

RYDE REMEMBERS
2014 - 2018

2,000 Poppies Project

City of Ryde

Ryde's link with the Red Poppies of Flanders

The association with Red Poppies as a symbol of loss in war dates back to the battlefields of France and Gallipoli.

While researching for the Centenary of Anzac Commemorations, Ryde Local Studies Librarian, Angela Phippen, uncovered a close link of the enduring symbol of remembrance - the Red Poppy - and families in Ryde whose husbands, sons and daughters enlisted in World War One.

Ms Phippen discovered a "letter to the editor" dated June 1920 relating that children from Villers-Bretonneux (where Australian troops fought to save the town in 1918) had gathered red poppy seeds from the Somme Valley to send to "the relatives of Australian and New Zealand soldiers who fell fighting on the battlefields of the Somme". Read on...

POPPY SEEDS FROM VILLERS BRETONNEUX.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE HERALD.

Sir,—In commemo with my colleagues in Melbourne and Christchurch, I have received from Miss Rout, the honorary secretary of the New Zealand Volunteer Sisters at the above town, a small quantity of poppy seeds gathered in the Somme Valley by the school children of Villers Bretonneux. The sender asks me to distribute a few of the seeds "to the relatives of Australian and New Zealand soldiers who fell fighting on the battlefields of the Somme, and convey to the recipients the deepest gratitude and loving sympathy of the school children of Villers Bretonneux."

As Miss Rout points out, the seeds were gathered very late, and the fruits had but little seed in them when they arrived, but I shall be very pleased, indeed to send a tiny packet to the relatives of New South Wales soldiers, in accordance with this lady's wishes. I shall be glad if written applications be made to me, and they will be attended to in the order of receipt, and if there is not enough seed to go round I will endeavour to get an additional quantity next season. Poppy seed being a fine powder, recipients must be careful not to cover it up with soil. Sow in pots.

I am, etc.,
J. H. MAIDEN, Director,
Botanic Gardens.

Sydney, Jan. 2.

Letter to the Editor
Sydney Morning Herald
Thursday 15 January 1920

IN FLANDERS FIELDS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE HERALD.

In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly,
Scarce heard amid the guns below,
We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders fields.

Sir,—The above are the first two stanzas of Colonel M'Crae's famous poem connecting the poppies with our hallowed dead on the battlefields of Europe.

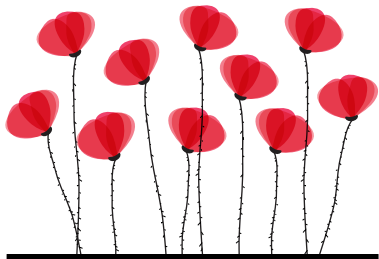
At the beginning of the year I wrote to you and told you that Miss Ettie Rout (now Mrs. Hornabrook), who was in charge of the New Zealand Red Cross at Villers Bretonneux, had sent me some poppy seeds from the neighbourhood, and I offered to send a small packet to the relatives of fallen soldiers. My offer was promptly taken up, and the supply was exhausted in a few days. I then got into touch with Miss Rout, and through the kindness of the mother superior of an orphanage on the Somme, who does not wish her name or the name of the town to be mentioned, I received last September an additional quantity of poppy seed of the new crop. In the meantime I had received 224 additional applications for this new seed. Every application was satisfied, and the supply was exhausted.

I only kept back for the Botanic Gardens the same amount that had been given to correspondents, and a member of the staff, who had himself lost a son at the war, lovingly sowed these seeds in a pot, and last week they flowered. They turned out to be a mixture of two poppies—the ordinary common red or Cornfield poppy, Papaver Rhoeas (there was most of this), and the long, smooth-headed poppy, Papaver dubium, which has an orange or orange-red flower.

I expect that a number of my correspondents have also flowered these poppies, and some of them will save the seed in order that they may replant them every year as an affectionate memorial.

I am, etc.,
J. H. MAIDEN, Director,
Botanic Gardens, Nov. 18.

