

Soldier Settlement Exhibit in Amiens Resource Centre (ARC)

Aim: to create a dedicated exhibit regarding the Pikedale Soldier Settlement which contains information collected about all returned Soldiers who participated in this scheme.

Components:

- Overview information panels – An introduction to what the Pikedale Soldier Settlement was. Appendix A & B provide information to form a basis of these information panels. This information will be reviewed and revised in consultation with AHA members.
 - Appendix C is a quote for information panelling (this is the same as what you would find at the Stanthorpe Regional Art Gallery beside artworks with a description on the piece. Number of panels required will depend on how much information is displayed.
- Soldier Settler Passports and Dossiers – A single page document (passport) has been created and loaded onto the <https://www.amiensqldhistory.com> website for 483 Soldier Settlers in the Pikedale Scheme. The information contained in the passport has been sourced from both Military and Lands Department records which are both in the public domain so there should be not privacy infringement concerns. We currently have further information (dossier) for 46 Soldier Settlers and their families. Some of this information has been shared with us by descendants of the settlers and some is being researched by Ian Ward who is using sources such as ancestry.com, general web searches and more detailed Military records. We hope that the number of dossiers will continue to increase over time and we have created a simple template so that information can be collated in a uniform manner. The intention is to store this information in the ARC where we have a measure of security over how public this research becomes. Appendix D is an example of a Passport and Appendix E an example of a Dossier.

Large laminated maps of the counties which formed part of the Pikedale Settlement have been produced. These maps correspond to map inserts on each passport and are necessary for locating the site of individual lots.

- A touchscreen computer has been purchased so that visitors can access the passports however, this function would require Wi-Fi so that the home screen can be set on the <https://www.amiensqldhistory.com/find-a-soldier> page where all of the passports have been loaded. Asterisks indicate those settlers for whom we currently have a dossier. We could load the passports onto the hard drive of the computer to avoid the need for Wi-Fi however, this would leave them open to the possibility of being accidentally deleted or edited if a user makes an inadvertent error in accessing them.
- A small desk or table for the computer is required.
- A bookshelf or magazine rack for the dossiers and other Pikedale Soldier Settlement documents is required.
- Seating for visitors wishing to undertake research or read dossiers would be nice.
- The maps need to be accessible so that the location of lots can be cross referenced with the passports. How to best display these maps needs further discussion.

APPENDIX A

What is Soldier Settlement?

Over 300,000 soldiers returned to Australia from WWI. In all some 40,000 returned servicemen and women took up an offer of farming land, made possible by Soldier Settlement schemes in all the states of the Commonwealth; fewer than half remained on the land fifteen years later.

The advantages of a rural life and the availability of land for returned soldiers was promoted and advertised extensively by the Department of Lands after World War I and again after World War II. Sometimes referred to as the “yeoman ideal”, Australian policy makers in the late 19th and early 20th Century encouraged a romantic belief in the virtue of agricultural activity and the societal value of small-scale farming communities. The sturdy, independent pioneer merged with that of the noble, patriotic digger to create a powerful symbolic character: the Soldier Settler, a worthy figure capable of promoting social stability and economic productivity.

The *Returned Soldiers Settlement Act, 1916* allowed settlement of returned soldiers on Crown and Closer Settlement lands. From this date, the Commonwealth Government was responsible for finance, and the states were responsible for the provision of land, the classification of applicants and training.

Crown land was used where possible, but much land was also acquired by the government. By 1924 almost 100,000 km² had been designated for Soldier Settlement. Of this, 73,000 km² was Crown land, including some land from Aboriginal Reserves. The remaining 25,000 km² was acquired, mostly by a government policy called *Closer Settlement*. The aim of Closer Settlement was to establish productive agricultural communities by dividing large tracts of pastoral land into small plots with the intention of reviving an agrarian ethic and in some areas, was a concerted effort to break the squatters’ domination of land tenure.

From as far north as the Atherton Tablelands in Queensland, to Kangaroo Island in South Australia, every state saw new settlements develop. Applicants were required to place a tender with the Department of Lands with successful applications being, in theory at least, decided by ballot system. Those eligible to apply for land were ex-service personnel with at least six months war service including nurses and women relatives of deceased soldiers. Despite being legally able to take up land, there is evidence that women were not openly encouraged to do so and even though some of the available land was taken from Aboriginal Reserves and the fact that Aboriginal Australians fought alongside other Australian troops, only a very small number of indigenous applications were successful.

However, those Soldiers who were successful in gaining such a block of land had the opportunity to start a farming life in a number of rural activities including wool, dairy, cattle, pigs, fruit, fodder and grain. By the end of June, 1924 a total of 23,367 returned soldiers and sailors had taken up settlement farms on 94,192 km² across the country.

