

ARMIDALE'S FIRST WORLD WAR MEMORIAL: A RE-INTERPRETATION*

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Anyone who has attended the Anzac Day Dawn Service in Armidale's Central Park would probably be in little doubt as to why its Memorial Fountain was built: to commemorate local volunteers who died in the First World War. And our current crop of academic historians would fully concur: such memorials constitute evidence of Australian communities being in mourning, grieving for their young men who were sacrificed in a futile and bloody war, a conflict which was devoid of any moral purpose. But how historically accurate are these interpretations? Are they validated by an investigation of Armidale's First World War Memorial, and of how it came into existence almost a hundred years ago?

BACKGROUND

The origins of Armidale's First World War Memorial can be traced back to the beginning of the Twentieth Century, when the Boer War of 1899-1902 was being fought in southern Africa between British troops and the inhabitants of the Transvaal and Orange Free State. This presented the locals with the opportunity to demonstrate their loyalty to the British Empire, and about sixty men did so by volunteering to fight – luckily, with none being killed. Nevertheless, the people of Armidale were very keen to build a memorial to these volunteers, and how they set about establishing it produced precedents that would influence the community when, eventually, it came to deciding about their next war memorial. The major precedent established involved the creation of a memorial which was a celebration of volunteers who had represented the community – a war memorial that invoked no mourning or grief, just pride!

On the evening of Friday 24 August 1900 a civic reception welcomed back a contingent of Boer War volunteers who were returning home early, due to injury or having contracted fever. Armidale's Town Hall was filled to overflowing with enthusiastic locals who were keen to shake their hands and cheer at every opportunity. The local band contributed to the martial atmosphere by striking up with tunes such as 'Soldiers of the Queen'. The gathering was assured by the Mayor that these volunteers 'had done their duty with credit to themselves and with honour to Australia. These men had assisted to raise the prestige of Australia far above its previous standing; and had shown foreign nations that if they desired war they had not only to contend with Great Britain but also Australia'. (The subsequent speaker, Mr Charles Wilson who was Armidale's elected representative in the state parliament, suggested that a reason to keep on side with Britain was that, at some future time, its Navy might be indispensable in helping defend Australia against an Asiatic 'invasion'.) The crowd was also addressed by leading local businessman George Braund (1866-1915), in his capacity as officer-in-charge of the local regiment of Commonwealth militia: he 'felt proud to be the comrade of the returned troops' and announced that there was a move afoot 'to erect a memorial' in their honour. He added to the proposal with a suggestion of his own: 'Personally he would, in addition, like to see a memorial tablet ... with the names of those who went to the front thereon'.

A Citizens' Committee was set up to oversee the memorial project (which would eventuate in the construction of the Band Rotunda on the south side of Central Park). One of the first items on its agenda was to raise funds, and the scheme it chose appealed to the competitive instincts of the residents of the different parts of the township: the locality that raised the most money would have the honour of the memorial being built there. This set in motion much good natured banter and, two months hence, on the evening of Saturday 27 October, a carnival-like atmosphere prevailed when the fund-raising reached its finale. 'The scene in the [main] street ... was one of extreme excitement. Mr. Weaver's shop was thronged with interested parties, and the street was packed with an animated throng. When the numbers were declared, the pent-up excitement burst forth in wild fury, cheer after cheer being given for the success of the Central whose supporters were beside themselves in jubilation'. A total of £108 7s 6d was raised, for 'the purpose of memorialising the "man behind the gun"'. (The fund-raising effort that would go into Armidale's later First World War Memorial project would be very similar – it would be extremely competitive, generally quite sociable and fun-filled.) Then, as the Rotunda neared completion, arrangements needed to be finalised regarding the honor roll of names proposed by Captain Braund. Names had been collected, but should they all be eligible for inclusion: what criteria needed to be met? It was 'decided to include the names of all soldiers who, although not actually residents at Armidale at the time of volunteering, had lived in the district for five years and had not been absent therefrom for more than five years to date on enrolment for service'. (A not too dissimilar formula would be followed when compiling the names for the later First World War Memorial.)

* This is a condensed version of a much longer, more detailed paper, complete with references, copies of which can be consulted in the Dumaresq Chambers library in Armidale and the University of New England's Heritage Centre.

Chiselled into the marble at the base of the Boer War memorial are 59 names, not one of which has affixed to it an asterisk to indicate a death in battle. At the official unveiling of the Rotunda, on Monday 17 March 1902, Armidale's new parliamentary representative, Mr Edmund Lonsdale, declared of the townspeople that: 'They had shown that they were prepared to take their share in the work of the Empire. They had always been part of the British Empire, which had so many grand traditions; and, as Britain has stood against the world, so Australians were prepared to follow her steps ... [T]he assistance given by Australia to Britain was a great thing'. (There would be a carry-over of these sentiments into the world war – with Imperial loyalty probably accounting for why locals volunteered in the early months of the four-year conflict. However it would take about 10 months before enlistments really gained momentum.)

