

PREMIER'S ANZAC SPIRIT SCHOOL PRIZE 2023

PRIVATE

WALTER LEONARD EAST

10<sup>TH</sup> BATTALION, A.I.F.



28.9.1894 – 15.5.1915

LEST WE FORGET

**ALBY BRADSHAW**

YEAR 10

ENDEAVOUR COLLEGE, MAWSON LAKES

## PART A

### The life and service of Walter Leonard East

*They are not dead; not even broken  
Only their dust has gone back to the earth  
For they, the essential they, shall have rebirth  
Whenever a word of them is spoken.<sup>1</sup>*

Dame Mary Gilmore, 'These Following Men'

Walter Leonard Rann (East) was born to Charlotte Rann on 28th September 1894, in Adelaide, South Australia. His father's details were not recorded<sup>2</sup>. In 1895, Charlotte Rann married Henry East, of Forest Range, and together they raised Walter and ten other children, including his brother and fellow serviceman, William Henry East. The family lived in a shed on Crown land in Stringybark, Forest Range, which Henry East leased from the local government for the purpose of grazing and cultivating. The property is situated at Lot 363, Mawson Road<sup>3</sup>, near the Adelaide hills township now known as Lenswood.

**Source 1:** Walter's Oath to serve King and country upon enlistment.

Walter was educated at the local Forest School and after leaving, worked as a gardener in the Forest Range area. His income was critical in supporting his family, who were very poor and had many children to provide for<sup>4</sup>. Walter's interest in service was evident as a sixteen-year-old, when in 1912, he joined the 79<sup>th</sup> Infantry Citizens Forces in the nearby Hills township of Lobethal<sup>5</sup>. It is likely that through his civilian service, Walter was alerted to the breakout of war in Europe, and journeyed to Morphettville in Adelaide, to swear his oath to King and country. [refer to source 1]

On 24<sup>th</sup> August 1914, Walter joined the Australian Imperial Force, his service number, 474, indicating his early commitment and sacrifice. Walter was 19 years, 11 months old. His enlistment paper states he stood at 5'6" (170cm) tall and weighed 140lbs (63kg), with fresh complexion, blue eyes and fair hair.<sup>6</sup> Walter was posted to the F Company of the 10<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion and commenced his training at the Morphettville camp. "The 10<sup>th</sup> Battalion was the first infantry unit raised in South Australia for service overseas during the Great War, as well as the first into action at Anzac on 25 April 1915."<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Passionate Heart, p.3

<sup>2</sup> Genealogy SA, Birth Registrations book 550 page 416

<sup>3</sup> The Forest Range and Lenswood History Group

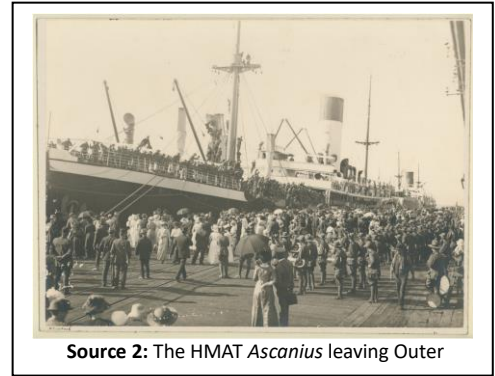
<sup>4</sup> Carolyn Harding

<sup>5</sup> The Forest Range and Lenswood History Group

<sup>6</sup> National Archives of Australia: B2455, EAST W L, Item ID 3532712, p.5

