

St Paul's College ANZAC Day Service

Thursday 25th April 2024

An Address by the Rev. Antony Weiss - Chaplain

From the holy Gospel according to John we read, "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends." (John 15: 12-13)

Self-sacrifice is one of the major themes of the New Testament. Jesus modeled it for us in the way He lived. Though He was God, He did not demand His rights as God, but demonstrated servant leadership in everything He did (Philippians 2:6-8). He said to His disciples, "Whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:27-28).

Jesus states that the greatest commandments require self-sacrifice. The first commandment is that we love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. The second is to love our neighbors as ourselves (Matthew 22:36-40).

Therefore, it comes as no surprise that Jesus's powerful call recorded in John 15 of exemplifying the greatest expression of love in laying down one's life for another have been tied to ANZAC Day and Remembrance Day services, since the two World Wars.

The first ANZAC Day was conducted in 1916. In London, large crowds watched 2,000 Australians and New Zealanders march to Westminster Abbey while at home, almost 100,000 people packing the Domain in Sydney for a service as the War was still in full swing.

The first return visits to Gallipoli occurred shortly after the end of World War I, mostly by ex-servicemen or family members of men who had died there. At least seven organised visits were made in the 1920s and 1930s.

Then World War II erupted and there were more immediate battles to be fought and won thus focus on Gallipoli was diverted.

In the 1950s and 1960s there was a declining interest in Gallipoli and in ANZAC Day commemorations in both Australia and New Zealand.

That's my memory as a boy in the 1970s. ANZAC Day was for old diggers to gather, reminisce and hit the turps. Moreover, as for Vietnam Vets – they were disgracefully shunned including being excluded from the RSL and ostracised by the civilian population. It was not until 15 years after the last Vietnam veterans returned home in 1972 that they were given an official welcome parade in Sydney on 3 October 1987!

It was around the 75th Commemoration of Gallipoli in 1990 that our nation's perceptions and appreciations of ANZAC Day were reinvigorated. These days we duly honour all our service personal, not only the 8,259 Australians and 2,779 New Zealanders who were killed in the Gallipoli campaign.

Today has become the most important national day for Australia and New Zealand – and for Aussies, certainly more than Australia Day that has become contentious in recent years.

Mateship, courage, remembrance, triumph of the spirit, the ability to right wrongs and the awareness of ultimate sacrifice for others' freedom –this is ANZAC, this is what we pause and hold dear on this day, above all other days.

For a secular nation as ours ANZAC Day has taken on an almost religious form with words like 'pilgrim' and 'pilgrimage' appearing in news reports, especially from Anzac Cove which has become what Jerusalem is for Jews and Christians, Mecca for Muslims and the Ganges for Hindus.

More recently, walking the Kokoda Track has also become enshrined in our national psyche and perhaps one day, when, God willing, peace comes to Libya, we'll be able to add Tobruk to our holy sites where the blood of Australia soldiers cries out from the desert sands.

So whilst we focus on events of 25 April 1915 being the starting point, the '*spirit*' of the ANZAC and the example of an Australian soldier laying down his life for his friends in fact started seven months earlier, and it involved one of this College's greatest sons...

226 days prior to the first Gallipoli landings, the first Australian World War I Officer was killed on the other side of the globe. He was only 24 years old - the same age as some of you. He had been a member of the Sydney University Scouts who, along with a number of members of this unit, enlisted in the

Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force (ANMEF) on 4 August, 1914. It was then that he also applied for a commission and was appointed as a Captain.

He departed Australia to serve with the ANMEF in German New Guinea on 19 August 1914. The Australians were charged with the mission of taking out the German Pacific radio communications' stations.

Only a handful of years earlier this young man had been senior prefect at Sydney Church of England Grammar School, more commonly known as Shore, where he played in the 1st XV for two seasons, and was Captain of Rugby Football in 1908.

Looking at a team photo of that undefeated team it is worth pointing out that, of the fifteen players in the side, all bar one served in World War I and of those five were killed, one in each year of World War I.

