

At the Commemorative Dinner in the Hunter Valley, Australia in April 2015, Mike Garnett told us about a fascinating story that has an unusual Framlingham/ ANZAC association. We thought we would share this with all OFs.

Thirty-five years or more ago, whilst driving an alternative route from Melbourne to Adelaide, I stumbled across the small township of Framlingham, which was named after our own in Suffolk. It is located just on the Victorian side of the border with South Australia and, incidentally, is not far from the township of Rendlesham, which is just the other side of the border. I made a detour to find this Framlingham, and once there I took photos of the church, school and the few other buildings left, which I sent to General Inskip or Tom Saul. These pictures are hopefully still on record in the archives because I later learnt that the entire hamlet had been virtually obliterated in the Ash Wednesday fires of 1983.

But I know you want more! The nearby Framlingham Aboriginal Reserve was set up as an Anglican Mission by the Church of England in 1861 and closed in 1916. However, there is still an aboriginal, (or part-aboriginal), community living in the area.

During the Great War, military regulations stipulated that aboriginals could only enlist if they had sufficient European descent. Interpretation could be quite fickle. In one instance two brothers tried to enlist with only one being accepted; the other being rejected for not having sufficient European descent.

Now, these current celebrations of ours led me to investigate whether anyone from the Framlingham, Victoria Reserve, succeeded in enlisting for the Great War. There was one, who I consider to be quite a hero. He was a part Aboriginal by the name William Reginald Rawlings and he was born in 1890 at the Framlingham Reserve. Private Rawlings enlisted in March 1916 and was sent to France where he was involved in the heavy fighting with the 29th Battalion along the Morlancourt Ridge. He was awarded the Military Medal for his role, which was described in official records as: **'first bayonet man for the bombing team'**, which sounds to me suspiciously like 'bringing a knife to a gunfight!' Less than two weeks later, during the capture of Vauvillers on 9 August 1918, Private Rawlings was killed in action.

To my knowledge, William Rawlings, whose photograph I have located, was the only enlistee from the Framlingham reserve, and he now rests in a French cemetery* where maybe no one is aware of his existence. His is, perhaps, one of the many lonely graves that has lain undisturbed and unknown for nearly a hundred years. Would it not be nice, if we, from Framlingham College, somehow adopted this hero as one of our own, and, if we can locate his grave, perhaps a visiting OF would one day place a poppy or two on it? ** After all, we all called Framlingham home, even if we were separated by some 12,000 miles.

Finally, I have had some involvement in the ANZAC commemorations in country Victoria. Although my limited service background was Air Force, I became intrigued about the formation of the early Mounted Rifles at the nearby town of Kyneton, dating back to the 1860's. While amalgamations of these military units inevitably took place, their grandchildren and great grandchildren were those members of the Australian Light Horse who made the famous charge at Beersheba, which was then ruled by the Ottoman Empire in the Great War.

Last year, a project, with which I became closely connected, came to fruition with the unveiling of a Light Horse Statue at Kyneton. I attach a photo that shows this fine statue.

This brings me to a small presentation that Chris Shaw and I would like to personally make to the College, and we hope that it will form a central table decoration at important events, especially whenever

there is any involvement of Australia or New Zealand. It is of an Australian Light Horseman, who is unarmed and totally non-aggressive!

So Chris Shaw, would you join me, and together we will request Chris Essex to receive it.



Chris Essex, President of the Society of Old Framlinghamians (L), receiving the statue of the Australian Light Horseman from Mike Garnett and Chris Shaw

The plaque reads: "Framlingham College 150th Celebration – Australia 2015 From Michael Garnett and Chris Shaw"

As footnote it is nice to report that the statue now resides in the Headmaster's study and is often commented on by prospective new parents.