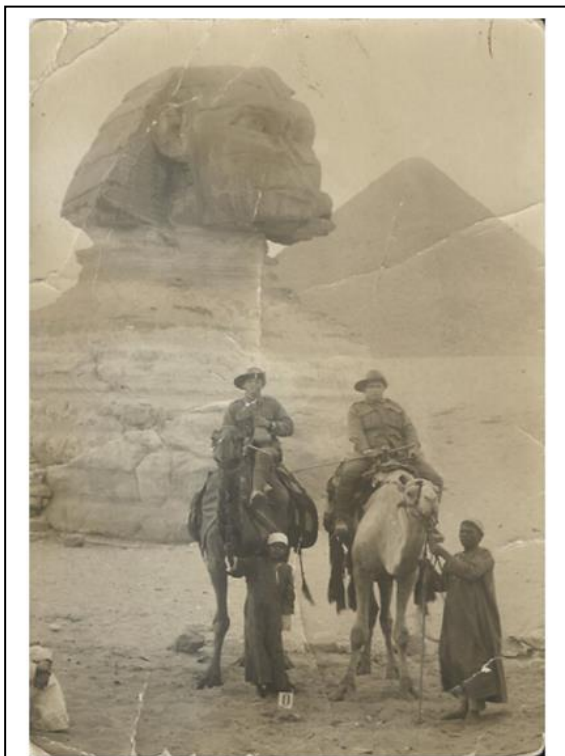
<sup>7</sup> Kearney, p.39

Walter and the 10<sup>th</sup> Battalion embarked on 20<sup>th</sup> October 1914, from Outer Harbour, Adelaide, aboard the HMAT A11 *Ascanius* [refer to source 2], to travel to Western Australia to join the largest convoy of Australian and New Zealand ships to ever travel across the Indian Ocean. He was bound for Egypt, and as he waved goodbye to the crowds, he could never have anticipated the journey that was yet to come. While records indicate that Walter boarded *Ascanius* as a member of the 10<sup>th</sup> Battalion F Company<sup>8</sup>, at some stage during his service, he joined A Company, however the details of the timing of this are unknown<sup>9</sup>.



Source 2: The HMAT *Ascanius* leaving Outer

After an eventful convoy at sea, including celebrating the Australian Navy's first battle after the HMAS *Sydney* successfully destroyed the German cruiser SMS *Emden*, and managing damage sustained from a collision with the *Shropshire*, the *Ascanius* arrived in Alexandria, Egypt on 6<sup>th</sup> December 1914. Walter and the 10<sup>th</sup> Battalion disembarked and travelled to the Mena Camp, where they remained for nearly 3 months<sup>10</sup>.



Source 3: Walter (left) and fellow soldier at the Sphinx, Egypt, sent as postcard to his brother, William. Image supplied by Robert Jarrad.

During this time, the Battalion undertook extensive training to prepare them for war, but there were also significant opportunities for the soldiers to explore local landmarks as tourists. For Walter, this desert landscape would have been of stark contrast from his home in the dense forest greenery of the Adelaide Hills. He sent a photo of himself riding a camel in front of the Sphinx as a postcard to his brother, William, to share his experience. [refer to source 3]

The next stage of Walter's service began on 1<sup>st</sup> March 1915, when the 10<sup>th</sup> Battalion departed Mena Camp, to embark on the SS *Ionian*, bound for the Greek island of Lemnos.<sup>11</sup> Upon arrival on 6<sup>th</sup> March, the 10<sup>th</sup> Battalion stayed onboard the *Ionian* for seven weeks, in tough living conditions due to lack of fresh drinking water on the island. During this time, they carried out further training and landing practice in preparation for the assault on the Gallipoli Peninsula.<sup>12</sup>

On 24<sup>th</sup> April 1915, Walter's extensive training came to fruition as he and the 10<sup>th</sup> Battalion made final preparations for the landing at Gallipoli. Companies B and C boarded HMS *Prince of Wales*, and Companies A and D boarded the naval destroyers *Foxhound* and *Scourge* for the attack. Despite the careful night operation and silent lifeboat journey to shore, B

and C Companies were met with a hail of rifle and machine gun fire, yet the men charged on, shortly followed by A and D Companies<sup>13</sup>. Walter landed on the shores of ANZAC Cove amidst the bodies and bloodshed, heavy artillery fire and shelling - pure hell – where over 620 Australians died that day.<sup>14</sup> Walter survived the landing, yet this was only the beginning of the devastating campaign in the Dardanelles.