HOW THE ARMIDALE COMMUNITY VIEWED THE FIRST WORLD WAR

Why the First World War broke out, and if one nation more than any other was particularly 'guilty', has been a matter of endless historical debate. What is beyond dispute is that central to any understanding was the role played by Kaiser Wilhelm II's Germany. It was from that perspective that the residents of Armidale viewed the conflict: almost immediately they became convinced that Germany posed an existential threat to Australia, one which demanded they take up arms on the side of Britain. They never wavered in the belief they were fighting a 'just war'.

The key episode that left an indelible imprint on the conscience of the Armidale community occurred upon the outbreak of the war, throughout the month of August 1914. At 8 am on 4 August, Germany commenced its invasion of Belgium. It was a massive breach of international law, prompting German Chancellor Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg to comment to the German *Reichstag* later that day, by way of apology: 'The wrong we thereby commit we will try to make good as soon as our military aims have been attained'. During the invasion, between 5000 and 6000 Belgian civilians (practically all unarmed) would be killed by German soldiers. In the words of the historians of these Belgian atrocities, Professors John Horne and Alan Cramer: 'Arson, executions, expulsion of the inhabitants, and ... deportation ... to Germany, [became] the standard military tactic'. This was no propaganda fabrication (as those of today's historians with an anti-war agenda urge us to believe). Armidale's residents gained an impression of what had transpired from reports in the metropolitan newspapers, with a limited amount of reportage in the local press. During the first 12 months of the war the locals would donate the very considerable sum of £8768 to the Belgian Relief Fund. (Such contributions were made Australia-wide.)

In Armidale, anger at German behaviour in the occupation of Belgium continued unabated throughout the war, combined with a growing apprehension of what German victory in the war would mean for Australians. This was demonstrated on Thursday 4 August 1915, at a public meeting which took place in the Armidale Town Hall to mark the anniversary of the outbreak of war. According to the Rev Cannon Garnsey's address: 'The City of Armidale was only a unit of the British Empire, but it was a unit which, in common with the rest of the Empire, enjoyed the right of self-government. Would that be the case under German rule? If it were given at all, it would be the mere shadow of self-government such as they had in Germany today. This was no war of capitalists, no war of competition for the world's markets, it was no duel between war-lords – there was only one war-lord in Europe, and there had only been one for many years past, and that was the German Emperor. This was a just war ... The war was also a necessary war. It was necessary if we wished to preserve ourselves as a free people'. (Other speeches of the period convey the exact same message.) The meeting concluded with the Mayor calling upon those present to take an oath: '... until Belgium and France are restored and victory gained, we will not sheath the sword'.

Following the signing of the Armistice that brought the conflict to a conclusion on 11 November 1918, the *Armidale Express* would editorialize: 'Prussianism [had] sought to enslave the world ... It was a long and awful struggle, but the Allied cause was just ... Never again shall autocratic rule or regal absolutism be possible, never again will the fate of millions lie in the hollow of a despot's hands'. 'Prussianism is smashed for ever. The world is free from the deadliest menace that ever confronted it, and to the future belong the priceless gifts of liberty and justice, with self-determination by the free nations of their own destinies'. At 8 pm on the evening of Tuesday 12 November 1918, there would occur in Armidale's main street a 'funeral procession', led by three 'jubilant-looking undertakers': 'Then followed a motor car, and attached to its rear by a rope round the neck came the Kaiser [in effigy], well soaked in kerosene and being unceremoniously dragged along the street. On arrival at the appointed spot a match was applied, and in a few minutes the effigy was blazing furiously, to the resounding cheers of the crowd. A big cracker secreted in the interior produced a fine climax ... It was close on midnight when the last

celebrants turned homewards, after having once more very successfully jubilated [sic]'. This episode encapsulates what the war meant for many residents of Armidale. They were in absolutely no doubt their cause had been just, and the result filled them with enormous satisfaction. One of the newspaper's headlines said it all: 'Armidale's Delirium of Joy'.

