

Inspector Moore may have had some justification for his comments, but did not seek reasons for Whalen's condition.

The settlement went from being a showpiece to a debacle. In November 1923, the Minister was asked if reports in the *Evening News* saying only eighteen farms were occupied were correct. In reply, Minister Wearne said few soldiers remained at Bankstown, 'owing to the failure to make good under poultry-farming conditions'.<sup>120</sup> The Minister made no attempt to explain why so many returned men had forfeited at Bankstown. Due to the large number of unoccupied blocks, the RSSB recommended civilians be allowed to purchase blocks, and in November 1923 twenty-eight vacant blocks at Bankstown Soldier Settlement were offered for sale in the *Government Gazette*.<sup>121</sup> By May 1924, a quarter of the thirty-five occupied blocks at Bankstown had been taken by civilians. At least eighty returned men had forfeited their block since the settlement was established.<sup>122</sup> This was hardly the result the government had hoped for when it championed group settlement for returned men only a few years before.

## **Grantham**

The smallest of the group soldier settlements in this study, Grantham's importance to the government lay in its previous reputation as a supplier of quality stud poultry, and its relatively close proximity to Sydney. Another important consideration for purchase was the potential the site had for training purposes. It was quickly realised that large

---

<sup>120</sup> New South Wales Parliamentary Debates, Vol. 93, p. 2371.

<sup>121</sup> SRNSW: NRS 8052 [10/13713], *op. cit.*, Schedule X memo re 22 vacant blocks at Bankstown (undated; notation bottom of report to see District Surveyor's memo) 13 October 1923; Memo re disposal from Metropolitan District Surveyor; SRNSW NRS 8052 [10/13714], *op. cit.*, notification of vacant blocks *New South Wales Government Gazette*, 9 November 1923.

<sup>122</sup> *ibid.*, see also Appendix A.

numbers of inexperienced men were applying for soldier settlement, and the limited training facilities at Hawkesbury Agricultural College could not meet the demand. Grantham, a facility that could be used to train returned men in poultry farming under commercial and practical conditions, seemed therefore to be a most worthwhile enterprise for purchase.

Grantham Stud Poultry Farm was established at Plumpton, near Blacktown in 1888, moving to the 118 acre property 'Melrose' at Seven Hills in 1906.<sup>123</sup> Owned by Francis Leslie Martin, it is believed he named the property 'Grantham' after the town in England that his family originally came from.<sup>124</sup> The Grantham Stud Poultry Farm was managed by James Hadlington, recognised as a leader in his field, and who was frequently quoted as an authority on all aspects of raising poultry, and regularly judged poultry events.<sup>125</sup> James Hadlington resigned from Grantham in 1913 to become the Government Poultry Expert.<sup>126</sup> The influence of the Hadlington family on the group soldier settlements in this study is significant. It was explained earlier in this chapter that the plan for Bankstown was made by RSSB Director Bryant and James Hadlington. Hadlington continued to be involved in the training and supervision of all the poultry settlements, with memos written or authorised by him in many settlers' loan files. His sons, James R. Hadlington and Edwin Hadlington, became joint managers of Grantham following their father's resignation to take up the

---

<sup>123</sup> J. Brook, 'Seven Hills', *Sydney Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 2008, p. 115.

[http://epress.lib.uts.edu.au/ojs/index.php/sydney\\_journal/index](http://epress.lib.uts.edu.au/ojs/index.php/sydney_journal/index), accessed 5 January 2010.

<sup>124</sup> J. Brook, *The Seven Hills. A Village Divided, A Suburb United*, Blacktown City Council, Blacktown, 2004, p. 145.

<sup>125</sup> James Hadlington's articles appeared in many newspapers from at least 1904. See, for example *Alexandra and Yea Standard, Gobur, Thornton and Acheron Express*, (Victoria) 29 January 1904, p. 6; *SMH*, 25 May 1905, p. 3; *The Brisbane Courier*, 23 May 1907, p. 3.

<sup>126</sup> *SMH*, 9 August 1913, p. 16.

government position.<sup>127</sup> James R. Hadlington was still managing the complex until approximately a year after the Government acquired the Grantham property.<sup>128</sup> Edwin Hadlington then became the Poultry Inspector for the RSSB.<sup>129</sup>

THE GRANTHAM STUD POULTRY FARM. SEVEN HILLS, N.S.W.



Manager's Residence

### Grantham Stud Poultry Farm.

Our Farm is situated at Seven Hills, on the main Western Line, 20 miles from Sydney, and is only eight to ten minutes walk from the Railway Station. The situation is an ideal one for a poultry farm, and no more suitable site exists between Sydney and the mountains. Sheltered from westerly winds with a hillside slope to the north-east, plenty of natural shade, and an abundance of water. We have an area of 118 acres, consequently ample scope for large operations.

*Source: The Grantham Stud Poultry Farm General Catalogue, A. McQuilty & Co, Sydney, c.1915.*

In June 1917, the property was purchased by the New South Wales government for soldier settlement as a going concern.<sup>130</sup> Paying over £10,000, the New South Wales government believed acquiring Grantham had many advantages. The property was well located, and only half a mile from Seven Hills Railway Station. Eighty-six acres on the property had been cleared, with remaining land covered by bush timber and wattle scrub. Several dams and waterholes provided good supplies of fresh water. Additional bonuses included substantial improvements of buildings, plant and stock. Equipment that was included in the sale was one of the largest incubators in Australia, and several smaller incubators which made a total egg capacity of 10,000. The

<sup>127</sup> *SMH*, 5 January 1928, p. 7. Edwin Hadlington was assistant State Poultry Expert from 1924, and was appointed State Poultry Expert in January 1928 after his father's retirement at the end of 1927.

<sup>128</sup> *SMH*, 4 September 1920, p. 14.

<sup>129</sup> NSWPP, Vol. 1, 1922, Progress Report from the Select Committee on the Soldier Settlements, *op. cit.*, p. 291.

<sup>130</sup> SRNSW: NRS 8056 [19/7028], *op. cit.*; *SMH*, 12 June 1917, p. 5. The Government acquired the property from Francis Leslie Martin.

government planned to establish a training school, offering courses of up to three months at Grantham for returned men, prior to them taking up their own land under the soldier settlement scheme.<sup>131</sup> Additionally, the purchase was considered practical because ‘the Department secures sound, well-bred stock, practically unprocurable in any number in the ordinary way, and will be able to supply the soldier settlements that are being established, under expert supervision, with stock from approved strains’.<sup>132</sup>

The Poultry Station part of Grantham totalled forty-two acres, with the balance of the land divided into eleven farms, all of approximately five acres.<sup>133</sup> The 1920 Report of the RSSB specifically noted that Grantham farms were for returned men ‘who through their war activities were unfortunate in being deprived of the use of an arm or leg’.<sup>134</sup>

This notation about war-disabled ex-servicemen is not made in any other of the summaries of fifty-four settlements across the state contained in the report. It shows some government recognition of physically war-disabled men wanting to become soldier settlers, although the number assisted is minute compared with the total number of settlers across the state.

Blacktown Shire Council raised concerns in late 1917 about the sub-standard building of houses on Grantham, saying no plans for the subdivision of the land or housing construction had been submitted for approval to them.<sup>135</sup> This oversight by the government indicates the lack of experienced staff in the new branch created to

---

<sup>131</sup> *SMH*, 12 June 1917, p. 5.

<sup>132</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>133</sup> SRNSW: *Copies of Government Gazette notices re soldiers’ group purchase areas* NRS 8153 [7/2687] [General Drafting Branch, Department of Lands] Gazette 7228, 8 April 1921; Brook, *The Seven Hills*, *op. cit.*, p. 147.

<sup>134</sup> NSWPP, *op. cit.*, 1920, Vol. 1. RSSB – Report for the Year Ended 30 June 1920. Report No. 259, p. 645.

<sup>135</sup> *SMH*, 8 November 1917, p. 8.

administer soldier settlement. By mid-1918 some homes had been completed and occupied by disabled ex-servicemen and a cheap bachelor's barracks was being built to house single men undergoing training courses on-site.<sup>136</sup> As the Commonwealth government had agreed to share training costs with the states, the Department of Repatriation asked for money to purchase equipment for Grantham bachelor barracks. The list included one scrubbing brush, two wash basins, one dozen pudding cloths and tins for flour, sugar, tea and rice. The request was agreed to, with strict instructions expenditure was not to exceed £10.<sup>137</sup> Amongst later claims of over-expenditure and waste in land settlement for returned men, this particular correspondence shows some administrative work was both time-consuming and petty.



*Grantham Bachelor Barracks. Source: State Records of New South Wales*

The barracks were used for only a short time as training was discontinued at the end of 1920, with the assumption that the bulk of men had returned to Australia and were

---

<sup>136</sup> *SMH*, 9 May 1918, p. 5; SRNSW: *Agriculture Special Files* NRS 54 [12/3512]

<sup>137</sup> NAA: Repatriation Department; A2485, *Correspondence files, 'C' series (relating to Land Settlement and Local Repatriation Boards)*, May 1918 - January 1919; C/990 Supply of equipment for trainees – Land settlement.

now settled into their civilian occupations.<sup>138</sup> At least ninety-three men on the six poultry settlements in the County of Cumberland received some training at Grantham Stud from 1918 to 1920.<sup>139</sup> With limited accommodation on-site for trainees, large numbers of men received only basic and limited training during its operation.

By early 1919 returned soldiers were living on the five acre poultry farms at Grantham. All these men were severely physically disabled as a result of war service. Men like William Bury, Sidney Marshall, Geoffrey Wood and Ernest Barber became soldier settlers following their medical discharge after having lost an arm or a hand during their war service.<sup>140</sup> None became successful soldier settlers. It could be argued they should never have been eligible to apply for land under the scheme, but there were very limited options a grateful nation could offer them. After trying to make a living for four years on his block, Geoffrey Wood left. Pursued by the RSSB for debts arising from his occupancy, Wood replied, 'I might mention that physically I am disabled fairly considerably having left my right arm in France, my remaining arm is also damaged, four fingers only working ... I am the sole support of my widowed mother and to cut a long story short I have not the money claimed'.<sup>141</sup> His story was not unusual, as many men forfeited their soldier settlement block with no assets and no future. Another limbless man, William Bury, was wounded in action and returned to Australia in early 1919 after his right arm had been amputated at the shoulder.<sup>142</sup> It is unknown where he worked or how he supported himself before taking over a block

---

<sup>138</sup> NSWPP, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, 1922, p. 268.