<sup>8</sup> UNSW Canberra (2023) "10th Battalion, F Company"

<sup>9</sup> The Forest Range and Lenswood History Group

<sup>10</sup> Kearney, Chp.3

<sup>11</sup> Kearney, Chp.5

<sup>12</sup> Kearney, Chp.5

<sup>13</sup> Kearney, Chp.5

<sup>14</sup> Department of Veterans Affairs, First to Fall 25 April 1915

For the next three weeks, the 10<sup>th</sup> Battalion were digging trenches. They continued to face heavy casualties and constant artillery fire, fighting and bayonet attack at various points along the Gallipoli Peninsula including the notoriously dangerous Quinn's Post. Walter was killed at Second Ridge on 15<sup>th</sup> May 1915.<sup>15</sup> He was only 20 years old and had been at Gallipoli for just three weeks. It is unclear exactly how Walter was killed in action, but his death occurred on a day when only a few casualties were recorded.<sup>16</sup>

He was buried by fellow soldiers in Victoria Gully. [refer to source 4]

Several years later, in 1920, Henry East, received Walter's personal effects, including his medals, memorial plaque and King's Message. Written communication between Base Records and Walter's mother, Charlotte, confirmed that Henry East was alive, after Charlotte East was not acknowledged as Walter's Next of Kin, despite being listed<sup>17</sup>.



Source 4: Walter's grave in Victoria Gully, with unidentified soldier. Image supplied by Robert Jarrad.

EMBARKED ( ) J.H.  
M E F PER IONIAN  
GALLIPOLI 2.3.18

Casualty Form—Active Service. Army Form B. 103. 474

Regiment or Corps *10th Inf Bn*  
Regimental No. *474* Rank *Pvt* Name *East Walter Leonard*

Enlisted (a) *2/4/15* Terms of Service (a) \_\_\_\_\_ Service reckons from (a) \_\_\_\_\_  
Date of promotion to present rank \_\_\_\_\_ Date of appointment to lance rank \_\_\_\_\_ Numerical position on roll of N.C.O.s \_\_\_\_\_

Extended		Re-engaged	Qualification (b)	
Date	Report From whom received	Place	Date	Remarks taken from Army Form B. 113, Army Form A. 30, or other official documents.
<i>15/5/15</i>	<i>OS. 10th Bn</i>	<i>Killed in action Gallipoli Peninsula</i>	<i>15/5/15</i>	<i>2110. 474. 2440. 1/15 - 2/1/15.0</i>
		<i>Buried towards lead of gully near Anzac Cove, Gallipoli Chap. S.C. W.P. Sec. P.R.G.S. 471.</i>		

National Archives of Australia B2455, EAST WL

Source 5: Walter's official record of death and burial.

Walter is now at rest in Plot 2, Row A, Grave 17 at the Lone Pine Cemetery, ANZAC Cove<sup>18</sup>, after his remains were exhumed and re-interred there in 1923<sup>19</sup>.

Transferred to  
AUSTRALIAN IMPERIAL FORCE.

No. *474*  
Rank *Private* Name *East W. L.*  
Unit *10th Battalion*  
Service No. *15/5/15* Killed in action Gallipoli Peninsula

DATE OF DEPARTURE FROM AUSTRALIA  
15/5/15

DATE OF RETURN TO AUSTRALIA  
16/7/15

WHERE THE AUSTRALIANS REST.  
Lone Pine Cemetery, ANZAC Cove, Gallipoli Peninsula

Source 6: Walter's official service records.

<sup>15</sup> National Archives of Australia: B2455, EAST W L, Item ID 3532712, p.10-14

