase and affect not only his quality of life but make him more dependent on his family drove him to the ultimate despair of suicide.

The Limbless

Arthur Ross' story is of a limbless soldier settler, but is one of a different kind of despair that became too much for him with the highly emotional loss of his wife and a child. Although Arthur could not be counted amongst those who failed at soldier settlement, his war injuries moulded his civilian life, adding to the burdens he later had to endure.

The soldier settlement at Grantham, designated by the government as specifically for men who had had limbs amputated, with just eleven farms obviously did not fully address the needs of all returned men who had lost a limb during service, but still needed to augment their pensions and make a living with dignity. Grantham soldier settlers fared no better than men at the other group settlements. Original settlers on these blocks were limbless men whose disabilities prevented them returning to their largely physical pre-war occupations. It was believed they would receive more physical assistance on their farms from prospective soldier settlers because of their proximity to the Grantham training barracks. For soldier settlers like John Rankin and Edgar Harvey life on the land, even on a five acre block, proved to be too difficult for them to manage given their disabilities.

Born in Toronto in Canada, John Rankin served at Gallipoli and the Western Front before being discharged, severely disabled. Within weeks of landing at Anzac Cove with the 13th Battalion, Rankin was medically evacuated to Malta, seriously ill with

dysentery.¹⁰⁴ Seven months after finally rejoining his battalion in France he suffered severe gunshot wounds to both legs at Fleurs, with his left leg so badly injured it was amputated at the thigh.¹⁰⁵ The same month he was discharged, John Rankin applied for and accepted a poultry block on Grantham Soldier Settlement. A small soldier settlement farm probably represented his best prospects to make a decent living, supplemented by his war pension. With no savings John had to ask to be supplied with a mattress, blankets and cooking utensils for his new property.¹⁰⁶ John married, bringing his bride, Elsie, to Grantham, determined to lead a normal life in spite of his disabilities. John and Elsie worked hard to improve their property and make their home more comfortable. They spent £200 of their savings building extra verandahs and painting the house, as well as building new stock yards to house 650 chickens.¹⁰⁷ John's disabilities made working the farm difficult, and added to this he had long-term problems with his artificial leg. From mid-1921 for at least the next three years, his prosthesis required repairs almost monthly.¹⁰⁸ These repairs would necessitate John being regularly absent from the farm, leaving his wife responsible for all the work in both the home and the yards. It was a tiring drain on his physical health trying to resolve the problems with his prosthesis, and it is likely John had associated problems with his stump that caused more pain.

¹⁰⁴ NAA: B2455, *op. cit.*, SERN 2006 RANKIN, John; C.E.W. Bean, *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918*. Vol. II. 'The Story of Anzac from 4 May 1915 to the evacuation of the Gallipoli Peninsula', Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 11th edition, 1941, p. 373. Bean notes that from June to October 1915 constantly swarming flies caused serious outbreaks of dysentery on the Peninsula, and only about 200 a day of the most seriously affected men could be evacuated for hospital treatment.

¹⁰⁵ NAA: B2455, *op. cit.*, SERN 2006 RANKIN, John. Rankin was thirty when he was discharged in March 1918.

¹⁰⁶ NAA: C138, *op. cit.*, R15121 RANKIN, J. request to State War Council 26 March 1918.

¹⁰⁷ SRNSW: NRS 8058, *op. cit.*, [12/6848] Loan File 1077 RANKIN, J.

¹⁰⁸ NAA: C138 R15121, *op. cit.*

In October 1920, after two and a half years on his block Rankin owed more than £900.¹⁰⁹ This figure had nearly doubled six years later.¹¹⁰ By this date many original Grantham settlers had forfeited, and Rankin knew he could never repay his liabilities and make the poultry farm profitable, so he asked for a revision of his debt explaining that feed had always been expensive and profits meagre. Some debt was written off, but he continued to seek further reductions.¹¹¹ Rankin was advised to attend a meeting of the Soldiers' Settlement Appraisement Board at the offices of the Lands Department in Bridge Street in Sydney to give evidence in support of his request for revaluation.¹¹² This necessitated a one hour train trip and transport both from the settlement to Seven Hills railway station and from the city station to departmental offices. No consideration was given that for Rankin this was a physical impossibility. Unable to attend the meeting because of his disability, it was nevertheless decided to further reduce Rankin's debt.¹¹³ Whether soldier settlers on these group settlements fully understood how their debt was calculated, or even how much they owed is difficult to determine. Few, like John Rankin, made any repayments, and their debt spiralled. From correspondence in John Rankin's loan file, it is obvious he made little money, and what profits there were went into improving the property. By December 1931, in spite of £400 being wiped off his debt, the total amount owing was £1,580.¹¹⁴

John Rankin died in September 1931 of endocarditis and bronco-pneumonia, later deemed attributable to war service. His widow Elsie was left penniless, having to

¹⁰⁹ SRNSW: NRS 8058 [12/6848], *op. cit.* The loan files notes Rankin's debt at 2 October 1920 was £936/9/-.

¹¹⁰ *ibid.*, total indebtedness 1 August 1926 £1,767/3/9.

¹¹¹ *ibid.*, interest on advances was written off in August 1926. This amounted to £232/19/3.

¹¹² *ibid.*, letter from Soldiers Settlement Appraisal Board, 6 October 1927. The Board notified Rankin that it had agreed to write off his marketing debt of £167/3/9.

¹¹³ *ibid.*, Rankin was informed by letter dated 14 November 1927 that £167/3/9 would be wiped off his marketing account.

¹¹⁴ *ibid.*, memo 19 December 1931. Authorities argued that a £2,000 selling price for this property was not considered excessive, although there is no notation of current market prices for similar properties.

apply for a grant to pay for his funeral. Elsie tried to sell the farm, but in spite of it being well-maintained and newly-painted, potential buyers balked at the required repayments. Elsie was desperate to sell so she could meet her husband's debts.¹¹⁵

Taking her grievances to the Minister for Lands, Elsie requested an interview to explain her difficulties.

I am the widow of a limbless soldier and I have had to do more than a woman's fair share during the thirteen years I have been here ... I want to get done with the place and its worries ... my late husband left no ready cash and his pension ceased the day he died.¹¹⁶

Elsie was informed no further reductions or allowances would be made, adding correctly, but callously, that the couple had occupied the farm rent free for eight years. An office addendum to this letter advised staff to 'keep an eye on this case and protect the Department's interests'.¹¹⁷ With no assets other than the farm, Elsie was finally given permission to sell the farm to Alexander Alan Mackenzie, who was not a returned serviceman.¹¹⁸

John Rankin's life was not long. Nor was it comfortable or pain-free after the war. The prosthesis for his amputated leg required constant repairs for many years, likely aggravating his stump, and his general health suffered from the appalling conditions on the battlefields of Gallipoli and France. He remained a soldier settler for thirteen years, in no small part because of his wife's willingness to work hard with him. John Rankin returned from the war too disabled for most jobs. He made a bare living as a

¹¹⁵ *ibid.*, letter 23 October 1931; letter 9 December 1931.

¹¹⁶ *ibid.*, letter to Minister for Lands 15 December 1931.

¹¹⁷ *ibid.*, December 1931.

¹¹⁸ *ibid.*, RSSB memo 19 December 1931. An undated RSSB memo notes Mackenzie was not an ex-serviceman; www.apf.gov.au/library/pubs/online/special_parta.htm, accessed 26 July 2011, notes income support for widows was not introduced until 1942; T.H. Kewley, *Australian Social Security Today. Major developments from 1900 to 1978*, Sydney University Press, Sydney, 1980, p. 9 notes that New South Wales introduced widows' pensions in 1926.

soldier settler, but had few choices to support himself in civilian life as his war pension would not have been enough to live on.¹¹⁹ As argued in Chapter One, group soldier settlement became by default a type of unemployment scheme for many returned men like John Rankin.¹²⁰ The couple had worked hard to make soldier settlement for them as successful as possible, with the home and property well-maintained and any extra monies going into its upkeep and improvements. Although John Rankin made no repayments against his soldier settlement debt, it was fully discharged by his wife after his death.

Two other Grantham soldier settlers, both limbless men, were David Albert Huxley and William Frederick Bury. Of different backgrounds and ages, the only common feature was that both tried and failed on Block 244. David Huxley was wounded at Bullecourt in Belgium, receiving gunshot wounds to his back and legs. His right lower leg was later amputated, and his left leg and ankle remained considerably weakened as a result of these injuries.¹²¹ William Bury had served for more than two years with the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) when only months before the end of the war, his right arm had to be amputated at the shoulder as a result of gunshot wounds. Bury returned to Australia in February 1919, but was not discharged for another fifteen months, indicating he had a long period of on-going medical treatment.¹²² After discharge, neither man was fit enough to return to their former

¹¹⁹ J. Bourke, 'The Battle of the Limbs: Amputation, Artificial Limbs and the Great War in Australia', *Australian Historical Studies*, Vol. 110, 1998, p. 66.