<sup>139</sup> See Appendix A.

<sup>140</sup> NAA: B2455, *op. cit.*, SERN 6464 BURY, William Frederick; SERN 4737 MARSHALL, Sidney Matthew; SERN 2903 WOOD, Geoffrey J.; SERN 1505 BARBER, Ernest.

<sup>141</sup> SRNSW: NRS 8058, *op. cit.*, [12/7300] Loan File 1488, WOOD, Geoffrey J. October 1925.

<sup>142</sup> *ibid.*

at Grantham two years later from another man who had suffered an amputation.<sup>143</sup> He was never successful, unable to fully work his block, with his loan file containing remarks such as ‘progress very slow’ and ‘settler appears to be handicapped by loss of arm’.<sup>144</sup> Bury forfeited in December 1928, leaving a debt of £1,115/2/3. Only able to find temporary employment as a car attendant after leaving Grantham, Bury’s physical limitations meant he had few options for work.<sup>145</sup> Moreover, like many other soldier settlers in this study, Bury’s physical and mental condition deteriorated with time. Several years after leaving Grantham, he was an inmate of Callan Park Mental Hospital.<sup>146</sup>

Returned men who lost a leg during the war and became soldier settlers at Grantham included Edgar Harvey, John Rankin, Michael Mulcahy and William Dickie.<sup>147</sup> None of these men succeeded as soldier settlers. William Glasgow Dickie had few prospects after the war, a thirty-five year old labourer who was gassed and had his right leg amputated after the Battle of Menin Road in September 1917.<sup>148</sup> Michael Mulcahy also had little to look forward to in civilian life. He recovered from being shot in the arm the day after he landed on Gallipoli in August 1915, but was not as fortunate the following August when his leg was shattered and later amputated. Thirty-four when he was discharged, he would never be able to return to work as a miner.<sup>149</sup> Suffering permanent physical disabilities, both men looked to these small soldier settlement blocks as their only recourse to making a living.

---

<sup>143</sup> SRNSW: NRS 8058, *op. cit.*, [12/7347] Loan File 9004. Bury signed the agreement to take over Block 244 from David Huxley, 17 March 1921, agreeing to take over the debt of £958/3/1.

<sup>144</sup> *ibid.*, from Loans Administration Section, April 1926.

<sup>145</sup> *ibid.*, Bury’s debt at February 1929. His pension was £4 a fortnight and his temporary work paid £2/10- a week.

<sup>146</sup> NAA: C138, *op. cit.*, R42111 BURY, William Frederick.

<sup>147</sup> NAA: B2455, *op. cit.*, SERN 514 HARVEY, Edgar; SERN 2006 RANKIN, John; SERN 2180 MULCAHY, Michael; SERN 5329 DICKIE, William.

<sup>148</sup> *ibid.*, SERN 5329 DICKIE, William. 19<sup>th</sup> Battalion.

<sup>149</sup> *ibid.*, SERN 2180 MULCAHY, Michael. 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion.

It is likely Grantham settlers received physical assistance to run and maintain their poultry farms from the trainees who lived on-site, although this source of extra manpower finished at the end of 1920 when training courses ceased. After this date, however, stud poultry from Grantham continued to be supplied as breeding stock to the group soldier settlements.<sup>150</sup> In 1923, the Minister for Agriculture, Frederick Chaffey, announced that his department would be taking over Grantham Stud from the Department of Lands as the government poultry farm, in order to offer services to all poultry farmers.<sup>151</sup> Planning to offer lectures and demonstrations on the latest innovations in poultry farming, the effect of this change of management on group soldier settlements is not known.<sup>152</sup>

Many men tried without success to make a living as a poultry farmer at Grantham. Some tried in other ways to supplement their income. One example is Frederick Plunkett, previously a soldier settler on Grantham, who applied to become Postmaster at Seven Hills.<sup>153</sup> Plunkett enlisted soon after the outbreak of war, and was evacuated from the Gallipoli Peninsular with dysentery and rheumatism. Discharged in December 1915 suffering from rheumatism and rheumatic fever, Plunkett's service file contains no record of any injuries.<sup>154</sup> As Plunkett's soldier settlement loan file is missing, his reason for choosing this work rather than returning to clerical work remains unknown. However, the strenuous and constant farm work required on a

---

<sup>150</sup> NSWPP, Vol. 1, 1922, *op. cit.*, p. 268.

<sup>151</sup> *SMH*, 16 August 1923, p. 7.

<sup>152</sup> *ibid.*, The Department planned to widen its involvement with poultry farmers by offering a range of educational programs and give assistance to beginning poultry farmers. Soldier settlers would also have been eligible to attend.

<sup>153</sup> NAA: Post Office Files; SP32/1, *January 1800 - December 1999*; Seven Hills Part 5, Seven Hills Post Office. Plunkett applied for the position in May 1928.

<sup>154</sup> NAA: B2455, *op. cit.*, SERN 64 PLUNKETT, Frederick Coventry.



small poultry farm would have contributed to his worsening health problems and the eventual decision to forfeit. Poultry-farming was a seven days a week job, starting at daybreak and finishing at dusk. It entailed a considerable amount of walking, often carrying heavy buckets.<sup>155</sup> It was not work for anyone who was not physically fit. Some of these chores included feeding the poultry several times daily, eggs to be collected, washed and graded, fowl pens cleaned out, and maintaining the correct levels of coke to the furnace in the brooder.<sup>156</sup> The incubator had to be kept at a constant temperature of 103 degrees for twelve hours at the beginning of the incubation period, and eggs checked and turned initially twice daily for several days, and then turned daily, making more work for the farmer.<sup>157</sup> Younger family members helped with chores as well, collecting firewood, feeding other livestock, weeding and helping with the many daily tasks for the poultry, from the time school finished until it was dark.<sup>158</sup>

The prospect of administrative work in the postal service with regular hours and pay should have suited Plunkett better. However, Plunkett's story is similar to many other soldier settlers in this study, whose war-related injuries preventing a normal working life. Plunkett stayed less than two years as Postmaster. He had to visit Randwick Military Hospital one day a fortnight for treatment for an unspecified condition, but was unable to afford to pay a replacement worker and still make a living.<sup>159</sup> For Frederick Plunkett, the excitement of war was brief. His disabilities saw him

---

<sup>155</sup> C. Braithwaite, *A Soldier Settlement Poultry Farm at Campbelltown*, Campbelltown and Airds Historical Society Inc., Campbelltown, 1998, pp. 14-15.

<sup>156</sup> Beckett, 'Childhood Memories', *op. cit.*, p. 18.

<sup>157</sup> J. Hadlington, *Poultry Farming in New South Wales*, Department of Agriculture, New South Wales, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition, Alfred J. Kent, Government Printer, Sydney, 1932, pp. 22-23.

<sup>158</sup> Beckett, *The 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Milperra*, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

<sup>159</sup> NAA: SP32/1, *op. cit.*, correspondence, 13 December 1929. It appears from the wording of correspondence in this file Plunkett's position was full-time and it was his responsibility to pay for replacement staff when he was absent for medical reasons.

discharged in poor health that dogged him for many years, in all likelihood for the rest of his life. Unsuccessful at poultry farm, he was subsequently unable to hold a permanent job that entailed little physical labour.

For Grantham soldier settlers, their struggles to adapt themselves to life as limbless civilians proved to be difficult, often impossible. They left Australia as fit labouring men, and returned broken in body. They chose to become soldier settlers believing it was a possible way to secure their future, living on a small block where a home, yards and equipment had been built. Most had no prior experience and thought a small area of land with a few hundred chickens would be manageable. It was hard, constant work, that many found wore them down more. At both Grantham and Bankstown, the original settlers were all men discharged physically unfit before the end of the war with a range of physical and mental health problems. They were unfit for war, and unfit for peace. At least 150 men attempted soldier settlement on these two settlements, very few were successful.<sup>160</sup>

### **Campbelltown**

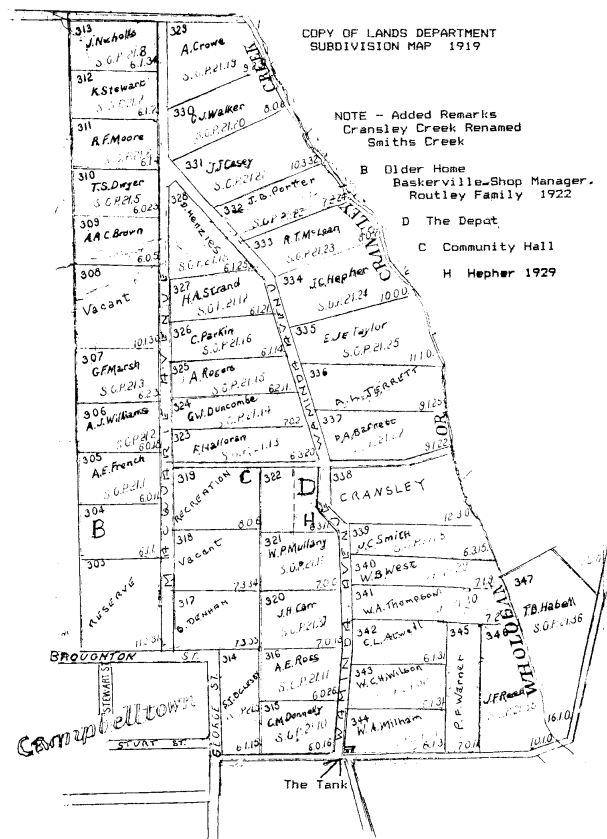
Although the government had decided to concentrate on group settlement tenure, it was nearly a year before it negotiated to purchase another property in the County of Cumberland. The land at Campbelltown was on the fringes of the County of Cumberland, and the greatest distance from the city of all the group settlements. The town was thirty-four miles south-west of Sydney on the main southern railway line, linking it to both the city and markets.<sup>161</sup> A group soldier settlement at Campbelltown was announced in April 1918, to comprise fifty farms using similar plans to

---

<sup>160</sup> See Appendix A.

<sup>161</sup> *SMH*, 19 April 1918, p. 9.

