

THE LEGEND OF NO 505 SERGEANT THOMAS HUNTER 'THE LONELY ANZAC OF PETERBOROUGH' BEGINS

The legend began on the 31st July 1916 when Thomas Hunter died from his wounds in the Peterborough Infirmary (now the City Museum). As soon as the Mayor of Peterborough, Councillor George Nicholls OBE, JP learnt of the death of this Australian in the Infirmary he decided immediately that this soldier from the other side of the world and far from friends and family should receive a civic/military funeral. Nobody at this stage knew that he did have relatives in County Durham, the county in which he had been born and lived before emigrating to Australia.

Councillor Nicholls served as Mayor for three years from 1916 to 1918. He was highly regarded as a man with much patience and sound judgement. He was born in 1864, starting work on the land before he was ten and learned all he could at night school. In 1891 he was working in the gravel pits at Whittlesey, a few miles from Peterborough. Later he was employed for a time as a navy on the digging of the Tilbury Docks and the Manchester Ship Canal. On his return to the Peterborough area he became a lay preacher and lay pastor at the Congregational Church in Chatteris, a small Fenland town. He truly was a man from humble beginnings who rose to become the First Citizen of Peterborough. This then was the man who has to be given the credit for starting the legend of 'The Lonely Anzac'.

The first public knowledge of the death of this Australian Sergeant was a report in the Peterborough Citizen on the 1st August 1916, which read: -

WOUNDED SOLDIER DIES AT PETERBOROUGH

REMOVED FROM RED CROSS TRAIN

TOO ILL TO CONTINUE THE JOURNEY

AND REMOVED TO THE INFIRMARY

A Red Cross train passed through Peterborough on Saturday evening when a young Australian was conveyed from the train to the Infirmary. The soldier was very ill on the train, suffering from gunshot in the spine and it was not thought possible that he would survive the long journey to Halifax.

He died early on Monday morning and the funeral will take place tomorrow (Wednesday) at 2.30 from the Infirmary.

The Mayor and Mr Taylor who was the Secretary of the Infirmary moved fast, they could not have anticipated the outpouring of grief that occurred on the day of the funeral of Thomas Hunter. The funeral was fully reported in all the local newspapers, but this was not the end of the legend, only the very beginning.

An article that was printed and published by Henry Butterfield at his offices in Cross Street, Peterborough appeared on the 5th August 1916 as follows: -

A TRUE SON OF EMPIRE

BRAVE AUSTRALIAN'S DEATH IN PETERBOROUGH INFIRMARY

BURIED WITH CIVIC AND MILITARY HONOURS

TOUCHING SCENES OF SYMPATHY

Included in the

A lad from the
the honour of
Cemetery on
he has passed
memory of the
appropriately
them. The
EXPEDITION
Deakin Street
to 35. And
with the day
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lovely friend

Meanwhile
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Included in this report were the following comments: -

A lad from the great Commonwealth of Australia - who had given his life for the Mother Country and the honour of his native land, but who was unknown amongst us, was laid to rest in Peterborough Cemetery on Wednesday with full military ceremony. Over the seas relatives may yet be unaware that he has passed away, but when they become acquainted with all that has been done to honour the memory of this brave soldier, one we loved for the sake of the sacrifice he made, (as the Mayor so appropriately expressed it at the graveside), it will at least be a source of consolation and comfort to them. The hero was SERGEANT T. HUNTER, No 505, 10 CORPS, AUSTRALIAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCE. Later it read - He was the adopted son and nephew of Mr J Dawson, Deakin Street, Kurri Kurri via Maitland, Australia (N S W) and it is presumed that his age was from 30 to 35. Among his little treasures was a pipe inscribed with his name and the word ANZAC together with the date 25/4/15. It had not been smoked and it was doubtless a valued gift. He also possessed a watch, evidently of French manufacture, a compass enclosed in a case and other knick-knacks such as are beloved by soldiers. After death the body was tenderly conveyed to the Infirmary mortuary where lovely fresh flowers were placed around the body through the kindness of a well-known citizen.