WHY MEN OF THE DISTRICT VOLUNTEERED FOR THE AIF

It would seem logical to conclude that what motivated local men to volunteer to fight overseas with the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) was a perception that Australia was under threat from the Kaiser's Germany, complemented by loyalty to the British Empire. These factors were certainly part of the mix of motives involved, but on their own they cannot account for the vast bulk of enlistments. Initially there was a minor surge of local volunteers, in August 1914, which presumably had much to do with Imperial loyalty and individuals having emotional attachments to the 'Old Country' – but for the subsequent 9 months there was only a trickle of enlistments. And apart from a few blips, there was again only a trickle of enlistments for the last 30 months of the war. Most local enlistments occurred between July 1915 and May 1916: why? The explanation involves two stories which broke in the press. On 8 May 1915 appeared the report of flamboyant British war correspondent Ellis Ashmead Bartlett, describing in inflated, heroic terms the Anzac landing at Gallipoli; then on 10 May reports appeared of the sinking of the passenger liner *Lusitania* by a German submarine, resulting in the drowning of 1198 civilians including 94 children and 35 babies. In combination, these two events made an enormous impact on local opinion: great pride was mixed with considerable anger. Before too long, this was reflected in a significant increase in local enlistments, which peaked in January 1916.

THE ARMIDALE DISTRICT'S AIF COHORT

Armidale's First World War Memorial incorporates the names of 903 AIF volunteers. With the use of AIF personnel dossiers, it has been possible to identify 588 who resided locally at the time when they enlisted, and these form the basis of 'the Armidale and district cohort' for the purpose of the following analysis.

Most were Australian-born: less than 7% were born overseas, 25 in England, three in Scotland and six in Ireland – there were also two from Canada and one from the USA. All volunteers were measured upon enlistment, and the cohort ranged in height from 5 foot to 6 foot 4 inches. (The tallest was Russel Williams, a motor mechanic of Mosman Street, who enlisted as an 18-year-old on 19 May 1918.) The average height was 5 foot 8 inches: 1.696 metres. From the data recorded on enlistment papers, an average age on enlistment of 23 years 6 months can be calculated. Undoubtedly, however, this is a little inaccurate, to some degree inflated. Regulations required that volunteers between the ages of 18 and 21, the then legal age of consent, have the permission of their parents before they could enlist. In practice, the authorities didn't worry much about this requirement the closer a young man was to 21, but teenagers usually had to provide written parental consent. Some teenagers, even as young as 16 or 17, looked years older, and some of these were so keen to enlist that, undoubtedly, they lied about how old they were, inflating their age. Some were known to forge consent notes. There was no need for older men to lie. What can be said with certainty is that the great bulk of the cohort, more than 75%, were younger than 25 when they enlisted; slightly more than 20% were aged between 25 and 35; about 5% were aged 36 or older. The oldest member of the cohort (by three years) was 48-year-old George Braund, the local member of the state parliament (elected in December 1913), who would be Lieutenant-Colonel in charge of the AIF's 2nd Battalion. (Braund was of average age for the initial 16 AIF commanders, but even so they were far too old to be in action, and very few of them would last longer than a year in their positions. Braund would be one of three AIF commanders to be killed-in-action.) The Armidale cohort was overwhelmingly single: slightly over 91% were unmarried when they enlisted. As best as can be determined from the contact details of next-of-kin they provided (when compared with residential addresses included on embarkation rolls compiled when they departed Australia) it becomes apparent that around 80% of the cohort had been living at home, under the same roofs as their parents – it appears only 73 single men had moved out. Married men constituted just 8.45% of the cohort when enlisting. (During the war, 11 members of the cohort would get married, one of them, Selby Bower, marrying in England.)

Enlistment papers required information about a volunteer's occupation. The largest occupational grouping of the Armidale cohort comprised labourers, farm labourers and station hands: 28% of the cohort. Almost 7% had skills associated with the rural economy: saddlers, wool classers, blacksmiths, farriers, etc. Graziers represented 6.8% and farmers 6.3%. At one time Hillgrove (to Armidale's east) had been a flourishing mining centre, and 4.4% had

been working in mining there. About 5.4% were employed in the building industry: carpenters, bricklayers, plumbers, plasterers, electricians, etc. About 3.5% were employed by the railway; and 4.7% were involved with transportation, as drivers, mechanics, etc. Almost 6% indicated they were bakers, butchers, grocers, tailors, boot makers, shop assistants, hairdressers, etc. White collar workers represented about 5.6%. About 5% were urban, middle class professionals: chemists, surveyors, accountants, opticians, doctors, solicitors, dentists, etc. There were five school teachers. And two were members of prominent Armidale business families, (Clifford Richardson, to be commissioned a Captain, then Major; and Lieutenant Colonel George Braund).

Whilst it was news of the Gallipoli landing that goes a long way to explaining why very many of the Armidale cohort enlisted for service overseas in the AIF, only about 1% of the cohort actually served on Gallipoli. Most locals had only just enlisted when Australian troops were evacuated from Gallipoli, on the night of 19-20 December 1915. After months of extensive training, it was France and Belgium that would provide them with their battlefield experiences, starting in mid-1916. Well short of 1% of the cohort would serve in the Middle East after the Gallipoli campaign.

