

This morning, on the one hundredth anniversary of the Gallipoli landing, perhaps we might reflect on the impact of the First World War on Glebe's 22,000 residents. Two thousand Australians were killed or died of wounds in the first ten days at Anzac Cove. We know that twenty four Glebe citizen soldiers were killed in action or died of wounds on the Gallipoli peninsula. Two of them, clerk Edgar Fitzgerald and fitter Dick Horan lost their lives at the landing. The youngest Glebe soldier to die was 19, the eldest 34, three were Scottish-born, five were labourers, two miners, two machinists, two farmers, a gasfitter, blacksmith, pattern-maker and process engraver.

By Armistice Day 1918, 792 Glebe residents had volunteered for overseas service; 174 names are inscribed on our memorial but research by Rod Holtham indicates 187 Glebe men lost their lives. Honour boards were fixed on walls all over the country. The first one in Glebe was unveiled in Glebe Town Hall in February 1916 with 130 names, but it was an interim artefact with the final roll of honour in the town hall foyer supplied by Wunderlich which stamped out board's standard in form with individual inscriptions to order; it was unveiled on 26 June 1922. Honour boards were also installed in three local churches, St John's, the Presbyterian and Methodist, at Glebe and Forest Lodge public schools, at Glebe Rowing Club, and two workplaces, the tram depot in Glebe but called Rozelle, and at Meloy's horse-drawn carrying business.

If we count as family a person's parents, children, siblings, aunts and uncles and cousins, Ken Inglis observes, then every second Australian family was bereaved by the war. And many of the mourners were a generation older than their dead. The news was broken most often to mothers and fathers who had lost sons, less often- for more than 80 per cent of the AIF were unmarried – to women who had been made widows. The families of men killed on foreign battlefields were deprived of the traditional mourning ritual of their culture.. Their dead lay far away. Losing so many young men on the other side of the world without any possibility of a funeral, left an aching void in their lives.

The unveiling of Glebe memorial on Anzac Day 1922 was an occasion where the Governor General held the stage but the women of Glebe grasped their opportunity at the 1923 service to collectively to express their sense of profound loss.

It took the form of a pilgrimage and grieving mothers, widows and sisters, all dressed in black and wearing hats, who turned up on masse together with other grief-stricken local people, all crushed together around the monument.. It was a particularly poignant, intimate occasion charged with high emotion and great solemnity. The memorial committee secretary then proceeded to read out the name of each soldier inscribed in gold on the marble nameplate, and, as he did, a Glebe woman stepped forward to lay a wreath. To these women the monument, an entirely voluntary and local initiative, was more than a public statement of grief and pride. It was a hallowed place that the bereaved visited on anniversaries of death or birth. On these intensely personal occasions they stood in front of the granite and marble mausoleum, head bowed in quiet contemplation.

Much grief was publicly invisible and inaudible, its severe burden known only to the sufferers and their nearest and dearest. Rachel Curtis and Susan Maltby lost two sons at Gallipoli, as did Margaret Cotter, Ellen Sharpe, Margaret Faerber and Emma Neaves between 1916 and 1918. Biographers give us glimpses of anguish. From the

day the minister brought H.B.Higgins news that his beloved only son Mervyn was dead, Higgins felt stricken : 'My grief has condemned me to hard labour for the rest of my life'.

Henry and Emma Neaves resided at 33 Avona Avenue Glebe and their two boys were born and educated in Glebe. Harry, a grocer, survived Gallipoli but died in France in 1916. Brother Erle, a cashier, also enlisted, and wrote to Harry in France that 'all my pals...I came over with are gone...it's simply scientific murder, not war at all. I keep smiling but I tell you it takes some doing...the premonition I had when leaving Sydney that I will never see home again still hangs about me. He died on 6 November 1917. In grief mother Emma searched desperately for more information about her sons, obsessed with details of death and grave site. 'I understand Erle was one of 7 who were in a dugout, 5 of whom were killed...We can trace just possibly where the two boys fell but do not know so far whether their bodies were recovered to cemeteries'.

At 16 Charles Street Forest Lodge Nellie and Percy Gibbs seemed unable to accept the news of their son's death at Gallipoli. The distressed father wrote to the Defence Department : 'I am informed that my beloved son Gunner P.L.Gibbs (No 282) second Battery, 1st Division has been killed in action. Will you please tell me if the dreadful news is quite true? His mother and I cling to the hope that there may be a mistake and that our only child and only treasure is still alive'.

As the human cost of the conflict mounted, belief in the cause, and in the God in whose name it was being fought, sometimes founded. The war intensified sectarianism. Small bands of pacifists and socialists in a nation of five million denounced the war as a massacre of innocents or a contest between rival capitalist and imperial regimes in Europe. The romanticisation of war might be considered a cultural universal. In a domestic world then perceived in terms of breadwinners (mostly men) and dependants, death or incapacitation of bread winners, whose families often lived from week to week, inflicted great deprivation on their dependants.

In Memoriam notices to dead soldiers in the daily press evoked a silent unquenchable sorrow. Bereaved people performed their own acts of mourning. Ernest Welling died in 1916. Mother Ada delayed placing a death notice in the papers for two years when she was then moved to write :

"Oh the anguish of a mother
Oh the bitter tears she shed
When she heard her boy was missing
And she wondered 'Is he dead?'
Oh the weeks and months of torture
Oh the agony and pain
And she ~~we~~ wept and prayed and wondered
Would he come to her again
'Killed in Action' came still later
Oh the awful truth is bare"

Among the 20% of married men killed was Glebe resident William McDonald, a Boer War veteran and part of the AIF landing at Gallipoli, wounded there, mentioned in dispatches and killed at Mouquet Farm, France on 16 August 1916, leaving a widow Helen and daughters Grace and Joyce. Helen lived out her life at Minerva Flats, Mansfield Street The widow's pension she received, about ten shillings a week, was only one quarter of the average weekly wage, a level of benefit less than that paid in Britain and France.