These initial land allotments resulted in triumph for a few and despair for most. Indeed, in some cases these new farmers, unable to cope with the climatic variances of Australia and devoid of the capital to increase stock or quality of life, simply walked off the land back to the large towns and cities from whence they had come.

Many settlers came from distant places and few had any idea of the type of land they were tendering for. Success was hindered by poor soil, land acquisitions too small to be viable, drought or lack of permanent water on allotments, lack of experience in farming and poor prices for produce. Also, the sheer numbers of men applying for land far exceeded the numbers anticipated, hindering sound administration of the scheme. Importantly, having some capital to begin with was also seen as a way to achieve success. For many just returning from the war, this was not their reality.

By 1929 almost one-quarter of soldier settlers in NSW had left their farms.

The first land chosen for soldier settlement in Queensland was 21,450 hectares near the Beerburrum railway siding on the North Coast railway line.

In 1919, an area of approximately 7000 hectares was selected in the Stanthorpe Shire, in the parishes of Pikedale and Marsh. Eventually, more than 700 returned soldiers were allocated blocks in what became known as the Pikedale Soldier Settlement. Within this wider settlement, a number of locations were named by those returning servicemen in honour of famous battlefields, no doubt including some where they had fought. Eventually supported by a branch railway line, they included a settlement at Amiens. This name was suggested by surveyor George Grant in 1920.

Although the intention of the soldier settlement farms in the district was fruit growing, the fruit trees required a number of years before they would bear, and the government loans on the farms required immediate interest payments. Many soldier settlers turned to vegetable growing, both for their own use and to enable them to sell for a short-term income.

As with other soldier settlements, life was difficult due to the varying quality of the land, isolation, lack of farming or other agricultural experience, adverse climatic conditions and the general lack of financial and other government support. It would be fair to say that overall, the nation's Soldier Settler Scheme ultimately proved to be a failure and had profound social and ecological effects.

However at Amiens, the branch railway line did help in terms of access and a number of State enterprises were established. Schools and churches as well as improved housing followed slowly and over time, the strength and resilience of these first soldier settlers laid the basis for a vibrant and lasting community.

Soldiers settled on the land

23/04/2015

By **ROBERT MACMAURICE**

SOLDIER settlements were seen as one of many ways to repatriate soldiers back from service in World War I.

railway sidings and areas, that still exist today. Their legacies are manifold.

In May 1917, Mr Hunter the Minister for Lands,

announced that 17,000 acres of

land had been reserved at "The 13 Mile" on Pikedale, about 15 kilometres from Stanthorpe.

Surveys were made of 138 portions comprising 4,368 acres consisting of blocks ranging from 18 to 76 acres. It was decided that the blocks were suitable for fruit growing, and ringbarking was commenced on five-acre areas on each



"Repatriation"
A Monthly Bulletin Published by the Department of Repatriation for the Information of its Local Committees and all interested in the Return to Civil Life of the Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Forces

Price—THREEPENCE PER COPY. No. 1. MELBOURNE, MARCH, 1919. [Vol. I.]

HELP THE MAN with the MEDAL

What the Department of Repatriation has done during the first ten months of its existence, that is, from 8th April, 1918, to 25th January, 1919

TEN MONTHS' OPERATIONS		
Total number of applications through all branches	- - - -	60,287
Total number of applicants assisted	- - - -	44,188
Total value of assistance granted	- - - -	£383,506
Made up as follows—		
Gift - £413,663	Loan - £154,455	General - £15,448
EMPLOYMENT SECTION		
Total number of men placed in employment	- - - -	29,260
VOCATIONAL TRAINING SECTION		
Total number of men approved for training	- - - -	4,365
Total number of men completed training	- - - -	1,230
ASSISTED PASSAGES		
Amount paid to date for passages of soldiers' dependents to the Commonwealth (485 passages)	- - - -	£5,772

[Issued under the Authority of Senator the Hon. E. D. Millen, Minister for Repatriation.]

The Pikedale (Amiens), Stanthorpe and Cottonvale Soldier Settlement (one of many established around Australia) became the vision of a future life for 501 returned men and their families. They brought with them the names of the battles they had participated in – Amiens, Bapaume, Messines, Bullecourt, Passchendaele, Pozieres, Fleurbaix, and these became the names, of villages,



Surveyors Camp

block preparatory to clearing. Clearing commenced in August 1917. Some 20 acres was also set aside as a nursery and state farm, for training the soldiers.