Almost 55% of the Armidale cohort would become casualties of war. More than 36% were wounded. Despite the picture one might have of First World War troops with bayonets affixed to their rifles, there is a reference in only one personnel dossier of a soldier suffering a bayonet wound. It was a conflict dominated by artillery, with most wounds caused by shrapnel balls and metal shards from exploding shells, followed by bullet wounds, from rifles and machine guns.

With the rise of awareness of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in the wake of the Vietnam War, what has particularly caught the attention of some historians is its First World War equivalent, 'Shell Shock'. As we are now aware, PTSD might possibly only manifest itself years after a precipitating event or situation, and AIF personnel files only span the war years plus the period of approximately a year before a soldier was discharged back in Australia. Sometimes the phrase 'shell shock' was employed in a personnel dossier, but also 'shock', 'neurasthenia' and 'neurosis', and phrases such as 'nervous debility', 'nerve shock', 'nervous breakdown', and 'flying stress' for aviators. There is a range of possible indicators. Upon the basis of such diagnoses, 15 members of the Armidale cohort can be identified as suffering from Shell Shock, just 2.55% of the cohort. Following hospitalisation, 10 were invalided out of the army, and returned to Australia. The other five would return to duty, after an average 9 weeks of medical treatment.

Of the Armidale cohort's 588 members, 108 (18.37%) would not return to Australia, having been killed in action - or they died as a result of an associated activity.

Probably the unluckiest member of the Armidale cohort was former butcher Private Claude Lennon who was killed on 24 September 1917. He was no stranger to going AWL, and had gone absent once again on 13 September. Then, 11 days later, when in London, he was killed by a bomb dropped from a German aircraft.

PLANNING ARMIDALE'S FIRST WORLD WAR MEMORIAL

On 13 May 1915 news broke in the press of the death of Armidale's parliamentary representative, Lieutenant Colonel George Braund, who had been killed on Gallipoli, (accidentally shot through the head by one of his own sentries in the early hours of 4 May). A fortnight later, at a livestock sale on Thursday 27 May, a proposal was floated for 'the construction of a monument to the late Lieut.-Col. Braund'. That day at the saleyard the handsome sum of £34/13 was raised from 24 individuals known throughout the local rural community, with the general public provided with details of how they too could donate to the fund. However it would take the broader community quite some time to work through exactly what type of war memorial it wanted.

The sectarianism that characterised Australian society of the period appears to have been a factor that entered into the process. In Armidale during the war years, there was a tension which sometimes surfaced between the community's Protestant Establishment and its Catholic minority (about 29% of the town's population) which felt aggrieved because of its perception of not being afforded respect: Catholic spokesmen wanted to be heard and exert some influence. In an address delivered on Anzac Day 1916, local Catholic priest Father Michael Foley began by lauding the achievements of Australian troops, and ended with these observations: 'I would like to see a life-size bronze statue of the Anzac soldier erected in some conspicuous place in Armidale ... [T]he monument would ... keep ever fresh in our memories the imperishable seed of the Anzacs'. Foley made no mention of a Braund memorial. Braund was an Anglican - in addition he was English-born, with a grammar school education. He had nothing in

common with the typical working-class Catholic, probably with a favourable disposition towards the Irish. Foley, himself an Irishman with some decidedly hostile attitudes towards the English, could be considered a local opinion maker, providing a counter-proposition which he wanted the community to consider. A year later Armidale's most high-profile Catholic layman, Sid Kearney, involved himself by calling for the community to create an Honor Roll of names of the men from the area who had volunteered for the AIF.

It was Kearney's intervention which prompted the Mayor to place a notice in the press advising that a public meeting was being scheduled for the evening of Wednesday 9 May 1917 to consider the memorial idea. In a convoluted way, the notice explained there to be two issues that needed to be discussed. The priority was to build a memorial to George Braund: 'The Colonel was undoubtedly one of the finest men Armidale knew, and it is fitting he should receive some special mark of esteem'. This proposition was seen as uncontroversial, from the perspective of the Mayor it being assumed that no-one could possibly object to construction of such a memorial. The other issue was subsidiary to this, involving an Honor Roll: the possibility of creating 'a permanent record of gallant men and their noble sacrifice' would be discussed – perhaps a 'general roll of honour, embracing all the other men who have enlisted from the district might well be incorporated with [the Braund memorial]'. On the designated evening the Mayor opened proceedings with an address in which he declared that a Braund memorial was 'no doubt the more important issue' they needed to discuss: 'He was a man of whom any city might feel proud, and it was well that future generations, should know the class of public men Armidale had in the days of the great war. (Applause)'. The next speaker supported the Mayor. With the third speaker, discussion took a change of direction: he 'thought a general memorial would appeal to the public more than one for Lieut.-Colonel Braund individually'. The following speaker diverted attention even further away from what the Mayor intended: 'the memorial should perpetuate the memory of every man [from the district] who had gone to the war, not only the Colonel or those who had fallen'. Eventually the tenth speaker, a spokesman for the Armidale Establishment, Mr George Atkin, rose to his feet, arguing that 'it was premature to consider the general Honor Roll', putting it to the meeting that 'a memorial solely to the Colonel's memory be now initiated', and such a motion was voted upon. This 'was defeated by a large majority'. As the Mayor would recall: he had 'called a public meeting to consider the erection of a memorial to the late Lieut.-Colonel Braund. It was resolved at that meeting that a memorial be erected to the memory of the soldiers from Armidale and district'.

