

MILDURA DAY CELEBRATIONS, 2017

Mildura Day 2017 remembers 100 years the first Soldier Settlement land was made available through 23 block since allocations at Birdwoodton.

One of the major incentives to the later growth of the Chaffey Settlement was the introduction into Australia of Soldier Settlement. The First World War was a conflict of extraordinary proportions, far outweighing any that had occurred previously, and it involved large numbers of volunteers rather than professional soldiers.

The Australian Government voted to open many regions throughout the nation by making land available for the establishment of primary industry.

Our own district, which could boast the greatest proportion of volunteers for any part of Australia, was enriched greatly by such schemes. The first was at Birdwoodton in 1917, and later would come West Merbein, Red Cliffs and the Millewa.

It may seem unusual that Soldier Settlement should begin even while the war was continuing

its ferocity in France and elsewhere, after all, most soldiers were still fighting. It comes as no surprise to find that so many of the first soldier settlers were men who had been wounded severely or had become ill. This is evident in any study of the first 23 recipients of Soldier Settlement blocks here.

The soldiers themselves made it clear that they wanted the settlement to honour the man they so admired: General William Birdwood, who was promoted to a full general in the same year. Later he became Field Marshall Birdwood, First Baron Birdwood. The name of the settlement was amended to Birdwoodton because South Australia already had a Birdwood, named after the same general.

Thus Birdwoodton became our region's first Soldier Settlement and in 2017 it celebrates its centenary.



Helping with the lunches

CENTENARY OF THE FIRST

Block 1: James Stevens served in Gallipoli in 1915. The block encompassed 12 acres of land and there is still a member from the original family living on the original block. Much of the land has been sold off through subdivision.

Block 2: Walter Roy Elliott enlisted at the age of 24. In 1928 this property was split – 9 acres was transferred to James Stevens and 2A, 6 acres went to another neighbour Frank Sedy.

Block 3: Frank Clifton Sedy enlisted at the age of 21. Suffering from ill health, block 3 and 2A were sold in 1928 and resold in 1932 to J Killingbeck.



Garrett Lyons - Block 4

Block 4: Garrett Lyons was enlisted at the age of 24. He died in 1936 and his widow, then later his sons, worked on the property and lived there for many years.

Block 5: Duncan James King enlisted at the age of 38. In September 1929 he left the district because of health problems within his family.

Block 6: Wallace Crace Bennett enlisted at the age of 21 and was discharged with rheumatic fever after 6 weeks of serving in Gallipoli. He left the district in 1928 due to his wife's ill health. The block was transferred to Mrs Lavinia Whitney.

Block 7: Henry Herbert Tiller enlisted at the age of 19. When applying for the property he gained suitable references from C.J DeGaris and Thomas M Gooch, both well-known settlers. In 1932, approval was granted to sell his property to a grocer from Cope Cope.

Block 8A: William Frederick Hodson enlisted at the age of 22 years and his block was transferred to G.H Ball in 1928.

Block 8B: Hugh Watson Woodburn enlisted at the age of 30 years and returned after being wounded at Gallipoli. He purchased additional land Block 8C (J.L Burrell) and it became 8D. He died in a car accident in 1937 and his wife remained on the land for many years.

Block 8C: John Lewis Burrell enlisted at the age of 18 years. He was a trooper in the Light Horse Regiment. His block was subdivided in 1928 between neighbours Woodburn and Charles. He has family remaining in the region.

Block 9: John Alan Jacob Whitney enlisted at the age of 33 and served in Gallipoli. As well as managing Block 9, he also had a dry-land farm at Wargan, west of Merbein.

Block 10: John Brown enlisted at the age of 23 and was a member of the Australian Flying Corp. He served in India and Mesopotamia. In 1931 his property was sold.

Block 11: Stanley Charles enlisted at the age of 23 years in Geelong. He had no living relatives known. He was wounded at Lone Pine, losing his right eye. Both he and his wife worked the property themselves, maintaining an excellent garden.

Block 12: Philip Joseph Palmer enlisted at the age of 21 years and was wounded at Gallipoli. He built a house on the property, but never lived there. He lived in Mildura and commuted to the block. His property was sold in 1936.

Block 13: Herbert Charles Neal enlisted at the age of 25 years and was wounded at Gallipoli. In his application for Soldier Settlement land he indicated his address was the Mildura Club. He was receiving a pension of 17 shillings and 3 pence a week. In 1923 his property was sold.

Block 14: Robert Keddington Rodwell enlisted at the age of 32 years. He was in the Royal Navy Reserve for 12 years. He applied for the block at the age of 34, having had two years' experience in Rhodesia growing maize and cattle.

Block 15: Theophilus Thomas Walters enlisted at the age of 20 years. When he applied for the block, he stated "he had no financial assets, however, he had been given a horse". He sold the property in 1942.