By the end of 1918, Mr A.P. Devereux, an ex-soldier had been appointed manager of the settlement, a sawmill had been established, 4,000 apple and peach trees had been planted, and five acres set aside for a school.



Amiens School built in 1920

Preparations were being made for the building of the school and recreation hall, and 19 returned soldiers were already camped, or housed at The 13 Mile. In order to take up their allotments the soldiers were each given an advance of 500 pounds (this was later increased to 625 pounds – this sum was equivalent to about two and a half years' pay, for an average worker), at an interest rate of three and a half per cent payable over a 40-year period.

This advance was intended to allow the men to purchase their land, equipment, and necessary materials in order to

make a beginning. Soldiers had to apply to the Land Settlement Committee, to be considered for the available blocks of land, had to be honourably discharged, and to have an aptitude for farming.

By early 1919 Miss Bertha Smith had 13 children attending what was to become Amiens State School and plans were being made to construct a tramway, with a three foot six inch wide gauge (about a metre) from Cottonvale a distance of 13 miles (approximately 20 kilometres). At this stage 46 soldiers, with families, in many cases had been settled and most were living in bark huts, including Miss Smith.

The tramway construction from Cottonvale to Amiens began in June 1919, with some of the tramline coming from used line in suburban Brisbane. It was

July 26th, 1920 – HRH Prince of Wales opens Cottonvale-Amiens Branch Line.



completed in September 1919, with 120 men involved in the building, and cost 35,000 pounds.

Other initiatives that had commenced by the middle of 1920, included the Pikedale Soldiers Settlement Co-operative Canning, Jam, and Preserving Company. The visit by the Prince of Wales in July of that year was also a major event, by which stage about 400 returned men were involved with the settlement.

Lode tin, a little gold, silver, wolfram and other minerals were discovered at Swiper's Gully in 1920 and many ex-soldiers went mining while waiting for fruit trees to grow. Many fruit trees needed at least five years to mature.

Progress at the settlement was rapid, as can be demonstrated by the fact that 193 buildings had been erected by the end of 1920, a cannery established, churches, cold rooms, 1666 acres of land had been cleared and ploughed, 110,000 fruit trees planted and blocks allotted to 354 applicants, and two full-time nurses were employed in the settlement. Some 143 ex-soldiers were actually settled by then. With so much activity and so many people involved it was inevitable that problems would arise and they did. By 1922 the following were being reported.

1. It took about five years for the orchards to become profitable.

2. Frosts and hail affected the establishment of orchards.

3. The 625-pound loan advanced was considered insufficient, by many settlers.

4. After all the development work the market value of the properties was less than the loans that the soldiers had undertaken. They had been overcapitalised.

5. Health problems, as a result of service, of many ex-soldiers affected their ability to work.

6. Abandoned farms became overgrown and orchards untended.

7. Whereas originally five acres of cultivatable land was considered adequate, this figure was later realised to be inadequate.

8. A lot of nursery stock obtained from Tasmania was found to be diseased, and/or root bound and these problems were only noted a couple of years after planting. When the government agreed to replacement stock, it too was found to be unsuitable.

9. Poor soil drainage and lack of water on many blocks.

10. The cost of fertiliser.

11. Interest payments on the loans were to be started immediately, yet most soldiers had no income and a number of years before crops would be profitable.

12. Uncertain markets.

13. Vermin and disease.

14. Ironically, on occasions, the soldier settlers produced a glut of vegetables, for the markets, and so creating low prices and unreasonable returns for their labour.

15. An unresponsive administration, who were responsible for numerous settlements all around the state.

By the end of 1921, 60 soldiers had deserted their Amiens blocks. In March 1922 an auction was being organised by the State Government for the sale of equipment. Recriminations and criticism began to mount, but many soldier settlers battled on. All up, at this time, there were 391 soldier settlers in the Stanthorpe area and in a radius of three miles of Amiens there was a population of 600 people. In 1927 only half, or about 200, of the original settlers remained on their farms.

Some settlers turned to other sources of income, besides orchards and vegetable growing. Some grew tobacco, others tried fox and possum farming for their furs. But with the arrival of the 1930s, more settlers had left their farms, the cannery had been sold and the sawmill sold, and some corruption reported with the sale of the Soldier Settlement Store, which was valued at £9956 but sold for £3550 to the one and only tender, who happened to be an employee!

Ironically many who had been able to “hang in” on their farms had independent sources of income such as disability pensions from the Repatriation Department. In a 1937 newspaper article it was reported that of the 500 original settlers, in the Stanthorpe district, only about 50 remained. In the Amiens-Bapaume area of the original 235 settlers, 25 remained.

