

# Maleny's Service Personnel

## Commemorating our Service Men and Women

The strong presence of our defence personnel has always comforted, protected and served us. Now, the Maleny RSL is working to ensure that all military personnel, whether they are local residents or visitors, are duly acknowledged.



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Barry Canton and Paul Gilmour Walsh next to the upgraded cenotaph, Maleny RSL

William Richard Musk  
James Wilson  
Kathleen Porter  
Captain James Cork



by JUDY FREDRIKSEN

Each ANZAC Day, in a tradition that dates back to WWII, a moving ceremony is held in the peaceful surrounds

of the Witta Cemetery. In making the service more relevant and meaningful, attendees are invited to stand next to a military grave in honour of the occupant.

Vietnam veteran Barry Canton explains: "You actually have the veteran in the ground and it's a completely different ceremony to a memorial overseas where all the soldiers have died in action.

"These are people that left this community, went to war, came home, lived their lives, and then died. It's a completely different thing to someone that dies in service, because the families know the person that goes away.

"A different person always comes back from the war, and then that person lives in this community and then their life continues on.

"Sometimes we forget these people are returned service people. That's a great thing with this service; we're standing there next to someone that's served

overseas and also their community."

However, with Maleny's high rainfall, many graves have sunk and along with their plaques, are no longer visible. So in the early 2000s, the Maleny RSL made a point of marking the graves of the former defence personnel with a white cross.



William Musk (L) with his sons Ron and Gordon, circa 1942. Image courtesy of Janet Heald

It has also become apparent that there are names missing from the honour boards in the Maleny RSL Hall, leading to a research and rectification process. This project ensures that all ex-service people who have a connection to the district, or are buried at Witta, are acknowledged properly.

Another aspect of the project includes an upgrade to the cenotaph which now bears five plaques reflecting all the overseas engagements that Australians have been involved in dating back to the late 1800s, says Paul Gilmour-Walsh, president of the Maleny RSL.

Importantly, this ensures any visitors, especially younger veterans, can see where they served and know that their contribution has been recognised.

Longer term, the RSL has plans to have a brief life summary – both military and civilian – of all the ex-



service personnel buried at Witta. Some of the more interesting stories uncovered to date include those of William Musk; James Wilson and his wife – Kathleen Porter; as well as Captain James Cork.

A local dairy farmer, William Richard Musk enlisted in 1914 and was at the landing in Gallipoli. In 1916, he was sent to France where he served as a gunner on the front line, firing the heavy cannons. Sadly, he was gassed by mustard gas which was later banned by the Geneva Protocol. After being wounded in action, Musk was invalided to England.

When WWII broke out, he tried to enlist again, but failed the medical examination because of deafness and high blood pressure. Eager to serve, he enlisted in the Volunteer Defence Corp, Nambour, which played a valuable role in protecting the local coastline against a possible Japanese invasion. Upon his death in 1948, it was found he had suffered from lung congestion.

The Skipper Musk Teahouse Lookout, Bald Knob, is dedicated to William's wife Daisy and Mrs Skipper who ran the teahouse at the top of the Range.

*Paul Gilmour-Walsh and Barry Canton with one of the honour boards, Maleny RSL ▶*



James Wilson, a sawmill and labourer of Conondale, enlisted in 1940, but within ten months, was reported missing in action and believed to be a POW.

While interned in Italy, and through the Vatican Radio Station, in conjunction with the Apostolic Delegation Bureau, Wilson was able to get a message to his family in Australia. For two years he was held POW in Italy before he made a remarkable escape to Switzerland and finally made it home safely in 1944.

After returning to Maleny, he married a local girl from a pioneering dairy family – Kathleen Porter. The couple had met before war broke out and she also served in WWII, achieving the rank of staff sergeant.

A talented musician and professionally trained dressmaker, Kathleen worked as a tailoress when she joined the Australian Women's Army Service, sewing and adjusting uniforms to fit all sizes.

On October 17 1944, she received a confidential but reassuring letter from the Lieutenant-Colonel, Queensland Echelon and Records, Warwick, advising that her friend, Private JA Wilson, had "reached Allied lines in Italy from Switzerland".

Born in Ulludulla, NSW in 1851, Captain James Cork joined the Ulludulla Volunteer Rifle Corp at the age of 17. At that time, many towns in Australia had a volunteer unit in case Napoleon III invaded England.

In 1886, James Cork represented Australia in England as part of the first Australian team to compete in the Kolapore Cup, a prestigious competition that saw colonial (including Indian) rifle shooting teams take on the best of the British Army. James Cork went on to reputedly become the best marksman in the colony.

In the early 1900s he came to Maleny, serving as director of the Maleny Butter Factory 1905–1921. In 1916, James Cork fired the first shot to officially open the Maleny Rifle Club.

To further their research, the Maleny RSL would love to hear from you if you have any information or photos of any current or former local service people: [info@malenyrsld.net.au](mailto:info@malenyrsld.net.au)

Lest we forget. 🇺🇸

◀ Barry Canton beside the grave and military white cross of Capt James Cork, Witta Cemetery