* Heath Cemetery, Harbonnières

** I have become better acquainted with Pte Rawlings and his background. In looking at the Australian War Memorial records, I have found that he was variously, 5' 6" to 6 feet tall, slightly built to well built, blown up by explosive, shot in the back, shot in the abdomen, shot in the head, buried near three trees, buried two hundred yards from where he fell, or buried in a cemetery. If you have any understanding of the Great War then you will understand that most of it was conducted without much planning or orders, apart from the direction to fight! Everyone had to fight/shoot/bayonet/blow up or bludgeon the enemy, and it was all very random. Corpses were mostly collected at night, so the variation in reports of his mode and place of death can be accepted and understood, too.



Chris Shaw goes on to provide the following additional information on William Reginald Rawlings

<https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/P01695.001>

Private Rawlings, c. 1916. William Reginald Rawlings, known as Bill, was born in Purnim, Victoria, the only son of William Rawlings and his wife, Elizabeth.

At the outbreak of the First World War he was a horse-breaker in and around the Framlingham Aboriginal Reserve in western Victoria. Although Aboriginal men were officially prohibited from enlisting in the Australian Imperial Force, Bill Rawlings was one of the many indigenous Australians who applied anyway. He enlisted in March 1916. In August he left Australia for France with the 8th reinforcements to the 29th Battalion.

Bill's health suffered in his first year in France. He had serious problems with trench foot and was eventually evacuated to England to recover. In late 1917 he rejoined his unit and went on to serve with distinction. In July 1918, the 29th Battalion took part in the advance along Morlancourt Ridge. The bombing team, of which Bill was part, attacked a communication trench and successfully forced out the enemy. Bill was commended for setting "a wonderful example to the remainder of [his] team" with his "irresistible dash and courage", and was awarded the Military Medal.

On 9 August the 29th Battalion was involved in the capture of Vauvillers in France. Bill left the trench with his battalion and started out on the advance, but about 200 metres from his starting point he was hit by a shell and was killed immediately. He was 27. Bill was buried in the Heath Cemetery in France, alongside his friend and fellow Indigenous soldier, [Corporal Harry Thorpe](#), another Military Medal recipient who was killed on the same day.

While some Indigenous Australian soldiers of lighter skin colour may have tried to hide their ancestry, Bill had much darker skin, but appeared to be accepted without prejudice within his battalion. In their reports about his death in Bill's Red Cross Wounded and Missing file, Bill's mates make no further comment on his Aboriginality beyond describing him as such for identification purposes. A veteran soldier later recalled, "The AIF judged a man not by his colour, but by his worth."

Bill Rawlings set a fine example of leadership and courage in the field, and was sadly missed after his death.

1 Bill's nephew, Reginald Saunders, who was named in his uncle's honour, became the first known Indigenous Australian to be commissioned as an officer in the army.

<https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/ART28159> Pamela Thalben-Ball, *Captain Reg Saunders*, 1978.

KYNETON LIGHT HORSE STATUE

The following was written by Mike and is based on his address given at the unveiling of this statue in Kyneton, Victoria on 31 October 2014.