The descendants of these families still remain in this region. Despite the overcapitalisation and numerous other problems, which led to many failures, these soldier settlers demonstrated what was possible.

The families that came after them and took on the partially developed farms were able to build on that work, which has led to the reputation of this region for fruit and vegetables second to none.



Aerial view of Harslett Farm 2018. Jack Harslett and his wife Edith took up Soldier Settlement Lot 241 in 1919. Now a much larger farm, the original lot is still owned and farmed by the Harslett family.



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APPENDIX D



PASSPORT

Name: CARNEY, George Bolton

Date of birth: 22.09.1895

Place of birth: Yeerongpilly, Brisbane, Qld

Service number: 1834

Rank: Sergeant

Place of enlistment: Brisbane, Qld

Occupation prior to enlistment: Clerk

Soldier settlement parish: Marsh

Settlement lot number: 551

Settlement register number:

Date of purchase/approval:

Notes on purchase:

Family: 20.08.1923 married Elsie Catherine Emmons (1894-1940)
10.12.1942 married Marjorie Theresa McGilvery (1911-1978)

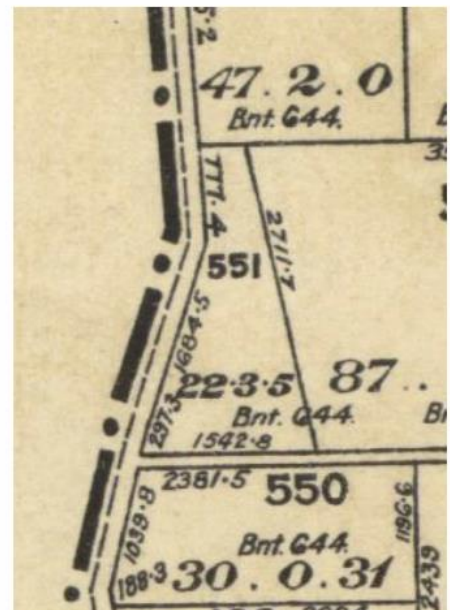
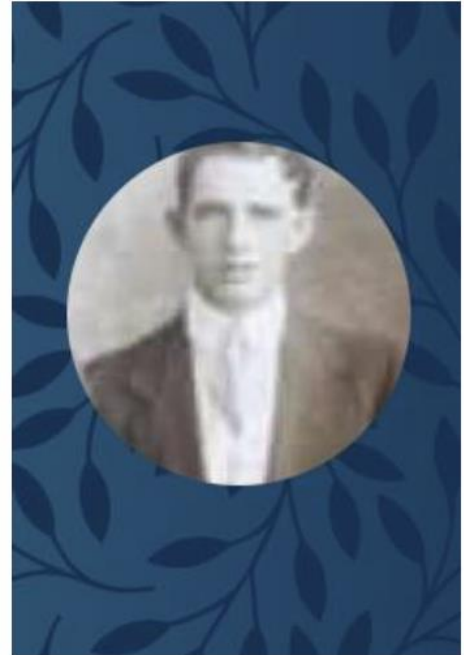
Notes on life:

Further information: Embarked on "Port Napier" on 12/05/1919 to return to Australia.

Date of death: 21.12.1951

Cause of death: Heart attack

Burial location: Brisbane



If you have any further information about George Bolton CARNEY, please contact the Amiens History Association at info@amiensqldhistory.com.

Further information:

Web: www.amiensqldhistory.com.au

Email: info@amiensqldhistory.com



DOSSIER

Name: CARNEY, George Bolton

George Carney. A soldier turned accountant.

George Bolton Carney was a most unlikely applicant for an allotment in the Pikedale Soldiers Settlement which had been founded outside of Stanthorpe in 1917. Prior to joining the First A.I.F. he worked as a clerk, not a farmhand. It is true that he did live with his family in a small country town--in Grandchester some 50 miles west of Ipswich in southeast Queensland. But his was not a farming family. Rather his father was the station master. Indeed after the war George himself would find work as a time keeper with Queensland Railways.

Eight months shy of his twenty-first birthday, but armed with a letter from his parents sanctioning his joining, George enlisted in Brisbane on January 10 1916.¹ Three months later, on April 12, he sailed from Sydney Harbour on the HMAT *Mooltan*. George was assigned the 4th Pioneer Battalion which assembled at Tel-el-Kebir in Egypt in March 1916 in readiness for fighting on the Western Front. Pioneers were given basic infantry training. But they were chiefly used to dig trenches, construct roads, light railways and strongpoints or clear battlefields.

