

Cenotaph 100 - Centenary of the Riverstone War Memorial

Rosemary Phillis and Sue Hunter-Lawrence

It was almost by chance that the events to commemorate the centenary of the War Memorial/Cenotaph came about.

Blacktown City Council had released a Town Centre Masterplan for the Riverstone Town Centre. The plan was to move the heart of the town to Market Street, away from the historic Railway station curtilage. The Masterplan quote, "Riverstone had no heart" incensed Riverstone Chamber of Commerce members Sue Hunter-Lawrence and Warren Kirby, who were charged to provide the business communities response to the plan.

Meeting to discuss the Chambers response to the Masterplan, titled "Riverstone in Review", Warren showed Sue a cracking photo he had recently captured of the sun setting behind the War Memorial. There was no doubt that this photo would feature in "Riverstone in Review" outlining the hidden beauty of Riverstone.

Sue approached Rosemary to discuss "Riverstone in Review", where she proudly pointed out the Cenotaph photo, and how it magically captured the essence of Riverstone. When Rosemary mentioned that the Cenotaph would turn 100 this year, Sue said it was our obligation to commemorate the centenary, the strength of our community and cement the Railway curtilage as our heart.

The Chamber formed a sub committee consisting of Sue Hunter-Lawrence, Mike Shervington OBE, Warren Kirby, Craig Laffin OAM, with Rosemary Phillis coming on board from the Riverstone and District Historical Society Inc.

The Chamber had three goals for the commemoration:-

1. Recognise the Cenotaph as Riverstone's heart;
2. Create a sense of community in our growing town;
3. Raise the profile of the Riverstone-Schofields RSL sub-Branch.

Sensing the importance of the occasion, the Chamber reached out to Blacktown City Council, the Riverstone RSL sub-Branch, and Legacy who came on board as partners.

Local businesses, the Riverstone Memorial Club, Macs Hire, Barker Plumbing, Riverstone Business Park, Simply Fin Wiz, ResponseRE, Reuben Real Estate, Michelle Rowland, Bruno's Barbers and Ztronics provided support as sponsors,

The main event was the rededication of the Memorial on Saturday 9 November. Although this date was a day after original date of the 8th, it was decided to hold it on a Saturday, to allow the maximum number of people to attend.

Following the rededication, plans were made to recreate a fundraising cricket match from 1914, when a team of local men played against a team of local women. The logistics associated with this event resulted in it being postponed to a future date.

In an effort to activate the local shopping area, Blacktown Council hosts car displays, at an event called "Rev Up Riverstone", on the second Saturday of the month.

Seizing the opportunity to support the Cenotaph Commemoration, the Committee approached the Council events team, to focus the "Rev Up Riverstone" event, on military related vehicles.

The decision was made that a commemorative plaque should be placed at the Memorial. The job of designing and supplying the plaque was taken on by Blacktown Council. It was also decided that funds should be raised to have a pair of bronze boots should be cast to be placed at the Railway Station/Memorial to represent the path taken by so many men and women who enlisted and served their country from the district. For most of the major campaigns servicemen and women would have left and returned by train. The aim will now be to raise sufficient funds to have the 'boots' installed by Anzac Day next year.

Rosemary and the Riverstone and District Historical Society's role was to publish a book on the history of the Memorial, including details of each of the 32 men whose names are listed. The book, "The Riverstone War Memorial", was printed by Andrew Southwell at Copyprint.

The Chamber of Commerce decided that memorabilia for the event (with funds to go to the bronze boots), would be a specially brewed and bottled beer and stubby holders. The beer was brewed by Hart and Hound who operates a boutique brewery in a building on the old Riverstone Meatworks site in Riverstone Parade.

A Facebook page called Cenotaph 100 was created to allow communication about the centenary. Mike undertook the huge task of preparing a daily Facebook post for the 100 days leading up to the rededication ceremony. He wrote about the men on the Memorial, military related items and interviewed a number of the local RSL sub-Branch and residents.

Sue had the role of finding sponsors and the challenging task of contacting local schools and community groups to invite them to be involved. The results were impressive. Most local schools were keen to be involved and the Riverstone Girl Guides were keen to help out in any role that they could.

Craig is the Development Officer at Norwest Christian College. He organised for the school band to play the National Anthem and students to take part in the ceremony. Craig also promoted the event on his community radio program and hosted members of the Committee on his program on Monday the 4th and 11th.

Warren is a professional photographer. His major roles were organising digital images for artwork, and the historic recording the event, especially the creation of an image of the crowd at the ceremony on the 9th, to recreate the image from 100 years before.



**The Cenotaph 100 Committee.
Warren Kirby, Craig Laffin,
Rosemary Phillis, Sue Hunter-
Lawrence,
Mike Shervington.
Photo: The Good Egg Studio**