Meanwhile, it became known in the City that Sergeant Hunter - so far from friends - had passed away. The hearts of the citizens were touched. Floral tributes were brought to the Infirmary one after another. Choice blooms, modest flowers plucked from cottage gardens, wreaths made by the hands of little children. Others bore heart-felt sentiments, breathing the ties of kinship, brotherhood and sisterhood that bind the whole British Empire together so strongly. Some fragrant roses, sweet peas or the bloom of ramblers were sent in bunches from persons unknown. But all betokened a singularly touching appreciation of the life laid down.

Shortly before half past two a contingent of the National Defence Corps under Major Gibson and Lieut Walker took up their stand in the roadway in Priestgate and were joined by members of the Peterborough Volunteer Corps under Lieutenants Beefy and Farrow with Sergeant Major Henshaw. Within the grounds of the Infirmary the bearers (members of the Defence Corps) took up position facing the entrance to the institution and immediately to the rear was the firing party. As the procession traversed the Market Place the solemn tolling of the funeral bell at the Cathedral was heard, amid the measured tread of the military.

The funeral arrangements were in the capable hands of Messrs G Braybrook and Sons, New Fletton, Peterborough.

The full report from the Peterborough Citizen of the 8th August 1916 follows: -

HOW PETERBOROUGH HONOURED AN ANZAC HERO

WHO DIED OF WOUNDS IN THE INFIRMARY

REMARKABLE DEMONSTRATION OF CIVIC AND PUBLIC SYMPATHY

A solemn and impressive scene was witnessed at the Peterborough Cemetery on Wednesday, when Sergeant T Hunter of the 10th Corps, Australian Expeditionary Force was laid to rest with military honours. The unfortunate Australian who was suffering from wounds in the spine, was in a Red Cross train which arrived in Peterborough on Saturday evening on the way to Halifax. But during the journey he became so ill and his condition was considered so grave, that he was taken out of the train and conveyed to the Infirmary at Peterborough. Everything possible was done for him, but it was seen that he had not long to live and he passed peacefully away early on Monday morning. A very large number of sympathisers assembled at the gates to the Infirmary, along the whole route and at the graveside to pay their respect to the stranger who had died in their midst. The coffin of polished film with black fittings was inscribed as follows: -

Sergeant T Hunter
No 505, 10th Corps
Australian Forces
Died July 31st 1916

THE UNVEILING

The Bronze was then unveiled by Bishop Thicknesse manipulating a cord and saying a Dedicatory sentence – "In the name and faith of Jesus Christ, I dedicate this tablet, not only in remembrance of one who came from the uttermost mouth, gave his life in the same great cause of mercy and justice to which the land of his fathers had set her hand, but as a perpetual token and symbol, in generations yet to be, of the unity and concord manifested in this hour of peril, amongst the daughter people of our blood and speech".

A special anthem by Sir Frederick Bridge CVO from Richard III, v.iii was effectively rendered by the choir with Dr Keeton officiating at the organ –

Remember this –
God and our good cause fight upon our side
The provens of holy saints and wronged souls
Like high-reared bulwarks, stand before our faces

The Cathedral Choir singing the National Anthem in which the congregation lustily joined concluded the brief service.

The top half of the Bronze shows an Australian soldier in bas relief, the bottom half shows the inscription: -

THIS TABLET IS DEDICATED
IN THE FAITH AND FEAR OF GOD
BY FELLOW CITIZENS OF THE EMPIRE
FOR WHICH HE GAVE HIS LIFE

TO THE MEMORY OF THOMAS HUNTER
OF KURRI KURRI, NEW SOUTH WALES
SERGEANT IN THE TENTH CORPS
AUSTRALIAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCE
WHO DIED ON MONDAY JULY 31, 1916
IN PETERBOROUGH INFIRMARY
OF WOUNDS RECEIVED IN FRANCE

The completion of the Bronze had to be delayed as the local foundry who were going to do the casting had many pressing contracts for munitions that had to be completed first.

The Bronze has now been repositioned in what has become a Military Chapel of Remembrance with memorials to many of those who fell in the Great War and the Second World War. Laid up in this Chapel are the old standards of the Peterborough Branch of the Royal British Legion, both the Queens Colour and the Branch Standard and also the Peterborough Branch Standard of the Dunkirk Veterans Association.

