

Riverstone District First World War Honour Roll

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On 5 July 2015 a reproduction of the First World War Honour Board was unveiled by Michelle Rowland MP. It was funded by a grant through the Centenary of ANZAC program.

The original Honour Roll was unveiled 97 years ago on 28 September 1918. A history of the Roll appeared in the Historical Society Publication, *Riverstone and the First World War*, part of which is reproduced below:

Each community wanted to honour in a permanent way the men who had given their lives, or years out of their lives, to preserve the Empire. Plans were underway for these memorials and money was being collected long before the war ended. Riverstone collected funds for an Honour Roll and raised £60 at a meeting held at the Picture Hall. It was planned to erect a temporary board in the waiting room at the railway station.

The Riverstone and District Honour Roll started out as a temporary memorial constructed during the war. The War Council would not allow more than £25 to be spent on memorials. Money was allowed to be collected, but above £25 had to be banked until after the war. A Committee had been formed to organise a memorial and it was decided to erect a wooden Honour Roll, with the names of all of the district soldiers inscribed. It was to be hung in the waiting room at the railway station, and after the war, they planned to erect a permanent monument in the town. Several people were selected to collect money: Miss Shepherd and Mrs Wallace for Riverstone; Mr Langland for Annangrove; Mr Verdon for Rouse Hill; Mr Pettingel for Marsden Park; Ald C. Jeffery for Vineyard and Cr J. Pye for Schofields.¹

An item in the Gazette of 17 May 1918 reported that the board was under preparation and the committee requested that in any instance where their representatives had failed to call on any family who have relatives on active service, such information should be made known to them as early as possible, for their paramount object is that of doing honor to every lad who is connected with the district and has fought or is fighting for the colors.

The committee decided that listing the soldiers in order of enlistment was impractical, so they were to be listed in years of enlistment.

The Honour Roll was unveiled on 28 September 1918 by R.B. Walker MLA. As a large crowd was expected, the ceremony took place near the Railway station with the board placed on a lorry and draped with the Union Jack. The speakers then stood on the lorry to make their speeches. The honour board was described as being of polished wood, in three panels with 128 names on the panels, with more to be inscribed.²As planned, it was then hung in the waiting room of the railway station.

The local band played, speeches were made by Councillor Pye, Mayor Chandler, Ensign Jones of the Salvation Army and others, and the ceremony was followed by refreshments at the Oddfellows hall.

The original honour roll remained at the railway station until the late 1970s/early 1980s. The story goes that it was vandalised, taken down for repair and then disappeared.

Despite persistent efforts by Sam Lane, Merv Davis and in later years Clarrie Neale, no trace of the original honour roll has ever been found.

Many locals, including myself, can still picture the Honour Roll as it hung at the Railway Station, a solemn, imposing icon that provided an emotional connection to our past. Every time we went to the station, while waiting to buy a ticket, we would look up at the Honour Board and search for the names of relatives or people we knew.

The loss of the Honour Roll has been a sore point to myself and many others. The opportunity arose through the Centenary of ANZAC grant program to apply for funds to have a reproduction made. With the support of Michelle Rowland MP and the Centenary of ANZAC committee, we were successful in obtaining funds.

We had one high quality black and white photograph of the Honour Roll and it was from this photograph that the skilled team of Hamilton Honour Boards was able to construct the beautiful replica that we now have. The artwork was by Sheridan Walters; Production and Assembly by Barry Higgins, Polishing by Joel Higgins and Assembly and Lettering by Bruce Clutton.

On 5 July 2015 over 150 people, including those with connections to the men whose names were listed, witnessed the return of the Honour Board to Riverstone.

Robyn Woodward, Stewart and Joan Thompson (along with Digger the horse), from the 1st Light Horse re-enactment group, plus Dennis Channels, from the 18th Battalion Living History group, dressed in First World War uniforms, added to the occasion.

After the official part of the morning, visitors enjoyed a sausage sizzle lunch and then visited the Museum exhibits which featured an ANZAC theme.

Later in the day James Downey was presented with the Historical Society's "Centenary of ANZAC" award for his outstanding work in educating the community about the First World War, especially through the 18th Battalion Living History group. His countdown on Facebook to the centenary of the landing at Gallipoli was an inspiring and emotional journey for both James and the hundreds of people connected to his page. We have no doubt that each and every person who read his posts gained an appreciation of the war far greater than by just reading a text book.

The First World War Honour Roll now proudly hangs above the fireplace in the entry foyer at the Riverstone Museum.

¹ *Windsor and Richmond Gazette*, 11 January 1918.

² *Windsor and Richmond Gazette*, 11 October 1918.



Michelle Rowland MP unveiling the Honour Roll. Dennis Channels and Judith Lewis watch on in the background.



Members of the Riverstone Historical Society.



The new Honour Roll after it was unveiled.



Michelle Rowland MP and Historical Society Secretary Rosemary Phillis.