Stanley Whiting - Block 16

Block 16: Stanley Joshua Whiting enlisted at the age of 24 years and was wounded a week after landing at Gallipoli. He was taken back to Cairo hospital and repatriated to England. In 1930, 5 acres from block 20 was purchased to add to his total acreage. Block 16 was sold after being in the family for about 70 years.

Block 17: John Percival Cupper enlisted at the age of 25 years and was wounded at Gallipoli within a week of arrival. In 1936, he sold this property and purchased another property from a later allocation of Soldier Settlement, building a most prestigious house of that time.

SOLDIER SETTLEMENT 2017

Block 18: Alfred Bromley enlisted at the age of 24 years in the Light Horse Regiment. He left the block in 1936.

Block 19: Noel Bean Corbould enlisted at the age of 23 years. In 1936, he applied for further lands and a water licence at Cabarita, his application was not agreed to. His son Peter managed the property until 1978 when it was sold.

Block 20: John McKenzie McLeod enlisted at the age of 25 years. His first attempt to sell the property was not approved by the authorities, however it was eventually sold in 1930, being divided by 3 adjoining blocks, all of 5 acres.

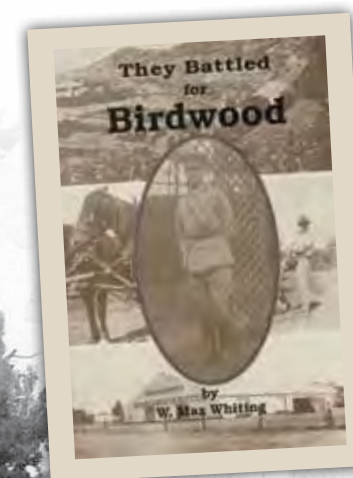
Blocks 21: Alfred John McGauchie enlisted at the age of 20 years and was repatriated to Australia in 1915. He re-enlisted in 1917 and left his brother to manage the property. He married in 1924 and worked the block until his sudden death in 1940 after which his widow managed the property for many years.

Block 22: Percival William Walters enlisted at the age of 28 years. Percival and his brother Theo, each offered 6 acres from their blocks to allow their brother Lionel to have 12 acres. This was eventually approved in 1920.