This is a most appropriate place for the memorial to The Lonely Anzac, now positioned between these standards. The Peterborough Royal British Legion have for many years been responsible for the organising of the very moving service at his graveside every 25th April, ANZAC DAY. Perhaps he still hears the haunting notes of the Last Post and Reveille and wonders at the continuing tribute being paid to his memory.

Out of order is reproduced a letter from a Hannah Dawson of Kurri Kurri, this was printed in the Peterborough Standard of 3rd February 1917. The letter was actually written on the 17th December 1916 and in it she forwards her thanks for the care given to Thomas Hunter. One has to wonder what she would have thought if she had known about the unveiling of the Bronze Memorial to his memory in the Cathedral Church of Peterborough before writing. It was actually unveiled almost a year after her moving letter to friends in the City.

The numbers attending the annual service on 'Anzac Day' at Sergeant Thomas Hunter's graveside increase as each year passes. Those attending include the Lord Lieutenant of the County of Cambridgeshire, a representative from the Australian High Commission in London, the Mayor of the City of Peterborough accompanied by the City Mace Bearer, the Royal British Legion and many of the other local Ex-Service organisations who parade with their Standards. Cadets from the Combined Cadet Force of the nearby Stamford School parade with their Standards. Cadets from the Combined Flag (they have close contacts with Australian schools) and many members of the Australian attend. The Celtic Cross on his grave is draped with both the Union Jack and the Australian Flag before the service begins. The Padre of the local Royal British Legion conducts this and the Last Post and Reveille are always played.

The wreath card on that laid by the representative from the Australian High Commission reads:-

**For Sergeant Thomas Hunter
on behalf of the Government and people
of the Commonwealth of Australia.**

'Lest we forget'

1998 was a special year on 'Anzac Day' in Peterborough when six of Thomas Hunter's relatives who had been traced by the author attended the service for the first time, a Mr and Mrs Jones (nee Hunter) and Norman Chant together with his wife and two sons from Northampton. As well as being fully reported in the local press, a report was printed in the magazine of the Gallipoli Association (Patron - HRH The Duke of Edinburgh) and also in 'Pro Patria', the journal of the Royal South Australia Regiment.

In 2002 Thomas Hunter was still making news both near and far, the following being printed in the January edition of 'Stand To', the journal of the Western Front Association

GHOST SOLDIER

(Reproduced from a recent Melbourne, Australian newspaper)

My mother, who is 95 and lives in Peterborough, England thinks that if you publish the details about the ghost of an Australian soldier who haunts the City's Museum, his soul will be able to rest. I guess that when you are 95 you have strange thoughts, but maybe it will work.

Sgt Thomas Hunter was fighting in the Battle of the Somme when he was wounded and shipped across the Channel and taken to Peterborough. He died in the Infirmary, which is now a Museum and Art Gallery and staff say they have seen his ghost on the staircase near to the old operating theatre. He appears as a white blur and my mother has sent me a clipping from a Peterborough newspaper, which shows a computer image of a ghostly soldier on the stairs and a photo of the more substantial war veterans who gather each year at his graveside. A Museum officer says a staff member was once pushed in the back at night, but when she turned round there was no one there. Other staff say that they often arrive at the Museum to find furniture has been moved overnight.

The next and final chapter, apart from that titled 'Miscellaneous Snippets' recounts the service and exploits of the 10th Battalion AIF from August 1916 until its disbandment in 1919. During this period two more Victoria Crosses were awarded to its members. The first to Private Reginald Roy Inwood for his extreme bravery over the 20th and 21st September 1917 during the Battle for Polygon Wood in Belgium and the second to Corporal Phillip Davey for his extreme bravery on the 28th June 1918 during the Battle for Merris in France. Many other decorations for valour were awarded during this period to members of the Battalion who were involved in most of the major actions right through until the cessation of hostilities at 11am on the 11th November 1918. Each of these actions saw the reputation of the 10th reaching new heights. They fully deserved their nickname - 'The Fighting Tenth'.

From the Peterborough Standard of 3rd February 1917: -

SERGEANT HUNTER, THE ANZAC

A TOUCHING LETTER FROM THE FAMILY

The following very touching letter has been received by Mr and Mrs A Route of Thorpe Lea Road from the sister of Sergeant T Hunter, the Anzac.