¹²⁰ There was little social reform during the inter-war period, with no unemployment benefits. See, for example, R. Mendelsohn, *The Condition of the People. Social Welfare in Australia 1900-1975*, George Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1979, pp. 22-45; B. Dickey, *No Charity There. A short history of social welfare in Australia*, 2nd Edn, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1987, pp. 112-114; M.A. Jones, *The Australian Welfare State. Origins, Control and Choices*, 3rd Edn, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1990, p. 21.

¹²¹ NAA: B2455, *op. cit.*, SERN 1934 HUXLEY, David Albert. Huxley was wounded in May 1917 by a minenwerfer, a German mortar. Huxley said on enlistment he was forty-one.

¹²² *ibid.*, SERN 6464 BURY William Frederick.

trade, Huxley as a horse trainer and Bury as a moulder, choosing soldier settlement as the only possible way they believed they would earn a living with dignity.¹²³

On discharge, David Huxley was nearly fifty and his prospects for work were limited due to both his physical disabilities and his age.¹²⁴ Whether Huxley ever intended to bring his English war bride, Eleanor Jane, to Australia is doubtful.¹²⁵ Six months after his discharge, Huxley had put his marriage behind him, and taken up one of the blocks for limbless returned men at Grantham. Huxley also needed a home which Grantham group soldier settlement provided for his partner Ann Jane McCready, who was expecting their child.¹²⁶ As a returned serviceman receiving a disability pension, Huxley's ex-nuptial children created administrative difficulties about their right to receive benefits. A further difficulty arose as the children's births were not registered until late 1921. Finally in October 1923, repatriation authorities agreed to treat the children as adopted.¹²⁷ The War Pensions Act schedule gave a maximum pension for the loss of a leg as payable only for six months, after which the rate dropped twenty-five per cent. Accordingly, Huxley's pension of 60/- per fortnight from June 1918 dropped to 45/- in 1919.¹²⁸ It was his only income to support his de facto wife and children until he could make the farm profitable. Soon after settling at Grantham, Huxley said he was having difficulty trying to clear his block. He could not use his artificial limb and the pain from the wounds in his left leg meant he always had to use

¹²³ *ibid.*, SERN 6464, SERN 1934.

¹²⁴ NAA: C138, *op. cit.*, R10691 HUXLEY, David Albert. This file records Huxley's date of birth as 4 May 1872. Huxley had lowered his age to enlist.

¹²⁵ *ibid.*, SERN 1934 HUXLEY. Huxley married Eleanor Jane in Berkshire, England in October 1917 just months before his return to Australia. Early in 1919 she contacted army authorities attempting to locate her husband who had not been in contact with her for nearly a year.

¹²⁶ NAA: C138, *op. cit.*, R10691 HUXLEY, David Albert. Their son, David Albert McCready was born at the soldier settlement 8 February 1919. A second child, May Jane, was also born on the settlement, 22 June 1920.

¹²⁷ *ibid.*

¹²⁸ *ibid.*, Huxley was informed these provisions were made under the 2nd Schedule of the War Pensions Act.

crutches.¹²⁹ Huxley's physical condition did not improve. Two years later soldier settlement memos note he was frequently absent for medical reasons, with the property being worked with a trainee. Reports from Inspector Hadlington and Grantham's manager stated Huxley was the most backward on the settlement and a heavy drinker.¹³⁰ There is no mention in any files related to David Huxley about pain management for his condition. Alcohol was a prop many returned men used to confront their physical and psychological demons in the absence of other medication, as will be discussed later in this chapter. Huxley was obviously not going to succeed as a poultry farmer, and authorities simply wanted to be rid of him, noting

in any case this type of settler is a menace to our securities – a bad example and a constant source of annoyance to his fellow settlers – a discrediting factor to the local reputation of the Settlement and “a thorn in the side” of the management.¹³¹

Huxley voluntarily relinquished his block at Grantham three months later, and was never gainfully employed again.¹³² Whether the pain from injuries to his left leg could be deadened by alcohol or Huxley was a heavy drinker before the war is not known. His war-related injuries in addition to his age left him unfit for most work, and simply to survive became a struggle. David Huxley and his family moved 450 miles north of Sydney to the small town of Walgett, then to the village of Pilliga, fifty miles from Walgett. In June 1922, the family were camping at the river, unable to afford any other accommodation. Five years after being injured in Belgium, Huxley's leg still contained shrapnel that he could feel, and occasionally a piece worked its way out.¹³³ In July 1923 Huxley was trying to find a way to have his artificial leg repaired, and wrote to repatriation authorities telling them he had no resources.

¹²⁹ *ibid.*, declaration 16 January 1919.

¹³⁰ SRNSW: NRS 8058, *op. cit.*, [12/7347] Loan File 1050 HUXLEY, D.A.

¹³¹ *ibid.*, Acting Director RSSB 6 December 1920.

¹³² *ibid.*

¹³³ NAA: C138 R10691, *op. cit.*, letters to Repatriation Commission 9 June 1922, 17 June 1922.

I am one of the limbless men, and it is about three years since I had a leg and the wooden one is broken beyond repairs and I have nothing to walk on ... I cannot come to Sydney as I cannot get my fare.¹³⁴

Living rough in an isolated area in a tent beside the river was not conducive to a happy family life, and in 1925 Ann McCready left Huxley taking two of their children with her. Later that year she applied for assistance under the Child Welfare Act stating she was destitute and unable to maintain the children. The pension they had been receiving as 'adopted children' had been stopped, authorities adamant that they must be in the care and maintenance of their father to receive the benefit.¹³⁵

McCready returned to Huxley. Six years after leaving Grantham, with no permanent home or income, the family was totally reliant on his war pension.

My home for my children is in a tent on the bank of the river. I cannot get a house as the pension would not meet 30/- a week rent and 7d for bread and 1/- a pound of meat ... I have neither food or money for my children.¹³⁶

David Huxley returned to Australia after the war a broken man, broken in body and spirit. His efforts to clear land and build a profitable poultry farm under the soldier settlement scheme failed. Aged over fifty and severely disabled by the loss of a leg during war service, Huxley also had on-going medical problems that required frequent absences from the farm for medical treatment. He would never have been able to afford to pay for another man to help run the farm, making the enterprise uneconomic from the outset. David Huxley never made any repayments on his poultry farm at Grantham which he had hoped would provide him with a home and a reasonable living. Huxley relied on his pension to support himself and his family, and after leaving Grantham, he too never worked again.

¹³⁴ *ibid.*, July 1923.

¹³⁵ *ibid.*, application by Ann Jane McCready, Pitt Street, Redfern, December 1925.

¹³⁶ *ibid.*, letter from Huxley to Repatriation Commission, January 1927.

William Bury, a young man from Cobar, 450 miles west of Sydney, lost his right arm at the shoulder late in the war, changing forever his plans for civilian life.¹³⁷ More than two years after being discharged, William Bury took over Huxley's block and his debt of nearly £1,000, but made little progress with one report noting he 'appears to be handicapped by [the] loss of [an] arm'.¹³⁸ It is an indication of the desperate position severely physically disabled men found themselves in post-war, often unable to earn their living by any other means that William Bury for example, would agree to take over such a large debt, knowing the previous man, similarly disabled had failed.

Bury stayed at Grantham for seven years, managing to scrape a living but finally had to admit defeat and forfeit his block. Like so many other soldier settlers in this study, after forfeiting Bury mostly only found temporary employment.¹³⁹ The next six years of William Bury's life are blank, but by September 1935 he was an inmate of Callan Park Hospital, a mental institution in Sydney.¹⁴⁰ It is not known how long Bury was treated, or the nature of his psychological condition. If Bury's mental state was a result of his war experiences, no mention is contained in official files of war neuroses or psychological problems before this date, fifteen years after discharge. Kate Blackmore, in her revealing study of war and medicine, provides examples of returned men who suffered physical disabilities during the war, and developed psychological neuroses many years later. Her research shows authorities refused to

¹³⁷ NAA: B2455, *op. cit.*, SERN 6464 BURY, William Frederick. Bury, aged twenty one, enlisted in May 1916 and was wounded in action in August 1918.

¹³⁸ SRNSW: NRS 8058, *op. cit.*, [12/7347] Loan File 9004 BURY, W.F. Bury took over the block soon after Huxley forfeited, leaving a debt of £958/3/1.

¹³⁹ *ibid.*, Bury's debt in March 1929 was £1,115/2/3 even though he had been making regular repayments. He had some employment as a car attendant in the city, but his only regular income was his pension of £4 a fortnight.

¹⁴⁰ NAA: C138, *op. cit.*, R42111 BURY, William Frederick. The application that his mental condition be recognised as war-related was rejected.

recognise these psychological conditions as being war-related.¹⁴¹ It is probable William Bury's case is another example of the Repatriation Commission's refusal to accept war-related conditions that developed post-war, severely impacting on the ex-servicemen's civilian life.