In the School Athletics Championship in his final year at Shore he won the 100 yards, 220 yards, 440 yards, 800 yards, high jump, hurdles and long jump and came 2nd in the mile. No doubt his reputed 9" chest expansion gave him a massive

aerobic advantage over his peers. This means that when he breathed in his chest expanded by a significant 9" (23 cm)

And if this is not enough, he did not just devote himself to games. Drama and debating were also his thing. He was a very good scholar gaining straight 'A's in his junior examinations, winning the Geometry Medal for first in the State. After earning strong results in his senior exams, he qualified for entry here at the University of Sydney where he studied medicine from 1909 to 1913 while living right here at St Paul's College.

He gained a double Blue for football and athletics in his first year, he was Vice-President of the Medical Society in his last year and was on the Students' Club Committee of the College for three years.

At the end of 1913 he graduated with Class II Honours and started work as a junior resident medical practitioner at Sydney Hospital on Macquarie Street.

Of the 89 men who lived in College during the five years before the outbreak of the War (1910-14), 78 enlisted (a couple were to wait until World War II) and of those nine died. Including

older Paulines, there were twenty war deaths altogether in that tragic war.

A total of 170 men from this College are known to have enlisted in World War I. Nearly three-quarters joined the AIF, a couple went into the Royal Australian Navy and one into the Australian Flying Corps.

But by far the most popular unit for St Paul's College men was the Australian Army Medical Corps. And the first of these was the aforementioned officer I have been telling you about - the much admired, and duly extolled Brian Colden Antill Pockley.

In fact, we have a descendant of Pockley here at College now - James Kerr. And we welcome NNN, and we are privileged to have NN Pockley's sword on the Lord's Table this morning.

As part of the first Naval Brigade landing force, Brian Pockley landed at Kabakaul in New Guinea on 11 September 1914.

While advancing towards a German radio station, Able Seaman William Williams was shot in the stomach. Pockley attended to him and then got one of the men to carry Williams out of the way. He gave Williams his Red Cross armband (brassard) to ensure they were not shot at, Pockley therefore rendering

himself unarmed and devoid of the Red symbol that afforded him protection under fire.

While then attending another wounded seaman, despite being warned not to, Pockley was shot and wounded by a German sniper for the Germans took him for an ordinary soldier.

Both Pockley and Williams were taken aboard HMAS Berrima. Williams died first, becoming the first Australian casualty of World War I. Pockley succumbed later, becoming the first Australian officer to fall in the Great War.

SS Mackenzie (author of *The Australians at Rabaul*) wrote, "Pockley's action in giving up his Red Cross badge, and thus protecting another man's life at the price of his own, was consonant with the best traditions of the Australian army, and afforded a noble foundation for those of Australian Army Medical Corps in the war."

In the University of Sydney Roll of Service Pockley is recorded thus: "As he lived his life...so he met his death... brave, cheerful, unselfish to the last, leaving behind a record carved in pure gold."

Shore Boy and Pauline, a medical officer who gave his only protection and defied advice to help two other fellow countrymen without hesitation put himself at great risk, and paid the ultimate price.

“Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.”

Days after his beloved son’s death, Pockley’s father said in a newspaper article, “It was just like him, not to have counted this cost to himself if it meant service to another.”

If you ever find yourself in the Shore Chapel, you will discover on its northern side a pair of stained glass windows depicting St Luke, the beloved physician. The image used for Luke face, is in fact Brian Pockley’s with this inscription below...

‘Non Ipse Pro Caris Amicus Aut Patria Timidus Perire’ - Not Himself For a Dear Friend Or the Country Afraid to Perish.

You and I, all of us are all beneficiaries of so much from those who have gone before us, men like Brian Pockley and the 103,021 Australian and 29,845 New Zealand service men and women who have paid the ultimate price.

The original ANZACS are all dead as are all those who fought in World War I, and there remains alive 12,000 Australian and 400 Kiwi World War 2 veterans.

We are now set adrift from the actual living memory of the first ANZACS, thus we're unchained from any direct linear connection and personal experience. Before long, it will be the same with those who serviced in World War II, and in your life times, Vietnam.

Their sacrifice can become the mantle of our own cultivated experience of martyrdom and mateship, so let's be certain to give due reverence to all those who served making sure that we don't rewrite their narratives as our own.

Enjoy the camaraderie this day affords you, and as you head out, never lose sight of the sacrifice and service of all ANZACs, safeguarding the gift of the freedom we readily and abundantly enjoy because of their sacrifice, those who out of love, laid down their lives for their friends that in fact, takes us to the heart of the gospel and the essence of the Christian faith.