At a subsequent meeting, of the committee established to oversee the 'soldiers memorial', an attempt would be made to redirect the project: for the proposed memorial to be dedicated to the soldiers who had been killed in the war. Back in civilian life, leading Establishment figure and Gallipoli hero Major Richardson 'was very much in favour of a special memorial for the slain'; and the Mayor 'thought that those who lost their lives should be given prominence'. But the manoeuvre proved unsuccessful. The community had been consulted, and its decision to have a memorial which recorded 'every man's name who enlisted, irrespective of whether he was killed or not', would stand. A separate Col. Braund Memorial Committee continued in existence, but to no purpose: nothing became of the proposal to dedicate a memorial to the dead Colonel (until one was unveiled on 28 May 2001).

The planning of Armidale's War Memorial immediately gained momentum upon the conclusion of the war: a public meeting which was called for 15 January 1919 to discuss 'the question of a suitable memorial in Armidale' attracted as many as 300 people. Proceedings opened with an address from the Mayor: 'Now that the war was over the time was ripe for the permanent memorial to be gone on with'. That meeting saw the appointment of a committee 'for the purpose of raising funds to provide a permanent memorial to perpetuate the names and deeds of the volunteers of Armidale and district'. However soon afterwards, because of the deadly Spanish 'flu epidemic that was spreading across the globe, the Mayor found it expedient to cancel, temporarily, such public gatherings in an effort to slow the spread of the virus locally.

The memorial project also suffered from some animosity between prominent personalities. Mr Kearney referred, sarcastically, to Major Richardson, as 'the gallant major', because he suggested there should be a £1500 limit placed on the construction of the memorial. Mr Kearney: 'Apparently there are people without imagination, and so unappreciative of the importance of a Soldier's Memorial as to suggest that £1000 or £1500, will suffice for an emblem of our recognition of our soldiers' military virtue, and a monument of inspiration that will serve future generations. Fortunately these penuriously-minded people are few, and do not represent public sentiment in this district'. The particular monument that Kearney had in mind would have cost an estimated £9000.

Altogether, nine quite different types of war memorial schemes would be proposed – most incorporating features that harked back to the defeat of Germany. They provide scant evidence for the proposition that there was a belief abroad amongst the community that it had been involved in a futile war, one devoid of moral purpose – let alone the community being grief-stricken. There was a proposal for a scholarship scheme for the children of men who had served in the AIF. There was a proposal for the establishment of a war memorial high school. It was suggested that an avenue of trees be planted ‘extending from the showground [where the local AIF training camp had been located] to the railway station, all along the route by which so many men marched on their way to war’. There was a proposal to up-grade the Sports Ground, involving the addition of an ‘arched gate’, ‘with the names of those who enlisted ... and the names of those who made the supreme sacrifice’. One proposal was for an 8-metre high female statue of peace, the base of which would feature, in bass relief, partly destroyed German weapons of war. (At the last moment, this proposal was changed to a cenotaph as has been erected in London.) There was a proposal for a clock tower, with various features ‘reminiscent of the war’. For an estimated £6000, the Mayor proposed a public swimming pool combined with a soldiers’ club, adorned with war mementoes, and incorporating a museum. ‘On the façade of the main building could also be inscribed the names of the great battles the Australians participated in – Pozieres, Bullecourt, Messines Ridge, etc.’; ‘names of the soldiers should figure in the most prominent place’. Also within the precincts could be located some ‘German guns’, war trophies which Armidale had been offered. Mr Kearney proposed a ‘District Honor Hall’: ‘returned soldiers will find in it a commodious club with the advantages of technical class rooms, reading and meeting rooms, for their self-improvement, the gymnasium for their physical well-being, and the lighter pleasures (billiards, games, etc.) for their leisure hours’. It would also include ‘a museum of war trophies’. Finally there was a proposal, estimated to cost £20 000, for a very extensive Memorial Park, displaying captured German artillery pieces ‘throughout the area on ... granite emplacements’, providing for the construction of ‘a public golf links, similar to St. Andrew’s’.

