

Mayor's Speeches

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2024 Speeches

Re-dedication of the St Peters World War Two Heroes Plaques, St Peters Heroes Memorial

11 November 2024: St Peters Heroes Memorial, St Peters Street, St Peters

Thank you, Ian (Smith), our MC.

- Her Excellency, The Honourable Frances Adamson AC, Governor of South Australia and Mr Rod Bunten
- Distinguished Guests
- Family and descendants of the St Peters Heroes.

It is indeed an honour and a privilege to be in the presence of so many of descendants of the St Peters heroes, some of whom have travelled from different parts of Australia.

On behalf of the City of Norwood Payneham & St Peters, I thank you sincerely for being here today.

Our community, our state and our nation are indebted to your ancestors for their service and sacrifice.

A special welcome and thank you to the students from our local schools where many of the men we honour this afternoon were educated.

I also want to acknowledge the St Peters Residents Association.

In particular, the incredible body of research and effort undertaken by David Cree and members of the Association, who with the generous support of so many people here today, and a grant from the Government of South Australia's ANZAC Day Commemoration Fund, have made this re-dedication ceremony possible.

The Council commends the Association for its important contribution to the history of St Peters.

We gather on Remembrance Day 2024, almost 80 years after the end of Second World War, at this ANZAC Avenue of Honour dedicated by the Council in 2014 to mark the centenary of the start of the Great War.

Just over a century ago, the women of St Peters resolved to erect a memorial to honour the St Peters Heroes who fell in the Great War.

A committee was formed to raise funds for the memorial and to decide the form it should take.

The then Town of St Peters reserved an area at the Town Hall end of St Peters Street, not far from where we stand today.

The final design, by Adelaide architect and artist Edward Davies, consisted of a base of Angaston marble on top of which is a statue of an Australian 'Digger' with arms reversed, sculptured in Carrara marble in Italy and based on photographs taken at the Keswick Barracks of a typical Australian soldier.

The cost of the memorial was fully met by public subscriptions, with the unveiling and dedication conducted by the Governor of South Australia, His Excellency, Lieutenant Colonel Sir William Earnest George Archibald Weigall KCMG.

It is fitting therefore, that 102 years after Governor Weigall dedicated this memorial on behalf of the St Peters community, our current Governor will unveil the plaque attached to this memorial.

I thank Her Excellency, for being here today.

Today, we gather in the presence of a solitary soldier, who since February 1922, has kept vigil over the memories and legacies of the 145 local men who fell during the Great War.

Today, eighty-nine Second World War St Peters Heroes who also made the ultimate sacrifice will also come under his watch.

One hundred and six years ago at the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month, the guns fell silent on the Western Front, signalling the Armistice to end what many hoped was 'the war to end all wars.'

For the Diggers who survived the Great War, which up to that point was the most brutal conflict in human history, little did they know or expect, that an only a generation later darkness would again fall over Europe and their sons, nephews and in some cases younger brothers, would wear Australia's uniform in battle.

September 3rd, 1939 was a Sunday. It was Spring.

Not far from where we stand local churches were full of parishioners attending morning services, signing hymns, giving praise to the Lord and praying for a world on the brink in the wake of Nazi Germany's invasion of Poland two days earlier.

The peace of the morning would soon be shattered when, later that day, Australia's Prime Minister Robert Menzies announced the beginning of Australia's involvement in the Second World War.

"Fellow Australians, it is my melancholy duty to inform you officially that, in consequence of the persistence of Germany in her invasion of Poland, Great Britain has declared war upon her, and that, as a result, Australia is also at war."

For the next six years the world was on fire.

The promise of prosperity in the 1920s followed by the despair of the Depression in the 1930s gave way to the weariness of war in the 1940s.

Over the course of the conflict, 39,000 Australians would lose their lives, over 30,000 would be taken prisoner with more than a third of them dying during captivity.

Many more would be wounded.

From the skies over the English Channel, to the rugged hills of Crete, from the desert sands of North Africa to the jungles of New Guinea, from the monsoons of Burma to the heat of the Pacific islands, the Australians were there.

They stood with Britain in its darkest hour and America after a day of infamy.