“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.”

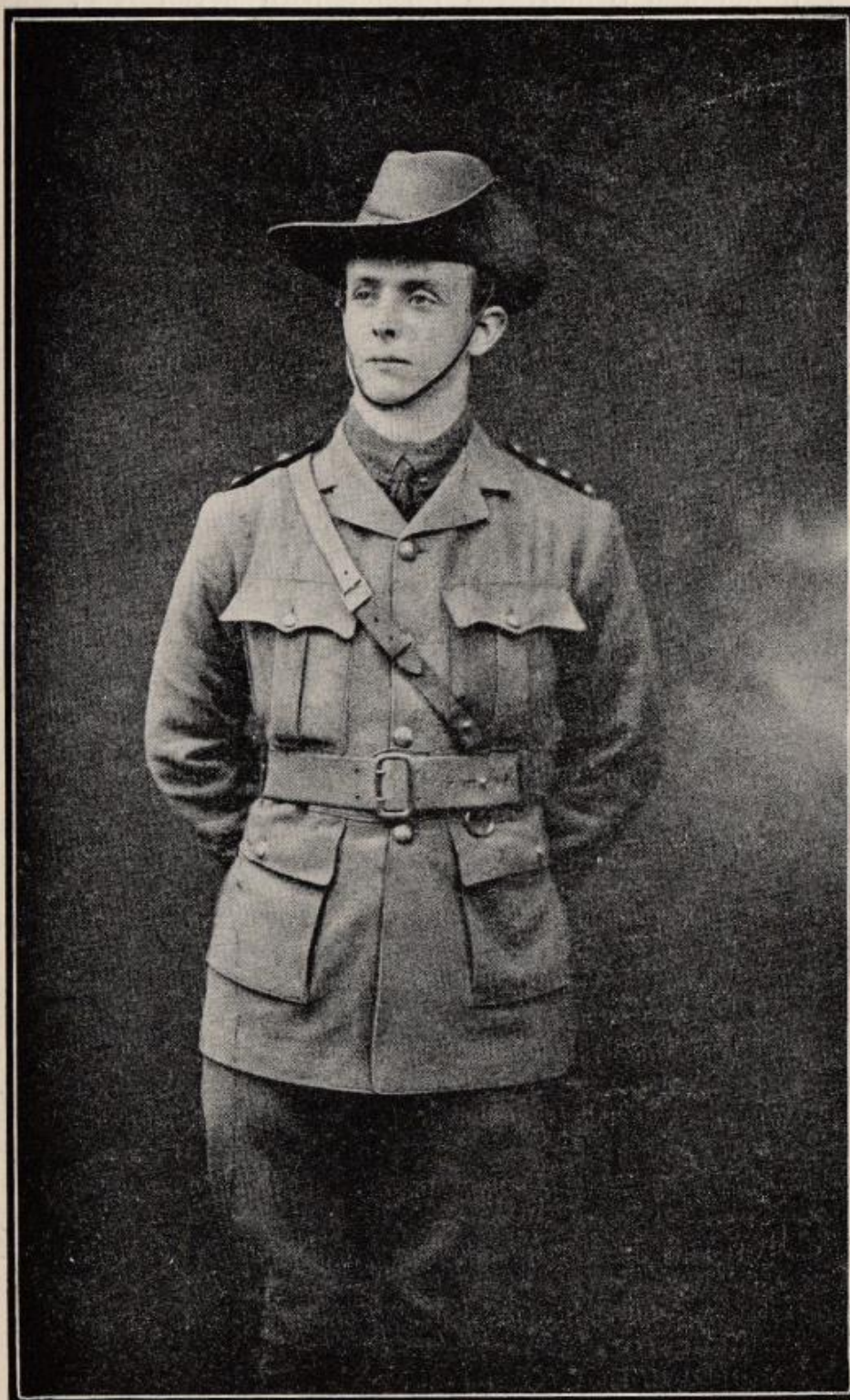
Jesus portrayed His love through sacrifice, and we are called to do the same. Captain Brian Colden Antill Pockley certainly followed his Lord’s call, and example...

Lest We Forget





[Captain Brian Pockley | Monument Australia](#)



Captain B. C. A. POCKLEY (A.M.C.)
(Killed in action, Herbertshohe, Sept., 11, 1914.)