Bankstown Soldier Settlement.<sup>162</sup> It took several months for plans to be completed, and tenders called to construct thirty-six cottages on the settlement, but nearly a year later many homes were close to completion, with incubators and brooder houses built on each block.<sup>163</sup> Campbelltown Soldier Settlement was not formally established until September 1919, when £4,000 was paid for the 373 acre estate, which was subdivided into thirty-eight poultry farms.<sup>164</sup> Progress was slow, especially building the homes, which frustrated returned men who wanted to begin their new enterprise, yet were already concerned about mounting debts and increases in the cost of living.<sup>165</sup>



Campbelltown Soldier Settlement

Source: J. Hephher, 'Campbelltown Soldier Settlement 1919- 1929', *Campbelltown and Airs Historical Society Inc., Campbelltown, 1998*, p. 30.

<sup>162</sup> SRNSW: NRS 8052, *op. cit.*, [10/37188] Campbelltown Soldier Settlement; *SMH*, 9 May 1918, p. 5 notes the settlement would have the same basic plans as both Bankstown and Grantham at Seven Hills; *SMH*, 19 April 1918, p. 9.

<sup>163</sup> *SMH*, 23 October 1918, p. 9; *SMH*, 6 March 1919, p. 9.

<sup>164</sup> NSWPP, Vol. 1 (2<sup>nd</sup> Session), 1922, *op. cit.*, Appendix B, p. 356.

<sup>165</sup> *SMH*, 24 September 1921, p. 11; SRNSW: NRS 8056, *op. cit.*, [19/7025], Office memo, 27 August 1919.

Cost of living worries were not, however, confined to soldier settlers with debts on their farms, homes and equipment. In December 1919, the Housewives' Association of New South Wales submitted a petition to parliament containing 7,000 signatures, saying retail food and clothing prices had increased so much that the standard of living was affected. The association asked tribunals be set up to regulate prices, and local markets established to buy fresh food at more competitive prices.<sup>166</sup> Although archival files reveal individual soldier settler's struggles to make a living, they contain no information about how families lived day to day. With community concerns about rising commodity prices post-war, these returned men and their families would have struggled more than most. Child endowment, introduced by the Holman Nationalist Government in 1919, was only available to men working under state industrial awards, and not extended to rural families.<sup>167</sup> This financial assistance for families was, therefore, not available to any soldier settlers. Additionally, many of the soldier settlers on the group settlements in the County of Cumberland had been discharged fit, without a pension that would have provided some regular extra money.

Campbelltown soldier settlers considered themselves to be a community within a short time, forming a Soldiers' Progress Association by late 1919, as did most other settlements in this study. At this early stage hopes were high for success, although it was reported some men had already left the settlement because of their health.<sup>168</sup>

---

<sup>166</sup> NSWPP, *op. cit.*, Vol. 4, 1919, p. 697.

<sup>167</sup> B. Dickey, *No Charity There. A short history of social welfare in Australia*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1987, p. 112.

<sup>168</sup> *The Mercury*, 7 October 1919, p. 6. The article is a report on the visit to New South Wales group settlements by the Tasmanian State Secretary of the Returned Sailors' and Soldiers' Imperial League of Australia.



*Campbelltown Soldier Settlement- main street*  
*Source: State Records of New South Wales*

In February 1920, the Red Cross Society donated a hall previously used at the Liverpool Recruitment Camp to the community. The hall was dismantled, taken by train to Campbelltown and re-erected by volunteers, many from Hillview Soldier Settlement as well as locals keen to assist returned men and their families.<sup>169</sup> The formation of Progress Associations and the involvement in community groups at these group settlements forms an integral and important part of the following chapter which explains the activities and hopes of soldier settlers.

In the February 1920 Campbelltown local government elections, John Charles (Charlie) Hepher, Herbert Denham, Septimus Oglesby and Walter West from the settlement stood on a platform of the ‘digger’s ticket’.<sup>170</sup> Proudly promoting themselves as returned servicemen, newspaper advertisements proclaimed ‘we belong to a body of men who Australia trusted with a big job overseas’. The diggers were

---

<sup>169</sup> *SMH*, 13 February 1920, p. 7.

<sup>170</sup> J. McGill, *Campbelltown. World War I 1914-1918*, Campbelltown and Airs Historical Society Inc., Campbelltown, 2001, p. 88.

however, unsuccessful.<sup>171</sup> Wanting to be part of a local community these men were still fiercely proud of having served their country during the war, but it was perhaps not enough to win votes.

Charlie Hepher had been 'caught up with the land idea', responding to government promotions for soldier settlement that offered returned men a better life on the land.<sup>172</sup>

In a better position than many other men in this study, he had a trade, some capital, and according to his service file, had not suffered any injuries during the war.<sup>173</sup>

Septimus Oglesby had not been so lucky. Wounded several times during his three-year service, he was discharged in December 1917.<sup>174</sup> Little is known of Oglesby's

time at Campbelltown, although by the Depression he was in straitened

circumstances, applying for assistance from charities.<sup>175</sup> Market gardener Herbert

Denham similarly had little success. Only a year after beginning his new life on the land, Denham was confident returned men could, and would become successful

farmers. Secretary of the Campbelltown Soldier Settlement Progress Association,

Denham said 'men are bound to be successful [on this settlement], because they have the right spirit, backed up with a good start'.<sup>176</sup> Probably one of the 'bad characters' in

the AIF as described by Peter Stanley in his recent book, Denham was returned to

Australia and discharged for disciplinary reasons after being acquitted on a charge of

---

<sup>171</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>172</sup> J. Hepher, *Campbelltown Soldiers Settlement 1919-1929*, Campbelltown and Airs Historical Society, Campbelltown, 1998, p. 31.

<sup>173</sup> *ibid.*, Charlie was also employed in the establishment stage at Campbelltown settlement installing guttering; NAA: B2455, *op. cit.*, SERN 5836 HEPHER, John Charles. Hepher was returned to Australia and discharged in September 1917 after eighteen months service, for flat feet.

<sup>174</sup> *ibid.*, SERN 1412 OGLESBY, Septimus Joseph. Oglesby suffered gun-shot wounds to the back and thigh in August 1915 and to his shoulder in December 1916.

<sup>175</sup> *ibid.*, Oglesby applied in June 1933 for assistance from the German Verge New South Wales Returned Soldiers' Repatriation Fund. He was living at the Salvation Army hostel in Sydney in mid-1936.

<sup>176</sup> *The Mercury*, 7 October 1919, p. 6.

manslaughter.<sup>177</sup> Re-enlisting, he suffered a severe gun-shot wound to his leg before being finally discharged in May 1918 with chronic bronchitis.<sup>178</sup> Denham, an original settler, died aged thirty-one in 1922, his dreams of growing bumper strawberry crops on his farm never realised.<sup>179</sup>

The government was hailing the success of the Campbelltown settlement within two years. Reflecting the government's belief in their policies, a press release in 1921 said that although the men were previously inexperienced in poultry farming, their success 'amply demonstrates that specialised poultry farming is a sound business proposition in small settlements'.<sup>180</sup> Three years after the end of the war, group settlement poultry farming was still being promoted as a good livelihood for returned and unskilled men.

The mood of optimism at Campbelltown did not last. In October 1922, Minister for Lands, Walter Wearne, visited the settlement to discuss settlers' grievances. Settlers were concerned administrative mistakes made by the Department at the settlement would be added to their personal debts and wanted official assurances this would not happen.<sup>181</sup> Large amounts of surplus building materials left to rot beside a creek and a stable of horses fed and maintained but unused on the settlement were among the examples of waste.<sup>182</sup> Of continuing concern to settlers was that Campbelltown's administration had refused to issue them with financial statements for more than two

---

<sup>177</sup> P. Stanley, *Bad Characters: Sex, Crime, Mutiny, Murder and the Australian Imperial Force*, Murdoch Books, Sydney, 2010; NAA: B2455, *op. cit.*, DENHAM, Herbert Victor, SERN 49/3131.

<sup>178</sup> NAA, *ibid.*

<sup>179</sup> *The Mercury*, 7 October 1919, p. 6; www.bdm.nsw.gov.au, accessed 4 June 2010.

<sup>180</sup> *SMH*, 24 September 1921, p. 11.

<sup>181</sup> *SMH*, 4 November 1922, p. 12.

<sup>182</sup> E.J. McBarron, *The Soldiers' Settlement – (Poultry) Campbelltown, New South Wales 1918-60*, Campbelltown and Airs Historical Society Inc., 1990, p. 30. Bookkeeper Sidney Massey was appointed to the settlement in 1919. The horses were sold at a considerable loss. There were further allegations when poultry feed was supplied to the settlers for double the price it could be sourced locally.

years.<sup>183</sup> The Minister's visit, made at the time of the Select Committee hearing into group settlements, was probably a placatory measure.

Giving evidence to the Select Committee in 1922, David Menzies said men on Campbelltown settlement were 'all triers', but in spite of this they could not make a living, describing the settlement as bankrupt.<sup>184</sup> Menzies' comments reveal Campbelltown soldier settlers wanted to be successful poultry farmers. That so many proved unsuccessful was due to their war-related disabilities, preventing them from working as physically hard as most could prior to war service. Soldier settlers at Campbelltown continued trying to remedy their problems. In 1926, a delegation to the Minister for Lands, Mr Loughlin, tried to negotiate a different repayment system. Spokesman James Nicholls said the response was unsympathetic, noting if changes could not be made, settlers would have to forfeit and 'be once more at the mercy of the world'.<sup>185</sup> This statement shows not only the desperation remaining settlers were reduced to, but their awareness that if they could not succeed at poultry farming, their chances of being self-sufficient in the larger community were limited.

By 1929, only nine of the original settlers remained at Campbelltown.<sup>186</sup> Ten years after its establishment, twenty-five original settlers and countless others had abandoned or been forced to forfeit their farms. Where most of these men went to and how they supported themselves and their families remains a mystery. Surviving loan files reveal most of the men who forfeited never had permanent work again. The

---

<sup>183</sup> *ibid.*, p. 31. McBarron claims Massey was told to keep all accounts secret and was not to associate with settlers.

<sup>184</sup> NSWPP, 1922, Vol. 1, *op. cit.*, p. 347.

<sup>185</sup> *The Labor Daily*, 20 October 1926, p. 5.

<sup>186</sup> SRNSW: NRS 8058, *op. cit.*, [12/7373], Loan File 9350, *Poultry Newspaper*, 19 October 1929, no page ref., ' "The Scout" Campbelltown Soldier Settlement. Some farms visited for inspection and advice'.



reasons why they forfeited were largely because of their war disabilities. Time did not heal, rather it worsened their conditions. They were not fit enough to become farmers under soldier settlement.

