

**ANZAC DAY 2021 SERVICE
SPEECH BY HER EXCELLENCY PROFESSOR
THE HONOURABLE KATE WARNER AC
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
HOBART CENOTAPH, SUNDAY 25 APRIL 2021**

I begin by paying my respects to the traditional and original owners of this land: the palawa people. I acknowledge the contemporary Tasmanian Aboriginal community, who have survived invasion and dispossession, and continue to maintain their identity, culture and Indigenous rights.

I mourn the fact that there are no longer any descendants of the muwinina, the Aboriginal people who lived here on the river estuary below kunanyi. But we can rejoice in the fact that principally through descendants of the North East Nation, we have today a vibrant Tasmanian Aboriginal community.

It has been estimated that some 74 Aboriginal Tasmanians served in World War One.¹ They included Edward Lewis Maynard who died in action at Gallipoli. Maynard was one of nine Aboriginal Tasmanians from Cape Barren Island and Flinders Island who did not return from the battlefield to their island home.² They were among the three thousand Tasmanians who died in that war.

Today, in commemorating all the men and women who have served our nation in wars, conflicts and peacekeeping operations, I will specifically mention the centenary of the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF).

In World War One military aircraft were mainly used for reconnaissance: Australia's eight Australian Flying Corps (AFC) squadrons were attached to the British Royal Flying Corps and Royal Air Force formations.

After that War, in January 1920 the AFC was replaced by the Australian Air Corps which became the Australian Air Force on 31 March 1921 and the Royal Australian Air Force on 13 August 1921. In World War Two Australian air crews fought in Europe, North Africa, the Middle East and in the Pacific as well as in Australia and its territories.

¹ Andrea Gerrard, *Overlooked: Tasmanian Aborigines in the First World War*, Master's thesis, University of Tasmania, 2015, iv.

² Gerrard, n 1, 164.

By 1945, Australia had the fourth largest air force in the world (after the USA, USSR and the UK) with some 6,200 aircraft and 61 squadrons. Over 215,500 men and women served between 1939-1945 and 9,870 Air Force personnel lost their lives. A majority of those deaths occurred in the air war against Germany over Europe.

The RAAF has undergone many changes in that one hundred years. For example while I mentioned that men and women served in the Air Force in World War Two, women were in Women's Auxiliary Air Force (the WAAF) and they worked as truck drivers, signallers, electricians and mechanics rather than as air crew or pilots. It was not until the early 1980s that females were accepted into the mainstream RAAF and 1988 when Australia's first female air force pilots graduated.

There was just one Australian women pilot, Mardi Gething, among the 80 women pilots in the Air Transport Auxiliary in Britain, who ferried military aircraft from British factories to RAF bases around the country.³ Now every role in the Air Force is open to women.

Today the RAAF plays a major role in peacekeeping and humanitarian missions throughout the world and it has between 500 and 700 people on operations each day. Humanitarian and disaster relief, while not the primary role of the ADF is nevertheless vital and we have seen this in the role it has played in recent disasters – the 2020 bushfires when we saw on our television screens military transport aircraft trying to land in zero visibility conditions at Mallacoota and the evacuation of local residents. And then in more recent weeks the assistance given during the flood emergency in New South Wales when the Richmond RAAF Base airlifted people who were trapped by floodwaters.

In September this year Australian troops are to be withdrawn from Afghanistan ending what has been termed Australia's longest war. It is therefore appropriate to remember the 41 soldiers who died, including Tasmanian Corporal Cameron Baird who was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross; the many more who were injured and mentally and physically; and to thank the 39,000 servicemen and women who have been deployed in that war.

³ 'Australian ATA Plot Mardi Gething', *Carrying On*, 2021 Autumn Edition, 15.

This Anzac Day it is also appropriate to particularly remember Ordinary Seaman Teddy Sheean, who, last year, 78 years after his extraordinary bravery, was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross, the first member of the Royal Australian Navy to receive this award.

In my Anzac Day Address in 2016, I spoke about the Siege of Tobruk on its 75th anniversary. In this my final address and the 80th anniversary, I would like to again remember my father, Kenneth Friend, who was a medical officer in charge of a mobile section of 2/5th Ambulance at Tobruk.

After the siege, Dad served with 2/1st AGH in Egypt and Palestine and then Bougainville. My brother Dick Friend recently attended an Open Day of the Rats of Tobruk Association and was alerted to two photographs of my father operating in Bougainville, with the caption:⁴ “Medical Officer Major Kenneth Friend operates on a battle casualty from the 47th Battalion at the 7th Field Ambulance dressing station, Tagessi, 16 January 1945 AWM 0784.”

It is unmistakably my father in these photos, operating with an apron, and like his assistants, without a shirt.

Like many families, we have since my father’s death wanted to know more about his war service. On the 75th anniversary of the siege, my daughter Meg, who was only four years old when her grandfather died at 65, wrote an Anzac Day blog and ended it with these words after recounting the number of dead and wounded at Tobruk:

Countless more no doubt, like my Pa carried the less visible, less immediate scars of war. Today, when I stood listening to the bugle and sniffing my sprig of rosemary (and trying to get a wriggly 4-year-old to understand remembrance) I thought of you Pa. I miss not knowing you.

Lest we forget.

⁴ <https://anzacportal.dva.gov.au/resources/media/image/awm-078495>