Deakin Street
Kurri Kurri
New South Wales
Australia

Note: this letter was undated

Dear Mr and Mrs Route,

I now write on behalf of my father and mother in answer to your most kind and sympathetic letter with regard to my brother.

I would like to thank all you kind people for what you have done for our dear boy, but words fail to express it. You will have some idea what sadness there has been since the Rector came and gave us the news. It was the sixth day of August, a day ever to be remembered by us, as he was such a dear kind boy and we all seemed to rely on him. He was 36 years old on the sixth of May. In the letters we received after his death, he was looking forward to the time when the war would be over and he would be home with us. He said how well he was keeping and that he thought that a soldier's life agreed with him.

It seems so sad that in the midst of his strength he should be cut down, but God's will, not ours, be done. It is a great comfort to us all to know that he was given such tender love and care in his last few hours on earth. Although he had none of his own dear ones around him, he had hundreds of kind and loving friends that had done so much. We can never be too grateful to them. But there a few things we would be very thankful if you would do for us one day. Would you thank all your dear people through the 'Standard' for us, if it has not already been done so as we think all the other letters we wrote were on the unfortunate mail boat that was sunk. Another is that you will sometimes visit our darling's grave and think of his sorrowing father, mother and sister, fourteen thousand miles away, who seem to miss him more each day.

We were so glad to learn that you had all seen his little treasures and if there is anything concerning his grave that you can let me know of, we will be glad to do it and we shall be thankful to have a photograph of the stone. Mr Taylor sent us all the photos of the funeral that I may tell you nearly broke our hearts when we looked at them. Before I close I would like to thank you all again. We only wish we could do it in person. At the present it cannot be done, but I hope in the future that it may be so.

We remain your dear friends in sorrow as mother, father and sister of our dear boy who is laid to rest in your City.

Sgd. Hannah Dawson

Mrs Route pressed some of the flowers of her wreath, red, white and blue and sent them to the family. It will be remembered that Pte Jim Elliott, late 18th Battalion, Australian Imperial Force and brother of Mrs Route belongs to the same State as Sergeant Hunter and arrived in Peterborough a day too late for the funeral. After service in Egypt, Gallipoli and France he had been invalided out and has returned to his home in Australia. By this time he has probably paid a personal visit to Sergeant Hunter's home in Kurru Kurri.

Memorial of one who came from a far Continent to fight in common cause with us for liberty and justice, may be a perpetual example of brotherly fellowship and concord in setting forward Thy Kingdom and the welfare of all mankind`

THE CEREMONIAL

Punctually at 2.30 the procession of choir and clergy proceeded from the Vestry to the Baptistry corner for the unveiling. The robed clergy present were Bishop Thicknesse, Archdeacon Hutton and the Rev J W E Guy. After two short prayers said by the Rev H W Bennett, Mr Fitzwilliam on behalf of the subscribers, committed the Bronze to the care of the Dean and Chapter for ever.

Mr Fitzwilliam in doing so, said, `On behalf of 2000 subscribers of every position, it is my duty to hand over this beautiful Bronze to the memory of Sergt Hunter, one of the Australian heroes who came over to help the Mother Country in a time of stress. Mortally wounded in the Battle of Pozieres he was transferred to England, but on arrival of a Red Cross train at Peterborough, it was found necessary to transfer him to the Infirmary of our City, where he passed away in spite of the tender care bestowed upon him. His body was laid to rest in our Cemetery where a monument was erected. Today we are here to ask the Dean and Chapter to accept as custodians of the Cathedral, this beautiful Commemorative Bronze which is about to be unveiled. It is significant and appropriate that those responsible for the care of the Minster have deemed it to be fitting to place the Bronze at the West End and among the local heroes who gave their lives during the South African War. On behalf of the subscribers, my Lord, may I now ask your acceptance and charge of this Memorial Bronze, knowing well that it will be in good keeping and as a genuine tribute of the admiration of the people of Peterborough and the neighbourhood for those peoples of the Great Dominions over the seas who are always willing to help the Old Country`..