Impaired Health due to Gassing

Another major health issue to affect a number of soldier settlers on group settlements in the County of Cumberland was the after-effects of having been gassed. Several soldier settlers whose stories were told earlier in this chapter suffered physically and mentally from being gassed in addition to their other injuries, including Francis Rivers, Leslie Scott and John Park.

Soldiers during World War I were frequently exposed to gas attacks, used on the Western Front from April 1915.¹⁴² Poison gases used in World War I were of four different types: eye irritants and tear gases, nasal irritants and vomiting gases, lung irritants and skin irritants, and therefore presented a large range of symptoms and severity for soldiers exposed to one or more of these different poisons.¹⁴³ Even nearly a hundred years after World War I, the long-term effects of gases used by combatants is still not fully understood. In the case of phosgene gas, a colourless and almost odourless poison used by the Germans from December 1915, after-effects included brain damage from oxygen deprivation to the brain that could cause a range of

¹⁴¹ K. Blackmore, *The Dark Pocket of Time. War, Medicine and the Australian State, 1914-1935*, Lythrum Press, Adelaide, 2008, pp. 173-188.

¹⁴² A.G. Butler, *Official History of the Australian Army Medical Services, 1914-1918. Vol. 3. Special Problems and Services*, 1st Edn, Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 1943, pp. 5-16, pp. 45-46 notes 'during 1918 "gas" became a dominant feature of the environment of the front lines and traces of yperite a frequent constituent of the atmosphere', p. 47 comments the Turks only used tear gas at Gallipoli.

¹⁴³ The Great War primary documents archives, www.gwpda.org, accessed 26 July 2011.

psychological problems as well as physical injuries.¹⁴⁴ Often misdiagnosed or not recorded in service files, gassing had long-term effects on the health of large numbers of returned men. It is probable many of the soldier settlers in this study suffered from the after-effects of a whiff of gas, which was not pensionable as it was never recorded in their service files. An interesting example of this omission is the unsubstantiated claim by descendants of George Steele, manager at Hillview Soldier Settlement and later a soldier settler at Campbelltown, that he suffered from respiratory problems for the rest of his life after eating bully-beef that had been contaminated by gas.¹⁴⁵ A doctor treating Australian returned men affected by gas noted more than a decade after the war that it continued to be a big medical problem, stating

I have been horrified with the enormous number of men I see at the General [Hospital] who have been gassed ...
Decent, typically casual Australians who would rather get on with their job than seem to complain and so they didn't both[er] about the 'touch of gas' – they seem to have poor expansion of the chest and poor breath sounds and low grade bronchitis and no pensions.¹⁴⁶

Walter West's attempts to become a soldier settler, revive his marriage and settle down to a good life on the land were outlined previously in 'Hope'. Wounded in Belgium in September 1917 and severely gassed six months later at Villers-Bretonneux, Walter West's lungs were permanently damaged, leaving him unfit for almost any type of work after returning to Australia and being discharged.¹⁴⁷ Walter believed in spite of these disabilities that working a small poultry farm would help him regain his health. It did not. Walter applied to transfer his holding at Hillview Soldier Settlement to his brother Frederick seven months later, after pleading guilty to

¹⁴⁴ Blackmore, *op. cit.*, pp. 35-39. Blackmore notes that soldiers were more likely to be affected by gases that attacked the respiratory system because of the high incidence in the AIF of both smoking and tuberculosis, p. 37.

¹⁴⁵ Correspondence Tony Steele to Glenys Allison, 15 July 2011, copy in possession of author.

¹⁴⁶ Blackmore, *op. cit.*, pp. 180-181, quoting Dr O.S. Hrischfeld, who was working at Brisbane Hospital in 1932.

¹⁴⁷ NAA: B2455, *op. cit.*, SERN 5471; NAA: C138, *op. cit.*, C44124 WEST, Walter.

criminal charges of attempting to kill his wife.¹⁴⁸ Walter's decision to give up his much-loved farm was made after being advised by his solicitor he could expect a lengthy prison sentence, although a sentence never eventuated.¹⁴⁹ Even though it was later recommended West be offered a poultry block on another settlement, the official response was a death-knell for his hopes. He was informed that due to the large numbers of ex-servicemen seeking land under the soldier settlement scheme, the Department had decided that 'no provision can be made for him for the present'.¹⁵⁰ Walter West's file reveals that among government officials some showed sympathy for returned men, but the final decision was realistic given his prospects of success and the probable financial loss to the state. Walter's hopes for a better life were short-lived, believing he could recover his health after being medically discharged with 'effort syndrome'.¹⁵¹ He thought a life in the country on a small poultry farm would not only help his health but help him rebuild his marriage. Neither plan worked. Walter lived with increasing disabilities caused by the mustard gas for the rest of his life. By 1940 he was blind and suffered from chronic bronchitis.¹⁵² Walter's brother Frederick did not succeed either as a poultry farmer, declared bankrupt eight years

¹⁴⁸ *SMH*, 22 February 1922, p. 8. The report said Jenifer Gladys West was in a serious condition in hospital after being shot by her husband, Walter; SRNSW: NRS 8058, *op. cit.*, [12/7052] Loan File 4943. This file includes copies of newspaper articles about the case from *The Sun* 6 March 1922 and *The Daily Telegraph* 21 June 1922, 'Painful Case. Young Soldier Shoots at Wife'. Walter went to his wife's workplace, the Vernon Shoe Company, Redfern, to convince her to live with him again. The couple had been separated for eight years before re-uniting at Hillview. When Jenifer refused, he shot her several times. He pleaded guilty in the Central Criminal Court to a charge of malicious wounding with intent to do grievous bodily harm. In June 1922 he was sentenced to twelve months imprisonment. Passing sentence, the judge said he would request clemency from the Minister for Justice.

¹⁴⁹ *ibid.*, memo from Boddington, Acting Officer in Charge, Closer Settlement Branch, Department of Lands, 20 October 1922. Four months after the trial, Boddington noted it appeared West's sentence had been remitted. There is no official record of a decision or an appeal about West's sentence. Boddington recommended West be offered a poultry block on another soldier settlement.

¹⁵⁰ *ibid.*

¹⁵¹ NAA: B2455, *op. cit.*, SERN 5471 WEST, Walter Henry.

¹⁵² NAA: C138, *op. cit.*, C44124 WEST, Walter Henry.

later.¹⁵³ Wounded three times and gassed at least once during the war, Frederick was only thirty-five when he forfeited his soldier settlement farm at Hillview.¹⁵⁴ As no information about Frederick's life post-soldier settlement have been discovered, the long-term effects of his war experiences on his health remains unknown.

Another returned man with high hopes of becoming a successful poultry farmer was David Menzies, whose story was also examined in 'Hope'. Aged forty-six when he came to Campbelltown Soldier Settlement, Menzies had believed this life would suit him and his family, after being discharged for debility.¹⁵⁵ There is no record of when, or how badly he was gassed as official medical records in his service file remain silent, although later repatriation files acknowledge his entitlement to war service benefits for this injury.¹⁵⁶ David Menzies was discharged from the Australian forces with impaired health, a result of gassing that affected him for the rest of his life. He followed the doctors' recommendations to seek a life in the fresh air of the country, with the assumption that this would prove restorative. It had seemed the best possible solution to support his family by becoming a soldier settler on a small poultry farm at Campbelltown.¹⁵⁷ For more than ten years he managed, but with the onset of the Depression it became more difficult and then impossible to meet his financial

¹⁵³ SRNSW: NRS 8058, *op. cit.*, [12/7330] Loan File 8763 WEST, Frederick Harold. In August 1930 his block was advertised in *The Sydney Morning Herald* as a mortgagee's sale and was sold to a civilian.

¹⁵⁴ NAA: B2455, *op. cit.*, SERN 3150 WEST, Frederick Harold. West was gassed and wounded in October 1917, the only time his service record shows he was gassed.

¹⁵⁵ NAA: B2455, *op. cit.*, SERN 3524 MENZIES, David Clark. Menzies' attestation files contain no record of injuries sustained during service. He was hospitalised and returned to Australia for discharge for chronic gastritis.

¹⁵⁶ NAA: C138, *op. cit.*, R8766 MENZIES, David Clark.

