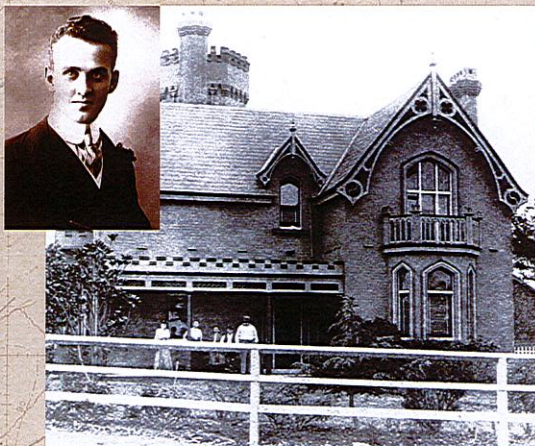# WWI: LOCAL BOYS

For Australia, as for many nations, the First World War remains the most costly conflict in terms of deaths and casualties. From a population of fewer than 5 million, 416,809 men enlisted, of which over 60,000 were killed and 156,000 wounded, gassed or taken prisoner.

Stephen Douglas Stuart Taylor, pre 1914

Stephen Taylor, born in 1891, was a firefighter at Campsie Fire Station until enlisting on 24 October 1915. He was discharged on 2 April 1918 after losing a leg in the trenches in France due to being hit by German gunfire. Stephen and his family lived next to a bakery in Park Street Campsie. He died in 1953.

Inset: Robert Archibald (Roy) Forsyth, 1914
Above: Forsyth family members standing on the front verandah of "The Towers", 1907

Robert grew up at *The Towers* at 31 Forsyth Street Belmore. He enlisted at Liverpool on 23 July 1915. He embarked for the Middle East on 5 October 1915 and to France on 25 March 1916. He died of wounds at Rouen, France on 6 May 1918 aged 26. *The Towers* was purchased by the War Service Homes Commission in 1920. Houses for returned soldiers and their families were consequently built on the subdivision. All Saints Grammar School is now on the site of *The Towers*.

Private Sylvanus H Williams of Campsie, 1918

Sylvanus Williams enlisted at Campsie on 7 July 1915. He lived at "Athol" on Beaumont Street Campsie and embarked from Sydney on 30 September 1915 on HMAT A8 Argyllshire. Sylvanus was born in 1896 at Redfern.

"WILLIAMS. In loving memory of our dear son and brother, Sylvanus Howell Williams, killed in action October 8, 1917, aged 21 years. He sleeps beside his comrades. In a hallowed grave unknown, but his name is written in letters of love in the hearts he left at home. Inserted by his loving father and mother and brothers (Jack on active service)" SMH 9/10/1918.

Fell family of Canterbury ca 1914-1919 signed "Tom"

This image is from a collection of photographs donated to the library by the Fell family. Very little is known about the collection. It seems that the family lived in the Canterbury area for many years at the turn of the 19th century and that they travelled extensivley overseas.

THE HOME FRONT

The first mention of the war in the minutes of Canterbury Council meetings is correspondence from the Belgian Clothing Relief Society wishing to donate new and second-hand clothing for Belgians made destitute by the war. Council offered the Town Hall as a depot to receive clothing and a carrier offered to deliver donations to the Belgian Consulate. In the first days of the war, Germany had invaded Belgium, evoking great sympathy for the country and its people who were made refugees.

Within days of the formation of the Australian Red Cross in August 1914, branches sprung up in NSW, including Campsie. Volunteers packed and distributed comfort packs to make life a bit easier for the troops. The Campsie branch held stalls and street processions to raise funds.