An example of the difficulties faced by many returned men is the story of the Hepher family. Life on a small poultry block raising a large family proved difficult. The Hephers, Charlie, his wife Adele and their three children came to Campbelltown Soldier Settlement whilst it was still under construction. Hepher, discharged in February 1918, was employed to fit the downpipes and guttering on the new homes. An original settler, he was allotted Block 334, a poultry farm of ten acres.<sup>187</sup> Charlie's son, Jack, recalls 1926 was a bad year for the Campbelltown settlers as feed prices were high and returns low. In 1929 at the beginning of the Depression, the Hepher family left their farm, moving to one of the former administration buildings. Charlie went hawking to make a living and provide for his wife and seven children. With his horse and buggy he went door-to-door selling drapery and haberdashery. He managed to replace his old sulky with hard iron wheels for one with rubber tyres, his son recalling the new one was a 'flash outfit' and 'jewelled in every spoke'.<sup>188</sup> The poultry farm did not pay, so Charlie had been forced to try to support his family in the trying years of the Depression as best he could. The war, the farm, and hawking took its toll. Charlie died in 1940, aged fifty-one. He left no cash assets, his widow Adele receiving a pension of just eight shillings and sixpence a fortnight.<sup>189</sup> Although no injuries were recorded in Jack's service file, his six months service in France from the

---

<sup>187</sup> NAA: B2455, HEPHER, John Charles, *op. cit.*; J. Hepher, *Campbelltown Soldiers Settlement 1919-1929, op. cit.*, pp. 30- 31.

<sup>188</sup> Interview Jack Hepher, 7 February 2010, copy in possession of the author.

<sup>189</sup> NAA: B2455, *op. cit.*, SERN 5836.

beginning of 1917 probably saw him exposed many times to gas attacks. A life in the country air for Charlie Hephher and his family was always a struggle.

### **Chipping Norton**

The fourth group soldier settlement to be established in the County of Cumberland was at Chipping Norton near Liverpool, south-west of Sydney. The property of the late William Alexander Long, Chipping Norton Estate was offered to the government as suitable soldier settlement land in December 1918.<sup>190</sup> Dying in November 1915, Long had been a member of both the Legislative Assembly and Legislative Council of New South Wales. With a passion for horseracing, Long had built a private training track and stabling complex at Chipping Norton and was a key figure in the planning of Warwick Farm Racecourse, located not far from his estate.<sup>191</sup> Chipping Norton had been leased by the government for a short period in 1912 as a horse-training facility for the military.<sup>192</sup> The estate seemed to be a good proposition for soldier settlement, previously used by the government, immediately available and relatively close to the city. The agents, in recommending the property, wrote 'as the property is one that would subdivide easily, it occurs to us that you might bring it under the notice of the Government with a view to purchase, as we know they are on the look out for suitable properties for returned soldiers'.<sup>193</sup> The RSSB reported favourably on the estate which contained 463 acres of mostly flat and cleared land. Inspector Edwin Hadlington said it would be suitable for poultry farming, but showed some concern about potential flooding from the Georges River during extended rains. Chipping Norton Estate also

---

<sup>190</sup> SRNSW: Department of Lands, *Closer Settlement Estate Files, 1910-1972*, NRS 8051 [10/13730], Chipping Norton.

<sup>191</sup> B. Nairn, 'Long, William Alexander (1839-1915)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 5, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1974, p. 100.

<sup>192</sup> *The Argus*, 9 January 1912, p. 9.

<sup>193</sup> SRNSW: NRS 8051 [10/13730], *op. cit.*, letter from Raine and Horne, to E.J. Sievers Esq, Valuer General, Department of the Valuer General, 4 December 1918.

had several improvements, including a large brick and stone house, and an adjoining small cottage previously used for servants. Five cottages built from new and second-hand materials had recently been completed, with plans to lease the cottages with a small acreage for farming. Several large sheds were also on the property, but electricity and town water were not connected.<sup>194</sup>



*Chipping Norton Estate – Block 378 and 381*



*Chipping Norton Estate – Block 379*

*Source: State Records of New South Wales: Department of Lands, Closer Settlement Estate Files, 1910-1972, NRS 8051 [10/13730] Chipping Norton.*

<sup>194</sup> *ibid.*, RSS Office Memorandum 18/18050, E. Hadlington, 16 January 1919. A generator provided power to the main house and dairy only.

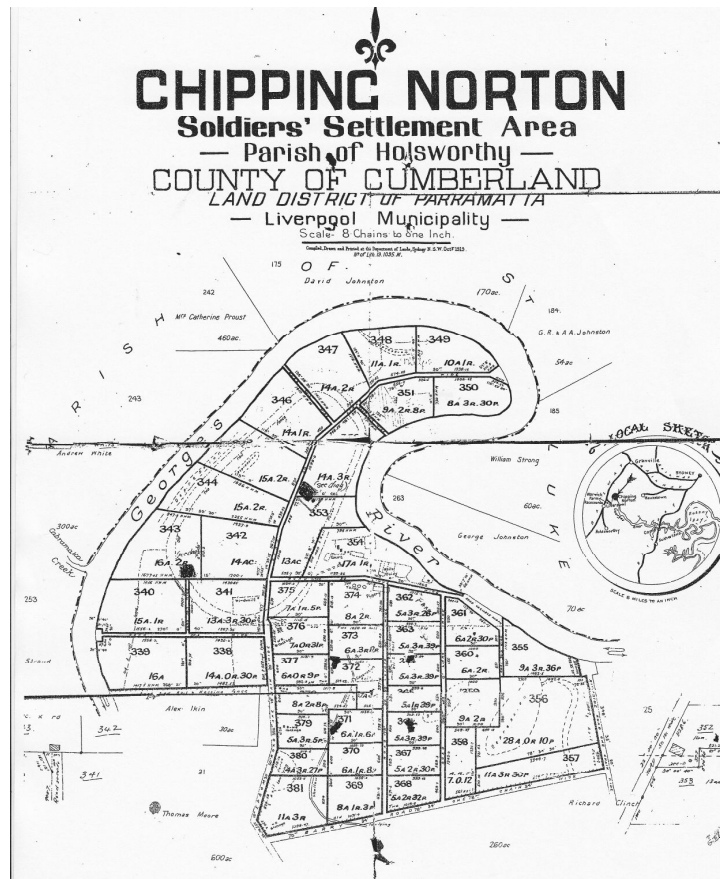
Warning bells were sounded by the Deputy Federal Commissioner of Taxation who believed the sale price was inflated but more importantly, was unsuitable for soldier settlement, and recommended negotiations cease. A valuer from this department had worked on Mr Long's private racetrack and reported the soil was very sandy and unsuitable for farming.<sup>195</sup> This information appears to have been ignored, as Director Bryant notified agents the following month of ministerial approval to purchase the estate at £21 an acre, £4 less an acre than the original asking price.<sup>196</sup> Reporting on Chipping Norton's purchase for grape and fruit orchards, the press noted 'magnificent grapes in record quantities' had been produced on neighbouring properties.<sup>197</sup> These comments indicate surrounding lands were agriculturally suitable for orchards, with the suggestion that this estate would be also.

---

<sup>195</sup> *ibid.*, letter from Commonwealth of Australia, Deputy Federal Commissioner of Taxation (Land Tax) 7 February 1919, information provided by Mr Stephen, Staff Valuer.

<sup>196</sup> *ibid.*, letter from J.G.R. Bryant to Raine and Horne, 27 March 1919; State Crown Solicitor's Office to Director RSS 27 May 1919. The sale was finalised in May 1919.

<sup>197</sup> *SMH*, 1 April 1919, p. 6.



Source: *State Records of New South Wales: Department of Lands, Closer Settlement Estate Files, 1910-1972, NRS 8051 [10/13730] Chipping Norton.*

There was clearly pressure on the government to secure Chipping Norton for soldier settlers. The Liverpool and District Chamber of Commerce wrote to the Department of Lands in March 1919, stating that

we cannot understand the Government in their attitude in regard to this property which is without doubt the best land in the County of Cumberland ... Our fear is that the delay will cause the withdrawal of the property and if so our soldiers will be denied some of the best fruit growing land in the State. We strongly urge upon the Government the need for prompt action in these matters and after full investigation either accept or reject. Our recommendation was given for the benefit of our returning men who have first and last consideration.<sup>198</sup>

This level of public pressure on the government must be considered a key reason for the haste in acquiring properties for soldier settlement, and in this instance to disregard obvious problems like poor soils and the probability of flooding. Eighteen

<sup>198</sup> SRNSW: NRS 8051 [10/13730], *op. cit.*, Letter from Liverpool and District Chamber of Commerce, 26 March 1919.

months after purchase, Hadlington's concerns about flooding were investigated as part of the Street Royal Commission. It was stated that the entire estate would flood except for part of one block if levels reached the 1874 flood line. If flooding reached the levels recorded in 1904, six homes would be inundated between eighteen inches and nearly five feet of water.<sup>199</sup> The floods of 1874 and 1904 were not isolated incidents. Severe floods were recorded eight times on the Georges River from 1874 to 1915, and the Moorebank-Milperra area is now recognised as one of the worst flood-prone areas in New South Wales.<sup>200</sup> Roads at Chipping Norton Settlement were frequently impassable due to flood-affected and low-lying areas. Repeated requests to Liverpool Council for improvements proved unsatisfactory, and a request to local government to provide a ferry punt for improved access across the Georges River was also unsuccessful.<sup>201</sup> Poor road conditions badly affected transporting produce to market, a key issue for soldier settlers, and also added to their isolation. The Chipping Norton Progress Association continued for several years to request Council improve road conditions in the area, noting people had often refused to come to the settlement as it was well known that the roads were terrible.<sup>202</sup>

In March 1920, an application was made for a public school at the settlement. A list of thirty-nine school-age children from the settlement was submitted as evidence of this need. An existing shed, already on the settlement, was suggested as a school building.<sup>203</sup> After visiting Chipping Norton, Voltaire Molesworth, Member for

---

<sup>199</sup> *ibid.*, letter from Surveyor Ryan to E.P. Fleming, Acting Director RSSB, 13 October 1920.

<sup>200</sup> J. Maddocks, 'Have We Forgotten about Flooding on the Georges River?' *2001 Floodplain Management Authorities Conference*, p. 4, p. 11. [www.bewsher.com](http://www.bewsher.com), accessed 8 November 2009.

<sup>201</sup> *Liverpool Council Minutes*, 10 April 1923, correspondence from Under-Secretary Local Government Department.

