

## RALLYING THE TROOPS: A World War I Commemoration

### Volume II: *Enlist Now* and Volume III: *Will You Help?*

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**Publishers:** Ku-ring-gai Historical Society ([www.khs.org.au](http://www.khs.org.au))

The Ku-ring-gai Historical Society is a band of community historians from northern Sydney. In a four-volume series, they have set out to generate a commemoration of their neighbourhood's contribution to World War I:

**I: *The Trumpet Calls*** (ISBN: 978-0-9598673-5-0)

**II: *Enlist Now*** (ISBN: 978-0-9598673-0-5)

**III: *Will You Help?*** (ISBN: 978-0-9598673-1-2)

**IV: *Were you there then?*** (yet to be published)

Volume I was released in 2014 to coincide with the centenary of the start of the Great War and covered 1914-15, with biographical entries for those whose family names start with A to F. It provided information on Life in the Pre-War era, Memorials (both in Australia and on the battlefields), an Historian (the vital role played by CEW Bean) and the early Campaigns (German New Guinea, Gallipoli) in a well-written style suited to both the general reader and serious researcher. A Glossary provided excellent support information to assist the lay reader easily understand the text. This volume set the scene for Volumes II and III now reviewed in this article.

The most remarkable and unique section in each volume, covers those who enlisted from the Ku-ring-gai area. Details of each soldier's (1800 identified to date) military service and next of kin are followed by their life story including location and date of death, and where each is commemorated. Many of those soldiers lie forever in a foreign field or at sea; only two from the entire AIF were returned to Australia. The labour of love by those who have painstakingly compiled these data is compellingly obvious, and the result is a record of a community's contribution to war that is probably second to none, especially on this scale and at this level of detail. Where one exists, a photograph of the soldier is included, as are the occasional document that provides a tenuous link with the soldier in question. All biographical entries are a remarkable tribute to the commitment of both the series' researchers and the relatives of the soldiers in question.

**Volume II** was released in 2015, devoted to the next stage of preparing for war. Sub-titled *Enlist now*, it covers detailed preparation of the troops now in uniform, and the campaigns which started in 1916. The first chapter provides an excellent coverage of Australian-based training which, for most of the enlistees, was in NSW. The authors also use the 18<sup>th</sup> Battalion experiences where many of the men from Ku-ring-gai were posted to illustrate the preparation for war in Australia. Another chapter deals with the handling of troops in England pending their deployment to the Western Front, an area about which less is written in Australian military history. The campaigns chapters include the Middle East operations in 1916-18 and then the Western Front where the Battles of Fromelles, Pozières-Mouquet Farm and Bullecourt all featured Ku-ring-gai's soldiers. In the biographical details section, soldiers with family names starting with G to K are included. The success of Volume I led to the identification of further soldiers so the writing team, in anticipating this, added further A-F names in an Addenda with advice that biographical entries would be included in the final volume.

**Volume III**, sub-titled *Will you help* was released in 2017 and follows the general design of the series. The same excellent standard is again evident. Chapters address the conscription movement, the 1917 battles on the Western Front and, under the heading of '*Care and support*', a well-crafted coverage of the human services support agencies which soldiers at war could scarce be without. Medical, religious, philanthropic and home front support are illustrated with a wonderful focus on Ku-ring-gai people involved, both at home and overseas. This section was particularly well delivered as it brings the reader close to what many military histories cannot do, put a local context to the less obvious but equally essential human side of war. Ku-ring-gai owes a lot to this writing team which has managed to capture the 'local' touch that is reflected in most Australian communities but is not so well-documented as is the case in this series. Soldiers with L to R surnames are covered, along with

another Addenda which picks up more names not known about during the publication of Volumes I and II. The same superb Glossary allows this volume to stand alone, as is the case for the others.

Technically the first three volumes are a first class product with every indication being that the final volume will be as good. As for Volume I, many original photographs are presented to support the imagery which comes from official sources, with excellent attribution applied. All are clear images, with accurate and concise captions. Book layout, use of white space and general compilation all bear the hallmark of a designer and publisher who know how to communicate visually with the reader to assist the authors convey their intent. Footnotes for each section are perfectly placed to enable the searcher for deeper enquiry to pursue more information.

To date, the first three volumes of ***Rallying the Troops*** comprise incisive and deeply personable publications; Volumes II and III maintaining the standard set in the first. Most Australians today can relate to the collective commitment made and hurt suffered by the Ku-ring-gai community. Collectively, all four volumes will constitute a remarkable collection that deserves its place, not only on every household shelf, but also in every institutional repository of first class literature across the nation. While it is a story of the Ku-ring-gai community, it is also Australia's. The voluntary team to generate this contribution to Australia's military and social literature on behalf of the Ku-ring-gai community are to be commended, a fact reflected by the series of awards already favoured upon the product.

**Reviewer:** Lieutenant Colonel Russell Linwood, ASM (Retd)

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