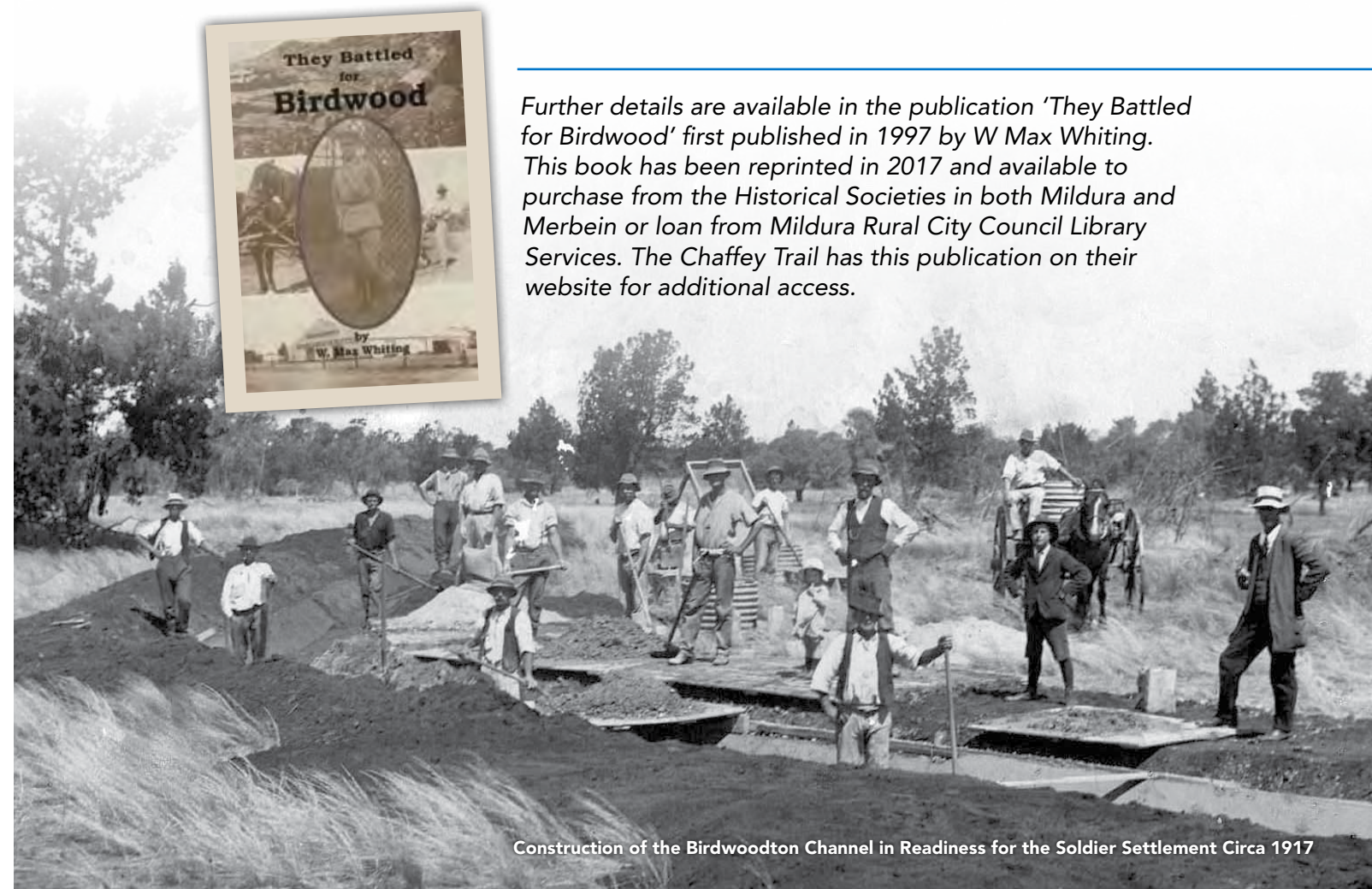


Block 22A: Lionel Stanley Walters enlisted at the age of 24 years, gaining his block from support of his two brothers Percival and Theo (blocks 22 and 15).

Blocks 23, 23A: Ewen Cameron Kennedy enlisted at the age of 22 years. He served mainly in France, and in his application for land, noted he had been wounded on four occasions. He was allocated block 23 and then acquired additional land from a section of recreational land, becoming 23A. He died in 1941 when the property was sold.