THE PANEGRIC

The Bronze was received by the Vice-Dean (Bishop Thicknesse DD) who said that `In the regretted absence of the Dean, in the name however of the Dean and Chapter and of all who may hereafter occupy their room so long as the Cathedral stood, they accepted and undertook as a perpetual trust, the custody and charge of the Memorial of Sergt Thomas Hunter of the Australian Expeditionary Force. What could have been more pathetic than the circumstance which called forth the sympathy and generous response of the people of Peterborough in the matter. To all of them he was unknown. It is very possible that he himself had never heard of Peterborough until some sixteen months ago when he was mortally wounded at the battle-front and on the way to a Military Hospital further north, he was removed in extremity of illness from the ambulance train to Peterborough Infirmary. He died, separated by half the compass of the earth from his home and friends. It was just in that, which the lesson of his great sacrifice was chiefly to be found. He gave his service and his life, not from any obvious call of duty, but for an ideal. That which united him with our own country and with us was the large brotherhood of race, because it was a spiritual force, that lost none of its energy in traversing those broad stretches of continent and ocean. It found a response in instincts and affection, which had remained unchanged and he was an example of what myriads and myriads of men of British stock had done and were doing. Rallying to our common cause because they were our kindred, because their feelings and traditions were still the same as ours, because they were true to their ancestry, which was both theirs and ours and because of the history, of which this is the crisis which was the proud possession of them and us.

It suggested and may it continue to suggest during many long years to those who visit the Cathedral two thoughts – one thought of hope while the tie endured between the peoples of one descent growing up in so many regions of the world, our history looked not only to the past but looked to the future, united we stand. They had a mandate in charge from God and with the charge the ability also, not only to maintain and promote always liberty, mercy and justice, not for themselves alone, but for all the nations of mankind – upon condition that they were true to one another, true to themselves and obedient and true to Him, the Maker of Earth, the Lord of Heaven and Earth.

The other thought was that those fellow citizens, in one allegiance with us who had gathered from afar, had set us a standard. We who are in the centre must not fall behind them in courage, in endurance and sacrifice`.

A black edged 'In Memoriam' Card was printed showing the Arms of the Commonwealth of Australia and the Arms of New South Wales (Kurri and Kurri and Broken Hill are in this State), it read: -

In the God's Acre of the
City of Peterborough, England
in the presence of

The Mayor and Mayoress
(Mr and Mrs Geo Nicholls)
and a great concourse of sorrowing citizens

On August 2nd 1916, was affectionately laid to rest the war-scarred body of

SERGEANT T HUNTER
(Of the 10th Corps, Australian Expeditionary Force) etc.

The Peterborough Citizen of 18th December 1917 reported on the unveiling of the memorial to Sergeant T Hunter in the Minster as follows: -

A MINSTER CEREMONIAL

UNVEILING THE ANZAC BRONZE

2000 SUBSCRIBERS SPEAK THROUGH MR FITZWILLIAM

IMPRESSIVE PANEGYRIC BY THE VENERABLE VICE-DEAN

There was an interesting and impressive service in Peterborough Minster (Cathedral) on Saturday afternoon. The large Bronze Tablet which in addition to a graveyard monument has been erected by 2000 subscribers from amongst the readers of the 'Peterborough Advertiser' as an overseas tribute and to the memory of Sergt T Hunter, an ANZAC, who died in Peterborough Infirmary was unveiled and dedicated. The bronze which is a massive casting in bold relief, measuring nearly three feet in length, was designed by Mr Temple-Moore and Mr W Stuart-Thompson of Peterborough and has been placed on the West Wall of the Minster next to the baptistery and adjacent to the memorial in brass and stained glass to the local heroes of the South African campaign. The bronze was veiled by a huge Union Jack, which at the uncovering rose and grouped as a canopy above the monument. There was a large congregation present including 60 wounded from Milton Hall Military Hospital accompanied by four nurses and the Commandant. Mrs Fitzwilliam (the Fitzwilliam family were the owners in 1916 of Milton Hall and the family still are today, it was given by the family to be used as a Military Hospital during the Great War) and Master Fitzwilliam. Mr Geo C W Fitzwilliam was too ill to be present. The Mayor in chain of office together with several of the Aldermen and Councillors were amongst the congregation, including the Mayoress. Several Australians were there to see and hear the tribute paid to their beloved Dominion and the Volunteer Training Corps of the City and district was represented by their Commanding Officer, Captain Vergette and two Lieutenants. The tall figures of Captain the Rev Warren Hastings, Chaplain and that of Commander Westbury RN were prominent. The legal profession had representatives in Mr H B Hartley and Alderman Jos Baffen. Rev G Heathcote Barker represented the friends of Sergt Hunter in Kurri Kurri. Mrs J H Beeby represented Mr J H Beeby, Chairman of the Liberty Magistrates. Mr Frank Loomes, the organiser of the Lonely Anzac Fund together with J G Gray, Chapter Clerk, Mr H G Wadow JP, Mr S Wilson and others assisted with the arrangements and the accommodation of the subscribers and congregation. Altogether it was a thoroughly representative assembly and the proceedings, especially musically under Dr Keeton were most gratifying throughout.