Nurses in uniform, Campsie, ca 1910s

World War I fund raising effort, Campsie ca 1916

Canterbury District Ambulance parades through Beamish St Campsie in an appeal for funds ca 1914
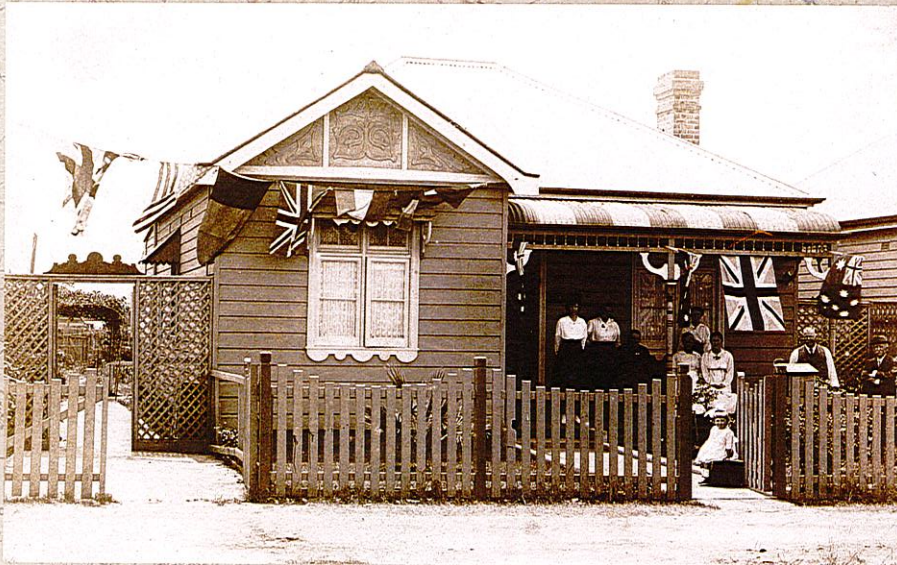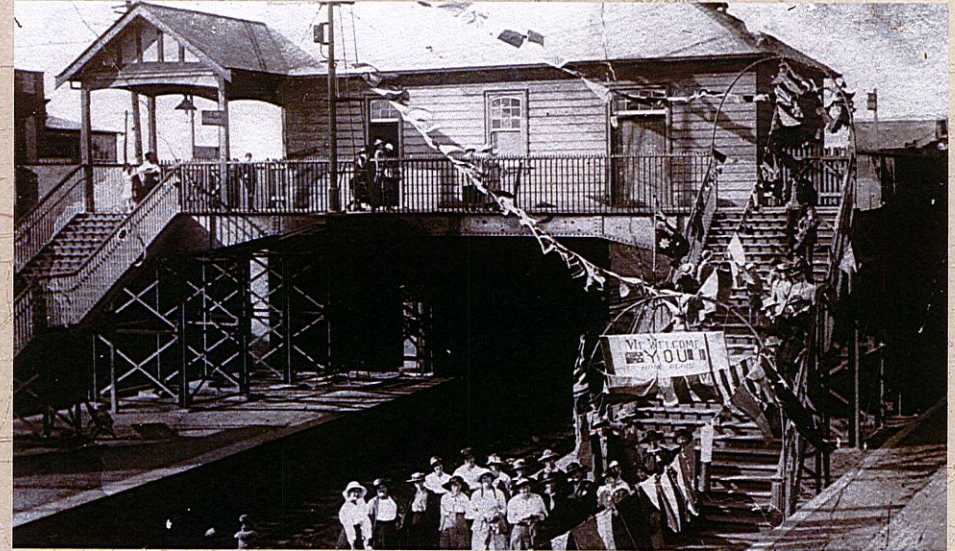
WELCOME HOME

As soldiers returned home, many were met at train stations by friends and ladies committee members. Functions for individuals were also popular, and at the later functions illuminated certificates were presented by the Mayor to the returned soldiers.

Canterbury Municipality after the war was a popular area in which many War Service Homes and private houses were built. With the population rising from 37,639 at the 1921 Census to 70,050 in 1933, Canterbury was the fasted growing area in Sydney in the inter-war period.

The War Service Homes Scheme was set up to assist service men settle in their own homes after the war. The first home in Australia completed under the scheme was at 32 Kennedy Avenue Belmore, for Private Frederick Baxter in 1919.

Soldiers Welcome Home, Campsie Station, ca 1919

Armistice celebrations at "Chardville", Campsie, 1918
Armistice was signed at 11 o'clock on 11th November 1918.

Part of the land subdivided after the opening of the goods line was the site of a complete estate of homes. One of the streets, Wattle Street, was renamed "Bazentin Street", after a village near Pozieres in France. In Earlwood, a large estate owned by the War Service Homes Commission had streets named after World War I battle sites in France: Flers Avenue, Gueudecourt Avenue, Polygon Crescent and Fricourt Avenue.

Canterbury's War Service Homes are significant heritage items. They were mostly architect-designed, and represented the latest ideas of the time on ideal housing for a family. Many variations of houses built to the standard War Service Home plans exist today in estates at Belfield, South Belmore, Lakemba and Clemton Park.