<sup>202</sup> *ibid.*, Correspondence 8 July 1930.

<sup>203</sup> SRNSW: NRS 3829, *op. cit.*, [5/15384.3] Chipping Norton Public School. Application 8 March 1920.

Cumberland, wrote to the Minister for Education describing the shed used for the school.

the 'schoolroom' is one-half a stable, horses sharing the other half. The whole was formerly used as a stable for many years, and as there was an asphalt floor, naturally it was soaked with urine etc., which in wet weather gives off an offensive smell. Again, in heavy rain, so I am informed, the stable is surrounded with water and is very damp ... no time [should] be lost in authorising a new school there ... the settlers themselves having painted the place out. It will be seen that they are keen to help themselves and I feel sure you, equally anxious to help the welfare of the kiddies.<sup>204</sup>

The closest school was at Liverpool, approximately three and a half miles away, and there was no means for the children to get there. The immediate need was obvious as none of the settlement's children were attending school. The inspector reported the school's proposed site was the best on the estate. The Department of Education considered a school's location vitally important, advising inspectors to make certain 'it [has] a pleasant outlook ... one that commands diversity of scenery – views of mountains, plains, rivers, glimpses of lake, ocean, valley, or any other interesting physical features – is regarded as best'.<sup>205</sup> The Department of Education also asked if parents would take responsibility for planting and maintaining trees supplied by the Department to further improve the site.<sup>206</sup> A teacher was not appointed until after April 1920, following further applications from the Progress Association who raised concerns about the continuing lack of education for the children.<sup>207</sup> Students and teachers had to cope with the primitive conditions of the shed converted for use as a school for two years until a school was built on a portion of Block 363.<sup>208</sup>

---

<sup>204</sup> *ibid.*, letter from V. Molesworth MLA to Mr Mutch, Minister for Education, 7 February 1920.

<sup>205</sup> *ibid.*, Department of Education. Queries to be answered by Inspectors when Reporting upon Applications for the Establishment of Schools, 10 March 1920.

<sup>206</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>207</sup> *ibid.*, letter from J.M. Rae, President, Chipping Norton Progress Association, 20 April 1920.

<sup>208</sup> *ibid.*, The cheapest tender of £794 by Archibald Hitchcoe of Leichhardt was accepted 6 February 1922. Electricity was not connected to the school until 1937.

A Post Office was opened at Chipping Norton in June 1920, with Settler G.A. Elliott, appointed Postmaster as a means of making some additional income. Four years later another settler, Daniel McMillan was appointed, remaining in this position until 1932 when his wife, Vera took over his duties.<sup>209</sup> It is not known where the Post Office was located on the settlement. There is no evidence that churches were built on Chipping Norton Soldier Settlement as at Bankstown, although Church of England services were held in a private home during the 1920s.<sup>210</sup>

Similar problems occurred at Chipping Norton in regard to maladministration and waste as noted previously at Campbelltown. Surplus building materials were auctioned, but their original full cost had been included in settlers' mortgages for which they received no debt reduction.<sup>211</sup> The Surveyor-General's report in late 1922 identified poor housing construction and building materials had been used at the settlement, although files do not indicate if these problems were later rectified.<sup>212</sup>

Settlers were justifiably concerned not only that their homes were unsound but that they would be forced to pay for goods and services they either never received or that were sub-standard.

Settlers David Beveridge, John Gilbert and Melville McNaught tried to find out how much each settler owed to the government, discussing their problems with the

---

<sup>209</sup> NAA: Post Office History Files, C362, *alphabetical series March 1828 – October 1988*; Chipping Norton Post Office [history file] [Box 445].

<sup>210</sup> SRNSW: NRS 3829 [5/15384.3], *op. cit.*, Letter from E.C. Robinson, Rector of St Luke's Church of England, Liverpool, requesting permission to use school's verandah for monthly church services, 19 February 1931.

<sup>211</sup> *SMH*, 16 August 1922, p. 12.

<sup>212</sup> SRNSW: NRS 8051 [10/13730] *op. cit.*, Joint Report and Valuation, Chipping Norton Soldier Settlement, The Surveyor General, 14 December 1922. The report said badly-split timbers had been used for facades and poorly-built coppers with unsuitable bricks in laundries would cause fire hazards.



Assistant Minister for Agriculture and Lands.<sup>213</sup> Four years after the settlement's establishment, many settlers were frustrated, confused or had simply given up trying and left, unable to sort out the paperwork.<sup>214</sup> All three delegates were men in their forties, hoping soldier settlement would provide them with a good living for the rest of their lives.<sup>215</sup> It seems their efforts were wasted as there is no surviving evidence that anything changed.

The government decided several blocks at Chipping Norton Soldier Settlement would be viticulture blocks. The government provided only enough vines to plant under four acres on each block, less than half the acreage prepared for planting. Unsuitable ungrafted rootlings were supplied, and subsequent vine stocks were also failures, as grape varieties had not been matched to the soil types.<sup>216</sup> Similar to other settlements in this study, less than five years after its establishment, Chipping Norton was in crisis. Blocks on Chipping Norton Settlement were being advertised for public auction in the newspapers, opening up the soldier settlement to civilians.<sup>217</sup>

After agitating for some years viticulture settlers at Chipping Norton were offered revaluations on their blocks. William Kelso, an original settler applied to have his property re-valued, as after six years he had little to show for his toil, other than a debt

---

<sup>213</sup> SRNSW: NRS 8058, *op. cit.*, [12/6971] Loan File 3917, McNAUGHT, M.

<sup>214</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>215</sup> For approximate date of birth see Appendix A; UWS Archives, Hawkesbury Agricultural College, *op. cit.*, Beveridge and Gilbert attended training courses at Hawkesbury prior to being allocated blocks at Chipping Norton. Remarks on both men's cards said that they were reliable and keenly interested in farming.

<sup>216</sup> SRNSW: NRS 8051 [10/13730], *op. cit.*, Following these debacles with the grape blocks, settlers demanded reductions in their marketing and sustenance accounts; Solicitor and President of the Returned Soldiers' League, Mr L.C. Elliott, acting on behalf of the viticulture settlers, demanded revision of their indebtedness in August 1926.

<sup>217</sup> *ibid.*, blocks for public auction listed in NSW Gazette 2 May 1924; auctioneer Laurence Murphy requesting agent's commission 16 July 1924.

of more than £2,000.<sup>218</sup> Kelso had no pension and no income, but had to support his wife and four young children somehow. To add to his burdens Kelso had been hospitalised, not expecting to be well enough to work his property for at least another six months.<sup>219</sup> Aged fifty and in poor health, Kelso's prospects of succeeding as a soldier settler were slim at best. Kelso's next crop failed, but he had nowhere to go if he left Chipping Norton. Even inspectors recognised the inevitable, reporting that 'Kelso will never succeed, and his health is now against him ... One cannot help feeling sorry for Kelso, but the taxpayer has done more than his share in this case'.<sup>220</sup> Continuing poor health and crop failures meant Kelso never made the required repayments. Kelso was obviously not the only viticulture settler unable to repay his debt, as RSSB memos reveal the department's patience had been exhausted.

It is considered to be high time that Chipping Norton men showed signs of realising their responsibilities to this Department. They have been exceedingly well treated in the past and should reciprocate by making substantial payments.<sup>221</sup>

Although blocks at Chipping Norton were being offered at auction to civilians, this was greeted with enmity by returned men. The matter of Italians acquiring a block in mid-1929 was the subject of protests to the local council and the press.<sup>222</sup> The block was originally allocated to Cyril Joseph Rae shortly after his discharge. Serving in Egypt, there is no record of illness or injury in Rae's service record.<sup>223</sup> However, after working his thirteen acre block for six years, he was hospitalised in December 1926.<sup>224</sup> Unable to transfer to another returned man, Rae's property was sold to

---

<sup>218</sup> SRNSW: NRS 8058, *op. cit.*, [12/6993] Loan File 4169, KELSO, W.A.

<sup>219</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>220</sup> *ibid.*, Report 4 December 1931 Orchards Home Maintenance Board representative.

<sup>221</sup> *ibid.*, memo from RSSB 31 August 1932.

<sup>222</sup> Liverpool Council Minutes, *op. cit.*, 23 July 1929, letter from the Returned Soldiers' League. Council decided not to take any action; *SMH*, 5 August 1929, p. 12. No evidence of similar protests on any of the other soldier settlements in this study have been discovered.

<sup>223</sup> NAA: B2455, *op. cit.*, SERN 18590 RAE, Cyril Joseph.

<sup>224</sup> SRNSW: NRS 8058, *op. cit.*, [12/6979] Loan File 4033 RAE, Cyril Joseph.

Ladovico Cattani and Paolo Ciliotta in late 1929.<sup>225</sup> More than a year later, xenophobic feelings among ex-servicemen continued to run high, amid statements such as ‘it was disgraceful that children of returned soldiers should have to go to school with aliens’.<sup>226</sup>

The selling of former soldier settlement blocks to civilians, especially foreigners, and the preferential treatment ex-servicemen received after the war, adds a further dimension to the soldier settlement story. The Returned Sailors’ and Soldiers’ Imperial League of Australia lobbied by returned servicemen in other States strongly objected to foreigners purchasing soldier settler land, claiming immigrants’ ‘low standard of living and community methods of working is bound to create serious racial and economic problems in industries that already have enough of their own to solve’.<sup>227</sup>

## **Hillview**

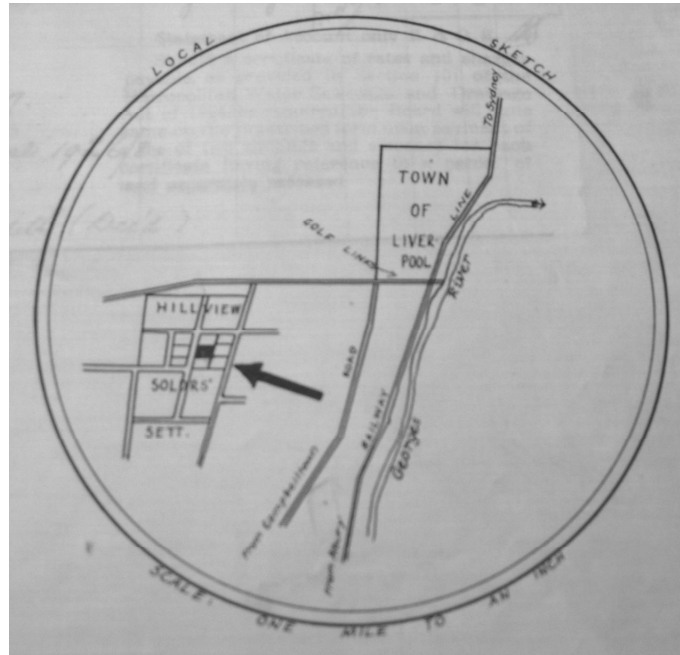
Locating a group soldier settlement close to an established town with road and rail access to the city appeared on paper to be a sound decision. It was a deciding factor in acquiring land for Hillview Soldier Settlement, approximately two miles from Liverpool.