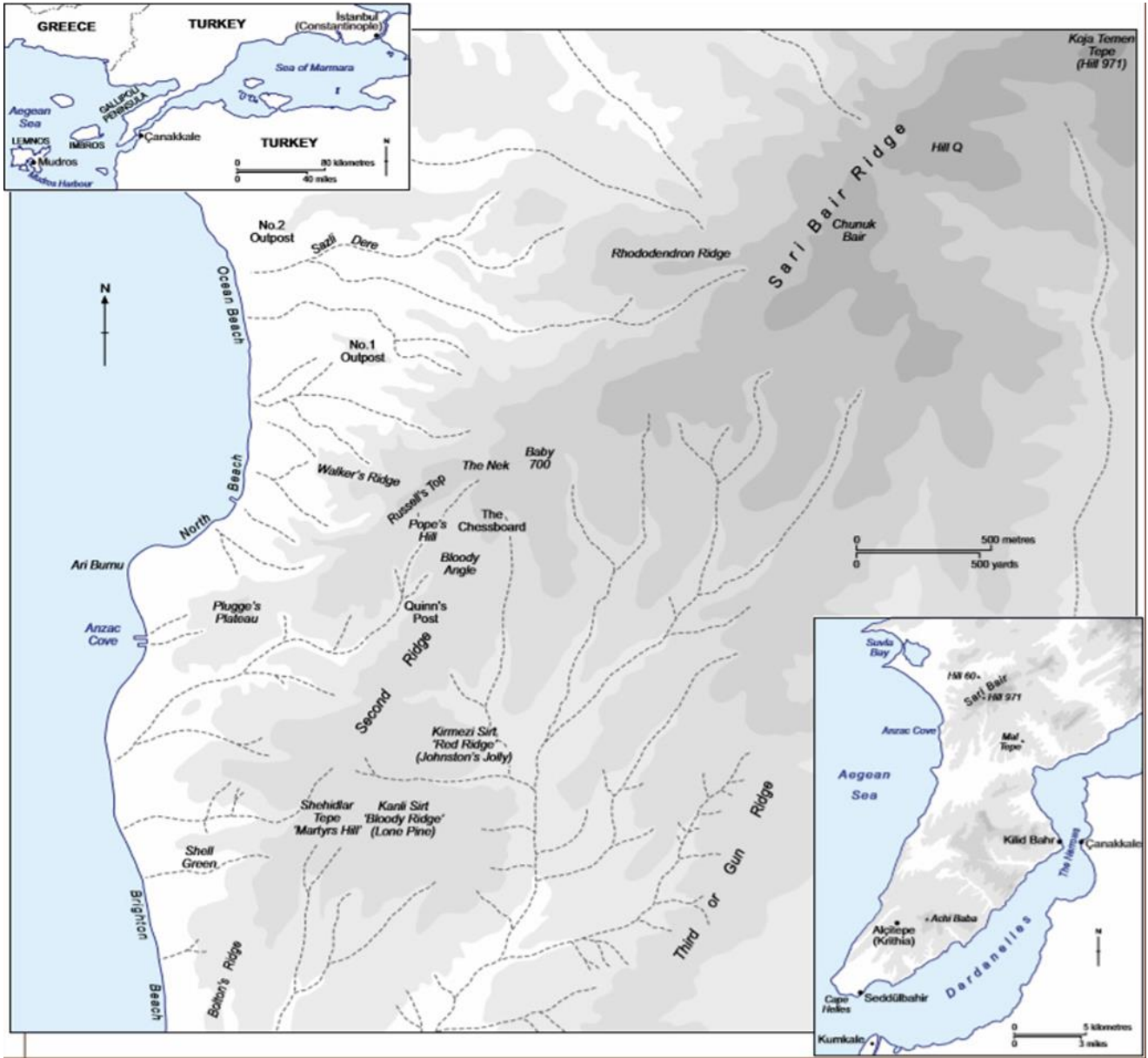
<sup>16</sup> Kearney, P.116

<sup>17</sup> National Archives of Australia: B2455, EAST W L, Item ID 3532712, p.40-41

<sup>18</sup> The Forest Range and Lenswood History Group

<sup>19</sup> National Archives of Australia: B2455, EAST W L, Item ID 3532712, p.25





**Source 7:** Maps showing Australian locations on Gallipoli 1915 (source: Department of Veteran Affairs ANZAC Portal). Walter Leonard East was killed on Second Ridge near Quinn's Post on 15th May 1915.

## How Walter Leonard East reflected the ANZAC Spirit

Walter Leonard East was a courageous, bright, resilient, and respectable individual. His eagerness to aid the war effort from a young age epitomises the ANZAC values of courage and sacrifice and ultimately, he sacrificed his young life. Walter was the 474<sup>th</sup> Australian to enlist in the AIF, willingly leaving behind his own life, family, and personal ambitions for the greater good of his nation.

Walter's efforts in the ANZAC campaign reflect his bravery, perseverance, and endurance. He survived the Gallipoli landing and following weeks amidst the physical and emotional horrors of war, with multiple sources indicating his positive impact on his fellow servicemen.