In the tight-knitted community of the then Town of St Peters, brothers followed brothers, mates followed mates and neighbours followed neighbours to join Australia's military forces.

Between 1939 and 1945 more than 800 men and women who lived in the former Town of St Peters enlisted to serve in the Australian Navy, Army and Air Force.

Eighty-nine would make the supreme sacrifice, with most who responded to the call to arms for God and country, returning to their country in God's arms.

They lived in blue stone villas in St Peters and worker's cottages in Stepney.

They came from the middle class and the working class.

They were married and they were single.

They were bank clerks and law clerks, teachers and toy makers, students and salesmen.

They were Anglicans and Methodists, Presbyterians and Catholics.

They were educated in public schools, and they were educated at elite colleges.

They were Australian-born and foreign-born.

And yet, for all their differences they were drawn together for a common cause: to fight against the tyranny of the Axis Powers: Germany, Italy and Japan.

Among the siblings who served and died were the Dumas brothers, Charles and Keith, sons to Edmund Russell Dumas and Gertrude Diosma Dumas, and older sister Betty.

The family lived at 189 Payneham Road, St Peters - not far from where we meet today.

Charles, the older son, was born in North Adelaide on 18 March 1919. After attending Adelaide Technical High School, he took a job as a Bank Clerk with the Commonwealth Bank.

During his teenage years, Charles served in the Citizen Forces with the 10th Battalion Adelaide Rifles and after almost three and half years was discharged.

His Certificate of Discharge reported his military conduct was "very good."

At the time of his enlistment with the RAAF on 7 December 1940, Charles was 21 years of age and single.

He stood at 5 feet 11 inches and had Green-Blue eyes and fair hair.

In March 1941, Charles was sent to Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe, to train as a flying officer before being commissioned on 26 August that year with two-two-three (223) Squadron was killed in an air battle over the Middle East on 10 August 1942, having been reported missing that day.

On Boxing Day 1942, 'The Advertiser's' Casualty List reported Charles' parents had been notified of his death.

The same article reported his brother Keith Russell Dumas was serving in India.

Keith was born on 14 September 1920.

Like Charles, he also attended Adelaide Technical High School and also took a job as a Bank Clerk, but in his case, it was with the Union Bank on King William Street, Adelaide.

Four inches shorter than his older brother but arguably more handsome, Keith served 18 months in the 27th Battalion (Scottish Corps) before enlisting with the RAAF on 27 May 1940 at the age 19.

He enlisted 12 days after his father retired as a Senior auditor with the State Audit Office, ending a remarkable 43 years as a Public Servant.

Keith completed his training as a pilot in Australia, the Middle East and Kenya.

Six months later on 31 October, 'The Advertiser' published a notice announcing the engagement of Keith, then training in Cootamundra, New South Wales, to Beryl Patricia Collie.

On 16 October 1944, Keith Dumas, by then a Flying Officer with 45 Squadron, was killed in an air battle over the skies of Burma.

He was buried in Taukkyan War Cemetery, Mingaladon, Yangon, Myanmar.

We do not know what lives Charles and Keith Dumas would have lived had they survived the war.

What we do know is that these brothers and their brothers in arms who fought and fell in Australia's name in the Second World War will forever be in our hearts.

The men we honour today served in different theatres of war at different times in different branches of Australia's military.

Today, for the first time, these brothers, mates and neighbours have been brought together - and will stay together - on a plaque affixed to this memorial without reference to their rank or reputation.

This Soldier's Memorial will forever unite them and serve as a reminder to all who pass it of the extraordinary effort made by ordinary Australians who answered the call to defend democracy.

We remember them and all others who gave up their tomorrows so we can live today.

Lest we forget.

Eastside Business Awards 2024

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen.

My name is Robert Bria. I am the Mayor of the City of Norwood Payneham & St Peters.

It is my great pleasure to welcome you all here to the Norwood Concert Hall for the seventh consecutive Eastside Business Awards.

We acknowledge this land that we meet on today is the traditional lands for the Kaurna people and that we respect their spiritual relationship with their country.

We also acknowledge the Kaurna people as the custodians of the Adelaide region and that their cultural and heritage beliefs are still as important to the living Kaurna people today.