The Light Horseman of Kyneton, in situ

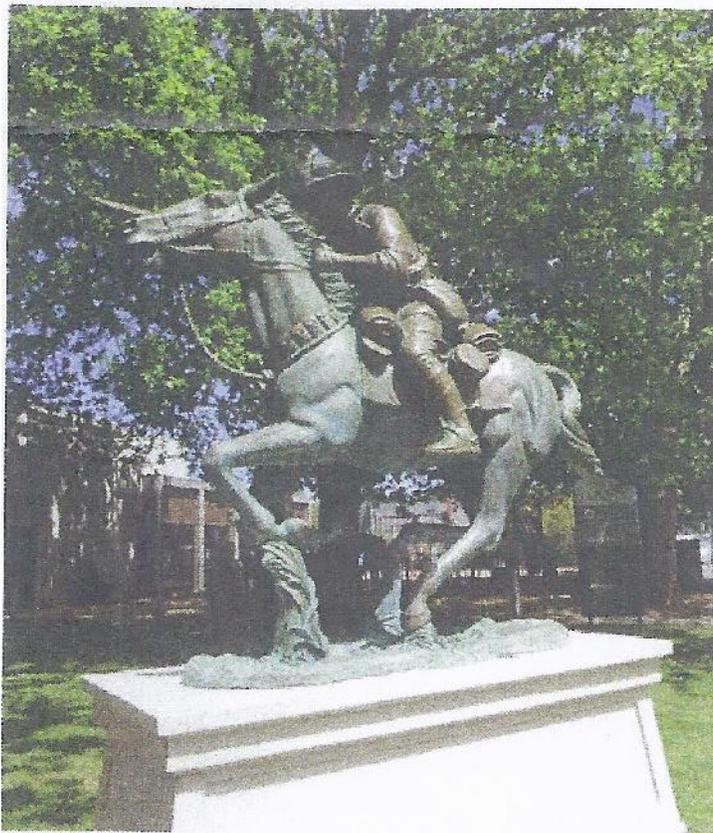
This magnificent statue depicts a Light Horseman at Beersheba, which is appropriate because today is the 97th Anniversary since the famous charge in October 1917.

Beersheba was a small outpost in the Sinai Desert manned by the Turks. It was important to the overall British offensive, known as the Battle of Gaza, because of the vast water supplies, which were so necessary for the survival of both troops and their horses. The place is now a substantial town of some 200,000, predominantly settled, in recent years, by immigrants from Eastern European countries, and is now a part of southern Israel.

This statue is also representative of the Kyneton volunteers, who signed on here at the Mechanics Institute into the newly formed volunteer units, back in the early 1860's. This resulted in two of the earliest country troops in Victoria: the Kyneton Light Horse and the Kyneton Rifles - basically one cavalry and one infantry unit. Through many amalgamations that incorporated those volunteers from towns such as Malmesbury, Castlemaine, Maldon, Maryborough and elsewhere, they received royal patronage, which resulted in a name change to the Prince of Wales Light Horse. They were the forerunners of those who came together and fought so heroically against Germany and the Ottoman Empire some fifty years later, which this statue represents.

I want to pay tribute to the person who had this statue made for us. His name is Rob Curtin from nearby Trentham. When I approached Rob to make this statue he was clearly taken-aback, because his artisans in the Philippines were used to producing life-like and life sized, reinforced fiberglass models of giraffes, elephants and lions for theme parks. Clearly we had no hope of constructing a bronze sculpture because we did not have sufficient funds. I recall Rob's immediate reaction, which was, 'Well, I had a grandfather who fought at Gallipoli, so I will help all I can. Just get me an accurate model showing all the accoutrements in the correct proportions and positions, and I will take it to my people in the Philippines, to see what they can do.'

Getting this model for Rob was easier said than done, and it took a long time to find even a tiny model measuring just three inches, but which had been brilliantly made in Hong Kong for an Australian company. Somewhat sheepishly, I gave it to Rob and apologized for its small size.



To cut a long story short, Rob took this to his Philippine artisans who, without fuss, proceeded to enlarge it photographically, on to a huge screen. They immediately set about the moulding procedure, resulting in a decent sized model standing nearly a metre high, or 36 inches in the 'old money'.

Three months later it was shipped back to Trentham for our approval. As my background was Air Force, I obtained the assistance of the historian from the 4/19th Prince of Wales Light Horse, David Holloway, who checked everything; the slouch hat, emu feathers, rifle, bayonet, uniform, boots, horse saddle and all the various pieces of tackle that were so necessary for a life in the saddle. With minor adjustments, we gave the go-ahead, and those amazing Philippine artisans were able to progress to a life size statue.

And this, Ladies and Gentlemen, is what they came up with. Isn't it absolutely stunning? However, but for Rob Curtin's willing participation and this little model, we would not be celebrating here today.