¹⁵⁷ SRNSW: NRS 8058, *op. cit.*, [12/6865] Loan File 1873. Letter to Sir Bertram Stevens 28 August 1932, from Mary Brown, Menzie's daughter, to her local Member of Parliament. She said 'when my father returned from the war, in very bad health, through being badly gassed, he was ordered by his Doctors a life in the open air, so he took up a poultry farm at Campbelltown, under the Repatriation Scheme'. She stressed if her father was evicted he would be homeless. Mary said she was unable to offer any assistance to her parents as it was a struggle for her to provide enough for her own young family.

commitments. Menzies had worked hard on his farm in spite of impaired health and desperately tried to hold onto his home and his livelihood, knowing there was little other work he could do. He enlisted community support to help his cause, with respected local businessman Robert Sidman writing to authorities,

Mr Menzies is a good citizen, and up to the time of the present financial slump I observed that his holding was one of the best kept and cared for on the Settlement. True it is we all have our faults, but Mr Menzies can be said to be a good true and honest citizen ... Menzies has lost hope temporarily in view of the thoughts of having to leave his holding – penniless. Your immediate inquiry into this case may mean future happiness for one of Campbelltown’s best citizens.¹⁵⁸

All the appeals were in vain with David Menzies forced to walk off his block aged sixty-one, with nothing.¹⁵⁹ He had returned from service in the AIF after being gassed, and his poor health prevented him returning to his former civilian life. For fourteen years the small poultry farm at Campbelltown Soldier Settlement was his life, but because of his war-related injuries he became another statistic of failure.

Menzies’ experiences as a soldier settler were clearly harrowing for himself and his family. The fact that this was not an isolated incident, at least in these group soldier settlements, reflects some of the human tragedy behind the perceived failure of the scheme. All too often loan files on individual soldier settlers contain evidence that after either choosing to leave or being forced to forfeit their farms, these ex-servicemen had nowhere to go and no work to go to. The war had taken a heavy toll on their health, either physical or mental. Their civilian lives were impaired and would never return to what they had known before the war. Within a few short years

¹⁵⁸ *ibid.*, letter 5 September 1932 from Robert Sidman, the owner of the *Campbelltown News*, and an ex-serviceman, to Mark F. Morton, MLA.

¹⁵⁹ *ibid.*, Menzies was only able to find casual work as a painter, his pre-war trade, after leaving Campbelltown Settlement.

their dreams of a secure life on the land, the only work many thought they could do, were shattered.

Like David Menzies, Arthur Burns' doctor recommended he become a soldier settler as a wholesome life in the country air would help him regain his health after being mustard gassed during the war.¹⁶⁰ Returning to Australia with his British war bride, Beatrice, Arthur had hoped they would have a long and happy life together.¹⁶¹ His plans did not eventuate as his war injuries made civilian life difficult. In poor health since his discharge, Burns had constant chest and bronchial problems that affected his quality of life and his earning capacity. The young Burns family expected life at Doonside Soldier Settlement would be regenerative but it soon became a struggle, becoming more desperate as the Depression years hit. Arthur Burns had to try to support his wife and three children without a pension or child endowment.¹⁶² Noting that Burns 'never made much headway', he finally admitted defeat and forfeited his farm after trying to make a living there for nearly ten years.¹⁶³ A year later because of his poor health he had only been well enough to work three weeks in almost six months.¹⁶⁴ Arthur Burns was never in a financial position to repay the balance of his debt. He never received a military pension, although his loan file contains references to him spending considerable periods of time ill in bed. He was less than forty years old when he was forced to leave his poultry farm because he could no longer make repayments.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁰ NAA: B2455, *op. cit.*, SERN 233B BURNS, Arthur. Burns was mustard gassed in March 1918, and evacuated to Middlesex War Hospital in England.

¹⁶¹ *ibid.*, Burns married Beatrice West at Gainsborough in Lincolnshire in April 1918.

¹⁶² SRNSW: NRS 8058, *op. cit.*, [12/7282] Loan File 8023 BAIRD, Robert. Burns owed £1,482/16/- in August 1926 after being on the block three years. Burns made regular repayments for more than seven years until December 1930.

¹⁶³ *ibid.*, [12/7372] Loan File 9340 BURNS, Arthur. Report by Inspector Laycock April 1932.

¹⁶⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁶⁵ *ibid.*, Burns' debt of £352/17/1 was waived in February 1936.

Tuberculosis

In the early twentieth century, one of the most serious conditions associated with both soldiers and civilians was tuberculosis, a highly contagious disease that often proved incurable.¹⁶⁶ Although the disease was widespread both in Australia and Europe at this time, conditions at the front and in military facilities such as hospitals were responsible for its spread amongst troops.¹⁶⁷ A serious public health problem during this period, tuberculosis often remained dormant or was masked by other symptoms that caused misdiagnoses.¹⁶⁸ In the case of Victor Dewhurst, a soldier settler at Campbelltown whose story was also told earlier this chapter, it is likely his tuberculosis was recognised as being war-related as he received treatment for the condition in a military hospital.¹⁶⁹ Dewhurst's example may have been an exception, as historian Marina Larsson has argued the number of organisations across Australia after the Great War representing tubercular ex-servicemen reflected the great need for assistance of soldiers and their families that was never adequately addressed by the Repatriation Department.¹⁷⁰

After being discharged in December 1916, the happy and secure future George Parkin had hoped to build in Australia did not last. Chapter Five outlined George's plans for his future where he intended to marry and farm on a small soldier settlement block. George trained for his new career for six months at Hawkesbury Agricultural College,

¹⁶⁶ M. Larsson, *Shattered Anzacs. Living with the scars of war*, University of New South Wales Press, Sydney, 2009, pp. 178-183. Larsson points out that historians have been slow to recognise tuberculosis as a significant part of war disability, p. 181.

¹⁶⁷ *ibid.*, p. 183.

¹⁶⁸ S. Garton, *The Cost of War. Australians Return*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1996, p. 14.

¹⁶⁹ SRNSW: NRS 8058 [12/7310], *op. cit.*

¹⁷⁰ Larsson, *op. cit.*, p. 197.

determined to become successful at farming.¹⁷¹ Offered a poultry block at Campbelltown Soldier Settlement, George and his bride Henrietta moved there in early September 1920, and maintained their high hopes until George became seriously ill with tuberculosis a year later. His application for a war pension was rejected. As the disease was diagnosed more than four years after discharge, the Repatriation Commission refused to recognise that George's tuberculosis was a war-related disability.¹⁷² He died in June 1923, leaving his widow penniless and unable to work the farm. Letters from the Campbelltown Repatriation Committee, the Waminda Farmers' Association and the TB Sailors' and Soldiers' Association of New South Wales appealing on Henrietta's behalf to recognise George's condition and death as war-related were all rejected.¹⁷³

Henrietta nursed her husband until he died, and in February 1924 was herself diagnosed with tuberculosis. Advised that her only chance of recovery was to move to a drier climate, Henrietta left the state. Further appeals on her behalf by the TB Sailors' and Soldiers' Association in 1930 and 1931 were also rejected.¹⁷⁴ The TB Soldiers' Association actively campaigned for changes to the Repatriation Commission's two year limit for recognising tuberculosis as a result of war service. In an unsuccessful attempt to have the arbitrary limit lifted, they provided evidence of men suffering from the effects of gassing who had taken longer than the statutory two

¹⁷¹ UWS Archives, *op. cit.*, PARKIN, G. 8 March 1920-8 September 1920.

¹⁷² Butler, *op. cit.*, pp. 800-801. A limit of two years following discharge was set in order to recognise tuberculosis as a war-related disability. Butler states that to 1920 1,820 members of the AIF had contracted tuberculosis, many after discharge; NAA: A2487, *op. cit.*, 1921/6772 Deputation to Repatriation Commission from TB Soldiers Association, 15 April 1921.

¹⁷³ NAA: C138, *op. cit.*, R32656 PARKIN, George.

¹⁷⁴ *ibid.*; Larsson, *op. cit.*, pp. 178-196 reveals that the example of Henrietta Parkin contracting tuberculosis from her husband was not an isolated incident.

year limit to develop associated illnesses.¹⁷⁵ In this case, the involvement by the TB Association over more than ten years reveals their belief that George Parkin's disease was contracted during his military service and should have been acknowledged as a war-related disability. Instead of being left with a debt for their soldier settlement farm, George's wife should have received a widow's pension.¹⁷⁶ In July 1935, George Parkin's case was reviewed for the final time. Henrietta was advised the case would be re-opened if she could provide new evidence. She had none, and the claim was again disallowed.¹⁷⁷ Parkin left Australia a fit young man, returning less than a year later physically disabled with arthritis.¹⁷⁸ Medical reports noted his arthritis was war-related although he never claimed a pension for this condition. He was exhibiting symptoms of tuberculosis in 1917 when fellow workers at William Arnott Ltd and friends said he was always coughing and spitting.¹⁷⁹ Unable to prove tuberculosis symptoms within two years of his discharge, it could not be recognised as a war disability.¹⁸⁰ The tragedy is that George Parkin returned to Australia in 1916 and was discharged physically fit, but died seven years later from what many believed was a war-related disease.

Psychological problems and war neuroses

¹⁷⁵ NAA: Repatriation Department; A2487, *Correspondence file annual single number series, 1918-1929*; 1921/6772 Deputation to the Repatriation Commission from TB Soldiers' Association, 15 April 1921.