In January 1920 the memorial committee narrowed the competition down to a choice between three of the more modest proposals, the Sports Ground, the clock tower and the monument. As with the Boer War memorial 20 years previously, a period was designated for fund raising, with the promoters of each scheme to raise their own finances by whatever means they could devise. The promoters who raised the most money would be the winners. The deadline for the contest was set for 10 pm on Saturday 1 May 1920, coinciding with the weekend of the local Show. When receipts came in, a total of £2259 had been raised: the winner was the Sports Ground, whose backers raised £1505.

The associated fund-raising events leading up to Mayday involved a number of social gatherings and much frivolity. It was anything but a period of solemnity: what transpired provides not the slightest hint of a community in mourning. A sports day was held at Kelly’s Plains, with athletic events and a cricket match, followed that evening by a fancy-dress ball. Three children’s balls were held, one attracting 400 children. Concerts combined with dances were held at Hillgrove and Wollomombi, lasting into the early hours of the morning. On the competition’s final day, festivities lasted from early morning to late evening. The central business district was decked out with flags and the street lined with stalls. What particularly caught the public’s attention were ‘mock trials’ presided over by two of the leading citizens. They had the Mayor ‘arrested’ on charges of damaging valuable plants in the park; a former mayor was found guilty of having failed, when in office, to take steps to solve Armidale’s notorious water supply problems; Mr Docker, the bank manager, was found guilty of playing two-up in the main street; presumably Mr Stevens had a strong accent because he was found guilty of impersonating a Scotchman; restaurant owners, the Souris Brothers, were charged for having undressed tarts in their window; etc. About 80 ‘cases’ were tried, all resulting in guilty verdicts and fines. ‘... the public derived a good deal of fun and the memorial scheme a good deal of profit from the burlesque’. At this time the town was yet to get electricity, and so it was a novelty to have brilliant lighting laid on for the evening’s entertainment, for what was described as ‘An Australian Night’ with the band playing. Thousands of packets of confetti were sold.

However, just as a winner was determined and it appeared that the locals would have the memorial that their money had paid for, the project came under the control of a Sydney-based committee appointed by the state government – in a move intended to ensure the artistic quality of monuments state-wide (with some such as that in the southern Sydney locality of Miranda having attracted criticism for supposed amateurism). The Armidale Memorial Committee which the locals had elected was effectively reduced to ‘a rubber stamp’. A resolution had already been passed, allocating £1500 of the available finances for construction of a memorial – the balance, the

Committee now decided, would be spent on the Sports Ground. Otherwise: 'The whole matter will be left in the hands of the [state government's] Advisory Board. They will call for competitive designs, make a selection, and then put in hand the preparation of working plans and specifications, so that tenders may be called for the construction'. Subsequently the Committee received correspondence advising: 'The Permanent Memorial Advisory Board judged the designs sent in for the Armidale monument. In all 26 were received and will be exhibited at the Royal Society's rooms, 76 Pitt St., Sydney, until 29th inst. ... Mr. Leith C. McCreadie, of Robertson and Marks, 14 Martin Place, Sydney, has been awarded 1st Place ... I am directed by the Minister to inform you that he has pleasure in granting his approval of Mr. McCreadie's design [for a water fountain]'. The only local input was to recommend that the memorial be built in Central Park, and this received approval. The comment that accompanied the report in the *Armidale Express* was that the letter 'speaks for itself'. Obviously the locals were far from pleased by this turn of events. No matter how good the design of the memorial might have been, it was certain to receive a hostile reception. In May 1921 it was reported that 'The design accepted for the Armidale War Memorial has come in for considerable adverse criticism'. A Sydney builder, Mr W.G. Partridge, won the contract to build the memorial which took six weeks from mid-July 1922.

THE WAR MEMORIAL'S AIF HONOR ROLL

In the meantime, under the stewardship of the Secretary of the Memorial Committee, Miss M.C. Blaxland, an extremely thorough effort had been made to collect the names of all the district's AIF volunteers, which were to be chiselled into the granite water fountain. By September 1917, 600 names had been collected; by June 1920 this had increased to 786. In September 1917 Miss Blaxland advised that 'if any requests are received for the addition of names of relatives or friends outside this area they will be added'. By March 1919 it had been decided that the roll would include not only volunteers from Armidale, but also those from Hillgrove to its east. Every effort was made to ensure that no volunteer was overlooked. It was arranged for the lists to be placed in front of the Court House: '... it was decided to place a type-written copy of the names already collected for the honor roll, in frames, ... so that the public may have best access ... and add any that have been inadvertently omitted'. As can be seen from the completed published list (in the *City of Armidale Diamond Jubilee Souvenir 1863-1923*, pp.99-103), in addition to recording names, the process also involved identifying those who died when members of the AIF. It is therefore of considerable significance that this singular piece of information has been excluded from the Honor Roll on the war memorial in Central Park. In the same way that no distinction was being made between AIF volunteers on the basis of the military ranks attained or awards for valour, even more significantly no distinction was made between those who were killed and those who survived the war. The Armidale War Memorial cannot be seen as a memorial to the dead: none were identified. It was a deliberate decision on the part of the Memorial Committee. What they wanted was, simply, as complete an Honor Roll as possible, of those with some type of connection to the district who enlisted. All such AIF volunteers were to be honoured equally, without distinction.