Rob Curtin from Trentham, Victoria, who arranged for the statue to be made



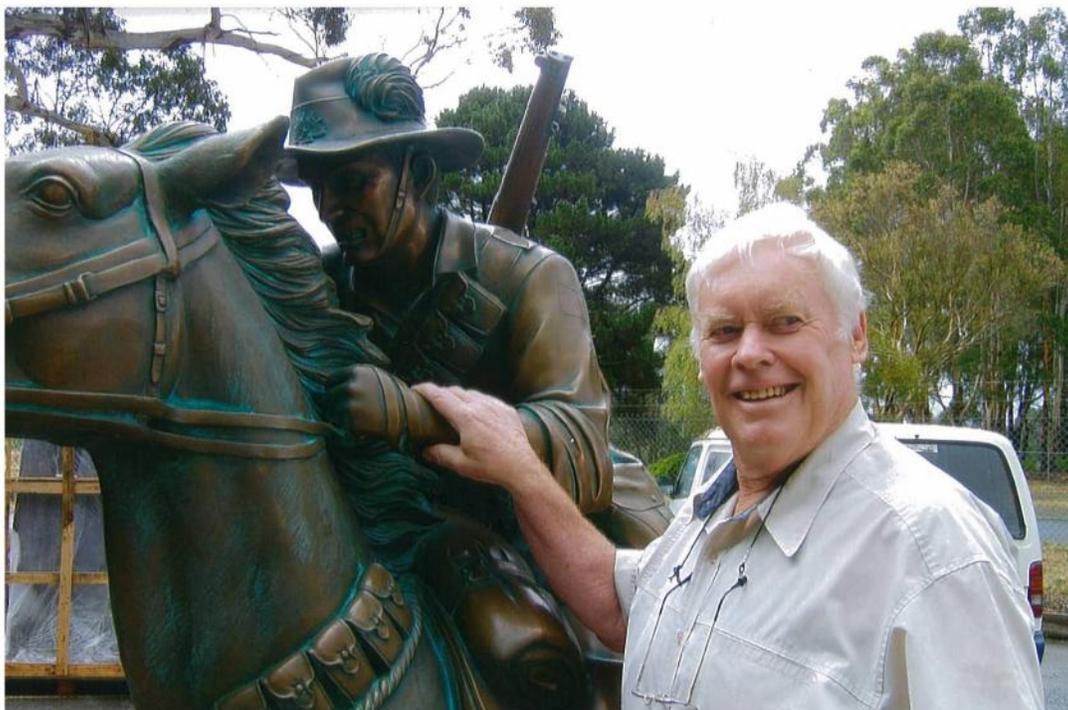
Mike with the newly delivered statue of the Australian Light Horseman of Kyneton, Victoria

I am delighted that we have representatives from the 4/19th Prince of Wales Light Horse with us today, including three former Commanding Officers.

This statue should mean much to those living in modern-day Kyneton. It acknowledges the early mounted rifles from the 1860's; it represents those of the Light Horse units, which served on all three fronts of the Great War (Gallipoli, the Western Front and Palestine), and it represents the 178 volunteers from this small town who paid the supreme sacrifice. And please, let's not forget the 150,000 'Waler' horses that never returned to Australia.

Beersheba was the last successful cavalry charge in history. It saw 800 members of the 4th and 12th Australian Light Horse win a heroic victory against an estimated 4,000 Turks. Unable to provide themselves with swords or lances at short notice, the Light Horse famously charged with their short bayonets as depicted on this statue. The liberation of Jerusalem and Hebron followed, and changed forever the face of the Middle East.

That action was, in large part, instrumental in creating the legend of the Australian Light Horse.



Mike Garnett with the newly arrived 'Light Horseman of Kyneton'



At the unveiling of the Light Horse Statue at Kyneton, former members of the 4th/19th Prince of Wales Light Horse gather with key-note speaker and former Air Force officer Mike Garnett.
L to R: Regimental Sergeant-Major Russell Earl, Mike Garnett, Major Nicholas Stafford and former Commanding Officers Lt/Colonels Graeme Smith and John Boyce

Article by Mike Garnett and Chris Shaw October 2015