A special service sheet, upon which were the Arms of the Dominion of Australia had been issued and it included the following prayer: -

' O Thou that makest men to be of one mind in your house. In this our time of trouble and peril we praise your glorious name, for thou that hast poured out the spirit of sacrifice and service among all the families of our blood and speech, whom thou hast planted in many lands. And we pray thee that this

In total before the appeal was closed after just a few weeks, over 2000 people had subscribed. As well as paying for a tall granite cross to be placed on his grave, there was ample funds left over to pay for the erection of a quarter ton bronze bas relief memorial to be placed in Peterborough Cathedral to perpetuate his memory.

In a letter accompanying his subscription, the Archdeacon of Northampton W H Hutton wrote: -

I do most certainly approve of your proposal. I know a great deal about the noble deeds of the Anzacs from my nephew, Lieutenant Colonel George Hutton DSO who fought with them at Gallipoli and rejoices to know that we at Peterborough should give some token of our gratitude and admiration

Sgd: W H Hutton

Archdeacon of Northampton

The inscription on the Celtic Cross on the grave of Sergeant Thomas Hunter reads: -

SGT T HUNTER

10th Australian Corps

of Kurri Kurri, New South Wales

Mortally wounded in France
fighting for the Allies

Died in this City, 31st July 1916
Aged 36

Born in Newcastle, England

This stone and the Bronze tablet in Peterborough Minster

Were erected by Public Subscription

Note: The reference to the 10th Australian Corps is incorrect, there was no such unit and all the research shows clearly he served in the 10th Battalion, this being on all his Army papers of which copies have been obtained. Neither was he born in Newcastle, which is some miles from where he was born in Medomsley, a village in Co. Durham. This is shown on his Birth Certificate.

In the same newspaper on the 22nd August 1916 the following was printed: -

AUSTRALIA THANKS PETERBOROUGH

FOR THE CITY'S HONOUR TO
THE FALLEN ANZAC

THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR THE COMMONWEALTH
EXPRESSES

THE COLONY'S APPRECIATION OF WHAT PETERBOROUGH HAS DONE

The Mayor of Peterborough has received the following letter from the High Commissioner of Australia: -

With deepest sympathy from a few girls at Browns, Broadway 'For a high cause he fought and fighting died. Paying with cheerful heart the soldiers price'

With deepest sympathy from Mr and Mrs Knighton, 2 Midgate Buildings, Peterborough

Just three short words in this is told,
A hero's deathless story.
IN ACTION KILLED, the words hold,
An epitaph of glory.

In health and strength he left his home,
Not thinking death so near,
It pleased the Lord, to bid him come
And in his sight appear

A token of deepest respect to a brave boy who did his duty – from Mr and Mrs Murray

In memory of a brave Australian soldier, who answered his country's call – from a soldier's mother,
Mrs B Eldridge, 12 Albert Place, Peterborough

He served his King and Country with a willing heart. To one of Australia's brave – from the
Peterborough Wesleyan Methodists.

In loving memory of somebody's boy and with deepest sympathy – from Mrs A Baxter, 1 Paston Lane,
Walton.

Mr and Mrs A J Cole and family – With deep sympathy to someone's darling boy, in memory for his
King and Country.

With deepest sympathy and respect for a brave hero of the Empire – from the Secretary and Porters of
the Peterborough Infirmary.

In honoured memory of a son of the Empire – From the Matron and Nurses, Peterborough Infirmary.

From Mrs A J Paten and children – In memory of a brave Australian, who died bravely defending us.

