



## THE MASONIC HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

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### BRO. WALTER EDWIN PARKER (1894-2000)

On 21 January 2000, Australia Post issued 4 stamps in the Australian Legends series. 1. They depicted the last three surviving soldiers of the first Australian Imperial Force (AIF) who served at Gallipoli, and the 1914-15 Star awarded to all those who served in campaigns of the early stages of the First World War.



The three men depicted on the stamps were Walter Parker, Roy Longmore and Alec Campbell. Parker and Longmore were masons.

Walter Parker was born in Sydney on 11 August 1894. He was the youngest of three boys and five girls who received a sound Christian upbringing with a faith in God.

He spent his early school years in the north-side suburb of Brookvale and he became apprenticed to the trade of commercial art printing with the Sydney firm of Turner and Henderson. 2.

He was twenty when his father signed his enlistment papers on the condition that he didn't go to New Guinea because of the possibility of contracting malaria. 3.

Parker found to his delight that his mate from schooldays, Norman Craven, had also enlisted, when they shared the same tent at the training camp in Sydney.

On his arrival in Egypt, Wally Parker spent his first nine days in hospital with enteritis, a form of typhoid. So much for the mosquitoes of New Guinea.

He arrived at Gallipoli on 12 November 1915 with the 4th Reinforcements of the 20th Battalion. The worst of the fighting was over and Private Parker carried ammunition and water through the muddy trenches to the troops at the front line.

He later described the Anzacs as 'a scruffy lot. They looked awful but they were a grateful lot of chaps'.

Parker's daughter, Mrs Gwen Charlesworth, said: 'I'm glad he went later rather than earlier or he might not have been my father'.

After six weeks at Gallipoli, Wally and Norman Craven joined the evacuation that followed the French-British decision to abandon the campaign.

They sailed for France and it was a case of out of the frying pan and into the fire of the hell of the Somme and Pozieres.

On 4 August 1916, Wally was wounded when a piece of shrapnel sliced a tendon in his left arm. His mate Norman was in the next bed but the war was over for Private Parker.

After the war, the two mates headed to the north coast of New South Wales where they worked on a banana plantation until the crop failed because of the disease, 'bunchytop'.

Parker then worked as a truck driver and a retail salesman and, on 13 October 1920, Wal married Amy, a Mullumbimby girl at Cooper's Creek, 12 km to the west of Mullumbimby. Wal and Amy then settled at Glen Innes while Norman, who had married Isabel, also a Mullumbimby girl, decided to return to Sydney.

It was the story of the song of the 'wedding bells breaking up that old gang of mine'.

Wal and Amy had a son, Earle and a daughter, Gwen.

During the Second World War, Earle, a rear-gunner in a Lancaster bomber, was shot down and killed over Germany. He was aged twenty-one.

In 1965, Wal and Amy moved to Melbourne to be near their family.

After fifty-two years of marriage, Amy died. His daughter Gwen, now Mrs Charlesworth, referring to her father, said: 'Earle's death left a huge hole in his life and he was terribly close to my mother'. 4.

In 1998, Wal Parker received France's Legion d' Honneur (Legion of Honour) medal and, in 1999, he received the 80th Anniversary Armistice Remembrance Medal.

Wally, aged 105 and living in a Melbourne nursing home, was blind and unable to see the gold replica of the stamp presented to his family which included his three grandchildren and two great granddaughters. 5.

Mrs Charlesworth said: 'The family believe it is a very special honour for all the men of Gallipoli. We are all very excited'.

Walter Parker died on 22 January 2000, the day after the stamp, bearing his portrait as a twenty-year old Anzac was issued.



Design based on Parker family photo.

Jack Moroney, a friend of 25 years, described him as the 'most charming of men. He was a remarkable feller . . . . . he was actually only a little bloke. He didn't have an easy life and people didn't mind doing things for him because he always appreciated it'.

Mr Mooney, Secretary of the North Balwyn Returned Services League (RSL) said that Wal Parker talked about the war but did not like to brag. He said 'fighting in France was worse than Gallipoli'.

Wally's mate, Bro. Norman Thomas John Craven was initiated at Mullumbimby in Lodge Brunswick No. 225 on the Register of the United Grand Lodge of New South Wales on 18 November 1921. He joined Lodge Bangalow No. 250 but rejoined Lodge Brunswick on 12 July 1927.

After he returned to Sydney, he joined Lodge Prince Edward No. 349 which met at Bondi. He called off on 15 April 1964.

Wally followed his mate into the Craft.

Bro. Walter Edwin Parker was initiated in Lodge Brunswick No. 225 at Mullumbimby on 30 June 1925. He was passed to the Second Degree on 29 September 1925 and raised a Master Mason on 2 September 1926. He called off on 14 May 1929.

He gave his age as thirty and his occupation as labourer. He was issued with Master Mason's Certificate No. 88940. 6.

On 20 October 1951, he affiliated with Lodge New England No. 764 at Glen Innes. He called off on 8 December 1962.

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#### NOTES

1. Australian Stamp Bulletin No. 254, March-May 2000.
  2. Personal correspondence from Mrs Gwen Charlesworth, 14 April 2000.
  3. Tony Stephens, *The Last Anzacs*, Allen & Kemsley, Sydney, 1996.
  4. The Herald-Sun: article by Kathleen Towers, 22 January 2000.
  5. The Sydney Morning Herald: article by Tony Stephens, 22 January 2000.
  6. The United Grand Lodge of New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory: Membership records.
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