



Newsletter Friends of St Kilda Cemetery Inc

April 2017

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Welcome to the April 2017 newsletter and hope everyone had a Happy Easter break

Volunteers needed...

**COME AND HELP THE FRIENDS BE A WONDERFUL
HISTORICAL GROUP.**



Printing of newsletter



Printed copies of our newsletters are provided courtesy of
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The Friends thank Scotsburn. Their kind assistance is most appreciated.

Contributions to our newsletter are welcomed. Email for further information to info@foskc.org



Enjoying a tour through St Kilda Cemetery, February 2017



Kelly Slatter laying flowers on behalf of FOSKC at Albert Jacka Commemoration, Sunday 15 January 2017

Recent tour/events highlights

Albert Jacka Commemoration Service, Sunday 15 January 2017...Thank you, Kelly for laying flowers on behalf of the Friends of St Kilda Cemetery

Writers, Booksellers and Literati Tour, Sunday 26 February 2017...great attendance for first tour of 2017.

The Sporting Tour, Sunday 26 March 2017

ANZAC DAY Tour, Sunday 23 April 2017...great commemoration tour on a beautiful sunny afternoon. Enjoyed by all.

All tours were well attended and enjoyed.

Items of interest

CHARLES TRUELOVE

"The Choir of Gravediggers" contributed by Melanie Hall, author

True love of Music

In late 2016, West Australian musician and writer Melanie Hall released a short book titled 'The Choir of Gravediggers'. The book is an historical novella written mostly about her great-great Grandfather, Charles Truelove. An enigmatic figure who worked as a choirmaster and cemetery manager, Truelove was at the centre of a series of 'grave' scandals in East St Kilda. Melanie's Grandfather, Bryan Hall, became fascinated with Truelove in the 1960s. Knowing very little about his own, rarely spoken of grandfather, he was shocked at a train station newsagent one day, when he flipped open a book to the article titled 'Truelove in a Graveyard'. The book, 'Great Scandals in Australia's Strange Past' by George Blaikie, sparked a lifelong curiosity in Bryan. Who really was Charles Truelove? Why did the family rarely speak about him, and hide his portrait? What really happened at the East St Kilda Cemetery?

After Bryan became ill in 2008, he shared his family history research with granddaughter, and then UWA History student Melanie. His research included many historical photographs, prints from microfilm, newspapers articles, family trees, and much correspondences with the St Kilda historical society. Melanie later traveled to Melbourne and trawled through archives at the State Records Office and State Library of Victoria, as well as visiting All Saints Church and East St Kilda Cemetery, which became the setting for the novella. 'The Choir of Gravediggers' was originally submitted as a creative writing honours dissertation in 2010. Sadly Bryan passed away before it was finished, but he was very pleased knowing that his grand-daughter had taken interest in the story. In the novella, fact and fiction are cleverly woven together to give the reader a taste of what nineteenth century Melbourne may have been like; with a particular focus on choral singing and cemetery management, as the title suggests. Melanie, also a musician, along with several siblings and cousins, sees the book as a celebration of the musical heritage in her family, and also a homage to her Grandfather, who was so intrigued by the eccentricities of Charles Truelove. 'The Choir of Gravediggers' was accepted for publication by Ginninderra Press in 2015. Bryan's wife Jennifer passed before the book was printed, but she was very happy to know that the story of her husband's beloved Grandfather would finally be told.

Here is a link to a review of Melanie's book which you can buy on Amazon:

<https://nathanhobby.wordpress.com/2016/12/17/the-choir-of-gravediggers-by-mel-hall/>

Featured Article

Major General Colin Hall Simpson CBE, MC, VD (1894-1964)

Died 23 August 1964; Buried: Pres D 238

Army Officer; Businessman; Football Administrator.



Major General Colin Hall Simpson, CBE, MC, VD rose to the rank of major general in the Australian Army as Signal Officer in Chief during the Second World War. He was one of the founders of AMCAL, the largest retail pharmacy chain in Australia.

Born on 13 April 1894 at St Kilda, Melbourne, son of Colin Simpson, a plumber from Scotland, and his Victorian-born wife Elizabeth Fulton, née Jordan, Simpson was educated at Caulfield Grammar School and apprenticed to a pharmacist.

After serving in the cadets (1909-14) and the Militia, Simpson was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the First Australian Imperial Force (AIF) on 1 May 1916, and posted to the 3rd Pioneer Battalion, part of the 3rd Division, which was then being raised in Australia. He embarked from Port Melbourne on the transport HMAT *Wandilla* on 6 June 1916, arriving in England on 26 July 1916. The 3rd Division trained on the Salisbury Plain in England, where he was promoted to lieutenant on 13 October 1916. He was transferred to the 3rd Division Signal Company on 16 November 1916. Soon after, the 3rd Division moved to the Western Front, moving into the line near Armentières. Simpson was mentioned in despatches on 4 January 1917.