A token of honour and respect for one who died for his country – From citizens of Russell Street.

With deepest sympathy – From members of the Peterborough Company of the 1st Volunteer Battalion,
Northamptonshire Regiment.

Canada to Australia, to the memory of a hero – from Overseas Dominion Government
Offices, Peterborough.

Mr A C Taylor, the Secretary of the Infirmary who at great personal trouble arranged the funeral, offers
his thanks to the many sympathisers and especially those who sent such beautiful tributes. He is
forwarding to the Australian Government a report of the proceedings and also a complete set of
photographs.

Note: The author was generously given a complete set of the same photographs in 1998 by a Miss
Braybrook, the only surviving child of the Undertaker responsible for the funeral. The day that
Thomas Hunter arrived at the Infirmary she had been in the building sand papering off cuts of timber
from her father's business that had been cut into suitable shapes for splints. As a young child this was
her contribution to the war effort.

It was draped with a Union Jack by Conductor (Sergeant) Grist and Corporal Cunningham and the bearers were six soldiers of the Royal Defence Corps who bore the flag draped coffin laden with floral tributes through the portals of the Infirmary and placed it in the horse drawn, glass sided hearse drawn by two magnificent black horses.

The Rev G Heathcote Barker of the Wentworth Street Wesleyan Chapel conducted the funeral service. Following the hearse were Mr A C Taylor (Secretary of the Infirmary), Mr H Miles, the Mayor and Mayoress of Peterborough (Councillor and Mrs G Nicholas), Alderman J Batten, Alderman W Cliffe JP and Councillors T C Lamplugh JP, C T Vergette, I Whitseed and T I Slater. Wounded soldiers who have been discharged from the Army – Privates Short, Tubby, Frank Cowley, B Wilcox (Northants Regiment, Corporal Rowlett (1st Cameronians), Trooper Bennett (Australian Forces) Sapper J Readman (Royal Engineers), Sapper Fowler (Royal Engineers) and Private Baines (Lincolnshire Regiment)

Also following were about 70 men of the Royal Defence Corps in charge of Captain Gibson and Lieut B G Walker. Members of the Peterborough V T C (Volunteer Training Corps) under charge of Lieut A J Beeby, 2nd Lieut H J Farrow and Sergt Major Henshaw with Sergt Instr Tucher, Platoon Sergt Hunt, Sergt Roe, Sergt Abbott, Corpls Tuplin, Cooke, Hall, Tirrell and Farrow, Ptes Duddington, Foreman, Boughton, Shrive, Moore and many others of this unit attended. The Recruiting staff that paraded were Conductor Grist, Corpl Cunningham and Corpl Wright.

Private Pollock of the 9th H L I and Mr Horace Vergette of Elton, ex/Cpl of 3rd New Zealand RoughRiders also joined the procession. Preceding the hearse was the Rev G Heathcote Barker and a firing party in charge of Sergt Bryant.

The scene at the graveside was very touching and will remain long in the memory of the large number of people present. The Royal Defence Corps formed three sides of a square, with the firing party at one side of the grave and the bugler at the foot. The firing party fired three volleys and Lance Corporal Treadgold of the Northamptonshire Regiment sounded the Last Post. Before this and just as the bearers reached the graveside with the coffin, an aeroplane passed over the Cemetery.

At the graveside the Mayor of Peterborough spoke as follows: -

'My friends, I felt I would like to say a word about this soldier, Sergt T Hunter who belonged to the 10th Corps of the Australian Forces. So far as we know, we have no trace of his father or his mother. He was brought up by an uncle and volunteered in the early part of the Great War and was wounded, no doubt in Gallipoli. He had a pipe presented to him with ANZAC carved on it. After he recovered he went to France and took part in the great move of the last few weeks and was again wounded, this time in the back. He was passing through Peterborough on the wounded train and was found too ill to continue the journey and was conveyed to our Infirmary where he died. It was the wish of several of us that this lad away from home and relatives, left in our care, should have some honour and respect paid to his memory to show our appreciation of his service and sacrifice. I know I am voicing your wishes and desires when I express on your behalf our sympathy and condolences with his friends and relatives and to Australia the great debt we owe to the men who responded so quickly to the call of Empire. It was a great honour to Australia to have given such a son and a great privilege to us today in this small way to show our appreciation of his heroism. Wreaths have come from factory girls and our own wounded lads as well as from our leading citizens and I am very grateful to all who have gathered here by the graveside to honour the memory of one we honour for the sacrifice he made for us and the Old Country'.

