

The Great War 1914 - 1918

Those who answered the call from the New Norfolk district

Hundreds of people from the New Norfolk district enlisted during the 1914 - 1918 war, making a substantial contribution to the war effort. The population of the valley at the time was about 7,000. Of the 12,000 people who enlisted from Tasmania more than 2,900 were killed in action or died as a result of injuries or other causes. These numbers are conservative as exact figures are hard to obtain due to people from the Derwent Valley enlisting in other places.



Group from New Norfolk. From left to right: A. Jarvis, P. Excell, W. Blackwell, P. Stocks, R. Tait, H. A. Balmer, T. Baily, (Mr R. W. G. Shoobridge, H. Blackwell, jun), C. Mitchell, A. Hyat, M. Blackwell, T. Turner, A. Harvey.

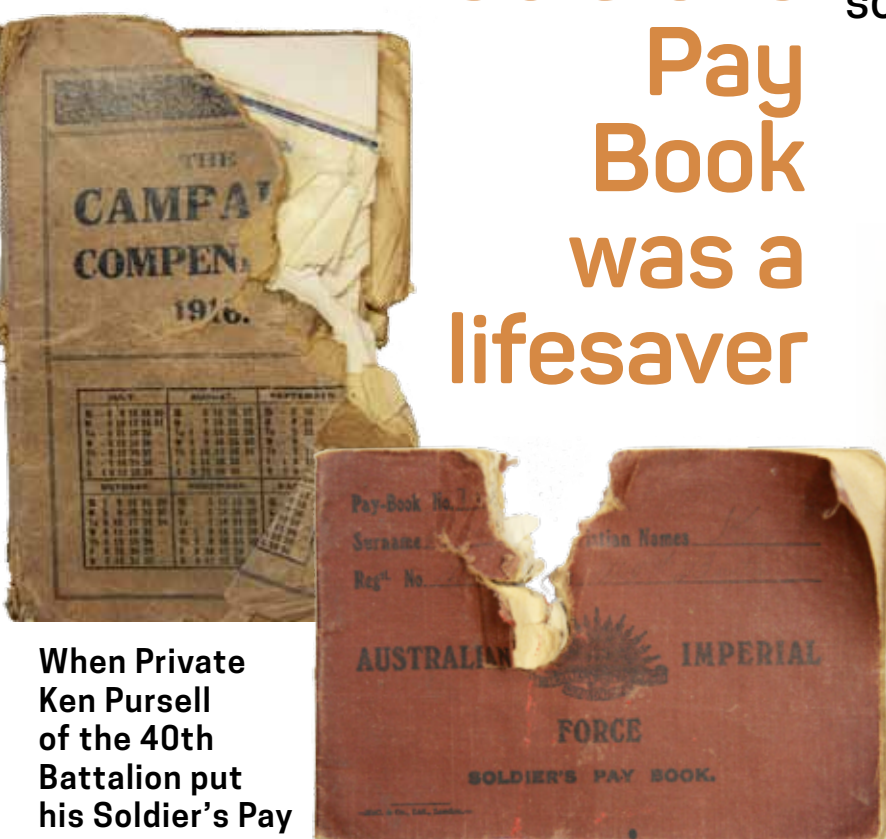
The names of those who died can be seen before you, on the Cenotaph.

Many of those who returned home bought the horror of war with them, suffering from 'shell shock' and dreadful physical injuries as a result of their service to their country. World War 1 was the first modern war fought by massive industrial means, with intense bombardment and fighting that affected some soldiers very badly.

'Shell shock' described a number of reactions to the trauma of war, including panic, fear, inability to reason, sleep, walk or talk. This was on top of the physical injuries suffered by soldiers on the battle front. Although the term 'shell shock' is no longer used, the trauma caused by war is still recognised and is now referred to as 'post traumatic stress disorder'.



