



ANZAC Day speech given by John Hand (Guest Speaker) RSL Finley Sub-Branch Treasurer and Local Historian

Welcome all to this service commemorating those who have served our country.

Across the country from our busy cities to small country towns like Finley, people stop to remember and honour the selflessness and sacrifice of those who have served our country or are currently serving.

Commemoration of our past and current service people takes several forms. Participating in marches, wearing of medals, preservation of memorials and memorabilia, a minute of silence, the last post, the laying of wreaths. Whether those who served are originally from our town or who chose to make Finley their home, we recognise their service.

This year, 2025, marks 125 years of service to their country by more than two million Australians, involved in several wars, border protection roles, peace keeping duties and our Catafalque party members represent a sample of those who served.

Ray Sutton served in WWII. Ray is the grandfather of Rodger and great grandfather of Riley and Cooper. Elyse Price is the granddaughter of Robert Pyle. Robert served his country by continuing on the family farm feeding the nation, whilst Robert's brother Gordon Pyle DFC, served overseas.

The leader of the catafalque party today, is RAAF Warrant Officer Tess Dean, Tess's great grandfather Private Francis William Gale Smith fought with 41st Infantry Battalion during the Battle of the Somme in 1916. Tess's husband RAAF Flight Sergeant Michael Dean served in Afghanistan. Michael's paternal grandfather Ron served in the Pacific in WWII before finishing the war as a Japanese POW on the island of Ambon, his maternal grandfather Bert Honeychurch served in New Guinea.

With the continual updating of service records, I recommend a search of the National Archives of Australia site to learn much of those who served our country.

110 years ago today, before dawn on the 25th April 1915, soldiers who enlisted from this town, whose names are permanently recorded on this obelisk, landed on the shores of the Gallipoli Peninsula with thousands of New Zealand, English, French, Indian and Gurkha soldiers.



RSL FINLEY SUB-BRANCH

Meets on the second Thursday of each month at the Finley Returned Soldiers Club.

New Members Always Welcome

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Finley Dobinson, Louis Drange, Thomas Gibbons, Arthur Jones, and his brother Harold, Edgar Livermore and George Parr.

They were followed by twin brothers, Frank and Leslie Canning the following day April 26, 1915.

In the months that followed, brothers Albert and Reuben Boyd, Sydney Jones, the third of the Jones boys, James Langtry, John Malone, Robert Ramsay, Walter Scott and Mervyn Scoullar were to experience the hell of Gallipoli before the withdrawal of the troops in December of that year.

After landing at ANZAC Cove, fierce fighting took place at well-known locations, Lone Pine, The Nek, Battleship Hill, Johnston's Jolly and others.

8,700 Australian soldiers lost their lives in a little over 8 months of fighting, 19,000 were wounded.

Four of the local soldiers were amongst those never to return to Australia - Frank Canning, Finley Dobinson, Thomas Gibbons and Sydney Jones.

The others who were able, joined the campaigns on the Western Front, in France and Belgium, and North Africa, whilst several returned to Australia wounded, unable to return to the battlefield.

From this small Riverina town of 800 residents, eighty-one soldiers from the town and area served in The Great War, fourteen of whom did not return home.

Today we commemorate their service and sacrifice, along with the two million Australian Service men and women who have served our country over the last 125 years, and especially the 103,000 who have given their lives in over a century of service, to make Australia this wonderful country we enjoy today.

To paraphrase the words of Dwight Eisenhower, Supreme Commander of Allied forces in Europe in WWII, later to become US President ...

"Let us remember the sacrifice of those who fought on the seas, in the air and on foreign shores to preserve our heritage of freedom, as we pursue the task of promoting an enduring peace so that their efforts shall not have been in vain"

"Lest We Forget"



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