

## Remembering the Battle of Poelcappelle

9th October 1917

Last month on the 9<sup>th</sup> October a ceremony was held at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra to commemorate the centenary of the Battle of Poelcappelle near Polygon Wood in Belgium. This battle like many on the Western front, resulted in a huge loss of lives for the Allied troops. Many of these men from the Australian Infantry were quite young. One of these was my uncle, Billy Dingley. His body along with 22,000 others was never found. They were lost in the quagmire of Flanders Fields.

The memory of Uncle Billy's short life, dying at just 20 years of age, has been kept alive through his story told, retold and passed onto the next generation of my family. There was one photo of Uncle Billy which was featured prominently in the homes of all his brothers and sisters. Those of us who are his nieces and nephews, came to know him through this photo and the stories which surrounded it.



This year (2017) one of Uncle Billy's great, great nephews, Matthew Claridge, painted a portrait of him for a major work in his Higher School Certificate. His grandmother, Uncle Billy's niece had shared with Matthew, her grandson some memorabilia items belonging to uncle Billy. Matthew featured these as the background to the painting.



In a recent address given by Dr. Brendan Nelson at the Canberra Press Club, he quoted a mortally wounded Australian soldier asking of the war correspondent, Charles Bean "In Australia will they remember me." As I read these words it made me realise that these soldiers fighting courageously had just one dying wish and that was; **to be remembered.**

Carl Jung, the eminent psychologist claimed that we carry a vast pool of ancestral memory within each of us. Part of our human journey is to bring to consciousness in our lives the stories of those who have gone before us because they are woven into the fabric of our being.

I am grateful that my mother and her brothers and sisters kept alive the story of their courageous brother. This has made future generations of family more aware of the shared story not only of our family but of our humanity.

As uncle Billy's body was never found his name, along with the names of Australia's 6,000 missing in Belgium are engraved on the walls of the Menin Gate near Ypres. Every evening the Last Post is sounded under the memorial's great arch.

Acclaimed British author and poet Rudyard Kipling contributed the following words which were inscribed on both the eastern and western facades of the memorial of the Menin Gates.

**TO THE ARMIES OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE WHO STOOD HERE FROM 1914 TO 1918  
AND TO THOSE OF THEIR DEAD WHO HAVE NO KNOWN GRAVE.**

*Article written by Patty Andrew osu. Niece of William (Billy) Dingley 1897-1917*