---

<sup>225</sup> *ibid.*, The Department of Lands agreed to the transfer October 1929.

<sup>226</sup> *SMH*, 11 March 1930, p. 11. Liverpool Council resolved to ask the Minister for Lands ‘to refuse the transfer of lands originally allocated for soldiers’ settlements to any other than people of British origin’; *The Argus*, 6 August 1930, p. 11. Reporting on the Soldier Settler Conference in Sydney, a resolution was passed urging relevant Ministers to allow soldier settlement farms to be purchased only by men who had served in the Australian forces. Delegate Harry Bird, from Hillview Soldier Settlement told the conference ‘aliens not even naturalised had taken farms and were being given the status of returned soldiers’.

<sup>227</sup> NAA: Prime Minister’s Department; A458, *Correspondence files, multiple number series, second system, 1899-1939*; X394/2, Repatriation. Land Settlement. Sale of Blocks in Soldier Settlements to Immigrants. RSSILA Federal Executive, at request of Victorian branch, 24 August 1928. A similar objection was forwarded from the South Australian branch, 2 December 1929.



Source: *State Records of New South Wales: Department of Lands, Closer Settlement Estate Files, 1910-1972, NRS 8051 [14/4889] Hillview.*

Liverpool was one of the earliest settlements in the colony, established by Governor Lachlan Macquarie in 1810. Until the mid-twentieth century the surrounding district was agriculturally based, with a population at the beginning of the century of about 4,000. Connected by railway to Sydney since 1856, Liverpool's population had grown to over 6,000 soon after World War I.<sup>228</sup>

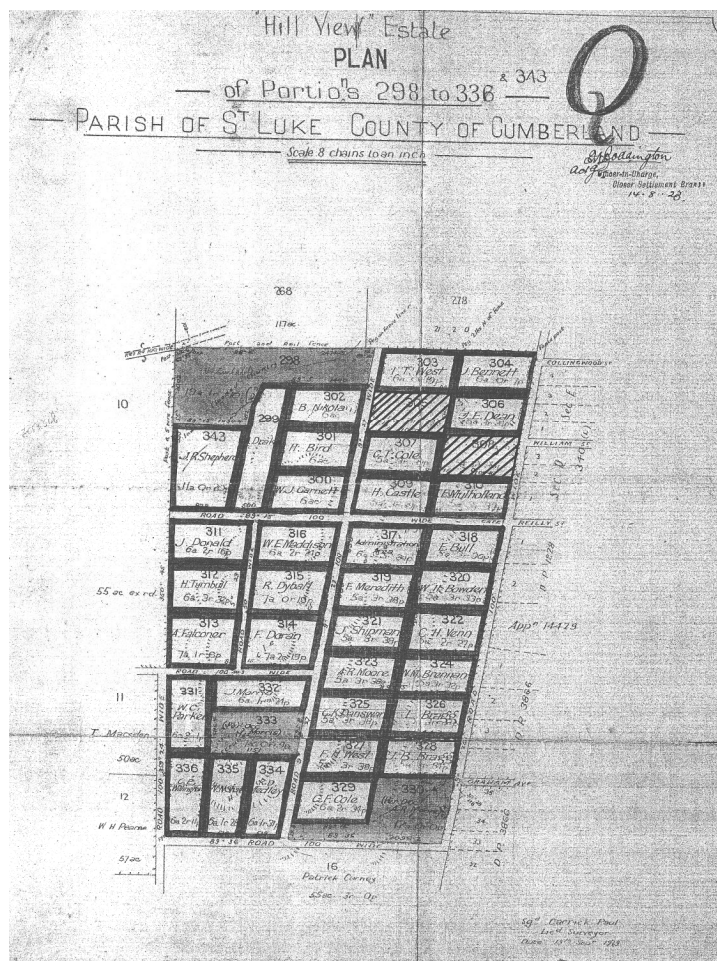
Hillview Estate was first offered to the government towards the end of 1917.<sup>229</sup>

Purchase of part of this estate, the smaller portion of 295 acres, was completed in August 1919 for £2,950. The land was gently sloping and described as being of fairly good quality, and the portion chosen had the advantage of being within two miles of Liverpool Railway Station. Inspector Edwin Hadlington reported that it was mostly

<sup>228</sup> [www.liverpool.nsw.gov.au](http://www.liverpool.nsw.gov.au), accessed 4 December 2010; C. Liston, *Pictorial History Liverpool & District*, Kingsclear Books, Sydney, 2009, p. 138.

<sup>229</sup> SRNSW: NRS 8051, *op. cit.*, [14/4889] Hillview Soldier Settlement. Hillview Estate was offered by A.A. Holland, Land and Mining Agents, Sydney. It was the deceased estate of A.W.S. Gregg.

cleared of timber but the problem of removing dead stumps remained, which implied the land had not been previously cultivated. The only natural water was a small creek which ran through part of the property. Hadlington advised the property would be suitable for approximately forty poultry farms under group settlement, if town water could be connected. Some of the land was unsuitable for poultry farming being either too steep or too flat for poultry, but could he suggested, be used for grazing livestock.<sup>230</sup>



Source: State Records of New South Wales: Department of Lands, Closer Settlement Estate Files, 1910-1972, NRS 8051 [14/4889] Hillview.

<sup>230</sup> *ibid.*, Report by Inspector Edwin Hadlington, 15 October 1917. It appears the vendors wanted to sell the 629 acres as one lot, so Hadlington's enquiries for only one portion were initially inconclusive. The original asking price was £13/10/- an acre, and the final agreed price was reduced to £10 an acre.

Plans were shelved to connect the property to town water when the Metropolitan Board of Water Supply and Sewerage notified it would cost about £3,000.<sup>231</sup>

Installing town water would have doubled initial costs, and may explain why it was another eighteen months before the sale was finalised, without water connection. The price paid by the government for Hillview was considered good value, as it was a good deal less than both the original asking price and the current market valuation.<sup>232</sup>

It took another six months for plans to be prepared for forty farms between five and nineteen acres in size.<sup>233</sup> Adjoining blocks of land were considerably larger, averaging fifty-five acres, but their agricultural use is not known.<sup>234</sup> By mid-1923, the administration block, Block 317, contained an office, three residences, three stores and a stable block, indicating that several departmental administrative staff lived and worked at Hillview. Development costs for Hillview were high, amounting to £77,071/19/1 not including costs for the land, which equated to an average cost of £2,000 for each poultry farm on Hillview.<sup>235</sup> George Allan Steele, an ex-serviceman and a poultry farmer prior to enlistment was appointed manager at Hillview in 1921.<sup>236</sup>

---

<sup>231</sup> *ibid.*, RSSB to MBWSS 8 January 1918; MBWSS to RSSB 30 May 1918; RSSB to MBWSS 13 June 1918.

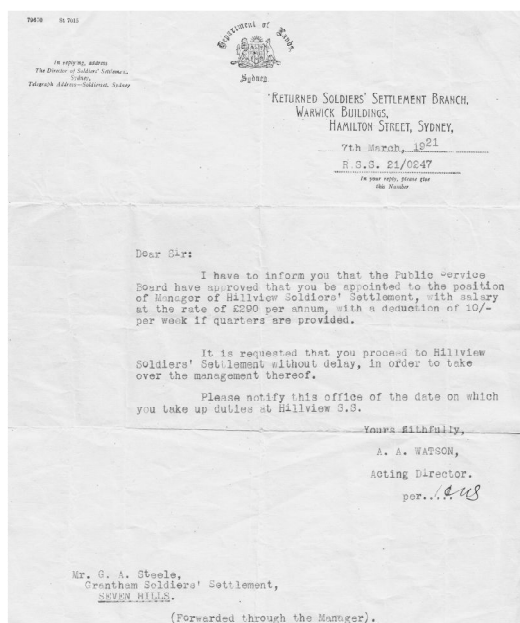
<sup>232</sup> SRNSW: NRS 8051 [14/4889], *op. cit.*, Valuation by Richardson and Wrench, Sydney, 15 March 1919. Market value £10.10.0 per acre – total value £3097.10.0. The valuation, on account of the Director of Soldiers' Settlements was only for the 295 acre portion.

<sup>233</sup> *ibid.*, plan of Hill View Estate [sic], 13 September 1919. The roads took up fourteen acres of the property.

<sup>234</sup> *ibid.*, from Hill View Estate plan. W.H. Pearse- 57 acres, T. Marsden- 50 acres, P. Carney- 55 acres.

<sup>235</sup> *ibid.*, RSSB office memorandum from Acting Accountant, 22 April 1922. These costings were for the first three years.

<sup>236</sup> NAA: B2455, *op. cit.*, SERN 22488 STEELE, George Allan. Steele had been an assistant manager at Grantham Soldier Settlement prior to his appointment as manager at Hillview. In late 1923 he became a soldier settler at Campbelltown Soldier Settlement, remaining there until his death in the late 1950s, Tony Steele, 15 July 2011, correspondence in possession of the author.



*Appointment G.A. Steele as Manager Hillview Soldier Settlement 7 March 1921  
Source: courtesy Tony Steele*

Many of the original settlers at Hillview received training in poultry farming at Grantham or Hawkesbury Agricultural College, as noted earlier in this chapter. Hillview settlers John Ernest Dean, Frank Meredith and Albert Rolfe Moore trained at Hawkesbury, with comments at the completion of their course saying these men were reliable, capable and hard workers.<sup>237</sup> At least another fourteen original settlers at Hillview settlement received some training at Grantham Stud at Seven Hills.<sup>238</sup>

John Dean left a poorer man financially and physically, after living on Hillview Settlement for over eight years. A year before he forfeited Dean told authorities he was going to try every possible avenue to make a living on his block and meet his obligations to the Department.<sup>239</sup> By this time his health was impaired, the poultry

<sup>237</sup> UWS Archives, Hawkesbury Agricultural College, *op. cit.*

<sup>238</sup> Information collated from loan files, settlement files and Department of Veterans' Affairs files; See also Appendix A.