On 14<sup>th</sup> July 1915 the Adelaide *Daily Herald* made an acknowledgement of Walter and his service<sup>20</sup>. [refer to sources 8 and 9]

Private W. L. East, who was killed in action in the Dardanelles, was the eldest son of Mr. and Mrs. H. East, of Forest Range, South. Australia. He was 20 years and 9 months old. He was one of the first to enlist from this town. He enlisted shortly after the war broke out and with the 10th Battalion of the first expeditionary force. He was a bright and manly young fellow and was greatly respected by all who knew him.

*Source 8: Transcript of Source 9, Daily Herald notice, 14<sup>th</sup> July 1915*

Mateship was a core part of the ANZAC Spirit and Walter's enduring relationships with others was evident even after his death. Of note was a poem entitled "*The Burial*", written by acclaimed Australian war poet, Leon Gellert, who served alongside Walter in Gallipoli. "*The Burial*" is dedicated to Walter's memory and describes the heart-breaking task of a soldier burying and mourning a mate, Gellert burying and mourning the loss of Walter to war. [refer Appendix 1]

Walter also had loving relationships with his family and his ANZAC Spirit lived on at home. On 20<sup>th</sup> October 1915, exactly twelve months after Walter departed Adelaide, his younger brother, William Henry East, enlisted to also fight in the Great War, with the consent of their mother. A second cousin, Albert Harold East also enlisted on the same day, and is often referred to as a brother in documentation, due to the close family connection. Family folklore says that William's decision to serve was to avenge his beloved brother's death<sup>21</sup>. Sadly, Private William Henry East was killed in action at Mouquet Farm, in France during the Somme campaign, on 4<sup>th</sup> September 1916<sup>22</sup>.

### PRIVATE W. L. EAST.

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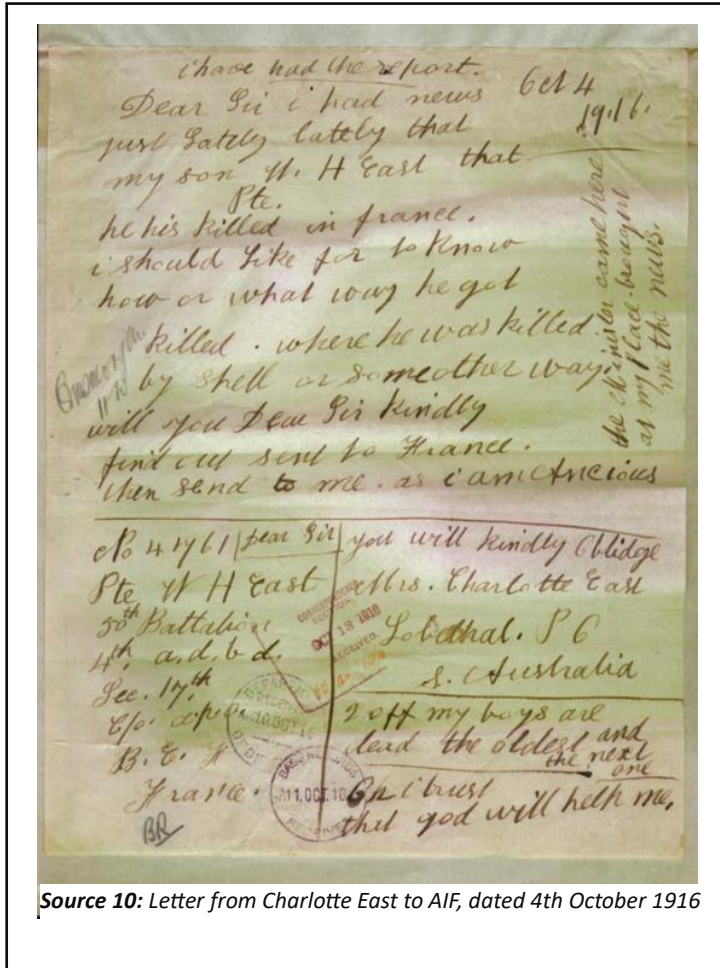
PRIVATE W. L. EAST,  
Who was killed in an action on the  
Gallipoli Peninsula.