So was laid to rest the stranger whom nobody knew, but everybody honoured and much sympathy was felt for his friends in Australia.

There were numerous floral tributes and many small bunches of flowers with no names or inscription attached, some having been placed around the grave before the funeral service commenced. Amongst the tributes on the many wreaths with messages that covered his grave were the following: -

With deep sympathy from the Mayor and Mayoress of Peterborough

With deepest sympathy
died. Paying
With deepest sympathy

A token of

In memory
Mrs B Eldon

He served
Peterborough

In loving
Walton.

Mr and Mrs
King and

With deepest
the Peterborough

In honour

From Mrs

A token

With deepest
Northamptonshire

Canadian
Office

Mr A
his
for
phot

Not
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SUBSCRIPTIONS MAY BE SENT TO -

THE 'LONELY ANZAC' FUND
CITIZEN OFFICE
CUMBERGATE, PETERBOROUGH

AND SO BEGAN THE LEGEND OF THE 'THE LONELY ANZAC OF PETERBOROUGH' who is still remembered at his graveside every year by a growing number of people on Anzac Day.

Many theories still abound as to why just one soldier, a complete stranger, was afforded such a wonderful tribute by the people of Peterborough following his death in the City. The most quoted is that even though Peterborough itself had by this time in the Great War lost almost 500 of its own men away fighting in our forces, the funeral of Sergeant Hunter was the first opportunity the people had to pay their respects to a soldier being buried in their midst. Their own kith and kin in far off lands fighting for King and Country had been buried where they fell. This was a tangible event at which they could express their grief, both publicly and collectively. Another major contributing factor must have been that by July 1916, everybody across the Empire had heard about the horrors of Gallipoli and the continuous bravery shown by the men fighting there from 25th April right up until the evacuation at the end of 1915. Thomas Hunter had been a part of this heroism.

The following week, on the 22nd April the same newspaper reported as follows: -

PETERBOROUGH'S TRIBUTE

TO AUSTRALIA'S FIGHTING MEN

OUR 'LONELY ANZAC' FUND

Since our last issue the response to the 'Advertiser' and 'Citizen' Fund for a monument to the 'Lonely Anzac' - who paid with cheerful heart the soldiers price (Sergt T Hunter of the 10th Corps, Australian Expeditionary Force who far from the land of his birth and of his kith and kin, was laid to rest in Peterborough Cemetery) - has gone apace. The mere parochial notion has passed and the population has risen to the Imperial Idea, that the tribute is not only to the brave young fellow who lies in our Cemetery yonder, but to the great people overseas who sent him to fight for the Motherland. In that Imperial spirit Peterborough and the district has been given and pathetic - an exceptional opportunity - which she is determined not to lose, to show her gratitude to the great Commonwealth for her whole hearted help and sacrifice in Britain's hour of peril. A national duty is thrown upon us locally and is being responded to magnificently. We seek not a mere gravestone above the frail war scarred soldiers grave, we are going to have a MONUMENT. Amongst the subscribers in addition to those earlier printed are the following:

Mr G C W Fitzwilliam	One pound, one shilling
Colonel Collingwood, Peterborough	10s 6d
Lady Margaret Proby, Elton Hall	10 6
Mr and Mrs Harry Westgate of the	10 6
Bull Hotel, Peterborough	10 6
The Earl of Sandwich	10 6
Dr Latham, Peterborough	10 6
Lady Hermione Buxton	10 6
Mrs Strong, Thorpe Hall	10 6
The Ven Archdeacon Hutton	10 6
Messrs Dyson Bros, Nenedale Works	10 6
George Braybrook & Sons, Fletton	5 0
Mr A J Bagshaw, Borough Treasurer	5 0
Cadet F C Muldrum (Officer	5 0
Cadet Battalion)	5 0
Rev W Hopkinson	5 0 etc. etc.
Teachers of Farcet Mixed School	
Newspaper operatives in Cumbergate	