<sup>239</sup> SRNSW: NRS 8058, *op. cit.*, [12/7104] Loan File 5559, DEAN, John Ernest.

business had left him with large debts and his alternate attempt to earn a living growing vegetables returned only a small profit. Constantly harassed to make repayments he wrote in reply, 'It is rather late now to talk of military service, but after all, the country did promise repatriation to we returned soldiers, and by that I do not mean the unhappy experience which has befallen those who were so ill-advised as to take up poultry farms under the group settlement system 7 (sic) years ago'.<sup>240</sup> Dean had some right to make these claims, as a departmental report about the same time said that his house had been poorly built and his land badly exposed to weather, not ideal conditions for poultry.<sup>241</sup> Only physically able to do light work, Dean forfeited shortly after.<sup>242</sup> After serving over four years with field ambulance units, Dean was discharged fit from the AIF but later successfully claimed a war service pension for neurasthenia and chronic bronchitis.<sup>243</sup> Unemployed after leaving Hillview, Dean had to support himself, his wife and three children on a pension of 25/9 a fortnight.<sup>244</sup>

A general store opened at Hillview in June 1920 but due to lack of support and the settlement's proximity to Liverpool, closed within the year.<sup>245</sup> Investigations into the economic feasibility of a store on the settlement were not made, and whether this store had been operated by the RSSB or the settlers is not known. Egg production at Hillview was much less than at Campbelltown, a similar-sized settlement, but this

---

<sup>240</sup> *ibid.*, letter from Dean 29 May 1927.

<sup>241</sup> SRNSW: NRS 8051 [14/4889], *op. cit.*, Report 25 October 1927.

<sup>242</sup> *ibid.*; NAA: C138, *op. cit.*, R67057 DEAN, John Ernest. A statement by Dr Minty, July 1927, said Dean failed on his poultry farm because 'his health has been so indifferent'.

<sup>243</sup> *ibid.*, Dean received a war pension from June 1927; NAA: B2455, *op. cit.*, SERN 1833 DEAN, John Ernest. Dean's service file contains no reference to either neurasthenia or bronchitis. In 1927 Dean was aged thirty-three.

<sup>244</sup> SRNSW: NRS 8058 [12/7104], *op. cit.*, declaration 15 March 1929.

<sup>245</sup> NSWPP, 1922 Vol. 1, *op. cit.*, 42<sup>nd</sup> Report of the Department of Lands for the Year ended 30 June 1921, p. 269.



discrepancy remained unexplained in departmental reports.<sup>246</sup> Other files however, reveal several blocks at Hillview were unsuitable for poultry farming because of the land, being either too exposed or in flood-prone areas.<sup>247</sup>

Like Bankstown and Chipping Norton, road conditions around Hillview Settlement were poor, affecting not only farmers' access to deliver produce to market, but also impacting on the social isolation of settlers and their families. Liverpool Council minutes regularly record requests for road improvement from late 1919.<sup>248</sup> Road conditions remained sub-standard as evidenced by Hillview Settler Harry Bird's claim when his sulky was damaged.<sup>249</sup> Several years after Hillview was established local authorities admitted the main road servicing the community was mostly dirt with little gravel, and was often impassable after heavy rain.<sup>250</sup>

Within two years there were numerous complaints from settlers about poor home construction practises, with Justice Street investigating these claims as part of the Royal Commission into the RSSB.<sup>251</sup> Complaints about workmanship went unresolved with settlers demanding action, saying brickwork for the stoves and chimneys in cottages were faulty.<sup>252</sup> Hillview settlers believed the government were

---

<sup>246</sup> *ibid.*, p. 273, Hillview produced 17,864 dozen eggs in comparison with Campbelltown's 87,894 dozen.

<sup>247</sup> SRNSW: NRS 8051 [14/4889], *op. cit.*, Report re applications for reappraisal 25 October 1927 mentions Blocks 319 (Meredith), 303 (West), 311 (Donald), 321 (Shipman), 306 (Dean) and 334 (Medley) being either exposed or flooded in wet weather.

<sup>248</sup> Liverpool Council Minutes, *op. cit.*, 23 December 1919, 20 July 1920, 14 February 1922, 27 March 1923. The Department of Local Government informed Liverpool Council they were unable to make special grants for roads to both Hillview and Chipping Norton Settlements.

<sup>249</sup> *ibid.*, Application to Lands Department 24 May 1921 for assistance in construction of Hillview Road; Claim for damages to sulky by H. Bird, 21 June 1921.

<sup>250</sup> *ibid.*, Memo from Town Clerk, 18 October 1923.

<sup>251</sup> SRNSW: *Royal Commission of Enquiry into the Administration of the Returned Soldiers' Settlement Branch, Department of Lands, 1920*; NRS 1527, 3/9602 Secretary's Minutes Book, No. 1, 17 August 1920-19 October 1920.

<sup>252</sup> SRNSW: NRS 8051 [14/4889], *op. cit.*, RSSB Memo, 30 October 1922. Several settlers had by this time already done their own repairs to stove brickwork, concerned that it was a hazard.

ignoring their concerns and they turned to the League for assistance. The League's letter quoted Settler John Dean who argued that if cottages had been well-built originally, they would not need repairing within a year. In his home the stove was 'falling out the back of the chimney' and a window had blown in during recent storms.<sup>253</sup> The response was not what the settlers had hoped for, as the Department made no offer to repair or reconstruct homes.<sup>254</sup> Substantial repairs to the cottages were eventually carried out by the RSSB in mid-1922.<sup>255</sup>

By 1925, half the original thirty-six ex-servicemen and their families had left their blocks at Hillview Soldier Settlement.<sup>256</sup> The local community realised the poultry settlement would probably never be successful, and tried to provide alternative means of support. For example, in early 1925 Liverpool Council was considering establishing a public pound with a Hillview resident as pound keeper, but the suggestion was not implemented as the settlement's future was questionable.<sup>257</sup>

Hillview Soldier Settlement was originally a gated community, as was Bankstown. Another indication that many believed the settlement was doomed was in early 1926 when Liverpool Council gave permission for the local show society to remove these gates.<sup>258</sup> No further record has been found about their fate. Even though most of the original settlers at Hillview had received some poultry training, within five years the settlement could be considered a failure. Why these men forfeited their blocks and

---

<sup>253</sup> *ibid.*, letter from RSSILA to RSSB, 31 May 1921.

<sup>254</sup> *ibid.*, RSSB memo 30 October 1922 stating settlers were verbally informed of these decisions 7 October 1921. Settlers were told they could improve, repair or renovate their homes without these improvements later being added to their mortgage.

<sup>255</sup> *ibid.*, Repairs included resetting kitchen stoves and coppers, re-hanging doors and windows, repairing the concrete in poultry yards and doing plumbing work in the bathrooms.

<sup>256</sup> See Appendix A.

<sup>257</sup> Liverpool Council Minutes, *op. cit.*, Town Clerk's report 7 April 1925. 'Owing to the nature of the tenure of residents on the settlement, I suggest that Council consider whether it should incur any - other than nominal - expenditure in fencing etc on any property within the settlement'.

<sup>258</sup> *ibid.*, 16 March 1926, giving authority to AH & I Society to remove gates.

some insights into their lives after soldier settlement will be examined in more detail later in this thesis.

The settlement continued to decline, with only thirteen of the original settlers remaining by 1930. Attempting to recoup some of the government's financial outlay, permission was given for civilians to acquire the properties, as had happened at other settlements in this study.<sup>259</sup> Unfortunately, no record has been found to indicate if these civilian farmers were successful where soldier settlers had failed.

### **Doonside**

Doonside Soldier Settlement was the last group settlement established in the County of Cumberland. Doonside was a small rural area approximately two and a half miles from Blacktown, which was in turn about twenty miles west of Sydney. Blacktown was a small town in the early twentieth century with a district population of 6,000 before the war, although the population had increased to nearly 7,500 when Doonside Soldier Settlement was established.<sup>260</sup> Authorities were confident this settlement would flourish because of good transport links for transporting produce to market, as it was bounded by the Great Western Highway, Doonside Road and Bungarribee Road, and adjacent to Doonside railway platform.<sup>261</sup> The 312 acre estate was purchased in July 1920 for £7,031/3/7, or more than £22 per acre. Surveying allowed for thirty-nine farms varying in size from about five to seventeen acres. Indicative that the land had not been previously used for agriculture was that the survey noted that

---

<sup>259</sup> NSWPD, *op. cit.*, Vol. 121, p. 1040. Comment by Minister for Lands, Richard Ball.

<sup>260</sup> [www.blacktownhistory.org.au](http://www.blacktownhistory.org.au), accessed 5 June 2010.

<sup>261</sup> SRNSW: NRS 8051, *op. cit.*, [10/13742] Doonside Soldier Settlement. Map of settlement August 1920.

only forty acres had been cleared, with most of the land covered by thick box, ironbark, gum and oak trees.<sup>262</sup>

However, only sixteen of the thirty-nine blocks were developed for soldier settlement. Three years after its establishment, thirteen of the original settlers remained, a much higher retention than on the other poultry settlements.<sup>263</sup> The sixteen poultry blocks on the Doonside estate were considered to be the best in the sub-division because of their position and proximity to the railway platform, on the main western railway line.<sup>264</sup> Soon after a 1923 survey, the Director told the Minister for Lands he recommended Doonside Settlement not be completed, arguing enough returned men had been settled in the industry.<sup>265</sup> No explanation for this decision, or mention of the numbers or causes of forfeitures on other poultry settlements were included in this memo. The decision not to allocate all the Doonside blocks foretold a lack of confidence either in the group settlement ideal or the potential success of the entire soldier settlement scheme.

As already noted at several of the other settlements in this study, road conditions at Doonside were sub-standard. Additionally in the case of the Doonside settlement roads were not directly linked to the closest town, Blacktown, affecting transport for marketing eggs in the city.<sup>266</sup> The settlement at Doonside was even more isolated than

---

<sup>262</sup> *ibid.*, Report 16 June 1923.

<sup>263</sup> *ibid.*, map, report 28 May 1923.

<sup>264</sup> *ibid.*, Report Senior Valuer Pulver C.S.A. Board, 12 March 1923.

