



ST PETERS RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION INC.

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Representing the Residents of St Peters, College Park, Hackney, Stepney, Maylands, Evandale & Joslin.

Address for the Re-dedication of the St Peters Heroes Memorial

11 November 2024.

David Cree President - St Peters Residents Association

Your Excellency, Mayor Bria, distinguished guests, the year 3 classes from East Adelaide School, and most importantly the descendants, relatives, and friends of those we are here to honour

I would firstly like to acknowledge the support for this project given by Mayor Bria and to the Events Team of the City of Norwood Payneham & St Peters for organising this commemoration service.

I would also like to acknowledge the grant given to the St Peters Residents Association from the South Australian Government Anzac Day Commemoration Fund, to research the names and to prepare and fix the Second World War bronze name plaque to the St Peters Heroes Memorial.

In early 1940 the St Peters Council asked relatives to submit the names of those who had enlisted from the Town, so that a register could be kept.

A large Enlistment Honour Roll was placed in the entry foyer of the St Peters Town Hall in 1941.

This board was updated over the following years as the Council received details of those who subsequently enlisted.

By war's end this honour board contained the names of 646 men, and had small red stars alongside some, but not all, of those who made the ultimate sacrifice.

Further research by the Association, with the assistance of the Australian War Memorial, the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Virtual War Memorial Australia, and Council's Cultural Heritage Centre, found many more names that were not on the board, including a number of women.

The board was removed from the St Peters Town Hall in the 1960s and relocated in the St Peters RSL clubrooms.

It has been in storage since the early 2000s, following the local RSL's closure, but has been bought out for display today, and can be seen in the St Peters Banquet Hall.

The St Peters Council appointed a committee in 1948 to decide which ex-servicemen should be eligible to have their names placed on a permanent Roll of Honour

It has however taken a further 76 years for these names to find a permanent place on this memorial.

We are here today to unveil a bronze plaque honouring 89 local men who did not return to their loved ones following their service in the Second World War.

They lived in Hackney, College Park, and Maylands

They were educated at the East Adelaide School, Norwood Public School, and Prince Alfred and St Peters Colleges.

They worshipped at the College Park Congregational Church, the Spicer Methodist Church and the All-Souls Anglican Church.

They died in the desert sands of North Africa, the jungles of New Guinea and in Japanese prisoner of war camps.

They died in air training accidents in Australia, Canada, and Scotland.

They died piloting Hurricane fighters over Burma, in Sunderland flying boats over the Bay of Biscay and in Lancaster bombers over Germany.

They died at sea aboard HMAS Sydney in the Indian Ocean, on ships escorting North Atlantic convoys, and on motor torpedo boats in the English Channel.

They were aged between 16 and 47.

Some had survived the hell of the Great War, only to die in the next.

Five years ago, we gathered here to dedicate two bronze plaques to 145 local Great War Heroes. One of those 145 was William Wallace Park of Maylands.

The soon to be unveiled Second World War Plaque includes the name his cousin Reid Gavin Park.

The Park family lived in Adelaide St Maylands.

Reid was a student at Prince Alfred College and in 1939 began study to become an electrical engineer.

He was 20 years old when he enlisted in the Royal Australian Navy in December 1941.

Following basic training at HMAS Cerberus in Melbourne he was sent to the United Kingdom, where, after further training, he was commissioned as a Sub Lieutenant in January 1943.

While he was away Reid Park wrote to his parents and sister Ruth at least weekly, often more. His letters often started by saying that he was “still alive and kicking”.

In his letters he described his visits while on leave to Scotland to see relatives, his time in the Highlands and of climbing Ben Nevis.

For most of 1943 and into 1944 he was based near Dover and commanded a Motor Torpedo Boat operating in the English Channel.

These 22-metre-long boats were extremely fast, agile and well-armed. They were powered by two Rolls Royce engines, marine versions of those used in Spitfires and Lancaster bombers. They went out night after night to raid the enemy’s coastal shipping or to protect allied ships from attack.

Their deadly encounters with the enemy were usually short and sudden, as they used their stealth at night to silently search for, and then ambush enemy shipping in the English Channel, and then escape at top speed.

On the night of 15th March 1944 Sub Lieutenant Park was aboard MTB 417, one of a group of four tasked to attack an armed German convoy near the French coast, just south of Calais. During the attack several shells hit his boat, which immediately burst into flames and sank with the loss of all on board.

Four days later a red-banded urgent telegram was delivered to 25 Adelaide Street Maylands, informing the family that Sub-Lieutenant Reid Gavin Park had been reported as missing in action. This was followed by a letter from the Navy that said -
“Light Coastal Forces of the Royal Navy were engaged in a very gallant action in the Straights of Dover. In the course of this action his ship came under the concentrated fire of the enemy force, and it must be considered to have been lost.”

Reid Park was 22 years old.

His last letter home was written just three days prior to his death.

The letter did not arrive for a further three months. In it he said that he was “still leading a quiet and sober existence”. Reid also sent a telegram to his family on the morning of his last mission saying, “Am well and fit”. The telegram arrived two days later.

As well as a condolence letter from Reid’s Commanding Officer, the family received a letter from Elsie Payne and her daughter Violet, a Wren officer at the naval base. Reid was a regular visitor in their home. Violet wrote –

“ - - he was at our home on the night before the tragedy - - I shall never forget my extremely happy friendship with Reid”.

Each of the other 88 men named on this memorial has his own story.

Each of these stories needs to be told so that their sacrifice will be remembered and was not in vain.

Lest we forget.

David Cree

11 November 2024