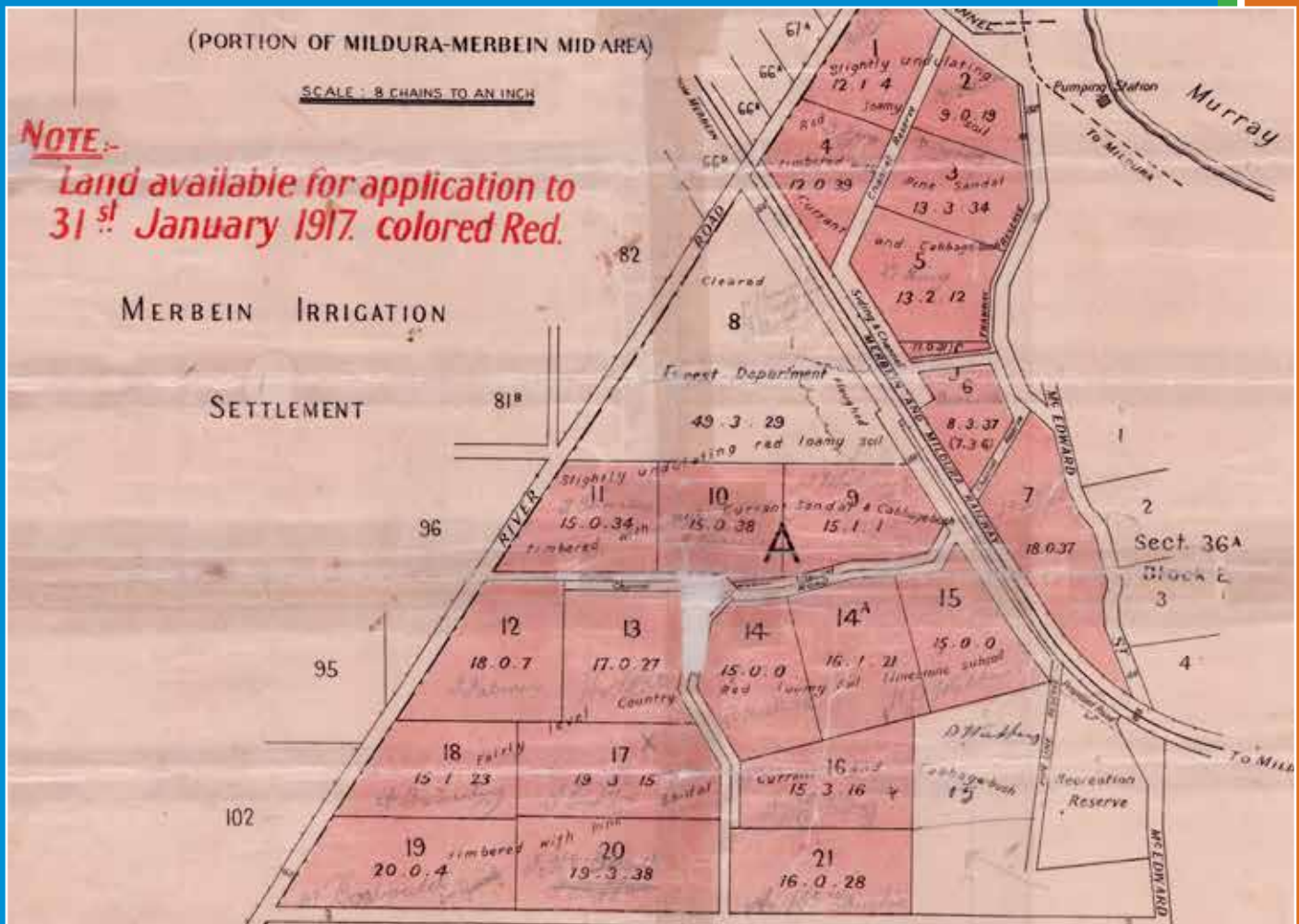


Further details are available in the publication 'They Battled for Birdwood' first published in 1997 by W Max Whiting. This book has been reprinted in 2017 and available to purchase from the Historical Societies in both Mildura and Merbein or loan from Mildura Rural City Council Library Services. The Chaffey Trail has this publication on their website for additional access.



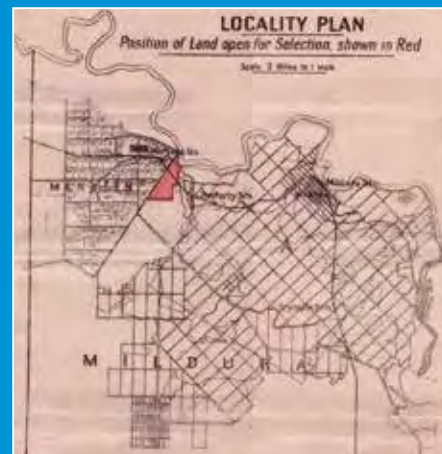
Construction of the Birdwoodton Channel in Readiness for the Soldier Settlement Circa 1917

SOLDIER SETTLEMENT ALLOCATIONS



SCHEDULE OF ALLOTMENTS.

Allotment	Section	Chain	Frigid Area.			Non-Frigid Area.			Total Area.	Capital Value.	Half-yearly Payment.
			A.	B.	P.	A.	B.	P.			
1	A	Mildura	12	1	4				12 1 4	75	2 5 0
2	A	"	7	0	19	2	0	0	9 0 19	45	1 7 0
3	A	"	13	3	34				13 3 34	105	3 3 0
4	A	"	12	0	39				12 0 39	75	2 5 0
5	A	"	11	2	12	2	0	0	13 2 12	90	2 14
6	A	"	7	3	6	1	0	31	8 3 37	90	1 16 0
7	A	"	16	2	37	2	2	0	18 2 0	103	3 0 0
8	A	"	10	1	1				10 1 1	90	2 14 0
9	A	"	15	0	38				15 0 38	90	2 14 0
10	A	"	15	0	34				15 0 34	90	2 14 0
11	A	"	18	0	7				18 0 7	90	2 14 0
12	A	"	17	0	27				17 0 27	85	2 11 0
13	A	"	15	0	0				15 0 0	115	3 9 0
14	A	"	14	3	21	1	2	1	16 1 21	115	3 9 0
15	A	"	15	0	0				15 0 0	115	3 9 0
16	A	"	15	2	15	4	0	0	19 3 16	80	2 8 0
17	A	"	19	2	15				19 2 15	100	3 0 0
18	A	"	14	1	33	1	0	0	15 1 23	75	2 5 0
19	A	"	18	2	4	1	2	0	20 4 0	95	2 17 0
20	A	"	19	1	38	0	2	0	19 3 38	100	3 0 0
21	A	"	15	2	28	0	2	0	16 0 28	80	2 8 0



The first working bee, 93 willing helpers from Mildura and Merbein referred to as 'Practical Patriotism' to assist clear the blocks of land for Soldier Settlers - 6 August 1917

E. J. Kenny, the State Rivers & Water Supply Commission's 'Officer in Charge of the Merbein Irrigation Area' was a friend and guide to the soldier settlers and in recognition of service to returned soldiers, the Merbein Branch presented him with a Certificate of Merit, one of only three presented to civilians by the Victorian R.S.S.I.L.A.

This brochure has been collated with information from 'They Battled for Birdwood' and in consultation with the Merbein & District Historical Society for which we are appreciative. We acknowledge the support of W Max Whiting and his generosity in sharing his publication with us all.