The 3rd Division carried out its first offensive at the Battle of Messines in June 1917. For his part in the battle, Simpson was awarded the Military Cross. His citation read:

For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty. He organised the Brigade Signal Service so thoroughly that communication was maintained with every unit throughout. He was continually under shell-fire, but personally supervised all repairs, by his vigorous and cheerful manner impressing all ranks in the highest degree.

Simpson participated in the Battle of Passchendaele where he was gassed and wounded. He was evacuated to England on 22 October 1917. While in hospital he applied for nine months' leave to return to Australia and

Photo opposite: AWM ID 001823

Sources:

Australian Dictionary of Biography: J Whitelaw;

<http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/simpson-colin-hall-11694>

Australian War Memorial, photos as referenced

Wikipedia:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colin_Hall_Simpson



Photo: AWM ID PB1150

Diggers of the 3rd Pioneer Battalion board the transport HMAT *Wandilla* at Port Melbourne, Victoria, on 6 June 1916



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL 11298

Photo: AWM ID 112985

Melbourne Vic 20 August 1945, A victory parade and march past, Albert Park, Units of the Australian Corps of Signals. The salute was taken by Major General C H Simpson, Officer in Charge, Land Headquarters. Shown, Major General Simpson taking the salute.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL 08903

Photo: AWM ID089035

Indooroopilly, Queensland 23 April 1945. Major-General Simpson and Major H T Macready with NSW personnel concentrated at 1 Australian Women's Army Service Barrack before embarkation to New Guinea.

complete his pharmaceutical studies. This was granted, and he embarked for home on the transport HMAT *Persic* on 21 December 1917. He passed the Final Examination, and was registered as a pharmacist on 10 July 1918. He never returned to the front, and his AIF appointment was terminated on 9 August 1918

Registered as a pharmacist in July 1918, Simpson set up as a retail chemist at Brunswick. In 1937, in collaboration with D. E. Robertson and A. E. Moore, he formed Allied Master Chemists of Australia Ltd (AMCAL) which sold products to fellow pharmacists to enable them to compete against other retailers. The business grew from 12 members in 1937 to over 100 by 1946 and became the largest retail pharmacy chain in Australia.

Meanwhile, Simpson remained active in the Militia. In October 1918 he was posted to the 2nd/14th Battalion. Promoted captain in 1920, he was transferred to the Australian Engineers (signal duties) in 1921. As a lieutenant colonel (from 1923), he commanded the 3rd Divisional Signals (1923-29 and 1935-39) and the 39th Battalion (1929-33). In May 1939 Colonel Simpson was appointed commander of the 6th Brigade. He had become a confidant of Major-General Sir Thomas Blamey in the 1920s. They were both involved in the "White Army", a secret organization formed principally by ex-servicemen to maintain law and order in the event of civil unrest.

Second World War

On 14 October 1939 Blamey appointed Simpson to command the 6th Divisional Signals, A.I.F., in the rank of lieutenant colonel. With the expansion of the force, Simpson was promoted colonel and made chief signals officer, I Corps, in April 1940. He sailed for the Middle East in September 1940. Based in Palestine, he ensured that every signals unit in the corps was trained to the highest standards, militarily and technically. Simpson arrived in Greece on 7 March 1941 as part of the I Corps advance party. The Battle of Greece presented a major challenge for Simpson's signals units, as rugged terrain, enemy action and frequent troop movements conspired to frustrate their efforts to maintain reliable communications. The news that Yugoslavia had offered to surrender reached Blamey from a BBC broadcast on 15 April picked up on a receiver built into a kerosene case that Simpson had insisted that he take. Much signals equipment was lost during the fighting, and some had to be destroyed following the order to evacuate Greece. Simpson embarked for Crete on HMS *Phoebe* on 25 April. From there he took a flying boat to Alexandria. His first priority on arrival was arranging for the lost equipment to be replaced. Simpson was appointed CBE (1941) for "*maintenance of communications under difficult conditions in the Grecian campaign*".

Back in Palestine, I Corps headquarters took command of the invasion of Lebanon and Syria, launched on 8 June. The operation involved Australian, Indian and Free French forces moving over three main routes, on a wide front, in difficult terrain. As CSO, Simpson solved the numerous communications problems that arose. For his services between February and July 1941 he was mentioned in dispatches. Simpson was promoted to the rank of brigadier on 11 September 1941, becoming the first officer of the Australian Corps of Signals to reach that rank. He was involved in a



Photo: AWM ID 093120

Simpson (second from right) visits the 6th Division in the Wewak Area with Blamey (right), and talks with its commander, Major General Jack Stevens (left)



Photo: AWM ID 091342

Simpson (right), inspects Chorehorse chargers at 3 Division Signals during his visit to Bougainville in April 1945.