¹⁷⁶ SRNSW: NRS 8058, *op. cit.*, [12/7288] Loan File 8128 PARKIN, George. In January 1929 it was agreed to write off Parkin's debt of £429/19/10.

¹⁷⁷ NAA: C138 R32656, *op. cit.*

¹⁷⁸ NAA: B2455, *op. cit.*, SERN 5199 PARKIN, George.

¹⁷⁹ NAA: C138 R32656, *op. cit.* Statutory Declarations June 1930 from James McMillan, Richard Ernest Rodwell and A. Campbell.

¹⁸⁰ Commonwealth Parliamentary Papers 1920-21, Vol. IV, 'The Civil Re-establishment of the AIF.' pp. 191-192.

During World War I almost 5,000 men were medically discharged from the AIF because of psychological disorders.¹⁸¹ A one hundred per cent or total incapacity pension was rarely given by Australian authorities to these men. Disability pensions were frequently re-assessed, giving the ex-serviceman a lower benefit, which forced him to try to supplement his pension in order to survive.¹⁸² There is evidence that psychologically-damaged soldier settlers in Victoria had to forfeit their farms after their pensions were reduced, unable to afford to pay other men to help them work the land.¹⁸³ Across Australia many returned men on soldier settlement farms with war neuroses struggled to survive. A significant number of soldier settlers in this study had psychological problems that were war-related, and failed because they could not cope. Ex-servicemen's war traumas and their effect on family members were never publicly discussed post-war, although fellow soldiers could recognise the signs, with a highly decorated doctor who had served in the war acknowledging that

The mental state of any of us who went through those dreadful years is not exactly normal. Whilst I may not observe abnormality in myself, I notice it in others who were at the war; they are not as they were before undergoing their experience.¹⁸⁴

These are just some of the stories of men from the group soldier settlements in the County of Cumberland who suffered from war neuroses that continued to badly affect them in civilian life, all too often resulting in forfeiture and failure.

Three months after George Parkin's death, Alfred Graham took over his block at Campbelltown.¹⁸⁵ When he applied for soldier settlement Graham said he was

¹⁸¹ A.G. Butler, *Official History of the Australian Army Medical Services 1914-1918. Vol. III. Special Problems and Services*, Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 1st edn, 1943, p. 942.

¹⁸² R. Lindstrom, 'The Australian Experience of Psychological Casualties in War 1915- 1939', PhD Thesis, Victoria University of Technology, 1997, p. 237.

¹⁸³ *ibid.*, pp. 231-232, 237-239.

¹⁸⁴ M. Sturrock, 'Gilbert Dyett – Architect of the R.S.L.' M.A. Thesis, Monash University, 1992, p. 158 quoting speech in Federal Parliament by Sir Neville Howse, *Duckboard*, 1 May 1924. Howse was a Victoria Cross recipient and Surgeon-General in the Middle East.

experienced in poultry and pig farming and had substantial capital to invest in his own farm. His prospects appeared good. However, only three months later the doctor said he was suffering severe physical and psychological problems and could not continue.¹⁸⁶ Alfred Graham and his wife lived at Campbelltown Soldier Settlement for less than six months. Should he have been able to become a soldier settler? He appeared to be reasonably qualified, with money, experience, and no indication of physical or psychological problems as a result of war service.¹⁸⁷ In reality he struggled. Graham probably attempted soldier settlement as a last resort, hoping he could regain his psychological well-being, living with and being helped by fellow ex-servicemen who understood his demons. Alfred Graham was unemployed after leaving Campbelltown Soldier Settlement, his only income a combined pension for himself and his wife of about £2 a fortnight that was insufficient to live on, let alone repay outstanding debts.¹⁸⁸

Graham later told Repatriation officers that after he was blown up in June 1918 he had been 'breaking up ever since', and was granted a pension for neurasthenia, rheumatism and defective hearing.¹⁸⁹ Shortly before he died, medical reports noted that his nerves were still bad.¹⁹⁰ Alfred Graham suffered from war-related psychological disabilities for nearly thirty years. The five months he spent at Campbelltown Soldier Settlement may have been the only stable period of

¹⁸⁵ SRNSW: NRS 8058, *op. cit.*, [12/7378] Loan File 9438 GRAHAM, A.

¹⁸⁶ *ibid.*, Graham was diagnosed with acute gastritis and enteritis and suffered a complete nervous breakdown, and forfeited in January 1924.

¹⁸⁷ NAA: B2455, *op. cit.*, SERN 6262 GRAHAM, A.

¹⁸⁸ SRNSW: NRS 8058 [12/7378], *op. cit.*, RSSB Memo 19 August 1925. Graham's debt was written off 18 September 1925 with the recommendation that 'in the circumstances, there is little likelihood of his repaying. In any case, it would appear to be a matter where relief should be afforded in the way of writing off the debt'.

¹⁸⁹ NAA: C138, *op. cit.*, R40481 GRAHAM, Alfred. Graham had been seconded to the Canadian Tunnelling Company in March 1918. He was granted a 100 per cent disability pension in 1934.

¹⁹⁰ *ibid.*, Alfred Graham died May 1947 in Concord Repatriation Hospital.

employment he had after his war service, but it was not enough to sustain him and help him recover his health.

Another settler at Campbelltown Soldier Settlement, David Wallace Montgomerie was discharged from the AIF with neurasthenia. His nervous condition affected him from shortly after embarkation for the rest of his life.¹⁹¹ The six years the Montgomerie family lived at Campbelltown was the only period he had any employment, albeit relying on his family to assist with farm work. Montgomerie said his 'jerky condition' began when he was in camp in England, and required on-going hospital treatment in Australia after he was discharged.¹⁹² There is a blank of several years in Montgomerie's story until the family came to Campbelltown Soldier Settlement in July 1923. It is probable that like so many other men in this study, Montgomerie finally chose soldier settlement as a last resort to try to earn a living and support his wife and family. His wife Ann wrote to the RSSB six months later, explaining the family's dire circumstances.

My husband my son and myself have worked from morning till dark and haven't made a wage for one out of it, also my husband has drawn from me £80 in seven months. I am left now with 30/- will that keep us in food ... through the rest of the months till the flush of the season comes again ... It would be easy enough to get out but my husband would be out of work, we have spent our all on this venture and neither of us are young.¹⁹³

¹⁹¹ NAA: C138, *op. cit.*, R/M10100 MONTGOMERIE, D.W. Medical report on an invalid 12 December 1917. The medical board recorded his disability as neurasthenia, noting they could find no evidence of the symptoms of illness or disease. The examining doctor said Montgomerie was 'evidently nervous and ... will never make a soldier and keeping him on in the service is [a] waste of money as he is useless for military purposes'.

¹⁹² *ibid.*, Montgomerie was at Sutton Veny Camp near Salisbury Plain. In April 1918 he was admitted to Bulli Hospital for treatment, then to Camden Convalescent Home. Medical certificates said Montgomerie was unfit to work until August 1919.

¹⁹³ SRNSW: NRS 8058, *op. cit.*, [12/7373] Loan File 9350 MONTGOMERIE, D. Wallace. Letter from Ann Montgomerie, Waminda via Campbelltown, 21 February 1924.

Montgomerie was hospitalised several times as well as receiving outpatient treatment at The Prince of Wales Hospital at Randwick for his mental condition. By the end of 1928 he had fallen in arrears with repayments.¹⁹⁴ Montgomerie was incensed by threats that he would be forced to leave, writing that

...These farms were for incapacitated soldiers who could not earn a living else where [sic]. So they have to put up with an existence feeding poultry ... you must not forget that we are still paying to stabilise a scheme you started and did not finish.¹⁹⁵

With no response to his letter Montgomerie wrote to the Premier but there was no reply. The letter is worth quoting at length as it contains truths relevant to many soldier settlers in this study.

...We seem to be in the hands of the Philistines of the Lands Dept and I suppose the more they worrie [sic] us the more farms become vacant. They will have settled so many on the land, they have unsettled more at Campbelltown than I can count, two of the farms in my time has [sic] changed hands five times. All the remainder [sic] have also changed hands twice (less nine) and thrice. There is nine originals left out of thirty seven and only two have been able to hang on to their stock... And the soldiers who they were built for, struggling [sic] to produce and still be an asset to his country is asked to beg... Mr Hadlington said there was roughly ten percent of the original settlers left a year ago on all settlements. Its hard to swallow that ninety P.C. [sic] are at fault ... My pension over and above is 4/- 1 ½ per week. I can assure you I do not wipe the bar counter with my sleeves. The only time I am off[f] the farm is while attending Randwick Hospital. And I may say that my wife looks to the farm as well as I do... Trusting dear sir that you'll grant me one more favour. Please do not let this letter be seen in the Department or I am out like an old Irish table.¹⁹⁶

David Montgomerie made some strong points in this letter, questions which remain unanswered to this day. He revealed that at Campbelltown and other poultry settlements, many farms had changed hands several times. Only a little more than ten years after the end of the war, group soldier settlement farms were being let to civilians because ex-servicemen realised they could not work them and meet

¹⁹⁴ *ibid.*, Montgomerie's arrears were £9/10/-, but even for this relatively small amount of money, the Department threatened to take action against him.