Soldier's Pay Book was a lifesaver



When Private Ken Pursell of the 40th Battalion put his Soldier's Pay Book and his Campaign Compendium in his breast pocket on 17 June 1916, he probably had no idea it was a life-saving moment. On that day he was wounded in France by shrapnel. One piece hacked into the books and slowed enough to not enter his chest. Private Pursell married in England during the war and later returned with his bride to Molesworth. He died in 1944. The actual books were donated by his family to the New Norfolk RSL Sub Branch where they can be seen on display.



A2 - HMAT GEELONG, Departure of Tasmanian Troops from Hobart wharf, 20 October 1914.

The Derwent Valley remembers The Centenary of ANZAC



MILLBROOK RISE

It was in recognition of the trauma suffered by those who went to war, and their families, that Millbrook Rise was built at New Norfolk.

Originally called Millbrook Rise Psychopathic Home, the facility was opened on Wednesday, 21 February 1934 by the Governor, Sir Ernest Clark, who was accompanied by a number of prominent citizens of the time, including the Premier and John Gellibrand (Chairman of the Veterans Trust).

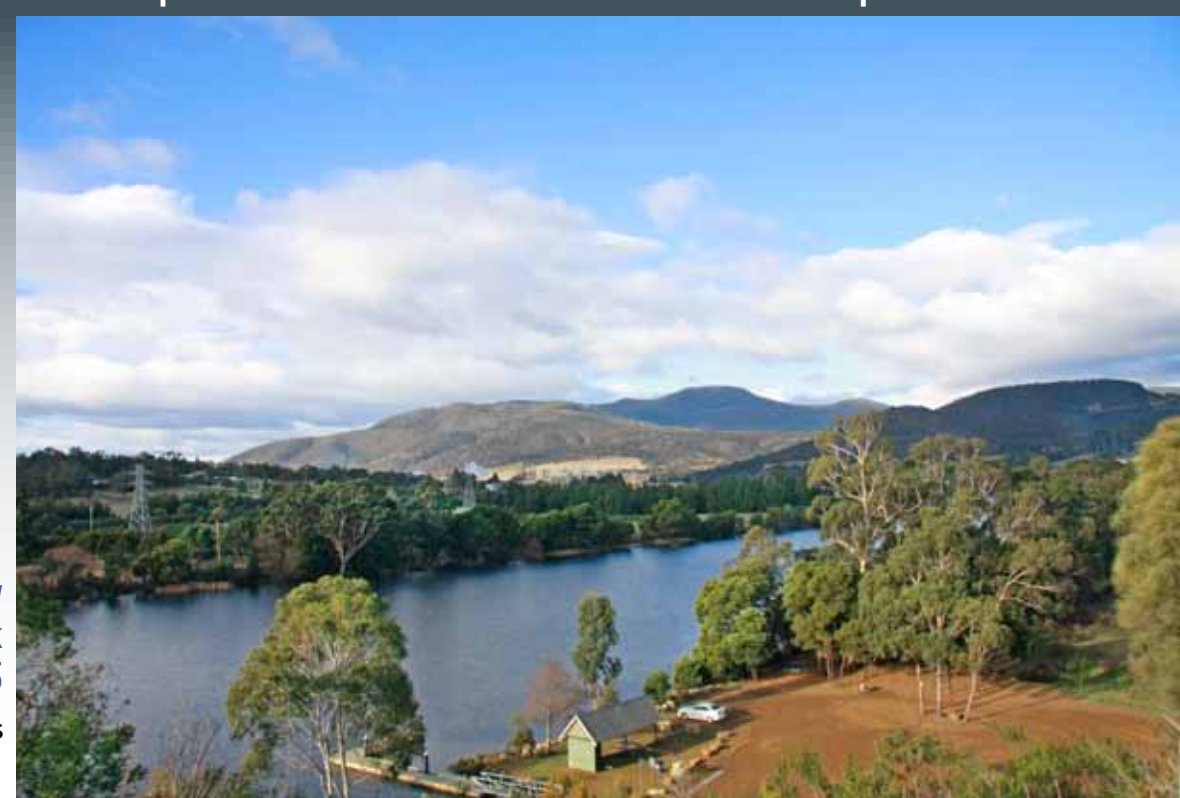
At the time of its opening, much importance was placed on the sunny aspect of the facility, its tennis court and other outdoor activities, which later included croquet and golf. The Mercury (Thursday 19 December 1935) reported that patrons were "...highly delighted with the excellence of the institution, ideal surroundings, and the keen interest displayed by its management. The spot chosen for the location of the home affords an excellent panorama of the picturesque River Derwent and the pleasant countryside.... Surrounding the fine buildings are well kept lawns and a profusion of choice flowers."