Essendon Football Club Logo

serious motor vehicle accident on 13 September 1941 and suffered severe lacerations, a concussion, and a broken collarbone, rib and finger. He was taken to the 2/1st General Hospital, and was evacuated to Australia on the hospital ship *MS Wanganella*. He returned to the Middle East by air, arriving back on 20 January 1942 but within days was heading for the East Indies where he joined a team of senior officers from I Corp in Java but faced with the continued success of the Japanese offensive, I Corps headquarters was withdrawn to Australia. Simpson reached Adelaide on 14 March.

Appointed commander-in-chief, Blamey chose Simpson as the army's signals officer-in-chief and promoted him major general on 6 April 1942, the first Australian Corps of Signals officer to reach that rank. Acting with drive and determination, Simpson expanded the signals component of the army to over 25,000 personnel (including large numbers of women) to meet the demands of the war.

The close relationship between Blamey and Simpson was based on mutual respect. It has been said that Simpson was Blamey's 'eyes and ears'—a quasi inspector-general. Simpson was kept constantly aware of Blamey's thinking. In his frequent visits to formations and units, Simpson inquired into matters of fundamental interest to the commander-in-chief, and reported in detail by semi-official letter, telephone, or face to face.

Perhaps Simpson's most ambitious project was the laying of a submarine cable between Cape York and New Guinea. A cable laying ship, the *SS Mernoo*, was chartered, and two old cables that ran across the Bass Strait were lifted and re-laid across the Torres Strait in October 1943. When the land connections were completed in December 1943, it became possible to send a message all the way from Melbourne to Port Moresby. Simpson, who was on an inspection tour of New Guinea, was on hand for the receipt of the first message.

To man his signals units, Simpson sought to obtain some 4,000 Australian Women's Army Service (AWAS) personnel. Aware that signals is usually forgotten when the signallers are doing their best work, Simpson attempted to obtain various accolades for his corps. He held ceremonial parades through Melbourne to celebrate VE Day on 10 May 1945, and VP Day on 20 August 1945. He attempted to get the title "Royal" granted in recognition of its wartime service. This occurred on 10 November 1948.

Simpson was a keen supporter of the Essendon Football Club, serving as its vice president from 1947 to 1964. He was awarded a life membership in 1957. He was elected Victorian State President of the Australian Legion of Ex-Servicemen and Women in 1948. He resigned in October after a dispute with the State Council over its suspension of two members for being communists, which Simpson opposed. Yet Simpson was no communist sympathiser. He organised The Association, a clandestine right wing paramilitary organisation headed by Blamey which was established to counter a possible communist coup. The Association disbanded in 1950.

On 12 August 1919 Simpson married Jean Elizabeth Watson at the Congregational Church in Ascot Vale, Victoria. Simpson died of cancer on 23 August 1964. His wife and their daughter survived him. Simpson Barracks at Watsonia in Melbourne was named in his honour in 1986.



The Law Week tour is held in conjunction with the Victorian Law Foundation



Hugh Ramsay, Artist, (self-portrait) is one of the graves we will visit on the Notable Interments Tour

St Kilda Cemetery is located on the corner of Dandenong Road and Hotham Street, ST KILDA EAST

Future Tours and events

PLEASE NOTE: The new toilets in cemetery are near front gate and now operational for future tours

Sunday 21 May 2017, Law Week Tour, As Your Honour Pleases...come and hear anecdotes about judges and lawyers buried in Cemetery.

Sunday 25 June 2017 – Notable Interments ...come on this easy “round the main path” tour of the cemetery visiting the graves of some most famous residents.

July 2017...event to be announced...

PLEASE FOLLOW US ON FACEBOOK OR LOOK AT OUR WEBSITE FOR NEWS OF ALL FUTURE TOURS AND EVENTS

Tour Cost \$10; members free. Bookings: email info@foskc.org; tel: 9531 6832

All our tours leave from the main entrance to the cemetery in Dandenong Road. Please wear suitable clothing and footwear as we go all weathers, rain, hail or shine.

Private Group Tours for 2017

We hope to do some tours for private groups in 2017. If your group is interested, please email info@foskc.org for more details. Group tours of 20 plus attendees are at a reduced rate.

WE LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU ON OUR TOURS IN 2017. WON'T YOU COME AND JOIN US!

Become a member of the Friends...

PLEASE COME AND JOIN US...

Membership costs \$15, includes free tours throughout the year and newsletter. Email info@foskc.org for a membership form.