¹⁹⁵ *ibid.*, 13 December 1928.

¹⁹⁶ *ibid.*, letter to Mr Bavin, Premier, 5 March 1929.

mortgage repayments. According to Montgomerie, Poultry Expert Hadlington had admitted that ninety per cent of original settlers on group soldier settlements in the County of Cumberland had forfeited, although Hadlington had offered no reasons for this extraordinarily high failure rate. Montgomerie subtly acknowledged some returned men probably had no intention of repaying their debt, treating soldier settlement as their reward for services rendered or sufficient to tide them over until a better option presented. However, these men would only represent a small percentage of the failure figures.

A year after his letter to the Premier, Montgomerie became another statistic as a failed soldier settler.¹⁹⁷ In 1937, Montgomerie stated his nervous condition began on the troopship to England and his poor mental health over the past twenty years was all attributed to his enlistment in the AIF.¹⁹⁸ Montgomerie survived at Campbelltown Soldier Settlement because his wife and son did all the work. A man who suffered bad mental health from the time of his enlistment, he was totally reliant on his family to support him. Montgomerie believed poultry soldier settlements had been created for incapacitated ex-servicemen, and would suit his special needs but he became another of the failures. Like so many other soldier settlers in this study, David Montgomerie's page is blank after leaving the settlement.

Henry Buckpitt's plans for poultry farming and his short-lived venture with the business *Knockemknutz* were also recorded in Chapter Five. His optimism did not last,

¹⁹⁷ *ibid.*, An ejection order for October 1929 was issued against Montgomerie. The property was transferred to James Lee, a returned serviceman, in June 1930.

¹⁹⁸ NAA: C138 R/M10100, *op. cit.*, statement January 1937. Montgomerie's claimed he was sick with influenza and fell down some stairs on the troopship to England, knocking himself unconscious, and waking to find the man beside him dead. This information is not contained in Montgomerie's service file. His medical condition was recognised as being war-related, even though Montgomerie was never in a battle zone.

forced to leave the farm after three years in mid-1923.¹⁹⁹ Pre-war Buckpitt was a journalist and a newspaper editor but because of his mental condition post-war, was unable to return to his profession.²⁰⁰ Henry only worked a variety of casual jobs after leaving Hillview.²⁰¹ His wife Katherine wrote to Repatriation authorities trying to get help for her husband saying Henry's mental state affected not only her mental health, but the welfare of their children.

He has come back from the War absolutely useless. We have two children dependent on us and I have not received more than 10/- a week from him towards their support since he left Hillview Soldier Settlement. He has been wounded in the stomach which makes him unfitted for hard work and when he attempts to do clerical or any other kind of brain work he goes almost mad and is awake nearly all night thinking and worrying. He is not fit to trust with the children and I am just worried with him until my health is giving way. This man saw 4 years war service and got an honourable discharge and was invalided back ... If there is a pension for men who cannot go back to their former calling, why isn't he getting it?²⁰²

By 1926 Henry was fifty-two and had hardly worked since leaving Hillview Soldier Settlement. Sadly, his mental condition did not improve. In 1934 he was admitted to hospital then transferred to the mental institution, Callan Park, after becoming uncontrollable and attacking hospital staff. He was diagnosed with confusional psychosis that doctors believed was probably exacerbated by alcohol.²⁰³ A recurring theme from many loan files in this study, are examples of 'war alcoholism' that will be examined later in this chapter.

¹⁹⁹ SRNSW: NRS 8058, *op. cit.*, [12/7052] Loan File 4941. Letter to vacate 14 May 1923. Buckpitt was given fourteen days to vacate the farm, owing more than £700.

²⁰⁰ NAA: B2455, *op. cit.*, SERN 1656 BUCKPITT, Henry Edward.

²⁰¹ NAA: C138, *op. cit.*, R35327 BUCKPITT, Henry Edward. Buckpitt worked as the Municipal Impounding Officer, but it was unprofitable as he had to supply feed for the animals from his salary. He also worked for John Sands and Company on the *Sands Directory*, and sold Singer sewing machines door-to-door.

²⁰² *ibid.*, letter to Repatriation Commission 14 May 1925. Buckpitt was granted a fifty per cent pension; a year later he was granted a total incapacity pension for one year.

²⁰³ *ibid.*

After serving more than four years with the AIF, the only gainful employment Henry Buckpitt had in the next twenty years was his agricultural training at Grafton Experimental Farm in northern New South Wales and the three years he spent at Hillview Soldier Settlement. His mental condition post-war affected his wife and children, scarring them all. In hindsight Henry Buckpitt should never have been able to become a soldier settler but as time showed, he could not do anything else. As has been argued throughout this thesis, the group soldier settlements in this study became by default a refuge for unemployable men damaged by their war service. As a result of his war service, Henry Buckpitt never settled or was permanently employed again.

For other soldier settlers, identifying psychological conditions linked to their war service can be more tenuous than men like Henry Buckpitt and Alfred Graham. A striking example of this dilemma is Muir Purser, who became a soldier settler at Bankstown two years after discharge. During World War I Muir Purser was a highly ranked officer, a most unusual occurrence in this study, and a leader of men whose bravery in the field was officially recognised on a number of occasions.²⁰⁴ However, Purser resigned his commission well before the end of hostilities, giving no plausible reason for this decision.²⁰⁵ Purser's Battalion had suffered heavy losses shortly before he resigned, and the deaths and injuries of his men would have laid heavily on him after nearly two years in command. High Command was aware of burn-out in senior

²⁰⁴ NAA: B2455, *op. cit.*, SERN Lt-Col. PURSER, M.; Australian War Memorial *Honours and Awards*. Purser was temporary commander of the 32nd Battalion from August 1916, assuming command of the 29th Battalion in December 1916. Purser was Mentioned in Despatches three times and recommended for the Order of the Crown of Italy in July 1916. He was awarded a Distinguished Service Order after the Battle of Polygon Wood in September 1917, the citation saying he had led his men through heavy fire before reaching the final objective. The 29th Battalion repulsed numerous enemy counter-attacks during this battle, sustaining heavy losses.

²⁰⁵ *ibid.*, In February 1918 Purser requested permission to resign his commission and be immediately returned to Australia. Asked to be more specific, Purser wrote he wanted 'a fresh start in life ... while my four children are still young'.

officers, noting that ‘it should in no way be counted against a commander if, after a year or two’s service under incessant pressure, his mental energy showed signs of flagging’.²⁰⁶ There is no notation of physical or mental injuries in Purser’s service file, nor did he receive a pension or apply for benefits through the Repatriation Commission.²⁰⁷ Nearly two years after discharge Muir Purser applied for a soldier settlement block at Bankstown Soldier Settlement, saying that for health reasons he was very anxious to be offered a block as soon as possible.²⁰⁸ Whether his three years tenure as a poultry farmer at Bankstown Soldier Settlement helped Muir Purser recover his psychological well-being is doubtful, as his forfeiture would have been a mark of failure for a proud man.

Neuroses and war alcohol

For a significant number of soldier settlers in this study, their loan files and repatriation files reveal not only that they returned from war with psychological problems but that they also suffered from alcohol abuse. Alcohol was one way men could deaden the memories of their war experiences. Often it was the only way they had. ‘Drink and the digger’ were synonymous with medical authorities aware many men consumed more after the war than they had prior to enlistment.²⁰⁹ Giving evidence to the 1926 Tasmanian Royal Commission into soldier settlement, RSSILA President Colonel Mullen stated that ‘even if there were a few settlers who drank, it was a case for pity, as the physical and mental condition of some of the soldiers as a

²⁰⁶ C.E.W. Bean, *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-18. Vol. IV. The AIF in France*, Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 11th edition, 1941, p. 23.

²⁰⁷ NAA: B2455, PURSER, *op. cit.*; The National Archives Sydney advised there is a file bearing Purser’s name, but no number was allocated, indicating it had not been activated, and the file is empty.

²⁰⁸ SRNSW: NRS 8052 [10/13714], *op. cit.*, application date 19 April 1920; letters to Mr G. Cann, MLA and RSSB 22 April 1920.

²⁰⁹ P. Stanley, *Bad Characters. Sex, Crime, Mutiny, Murder and the Australian Imperial Force*, Murdoch Book Pty Ltd, Sydney, 2010, p. 85, p. 214.

result of war service was responsible for the majority of the cases in question'.²¹⁰

Aware of the problems caused by alcohol with returned men, several treatment centres were established by the Department of Repatriation with the assistance of the Australian Red Cross. The surviving records of soldier settlers in this study who suffered from 'war alcoholism' reveals struggles that continued over many years.