The 4th Pioneers arrived at Marseilles on June 15, 1916. Their initial exposure to trench warfare was around Armentieres. Their first major battle was in July 1916 at Pozières in the final stages of the Battle of Pozières. The 4th Pioneers were never used as infantry. But they did take part in battles which defined the A.I.F.'s Western Front campaign--the Battles of Bouquet Farm, Bullencourt, Messines, the Third Battle of Ypres, and then in defensive actions (at Heburtern and Dermacot) during the Spring Offensive. In the Hundred Days Offensive beginning August 8, 1918, and which ended the war, the 4th Pioneers fought around Bellenglise and the St Quentin Canal in support of the 4th Division's attack on the Hindenburg Line. George spent some time ill in hospital and away from the front in 1916. But he will have participated in many of these scraps.

At the war's end the A.I.F. struggled to find the ships to return troops to Australia. George finally boarded the HMAT *Port Napier* on May 12, 1919, reaching Sydney on July 4. He was one of 880 returning soldiers on three trains which stopped over in Ipswich, en route to Brisbane, on the afternoon of July 6. There they were greeted by the Mayor and a party of officials, by a Train Tea Party providing refreshments, and by large appreciative crowd.² He was finally discharged on August 20 1919.

While still in uniform, on July 23, 1919, George married Elsie Kathleen Catherine Emmons from Ascot in Brisbane. They would have three children together, the first born on March 10, 1921. Elsie was the daughter of a railway ganger, and it was to Queensland Railways that the newly married George turned for employment. The 1919 Electoral Roll for Capricornia shows George working as a timekeeper with the address "care of Railway Assist. Engr., Emerald". As his station master father had, George moved to rural Queensland for work.³

When his eldest daughter was born in August 1923, George was registered as a voter living at "Tunnel", presumably the Tunnel Duaringa railway station, sixty miles west of Rockhampton. With the

¹ First Australian Imperial Force Personnel Dossier. Carney, George Bolton: SERN 1834. National Archives of Australia, Series B2445.

² "Yesterday's arrivals", *Queensland Times*, 7 July 1919, p.5.

³ Ancestry.com. *Australia, Electoral Rolls, 1903-1980* [database on-line]

Further information:

Web: www.amiensqldhistory.com.au

Email: info@amiensqldhistory.com

responsibility of a growing family, he determined that he should set his sights on qualifying as an accountant. In 1924 Rockhampton's *Morning Bulletin* included George as one of the "successful local students in the Federal Institute of Accountants' examinations".⁴

On the strength of his studies George was able to secure a position with the Main Roads Board in Brisbane. When he finally passed the Institute's accountancy examinations in 1925,⁵ he was living at Keylar Rd. in Michelton. He would spend the balance of his career with Main Roads as a sub-accountant. Michelton would become the family home. Living back in Brisbane he was able to take an active interest in the formation of the Pioneer Battalions' Association which held its first general meeting in 1931. George was elected honorary treasurer.

George may very well have been pleased with the course of his life after the WW1. But things did not pan out as he would have liked. Elsie died in February 1940. After her funeral George left their Michelton home to stay with his eldest son, Frederick, in Haig St. in Coorparoo. No doubt he was grief stricken. But during the next several months he met Marjorie Theresa McGilvery. They married in December 1941 and moved into a house in Haig St., Coorparoo. George would have another three children by his second wife and eventually establish a new family home at 63 Wellington St. in Coorparoo.

George remarried in the midst of WW2. Once again he offered up his services, signing up in April 1942.⁶ Aged 47 years, he was too old for active service and found himself in the Volunteer Defence Corps and attached to the Civil Constructional Corps.⁷ The Constructional Corps was established in April 1942 to provide manpower for the construction of necessary military infrastructure (such as airfields, barracks and gun emplacements.) George was temporarily promoted to the rank of Warrant Officer and headed its Allotments Section in Brisbane. He was discharged at his own request in December 1944, perhaps suffering a heart condition.

At his war's end George resumed work with the Main Roads Commission, as an assistant secretary and, after 1948, as its accountant. His premature death at the age of 55 years cut short his career. He died in Brisbane four days short of Christmas Day, 1951. The comfortable city life he had made for himself after returning from France was a far cry from that of his comrades who became soldier settlers near Stanthorpe.

⁴ "Accountants Institute", *Morning Bulletin*, 25 September 1924, p.8.

⁵ "Accountants exam" *Daily Standard*, 21 July 1925, p.5.

⁶ 2nd. Australian Imperial Force Personnel Dossier. Carney, George Bolton: SERN Q2002827. National Archives of Australia, Series B884.

⁷ Queensland Main Roads Commission. *The History of the Queensland Main Roads Commission During World War 2. 1939-1945*, p.vii.