



MELBOURNE
GRAMMAR SCHOOL

THE OLD
MELBURNIANS

Address to ANZAC lunch

26 April 2024

My purpose is to say some words of thanks.

Before I do I will tell a story which frames those words. The impetus comes from the foreword to the centenary edition of the *Liber Melburniensis*, written by the Archbishop of Melbourne.

About the *Liber* itself he said *To those who do not understand, it is simply a school register.... To those who do understand, its mere presence on their bookshelves will be a reminder of the splendid brotherhood to which they are privileged to belong.*

With that sentiment in mind - a rowing story illustrated by four photographs.



004165

1899 1st VIII Winners of the first public school's eight oared race in Australia.

Front left: J.P.C. Govett, J. Cockbill, E. Tulloch, H.C. Gordon, B.C. Merrillees, S.M. Bruce, G. Gunn, W.H. Webb and C.H. Anderson

The first photograph is of the very first MGS 1st VIII in 1899. Because it is 1899 this is the generation that built the Memorial Hall. And their story is the story of the Hall.

In the 6 seat is a young man named Merrillees. He was dead within 18 months of this photograph. He died in the Boer War and his name is on the list of the fallen.

In the 7 seat is Eric William Tulloch, a famous name in rowing at this school. Apart from being a first-class

oarsman he was an amateur soldier and when war broke out in 1914 he joined up and was commissioned a captain. Tulloch was part of the first landing at Gallipoli and that morning entered Australian military folklore. His command of 80 men was one of only two Australian formations to achieve its objective that day. Not only that, it was the only allied formation during the entire campaign that penetrated far enough inland to see the sea on the other side.

You may have seen the broadcast of the ANZAC day service from ANZAC Cove. In it, a Turkish officer reads Ataturk's Ode to the Fallen, first in Turkish then in English. The legend of Ataturk, then Mustapha Kemal, had its genesis in his personally led counterattack that saved the Ottoman position on the first day. Less well-known is that the counterattack was against Tulloch.

The Australians were outnumbered 10 to one, but they held on for an hour and a half before withdrawing. Tulloch was severely wounded in the course of the withdrawal and was repatriated to Australia to convalesce. He returned to active service in the trenches in France and was gassed. He then returned to active service a third time and within six weeks had won the Military Cross and then a Bar to his MC, essentially for capturing a series of machine gun posts almost single-handed armed only with a revolver.

As you know, 11 November 1918 was not the end of the war, it was an armistice, so the army had to find something for the men to do. A rowing regatta was arranged on the Thames, the Peace Regatta. Tulloch was appointed to select and train two AIF crews. Number 1 AIF VIII won the regatta and were presented with a trophy by the King, which they brought home and is now the King's Cup for which the States compete to this day.

Tulloch returned to civilian life in Melbourne and was appointed head of rowing and coach of the 1st VIII. He was also, fittingly for a rowing coach, a master brewer. The next photograph is of the 1923 crew, which as the presence of the Fairbairn Cup shows won the Head of the River. They looked pleased with themselves, as you do.



004159

Back row (from left): L.G. Travers, E.H. Bawden, N.D. Waters and C.R. Weir. Seated: J.C. Garran, L.K. Corteen, E.W. Tulloch Esq., T.A. Alston and F.H. Shore. Out front: C.G. McMicking (cox).

The next photograph is the 1926 crew. No trophy and no Tulloch. This crew does not look so pleased. The story behind this photograph is important. This crew was the hot favourite to win the Head of the River and they won their heat on the Friday convincingly. Tulloch retired to what we would call a boutique hotel in Wellington Parade East Melbourne. At about 2am the next morning he disturbed an intruder and was shot and killed.

The APS had to decide what to do. It decided the School should decide. And the School decided that these nine young men should decide. They decided the regatta should proceed and that they would race in it. As you can see from the photo, they did not win, but in the circumstances, they hardly lost either. The margin between first and third was the closest of any Head of the River final, before or since.



004323

1926 1st VIII Standing: W.Y. Bryant (4), L.F.P. Loader (2), N.R. Teague (3), E.J. Carnegie (bow). Sitting: J.B.J. Osborne (5), R.F. Bunting (6), F.C. Scarlett (cox), G.H.C Muirhead (7), L.C. Parish (stroke).

That is not the point of my story. The point is this. Tulloch's funeral was held in the School chapel. The sitting Prime Minister SM Bruce spoke. Bruce did not speak as Prime Minister, or even as a brother officer or as Tulloch's school captain. He spoke because that is Bruce sitting in the four seats in the 1899 crew. You might be interested to know that Tulloch's number 1 AIF VIII defeated the Cambridge University Returned Servicemen VIII in the semi-final. The Cambridge crew was coached by SM Bruce.

These are the ties that bind. And they can be found in all corners of school life. They are the reason why we are here. They are the reason why the generation in this photograph of the very first Melbourne Grammar VIII built that hall. They are what makes this school a great school. And I think the Old Melburnians are fundamental to that.

And so to my thanks. On behalf of the Old Melburnians' Council, my thanks first to the School for honouring the condition of the gift that requires the service we attended this morning. It is honoured to

the letter of the condition but in spirit, it does more. The solemnity and dignity with which the living school conducts itself is a tribute to the School.

Secondly, my thanks to those representing those who served. You are an important and tangible reminder of service and its human context.

Thirdly, thanks to those present who now serve or have served in the uniform of the ADF. I am not alone in this room in thinking that there is no higher form of service to our country.

MS



Tulloch Memorial Cup for House Rowing



1919 Paris Regatta oar in MGS Collection at the Simon Fraser Memorial Boathouse