Henry Langtry an original settler at Bankstown Soldier Settlement was treated for psychological disorders at the Red Cross home 'Novar' at Five Dock. Purchased in mid-1919, *Repatriation* acknowledged the need for a facility to help treat men suffering nervous or alcohol-related problems, saying

One visible result of the stress and hardship of war service is that the majority of returned men are not normal as to nerves, and consequently a number of them are easily affected by drink... and it hits them harder than it does the normal man.²¹¹

Novar, one of four 'nerve homes' in New South Wales was for the treatment of neurasthenics and men suffering from 'war alcoholism', who wanted to regain their physical and mental health and had 'indulge[d] to their own detriment'.²¹² Admission was voluntary, authorities stressing patients wanted to improve so they could again become good citizens.²¹³ Its only title would be Novar, known to the public as a rest home.²¹⁴ The Australian Red Cross, formed in August 1914, had responsibilities for

²¹⁰ *The Advocate* (Tasmania), 4 August 1926, p. 8 quoted in A. Richardson, 'The Long Road Home: Repatriation in Tasmania, 1916- 1929', PhD Thesis, University of Tasmania, 2005, p. 357.

²¹¹ *Repatriation*, Vol. 1, No. 4, 25 June 1919, p. 5.

²¹² *ibid.*

²¹³ *ibid.*

²¹⁴ *SMH*, 27 June 1919, p. 7; *SMH*, 2 July 1919, p. 12; Novar was named after the ancestral home of the Governor General, Sir Ronald Craufaud Munro Ferguson, Viscount Novar of Reith, Scotland. Ferguson was Governor General from May 1914 to October 1920, J.R. Poynton, 'Munro Ferguson, Sir Ronald Craufurd (1860-1934)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 10, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1986, pp. 615-618; The Governor General's wife, Lady Helen, established the

sick and wounded soldiers and also ran institutions caring for war-disabled veterans. The importance of the New South Wales Red Cross Branch's role in veterans' post-war health and welfare is only now receiving recognition by historians.²¹⁵ The Red Cross often subsidised or paid for treatment returned men received at these homes if their disability was not officially recognised as war-related.²¹⁶

The Langtry family left Bankstown settlement after three years citing family reasons, although Henry had no pension, no work and a wife and four children to support.²¹⁷ Langtry had been diagnosed with shell shock in 1916, although doctors blamed his mental state on his background, saying it was not therefore war-related.²¹⁸ Langtry was treated at Novar twice within six months of leaving Bankstown, but his mental condition and alcohol problems were not cured.²¹⁹ Several years later he was admitted to Callan Park, once under the Inebriates Act.²²⁰ Although Langtry clearly had psychological and alcohol problems when he was at Bankstown Soldier Settlement that would have contributed to his failure, it was the only relatively stable life the

Australian Red Cross and was its President from the time of its inauguration in August 1914 for six years. Oppenheimer argues that the Australian Red Cross, under Lady Helen's leadership, was influential in developing social welfare policies, especially within the Commonwealth Department of Repatriation, responsible for the care of returned men. With 600 branches across New South Wales in 1918, the Australian Red Cross was an integral part of repatriation programs involving convalescent homes. See M. Oppenheimer, '“The Best PM for the Empire in War?” Lady Helen Munro Ferguson and the Australian Red Cross Society, 1914-1920', *Australian Historical Studies*, Vol. 33, No. 119, April 2002, pp. 108-124.

²¹⁵ See, for example M. Oppenheimer, '“Fated to a Life of Suffering” Graythwaite, the Australian Red Cross and returned soldiers, 1916-39', in M. Crotty and M. Larsson (eds), *Anzac Legacies. Australians and the Aftermath of War*, Australian Scholarly Publishing Pty Ltd, Melbourne, 2010, pp. 19-21.

²¹⁶ *ibid.*, p. 35.

²¹⁷ SRNSW: NRS 8058, *op. cit.*, [12/7283] Loan File 8058, GOFTON, N. Norman Gofton took over Block 113 after Langtry's forfeiture.

²¹⁸ NAA: C138, *op. cit.*, R99019 LANGTRY, Henry Stewart. In September 1916 Langtry was diagnosed with delusional insanity. He had been found wandering by police, telling them a 'big ginger German' was trying to catch him. Langtry's mother had committed suicide, and doctors believed his violent temper showed a family history of mental instability. Doctors also believed his mental state had been affected by his history of sunstroke and malaria.

²¹⁹ *ibid.*, Statement by Langtry's wife, February 1921.

²²⁰ *ibid.*, Langtry's application in 1930 for a pension was rejected as not war-related.

family had after the war. The impact of war service on Henry Langtry and his family was immeasurable.

Another example of a returned man seriously mentally affected by his war experiences, including severe alcohol problems was Edward Sawle. It is not known how Sawle supported himself in the five years following his discharge until he came to Bankstown Soldier Settlement. How he gained a Qualification Certificate and convinced authorities he could operate a small farming business is difficult to comprehend, given his history of severe psychological problems during his service in the AIF.²²¹ For Sawle, his stay at Bankstown Soldier Settlement was brief and his story tragic. A single man with no relatives in Australia, he lived on Block 146 for just six months. Returned to Australia 'for change', Sawle was admitted to Mont Park Hospital in Melbourne as a mental patient before being transferred to a Sydney hospital and despite recommendations for further treatment was discharged medically unfit with 'melancholia' in mid-1918.²²² Sawle was given a total incapacity pension of approximately £3 a fortnight at discharge, an amount considerably less than half the basic wage.²²³ Even for a single man like Edward Sawle, it would have been difficult to exist on this benefit living in the general community. In addition to his mental problems, Sawle had lost the power of speech some time before he was

²²¹ NAA: B2455, *op. cit.*, SERN 4071 SAWLE, Edward Henry. Medical history June 1917 1st AAH Harefield. In April Sawle was evacuated from Boulogne to Horton County War Hospital, London, with neurasthenia. In June 1917, medical notes say Sawle was 'queer in manner, keeping to himself, melancholia ... watch required for night'. The following day the notation was more specific, 'am of opinion that he should be sent to a hospital for the Insane. He is morbidly depressed and despondent'. Another entry says Sawle had 'apprehensive delusions of impending disaster. Believes he is going to be "killed and cut up"'. The Medical Board found Sawle's condition was a result of active service attributed to the 'stress of campaign'.

²²² *ibid.*, Sawle was transferred to No.13 AA Hospital 30 May 1918, some records say he was discharged 12 May, others July.

²²³ L. J. Pryor, *op. cit.*, p. 24; Lindstrom, *op. cit.*, p. 235 quoting the Commonwealth basic wage in 1920-21 as £4.2.0 per week.

discharged. He had not regained it by 1923 when he was at Bankstown Soldier Settlement, and no record has been found to indicate if, or when, he ever did.²²⁴

Sawle was not the success Inspector Hadlington predicted when he approved the block's transfer from Muir Purser, whose brief story of tenure was outlined earlier in this chapter.²²⁵ Initially Sawle was reported as working hard on the block, but within a few months stock was neglected and he was drinking heavily.²²⁶ Sawle had deep-seated alcohol problems, and was hospitalised with chronic dysentery caused by alcohol abuse, forfeiting soon afterwards.²²⁷ Edward Sawle's psychological condition did not improve, and deteriorated to the point where he was admitted to Callan Park Hospital several years later.²²⁸ There were many other returned men like Edward Sawle whose mental demons and psychotic behaviours, often exacerbated by alcohol abuse, required their admission to institutions. Ten years after the end of the war, approximately 300 ex-servicemen were said to be receiving treatment for war-related psychological conditions in Callan Park.²²⁹ Soldier settlement for Edward Sawle may have been the only solution for him to try to support himself. The possibility he could succeed was slim at best, and all too quickly proved elusive. Sawle suffered mentally for many years as a result of his war service, and whether he ever fully recovered is not known.

²²⁴ SRNSW: NRS 8058, *op. cit.*, [12/7372] Loan File 9326 SAWLE, Edward Henry. Memo from Inspector Hadlington 2 January 1924.

²²⁵ *ibid.*, RSSB Memo April 1923; approval for transfer 15 June 1923.

²²⁶ *ibid.*, memo from Hadlington 2 January 1924 recommending Sawle's farm be declared forfeited. Although Hadlington expressed sympathy for Sawle's condition, he said he now believed he would never be successful.

²²⁷ *ibid.*, report from Bankstown Soldier Settlement Manager Goldsmith 14 December 1923. Block 146 was advertised as forfeited in the *Government Gazette* 1 February 1924.

²²⁸ *ibid.*, letter from Repatriation Commission, Commonwealth of Australia to The Under Secretary, Department of Lands, 27 August 1925, saying that 'there is no reason to suppose that his mental condition has appreciably improved'; NAA: B2455 SERN 4071, *op. cit.*, Sawle wrote to the Defence Department in November 1929 requesting duplicate Discharge Papers, stating they had been misplaced on his admission to Callan Park hospital nearly two years previously.