Letter to the Editor
Sydney Morning Herald
Thursday 18 November 1920



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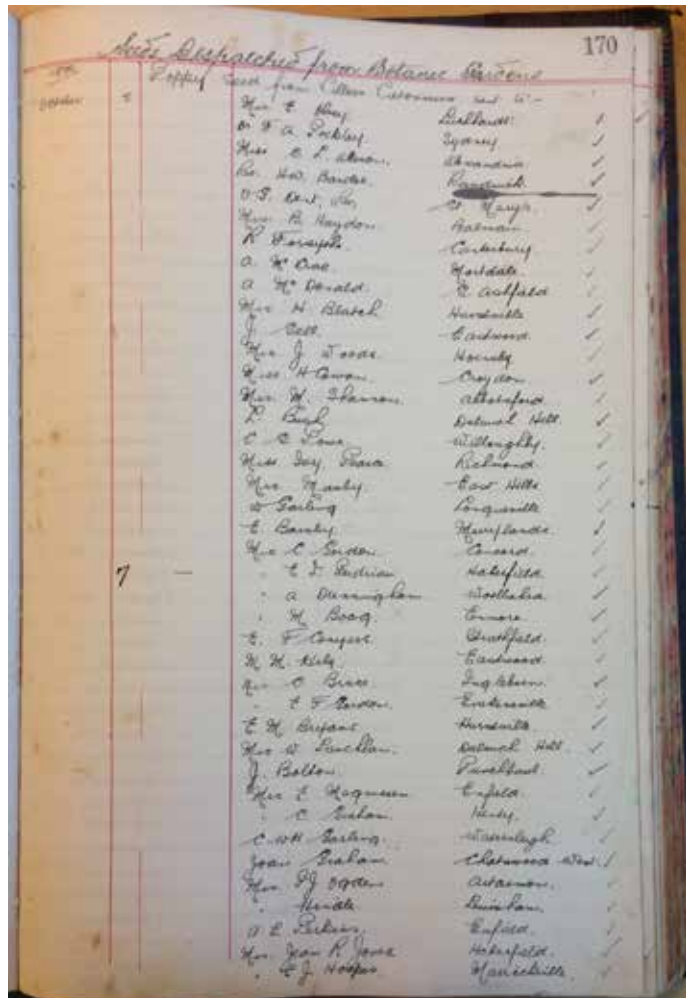
Following the lead, Ms Phippen visited the Royal Botanic Gardens Library and located a leather-bound register of "Seeds Received and Despatched 1899 - 1922" containing the names of twenty-one households in the Ryde/Hunters Hill area who received the seeds in 1920 in memory of their loved ones. Despite further extensive research no evidence of those original poppies that may have grown locally can be found.

But the story of the Red Poppy has now come full circle, with residents of Ryde being recruited to create our own 'field of Red Poppies' as tribute to the locals who enlisted to fight in World War One. The poppies will be planted enmasse in memory of their sacrifice.

You can dedicate a Poppy to one of the 2,000 who enlisted in WWI (as identified by the Ryde District Historical Society), or to any member of your family who served in World War One.



The Seeds Register
Royal Botanic Gardens
1899 - 1922



Record of seeds despatched to 22 local households



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 City of Ryde

In Flanders' fields

The red Flanders' poppy was first described as a flower of remembrance by a Canadian soldier, Colonel John McCrae. At the second battle of Ypres in 1915, when in charge of a small first-aid post, he wrote in pencil on a page torn from his despatch book:

In Flanders' fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row
That mark our place, and in the sky
The larks still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the dead, short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow.
Loved, and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders' fields.

Centenary of Anzac Commemorations Committee

Chairperson: Cllr Jerome Laxale

Members: Councillors, Staff, Local RSL/Ex-Services Clubs, Ryde District Historical Society, interested members of the community

Ryde Remembers Program

- Ongoing program of events throughout Library Network 2014-2018
- Lone Pine Commemoration (August 2014)
- 2,000 Poppies (November 2014 - April 2015)
- Street Signs and Map (WWI links identified)
- Program of workshops and talks in all Ryde Library Service branches
- Interactive Honour Board recognising over 2,000 local service men and women
- Remembrance Walk in Anzac Park, West Ryde

Field of 2,000 Red Poppies

Be part of our Centenary of Anzac tribute, by helping to create a field of 2,000 Red Poppies.

All you have to do is knit, crochet, felt, cross-stitch or craft a red poppy to remember someone who went to the First World War.

Pick up a brochure or ask your librarian for details. Project runs November 2014 to Anzac Day 2015.

Patterns, information and inspiration can be found at: www.ryde.nsw.gov.au/ryderemembers

City of Ryde thanks Melbourne's 5000 Poppies for their assistance.