A not insignificant portion of the names on the Honor Roll were those of volunteers who were not resident in the district at the time of their enlistment. Quite a few who had been born and raised there had moved on by the time of the war's outbreak, and they enlisted from where they had relocated, but their family or friends back in their home town apparently nominated them for inclusion on the local honour roll. Of the names on the honour roll, 69 can be identified as volunteers who had been born in the district but were no longer living there when they enlisted. For example, when war broke out, Thomas Jones was working in Sydney as a customs clerk and resident at 81 Darley Rd., Manly, yet his name would appear on the Roll, presumably nominated by his mother Catherine, who was living in Beardy Street. William Joseph Mills enlisted as a 21-year-old on 7 May 1918. On his AIF enlistment form he indicated that he had been born at Armidale on 6 May 1896; his family lived to the north of the township, at Rocky Gully *via* Guyra. But by the time of enlistment Mills had left the family home: he too had migrated south, to Sydney, and gave as his place of residence 20 Park Avenue, Ashfield. As his occupation, he gave 'wharf labourer'. Some who had never ever lived in the community, or visited the district only very briefly, were even nominated. Such non-residents included itinerant workers who enlisted whilst at Armidale, including: 21-year-old Cyril Eaton, a shearer whose home was in Sydney, at 32 Boyce St., Glebe Point; another shearer, 32-year-old Hugh Cameron, from Queensland; and 18-year-old Robert Fuz, a boundary rider, from Sydney, resident at 202 Marrickville Rd., Marrickville. The names of all three appear on the Roll. It would seem some locals simply sponsored the names of AIF volunteers for their Roll on the basis of any type of connection with their locality. (It would not surprise in the least if some of the names that can't now be identified were those of men who themselves, or their parents, only

first arrived in the district *after* the war but before the nomination-process was finalised.) The Roll includes four Lieutenant Colonels, only two of whom (George Braund and Harold White) resided locally: when Armidale-born military engineer Athelstan Martyn (at the time, a captain in the regular army) enlisted, his parents were still living in Armidale, but he was resident in Western Australia; Ballarat-born Leslie Morshead had joined the staff of The Armidale School in January 1912, where he taught for two years, but when war broke out he was teaching at Melbourne Grammar and, upon enlisting, gave as his address 32 Tress Street, Mount Pleasant, Ballarat, Victoria, where his mother lived. Many locals would have been most keen to make a claim on soldiers such as these, who served with distinction.

Apparently, the compilers of the Roll were so willing to include anybody with some type of local connection that they excluded no-one. The process seemingly involved no quality control: whatever names were presented went on the Honor Roll – no questions asked. Postal worker Leonard Purkiss joined up as an 18-year-old just three days before the Armistice, and his name is on the Roll. English-born George Thompson had been working locally as a labourer when he enlisted in December 1915; after about 5 weeks he deserted, in January 1916, and efforts to track him down were abandoned after 55 days. Yet somebody must have nominated George for inclusion on the local Honor Roll. In addition to such examples, there were those AIF members who were considered ‘Bad Characters’ due to their conduct in the army, but none seem to have been excluded. One of the local volunteers was discharged from the AIF as an ‘undesirable’ after 7 months, and his name is on the Roll. The imperative was to compile as complete an Honor Roll as possible of local volunteers.

There is a total of 903 names on the war memorial fountain in Armidale’s Central Park. Under the heading Armidale, there are the names of 773 men, under Hillgrove, 119 men: 892 men in all. In addition, preceding these are the names of 11 nurses.

THE UNVEILING OF THE WAR MEMORIAL

The unveiling ceremony took place in Central Park at 5 pm on Saturday 21 October 1922. The Memorial Committee had written to the state governor, Sir Walter Davidson, a career British colonial administrator, asking if he would preside and he obliged. He was accompanied on the official platform (the back of a lorry) by the Mayor, the Rev Canon Riley (a visiting dignitary) and the Anglican Bishop of Armidale.