<sup>265</sup> *ibid.*, Report 16 June 1923. The Director informed the Minister 'that he was not prepared to recommend the completion of the Doonside scheme, as he considered it inexpedient to settle a greater number of returned men in the Poultry industry than the existing farms provided for'.

<sup>266</sup> *ibid.*, Doonside settlers had a circuitous road route to Blacktown because of existing property boundaries with the adjoining Intercolonial Investment Company.

the other group settlements, having too small a population to warrant council or government expenditure to improve services and amenities for residents.

Among the original settlers at Doonside were Leslie Clement Haylen and Gerard Martyn Skugar. Whilst they had different wars, both men were shaped by their experiences as soldier settlers. Previously rejected for service because of ‘immaturity’, Les Haylen was accepted by the AIF in July 1918 but his troopship was recalled to Australia when peace was declared. Re-enlisting in June 1919 as an escort for the German repatriation program, Haylen was finally discharged in October 1919, never having served in a theatre of war.<sup>267</sup> Later becoming a playwright and novelist, Les Haylen had first-hand knowledge of the problems ex-servicemen and soldier settlers had returning to civilian life to draw on for his work. Haylen gained notoriety with his anti-war play ‘Two Minutes Silence’ in 1934, before becoming a long-serving Labor Party member of the Federal Parliament.<sup>268</sup> It is understood Haylen worked post-war as a journalist for the *Sunday Times* and *The Sun*, although precise dates are not noted in his biography.<sup>269</sup> The information that Leslie Haylen spent three years at Doonside Soldier Settlement from September 1921, trying to make a living on a poultry farm whilst supporting his invalid mother has not been previously acknowledged.<sup>270</sup> Haylen was keen to support his fellow returned men, writing to departmental authorities and the public on their behalf as Honorary Secretary of the Doonside Progress Association.<sup>271</sup>

---

<sup>267</sup> NAA: B2455, *op. cit.*, SERN 66713 and 85918 HAYLEN, Leslie Clement.

<sup>268</sup> R.E. Northey, ‘Haylen, Leslie Clement (Les) (1898-1977)’, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 14, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1996, p. 418.

<sup>269</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 418-419.

<sup>270</sup> SRNSW: NRS 8058, *op. cit.*, [12/7282] Loan File 8027 HAYLEN, Leslie.

<sup>271</sup> SRNSW: NRS 8051 [10/13742], *op. cit.*, Letter signed by Haylen, 2 November 1922, to the RSSB asking for land to be set aside for settlers to build a Hall for use as a School of Arts or Memorial Hall. The file contains no reply to this request; *SMH*, 15 January 1923, p. 10.

Gerard Skugar's experience of war was much different to Les Haylen's. A Russian citizen, born in Vilno in Poland, Skugar was a sailor before joining the AIF in May 1916.<sup>272</sup> Just months before the end of the war, Skugar was severely wounded in the head at the beginning of the Allied offensive at Hamel. His actions during this battle were to earn him a Military Medal.<sup>273</sup> Most of the two years between his discharge and arrival at Doonside Soldier Settlement remain blank, although Skugar spent some time training in poultry farming at Grantham at Seven Hills. A medal for bravery availed him little in civilian life, as he quickly becoming disillusioned, unsuccessfully advertising his property before finally transferring to another returned man in May 1924.<sup>274</sup> Clearly scarred from the gun-shot wound between his eye and his ear and partially deaf, it is not known how these injuries impacted on Skugar's ability to farm.<sup>275</sup>

Few details are extant about Doonside Soldier Settlement and the men who became soldier settlers there. Although twenty-five settlers have been identified with loan files existing for sixteen of these men, they contain little information in comparison with loan files of men from the settlements which were established earlier. It appears that by the mid-1920s, the bureaucracy maintained the commitment to settle men on the land but realised that the scheme had little potential for success. Mismanagement,

---

<sup>272</sup> NAA: B2455, *op. cit.*, SERN 2160 SKUGAR, Gerard Martyn.

<sup>273</sup> *ibid.*;

[www.awm.gov.au/research/people/honours\\_and\\_awards/?Name=skugar&ServiceNumber=2160&U](http://www.awm.gov.au/research/people/honours_and_awards/?Name=skugar&ServiceNumber=2160&U); [www.awm.gov.au/cms\\_images/AWM28/1/168P1/0117.pdf](http://www.awm.gov.au/cms_images/AWM28/1/168P1/0117.pdf), accessed 1 May 2011. The recommendation notes that Skugar single-handedly rushed and captured a machine gun and its crew before being badly wounded; [www.awm.gov.au/units/unit\\_11228.asp](http://www.awm.gov.au/units/unit_11228.asp), accessed 1 May 2011.

<sup>274</sup> *SMH*, 4 August 1923, p. 21, 'Rare opportunity for the Returned Soldier - £200 will get this snap'; SRNSW NRS 8058 [12/7282], *op. cit.*, Loan File 8030 SKUGAR, Gerard Martyn.

<sup>275</sup> *The Advertiser* (Adelaide), 20 October 1933, p. 20; *SMH*, 13 September 1933, p. 13. Skugar later became President of the National Polish Alliance, and was a manufacturer of fancy jewellery at Redfern in Sydney's inner city suburbs. He disappeared in mysterious circumstances in September 1933.

poor construction practices, claims of poor-quality stock and a number of government inquiries into poultry group settlements had taken their toll by the time Doonside was finally opened.<sup>276</sup>

More than 100 soldier settlers had left their blocks in the group settlements in the County of Cumberland by the time the decision was made not to complete Doonside.<sup>277</sup> These numbers show not only that group soldier settlement in the greater Sydney area had quickly proven to be an economic failure, but reveals many returned men who had chosen this tenure were experiencing difficulties in civilian life. Whether these high failure rates within a few years is a microcosm of soldier settlement in other parts of New South Wales remains to be discovered.

However State Poultry Expert James Hadlington continued to believe in the future of the poultry industry in New South Wales. In 1920 in answer to the query ‘does poultry pay?’ he wrote that the industry was expanding across the State, but especially in the County of Cumberland, ‘owing to proximity to a market that is one of the best in the world’.<sup>278</sup> Acknowledging that much remained to be accomplished, Hadlington said he believed the efforts of the Department of Agriculture were contributing to a stable industry.<sup>279</sup> The future of the poultry industry in New South Wales may have been bright, but not for men disabled in body and mind. Poultry farming on a group settlement was never the answer for these men. Returning from war without their physical health and strength, the majority of soldier settlers on the group settlements

---

<sup>276</sup> See, for example, *SMH*, 30 October 1922, p. 9. This article mentions ‘the grave state of affairs’ at Doonside and three other group settlements outside the metropolitan area.

<sup>277</sup> see Appendix A.

<sup>278</sup> *The Examiner* (Launceston), 24 January 1920, p. 2.

<sup>279</sup> *ibid.*

in the County of Cumberland struggled to survive in any work. These soldier settlements became in reality a welfare state for returned damaged men.

The remaining blocks not opened for soldier settlement at Doonside remained undeveloped and appear to have been offered for sale as vacant farms in the mid 1930s.<sup>280</sup> At Doonside in August 1931 a group of twenty unemployed women, selected from 300 applicants, began a Women's Land Settlement promoted and supported by the United Association of Women.<sup>281</sup> In spite of the Minister for Lands' disapproval of women working as farmers approximately twenty acres was acquired, probably part of the unused Doonside Soldier Settlement, with a strict understanding that the government would have no financial responsibilities for the project.<sup>282</sup>

Interestingly, newspaper reports about the plans for the Doonside Women's Land Settlement contain no references to Doonside Soldier Settlement, leading to the conclusion that either the area was no longer known by this name, or the poultry settlement of returned men had largely ceased to exist. Comparisons between the poultry soldier settlers and this group of women can readily be made. Unemployed, both groups had no immediate prospects to support themselves, living initially on-site in tents, a measure of their desperate circumstances. Both groups were also relatively

---

<sup>280</sup> SRNSW: NRS 8051 [10/13742], *op. cit.*, Report 16 June 1923 states remaining twenty-three farms were still in the same state as at acquisition, apart from some clearing for roads, but scrub had largely re-grown in the unused portion; SRNSW: NRS 8051, *op. cit.*, [10/37077] Doonside soldier settlement. Correspondence is undated, with exception of one notation for Block 255 for March 1935.

<sup>281</sup> *SMH*, 4 July 1931, p. 7. The Department of Lands representative at the meeting, Mr Guest, had details of land available at the Doonside Estate and land at Penrith, Waterfall and Frenchs' Forest. Doonside appears to have been considered the best possibility, as delegates visited the land the same day; SRNSW: NRS 8052, *op. cit.*, [10/13714] Bankstown Soldier Settlement, contains evidence that H.H. Guest was employed by the RSSB in 1923; *SMH*, 12 October 1931, p. 31. The settlement was also known as 'Birubi', an aboriginal name for the Southern Cross constellation; *The West Australian*, 29 April 1930, p. 4.

<sup>282</sup> *SMH*, 8 August 1931, p. 12. A deputation from the Women's Land Settlement Committee met with Minister Tully to ask for Crown lands 'within easy reach of the metropolis be made available in small areas at nominal rental for unemployed women'. The Minister said 'he was of [the] opinion that women could not develop land and make a living along the lines proposed'; *SMH*, 7 December 1931, p. 8.



short-lived with the principle of co-operative group settlement unsuccessful in practice. As with group settlements in the depression of the 1890s, the Women's Land Settlement did not last. It is not known when the settlement disbanded.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has outlined the development of group soldier settlements in the County of Cumberland and explored the establishment of Bankstown, Grantham, Campbelltown, Chipping Norton, Hillview and Doonside settlements. It has shown that problems were evident within a short time. The cost of establishing all these settlements was high, a factor not budgeted by the controlling body of the RSSB. The concept of group settlement, where largely inexperienced returned men could work with the assistance of professional managers and businessmen looked good on paper. It was seen as an effective and efficient way to settle large numbers of men quickly, but it clearly did not work. Government enquiries into problems on these group settlements failed to make any significant changes to help soldier settlers succeed. Many soldier settlers' lives on the group settlements in this study were made more difficult because they had war-related injuries. They tried to work the land and be independent, but failed. They attempted soldier settlement believing they had no alternative to earn their living with dignity. Most had few skills and hoped soldier settlement on a small farm would provide them with both a comfortable family home and an adequate income. Their attempts to succeed in their new careers are examined in the next chapter, 'Hope'.