²²⁹ *SMH*, 13 March 1928, p. 16.

Another former soldier settler who had war-related injuries, and psychological problems which necessitated treatment in an Australian Red Cross convalescent home was Aubrey Kelly. Although the effect of his failure as a soldier settler on his mental state cannot be definitively stated, Kelly's life post-war, especially post-soldier settlement, was weighed down with poor mental and physical health. For Kelly soldier settlement was a way, perhaps the only way he could try to support his widowed mother and siblings after being medically discharged from the AIF. In late 1917, Kelly was wounded in the temple and arm, developing severe trench fever shortly afterwards. His physical condition worsened when he began to suffer major epileptic seizures.²³⁰ Although he continued to have severe seizures, at discharge medical officers said he was fit and deemed not eligible for a pension.²³¹ By August 1919, Kelly was employed doing light work preparing Campbelltown Soldier Settlement, as he was not physically capable of doing the heavier work clearing and fencing.²³² He had spent the eighteen months since his return without permanent employment and the small pension he had been granted on appeal was completely inadequate to support his family.²³³ Aubrey's continuing epilepsy meant he could not work full-time, so a smallholding where allowances for his disability could be made seemed a sensible option. Six months later Kelly signed an agreement for Block 368 at Chipping Norton Soldier Settlement.²³⁴ Aubrey Kelly was aged twenty-three, single, and a severe epileptic who was responsible for supporting his family, but he

²³⁰ NAA: B2455, *op. cit.*, SERN 6107 KELLY, Aubrey John Frederick. Kelly was hit by a high explosive shell at the Battle of Polygon Wood, near Ypres in Belgium.

²³¹ NAA: C138, *op. cit.*, R12714 KELLY, Aubrey John. Appealing the decision, Kelly argued his epilepsy was a result of shock and trench fever. On reassessment Kelly was granted a one-quarter disability pension.

²³² *ibid.*, Campbelltown Soldier Settlement from 2 August 1919.

²³³ *ibid.*, Police Report Cowra 25 June 1918 saying Kelly had had temporary employment driving the sulky mail run between Cowra and Canowindra (approximately twenty miles).

²³⁴ SRNSW: NRS 8058, *op. cit.*, [12/6975] Loan File 3973, KELLY, A. Kelly signed the agreement 8 March 1920.

had little chance of succeeding at farming or any other occupation. After two and a half years Kelly forfeited, following reports the block was never worked satisfactorily.²³⁵ Aubrey's mother could not afford to pay rent in the open market and became desperate, begging authorities to allow her to return to Chipping Norton to give her a roof over her head.²³⁶

Six months after leaving Chipping Norton Soldier Settlement Kelly was admitted to Russell Lea, then transferred to the Red Cross Home at Exeter in the Southern Highlands.²³⁷ Russell Lea, located at Five Dock in Sydney's inner western suburbs, was one of five nerve and special cases homes in New South Wales established by the Department of Repatriation and run by the Australian Red Cross. At Russell Lea men received treatment for war neuroses and shell shock to help them return to civilian life.²³⁸ When their condition improved they were transferred from Russell Lea to the convalescent home at Exeter.²³⁹ Aubrey Kelly's treatment at Russell Lea was probably shortened because of the government's abrupt announcement of its closure. Kelly was among the forty patients receiving treatment there in early 1923.²⁴⁰ He was sent to the Exeter home the next month but no record remains of how long he stayed to complete his 'cure'.²⁴¹ In March 1920, newspapers reported that all the Red Cross homes for returned men were full and that there was a waiting list for admittance to

²³⁵ *ibid.*

²³⁶ *ibid.*, letter from Mary Kelly, 2 January 1923. She said her nerves were 'completely gone' and she was homeless and could not afford to pay rent. This example of Mary Kelly's reliance on her son for financial support reveals a largely unexplored area of post-war welfare for widows.

²³⁷ NAA: C138 R12714, *op. cit.* Kelly was admitted in February 1923.

²³⁸ *Repatriation*, 25 June 1919, Vol. 1, No. 4, p. 5.

²³⁹ *SMH*, 27 December 1919, p. 8; *SMH*, 7 January 1920, p. 10.

²⁴⁰ *SMH*, 14 February 1923, p. 12; *Red Cross Australian Branch. New South Wales Division. Report and Financial Statement, 1918-1919*, p. 26. Russell Lea had a capacity for sixty patients and treated nerve and shell shock cases. It was announced Russell Lea would close 24 February 1923.

²⁴¹ NAA: C138 R12714, *op. cit.*

Russell Lea.²⁴² This statement makes it difficult to reconcile the Federal Government's decision three years later that the facility was no longer needed, although it is likely economic factors were a primary reason for its closure.

Kelly's physical health did not improve, as he continued to suffer from epilepsy and the effects of gassing.²⁴³ He was unable to hold down any permanent work, and had long periods of unemployment.²⁴⁴ In addition to his epilepsy which seriously affected his everyday life and ability to work, Kelly had on-going mental health problems, dying of hydrochloric acid poisoning thirty years after the end of World War I.²⁴⁵

Soldier settlement for Aubrey Kelly did not help improve his health or to make a living, but it did give him more stability than he had for the rest of his life. The three years Kelly worked on Campbelltown and Chipping Norton Soldier Settlements were the longest time he was employed after the war. His story is not unique. This study has revealed a large number of soldier settlers on the group settlements in the County of Cumberland that failed or were forced to leave their farms, never had permanent employment again. The shadows of the Great War affected the rest of their lives, making their attempts to survive the peace with dignity difficult, if not impossible.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that the hopes for a good civilian life for a significant number of soldier settlers in this study did not last, often turning to despair. They failed to be able to adequately work their small blocks of land, make a living and repay their

²⁴² *SMH*, 26 March 1920, p. 6.

²⁴³ SRNSW: NRS 8058 [12/6975], *op. cit.*, Declaration January 1925.

²⁴⁴ *ibid.*, Kelly worked for a short while as a travelling hardware salesman, but said his epilepsy interfered with 'following a regular occupation'. He was unemployed by 1934.

²⁴⁵ NAA: C138 R12714, *op. cit.* Kelly died in 1948, his death recorded as accidental.

debts. It was much more than just the financial aspect, although many men left these settlements destitute. When they left many had no home and no prospect of work to go to. Few of these soldier settlers had skills needed in the employment market, and their greatest difficulty after forfeiting was finding work, any work. The majority were older men when they enlisted, their war ageing them even more, leaving them few alternatives to support themselves and their families. Garnet Adcock, a soldier settler near Gosford, expressed the reality of civilian life many returned men and women struggled to cope with.

We were welcomed back with promises of a rosy future. Well meant patriotism, hand in hand with callous profiteering, saw that we were ‘repatriated’ and handed perhaps a little more than our share of the common load to carry – a load not apparent at the time but becoming more and more noticeable as time went on...
Peace could crush with care, or dull with monotony. There was no medal ribbon for success, and no hero-worship. The greatest prize was escape from failure...
The Peace following a War is worse than the War.²⁴⁶

Five years after the Armistice at least one third of the soldier settlers on these group soldier settlements, or nearly 120 had tried and failed. Training made little difference to their success. Nearly half the men who trained at Grantham and Hawkesbury Agricultural College had forfeited by the end of 1923.²⁴⁷

This chapter is appropriately titled ‘Despair’. There were very few success stories in loan files from the group soldier settlements in the County of Cumberland. Many returned men chose this livelihood believing it was the only alternative open to them. Their war-related disabilities, many physical but probably many more psychological,

²⁴⁶ G.I. Adcock, ‘“Letters from the Front” 1916-1919’, addendum to Adcock’s diary, ‘After the War’ c.1930, Australian War Memorial, 2DRL/0123, p. 1.

²⁴⁷ See Appendix A.

limited their work choices in civilian life. Without their physical strength they had relied on to earn a living before the war, the men who became soldier settlers on these group settlements fell between the cracks of government assistance for returned soldiers.

This chapter has related case studies of men impaired by the war, unable to succeed as a soldier settler. For some, soldier settlement was possibly the longest period of permanent employment they had for the rest of their post-war lives. The men whose stories have been told in this chapter did not manage to ‘escape from failure’ as Garnet Adcock suggested.²⁴⁸ Their problems as soldier settlers also affected their wives and children. Farming often required the labour of family members in peak periods, but for many soldier settlers in this study, family labour was a necessity all the time. Many soldier settlers would have been forced to forfeit their blocks much sooner without the physical labour and support their families provided.

The concept of a group of returned men supporting and working together on farms, as they did in battle, did not work in practice. Group soldier settlement in the County of Cumberland on small acreage farms was a failure, but as has been argued throughout this thesis, these returned men believed they had few other options. The men on these group soldier settlements could not return to a productive civilian life because of their war-related disabilities. The shadows of the Great War blighted their lives.

²⁴⁸ Adcock, *op. cit.*