According to the Governor, the names on the war memorial ‘were just the ordinary names of the Irishman, and the Scot and the Englishman, as were those of their forbears who went with their Lords to fight England’s battles in the past’. The Governor then proceeded to express the type of praise of Australian military prowess that would have the very large crowd applauding. He focused upon ‘the splendid career of the 33rd Battalion [that had its initial training at Armidale and contained a number of locals in its ranks], taking his text from the Battalion flag, which hung behind the dais. Messines, Hangard, Villers Bretonneux, Bray, Morlancourt, and all the rest of them ... would live in the memory of New Englanders for ever’. At Messines, ‘They were eager, but they were stopped [when ordered to do so]. They did not want to stop, and he thought that if they had been allowed to go on they would have got into Berlin. (Applause) ... The Australians were vain, and thought that nothing could beat them, and their work showed that they were justified to a certain extent in holding this opinion ... Three Victoria Crosses were gained that day (Applause.)’. In the preceding speech, Canon Riley had referred to ‘the names of those who didn’t return’ from the war, and claimed (incorrectly) that ‘It was chiefly to honor the unreturning brave that the monument had been erected’. However that was not the thrust of the main speech delivered by the Governor. Finally, according to the report in the *Armidale Express*, ‘Many beautiful wreaths were placed on the monument’, whereupon the fountain was started. A bugler played the Last Post and the Bishop gave the benediction. To conclude proceedings there was ‘An announcement by the Governor that “there would be no school on Monday” which was received with whole-hearted approval by the children’.

The report in the *Armidale Chronicle* carried this additional observation: ‘There were many tear filled eyes as relatives of fallen soldiers accepted the Mayor’s invitation to place wreaths on the memorial’. It is on the basis of this solitary sentence, which is atypical of the other extensive coverage in the press, that historian Professor Ken Inglis would have us believe that Armidale’s War Memorial provides an example of an Australian community being in mourning, grieving the loss of those local volunteers who had died in the war. Whilst it is highly likely that the next-of-kin of local men who had been killed were overcome with emotion, to argue that the whole community was in grief and mourning is unconvincing. The weight of evidence supports a quite different interpretation.

Whenever given the opportunity, the crowd was only too prepared to applaud when reference was made to the 33rd 'Armidale' Battalion's battle honours. The community identified with the Battalion, and could not have been prouder of its military record. It would have been the same with the next-of-kin of the deceased.

CONCLUSION

It has been estimated that Australia has between 1500 and 2000 First World War memorials, about half of which record the names of locals who volunteered for the AIF, not just those who died on active service. This is a peculiarly Australian phenomenon. It contrasts markedly with the war memorials of other nations of the period which, if they have names, nearly always record only those of the dead.

An example of an Australian war memorial that incorporates as complete an Honor Roll as possible of the district's AIF volunteers is the one in Armidale's Central Park. What can an examination of its origins tell us?

Those who would go about the task of organising Armidale's war memorial had before them a precedent, the town's Boer War memorial, a band rotunda complete with its own Honor Roll of local volunteers, which had been unveiled in March 1902. Not one of the names on that Honor Roll was of a soldier who had been killed on active service. This is an example of a war memorial that is not a manifestation of community grief. Rather, the purpose of that war memorial was to express the Armidale community's pride in its volunteers, for having gone off to war to fight for the British Empire.

It was in May 1915 that the call went out for the Armidale community to become involved in the establishment of another war memorial. What triggered this development was the death at Gallipoli, shortly after the 25 April landing, of the community's leading citizen – a prominent businessman and the district's parliamentary representative. The members of the Armidale 'Establishment' were keen that this fine upstanding individual be memorialized, and it would continue to support such a project. However, the time was not right for an immediate start.

By the time something approaching community attention eventually came to focus on the proposal that a memorial be erected to him, public opinion was opposed. Replacing it was the proposal that there be a monument incorporating an Honor Roll, which would include the names of the men in whom the community took pride. There was a push for the names to be those of the locals who had been killed in battle – roughly 18% of local volunteers. This gave way, however, to a massive collection of names, about 900 in all, of each and every volunteer from the district. Actually, it was even more wide ranging than that, with inclusion on the Honor Roll of the names of anybody with any connection with the district, having once lived there or simply because of some type of passing association. The community was proud of them all because they had volunteered to fight against a German menace which seriously offended their moral sensibilities. The local volunteers fought mainly in Europe, on the Western Front, in the second half of the war. And back in Armidale, they could not have been prouder of the exploits of the 33rd 'Armidale' Battalion. Its battle honours were many, as it participated in the effort which culminated in German capitulation.

Undoubtedly there was grief in the community, that of next-of-kin of those men who were killed in the war. But that is not why Armidale built its First World War Memorial: it was because of the pride the community - the *whole* community - had for the endeavours of all its AIF volunteers.