After the armistice in 1918, a joint fund of the British Red Cross Society and the Order of St John awarded a number of grants to various States and Colonies.

Tasmania was the recipient of £25,000 (\$50,000). £10,000 was donated to the Bush Nursing Scheme and the balance was put into a trust fund that was used to build Millbrook Rise.

From its completion in 1934 until 1 July 1968, Millbrook Rise was a facility in its own right. After that point it became a ward of the Royal Derwent Hospital until the closure of the hospital in 2001.



The view from Millbrook Rise in 2015
Photo by Derek Jones



Millbrook Rise accommodated 24 residents in two wings (male and female), each originally with a sun room, sitting room and visitors room. Meals were served in a common dining room, and each resident had their own single room.

"Do not give him pity: give him understanding and love" The Mercury - 27 April 1945

MILLBROOK RISE when first built was a symbol of the great advances being made in psychiatric care. It was primarily for shell-shocked veterans of World War 1 and their families who were, 20 years after the cessation of hostilities, still suffering from "nerves" as a result of that conflict but who did not require to be admitted to Lachlan Park Hospital.

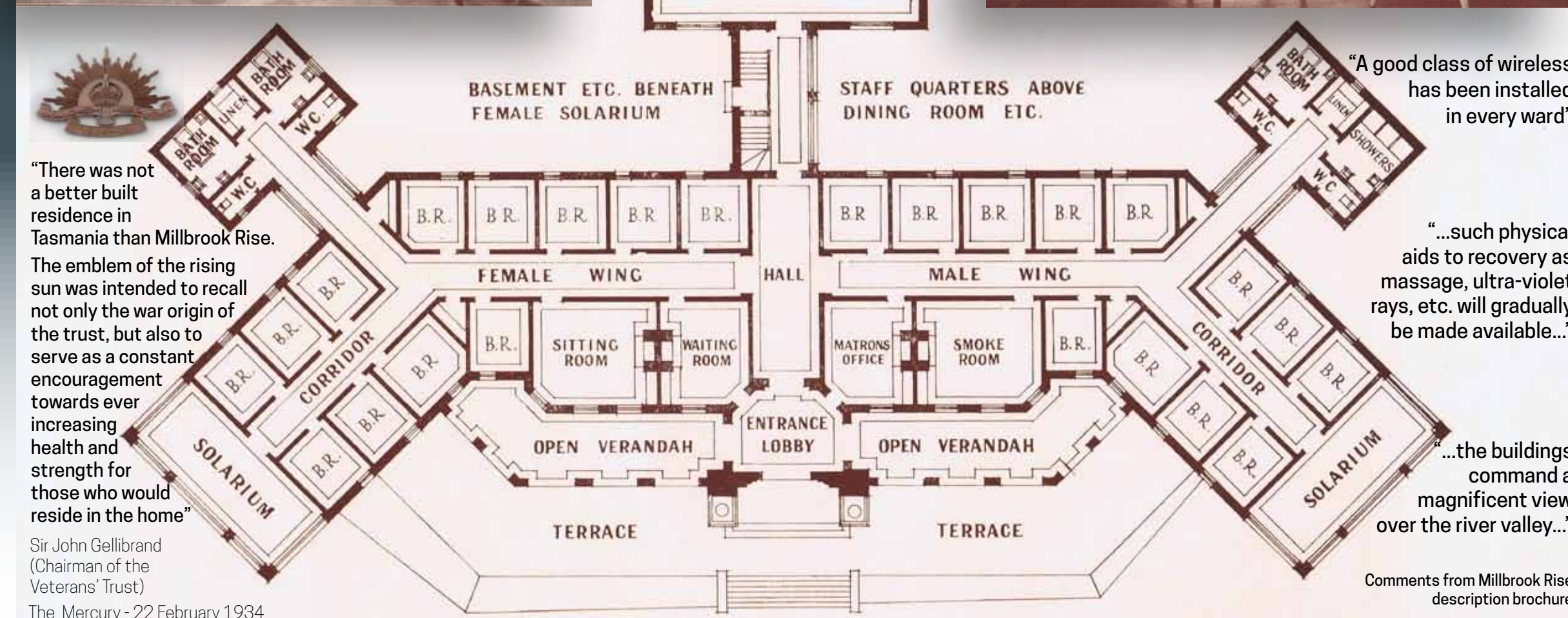
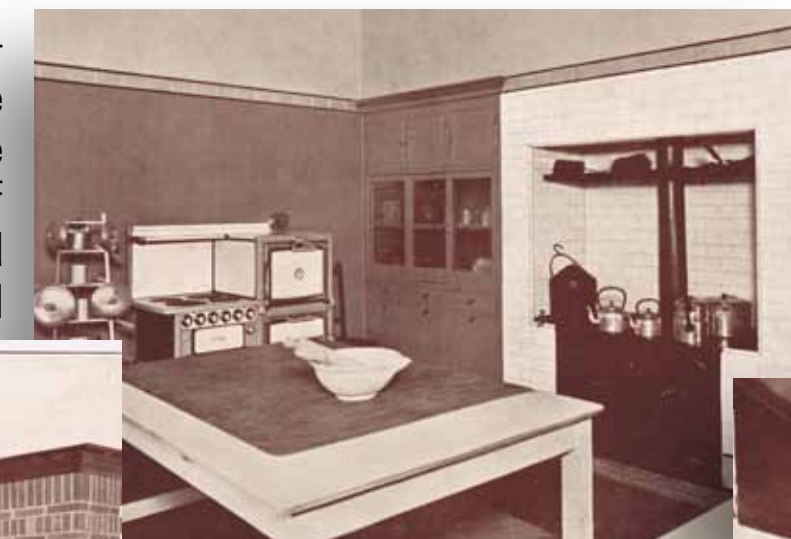
and was for the use of the residents of Millbrook Rise as well as local golf club members. The club contributed financially to the maintenance of the course and also had use of an original farm house near the river for use as a clubhouse. The site was used by New Norfolk Golf Club members for about 20 years.

Adjoining Millbrook Rise, in an area where the Lyell Highway runs close to the river opposite the old quarry, was a willow farm operated by Bridges Brothers of Hobart.

Many crack willows were planted there and every year reduced to a stump as the long willow canes were harvested to be taken to Hobart and made into baskets and other cane products for which Bridges Bros were famous.

A small hut on the property was used by the harvester who would tell O'Brien's Store in New Norfolk to "call in if you see smoke coming from the chimney because I will need some tucker." KEN O'BRIEN

When Millbrook Rise was built, a nine-hole golf course was built adjoining the facility under an agreement between the government and the New Norfolk Golf Club. The golf course was maintained by the staff of Lachlan Park Hospital



"There was not a better built residence in Tasmania than Millbrook Rise. The emblem of the rising sun was intended to recall not only the war origin of the trust, but also to serve as a constant encouragement towards ever increasing health and strength for those who would reside in the home"

"A good class of wireless has been installed in every ward"

"...such physical aids to recovery as massage, ultra-violet rays, etc. will gradually be made available..."

"...the buildings command a magnificent view over the river valley..."

Sir John Gellibrand (Chairman of the Veterans' Trust)
The Mercury - 22 February 1934

Comments from Millbrook Rise description brochure