*Source 9: Daily Herald notice, 14<sup>th</sup> July 1915*

<sup>20</sup> Daily Herald, 1915, retrieved from Trove

<sup>21</sup> Carolyn Harding

<sup>22</sup> Virtual War Memorial Australia



Source 10: Letter from Charlotte East to AIF, dated 4th October 1916

The devastating impact of the Great War on the East family is evident in the loss of Walter's and William's young lives. Charlotte's profound grief is highlighted in desperate letters she wrote [refer to source 9] pleading for news of her sons<sup>23</sup>, and memorial notices placed in newspapers. In following years, she also refused to allow her other sons to attend school as it was her belief that this would prevent them from being sent to war<sup>24</sup>.

Back home a portrait postcard arrives

With love from Walter. I'm doing fine<sup>25</sup>.

Robert John Jarrad, 'Walter'

Word count: 1500 (excluding Titles, Footnotes, Captions, Transcript and Appendix)

## APPENDIX 1: *The Burial* by Leon Gellert (1915)

### The Burial: In Memory of W.L.E.

What task is this that so unnerves me now?  
 When pity should be dead, and has been dead.  
 Unloose that sheet from round the pierced brow;  
 What matter blood is seen, for blood is red,  
 And red's the colour of the clammy earth.  
 Be not so solemn, - There's no need to pray;  
 But, rather smile, - yea, laugh! If pure, thy mirth  
 Is right. He laughed himself but yesterday.  
 That pay-book? Take it from him. Ours a debt  
 No gold can ever pay. That cross of wood  
 About his neck? That must remain, and yet  
 He needs it no, because his heart was good.  
 We'll house him 'neath those broken shrubs; dig deep.  
 He's tired. God knows, and needs a little sleep.

<sup>23</sup> National Archives of Australia: B2455, EAST W L, Item ID 3532712,

<sup>24</sup> The Forest Range and Lenswood History Group

<sup>25</sup> Slouch Hat Soldiers, p.33

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## PART B

### Research of Walter Leonard East

My research about Walter began in late 2022, when I recalled hearing about an ancestor who served in the First World War and I was curious to learn more about his story, and the ANZAC story. My grandparents and other relatives have undertaken some research to keep the stories of our family's service history alive, and I feel it's my responsibility to learn about this and to pass this knowledge on to future generations.

My first step to learn more about Walter was interviewing my maternal grandmother who provided valuable information about Walter's life and interesting sources. She showed me our family tree and explained that Walter is my three times great uncle on my Grandpa's side. From this conversation I gained knowledge about Walter, his family and where he had grown up in the Adelaide Hills. I visited Lenswood and Forest Range and spent time at the local war memorial to pay my respects to Walter, his brother, William, and other local men who lost their lives at war. I documented my interviews with my Grandma and my trip to Lenswood on video, and as I visited locations in the area, including the site of Walter's childhood home, I tried to put myself in his shoes. I reflected on what I had learnt of his life as a 19-year-old in 1914, as he prepared for war.

My Grandma also gave me a book, *Slouch Hat Soldiers*, written by my Grandpa's cousin, Robert Jarrad, which contains a collection of poems dedicated to our serving ancestors, including a poem for Walter, William, and also each of my paternal great-grandparents. This fascinated me, and I was touched by the connections to my family's history and driven to find out more about Walter's life in service after he enlisted.

I undertook research via trusted archival websites and numerous other sources to explore Walter's service records, including that of his tragic death. Amongst my most poignant findings were poems and correspondence about Walter from those who loved him, including a fellow comrade, Leon Gellert, memorialising Walter's ANZAC spirit in *"The Burial"*. Other excellent sources included the books *The Forgotten Monument*, by The Forest Range and Lenswood History Group, and *Silent Voices*, a book by Robert Kearney which details the history of the 10<sup>th</sup> Battalion during the Great War.

An absolute highlight of my research was an unexpected visit the Australian War Memorial when my mother took me to Canberra to further my research and pay tribute to Walter. It was a privilege to place a poppy on the Honour Roll next to Walter's name, and a moving experience to immerse myself in the exhibits with his war experience front of mind.

In tribute to Walter, I created a video presentation of my research, interviews and site visits, prior to commencing this essay submission, to document my research for my family.

*"Lives have been lost and family members have made sacrifices... it's a continuing timeline, and it's important these stories are told."*<sup>26</sup>



Lest we forget.

Word count Part B: 500 words (excluding Titles, Footnotes and Captions)

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<sup>26</sup> Our Continuing Story: Adam Bryan, Australian War Memorial