



Diggings



THE JOURNAL OF THE MARYBOROUGH MIDLANDS HISTORICAL SOCIETY
VOLUME 38 NUMBER 2 **MAY 2026**

MARGARET BASKERVILLE'S SOLDIER

This article, researched and compiled by our Society, first appeared in the Maryborough Advertiser on Friday April 24th to celebrate Anzac Day.

Anzac Day 1926, one hundred years ago, was the date scheduled for the unveiling of Maryborough's "Digger" memorial in front of the Post Office, in what is now McLandress Square. Unfortunately the sculptor Margaret Baskerville had not allowed the Melbourne foundry sufficient time to cast the bronze statue, and the opening was delayed until October.

A huge "Back To" event, titled the "Great Homecoming" had been planned for April to coincide with the unveiling. Hundreds of former Maryborough residents were expected to return to their home town by the special train from Melbourne that had been organised. Disappointed participants had to make do with attending the Bowenvale memorial ceremony.



Planning for Maryborough's memorial lagged behind some of the smaller surrounding towns, and was complicated by misunderstandings over the names that were to be recorded on the memorial. Two groups of women - the Red Cross and the Women's Patriotic League - had generously supported soldiers during the War and had begun raising funds to construct a memorial. They had initially agreed to combine their efforts, but could not agree on the issue of names. Would the memorial record only those who had died or everyone who had served?

Led by highly respected local citizens Christina Frost and Sevilla White, the Women's Patriotic League raised funds to commission a bronze statue on a base that would record only the fallen. The League also determined that the work was to be carried out by a female artist, and recruited Melbourne sculptor Margaret Baskerville without consulting the community. This caused outrage in some quarters! Red Cross Secretary Gertrude Herring, an equally prominent citizen, pressed for a memorial recording all those who served, and the Society joined with the Mayor and a community subcommittee to raise funds for the Harcourt granite gate pillars that now mark the entrance to Princes Park. The names of 493 servicemen and five nursing sisters are recorded.

On Sunday October 24th 2026 the Maryborough Soldiers' Memorial was finally officially unveiled by Mrs Eliza Wigger (née Branton), who had lost three sons to the war. The ceremony included addresses by local dignitaries and politicians and prayers and hymns. The names of the fallen were read by the Rev. Erskine, and an oration was given by Charlton born Senator H.E. ("Pompey") Elliott, the highly decorated Brigadier-General who commanded Australian troops at Gallipoli and on the Western Front.



The two brass panels on the pillar depicting the landing at Gallipoli and the Light Horse in Palestine inscribed with locations where Maryborough soldiers served during World War One.

SOLDIERS' MEMORIAL: THE SCULPTOR



Photographer unknown

Margaret Frances Ellen Baskerville (1861-1930) was born in Melbourne but spent her childhood in Ballarat, attending Miss Quinlan's School for Ladies. She studied at the National Gallery School in Melbourne, painting in watercolours and oils, but with the ambition of becoming a sculptor. She worked for the Education Department as a drawing teacher while saving to travel to London for further study at the Royal College of Art.

Her first public commission when she returned to Australia, a statue of politician and businessman Sir Thomas Bent, established her reputation. It was unveiled in Brighton in 1913.

Further commissions followed, including a war memorial for Alexandra (1924), the Maryborough statue, and a bust of the WWI English nurse Edith Cavell, unveiled in the King's Domain Melbourne in 1926.

In later years she and her husband, the sculptor and painter Douglas Richardson, established a studio in Brighton, where they worked on both individual and shared projects. Until her death in 1930 she continued to produce public and privately commissioned sculptures and paintings and played an active role in artists' societies.

MEMBERSHIPS 2026-7

Memberships are now due!

Please consider supporting our work by renewing your subscription.

All our gardeners/researchers/cataloguers/guides are volunteers, and we receive no regular funding. Aside from occasional grants, we rely on memberships, entry fees, donations and even sausage sizzles to fund our activities, equipment, garden upkeep and ongoing minor maintenance.

Details below.



MARYBOROUGH MIDLANDS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

3 Palmerston St Maryborough 3465
P.O. Box 265, Maryborough 3465
Telephone: (03) 5461 2518

ABN: 33610 529 643

Inc. Registration No: AOO24478S

email: mmhs@outlook.com.au

mmhs.net.au

We're also on Facebook



The Maryborough Midlands Historical Society acknowledges the ancestors and descendants of the Dja Dja Wurrung, traditional owners of the land on which we live and work.

2026-2027 MEMBERSHIP:

Individual \$25

Family \$35

Payment can be made via:

Cheque: We still accept cheques! Please make them out to MMHS and send to our postal address:
Post Office Box 265 Maryborough 3465, or deliver personally.

Cash: In person during our research hours: Tuesday/Thursday 10-12.

Direct Deposit: Commonwealth Bank
BSB 06 3519
A/C 0090 1319

HOSPITAL WOOD BEE 1911

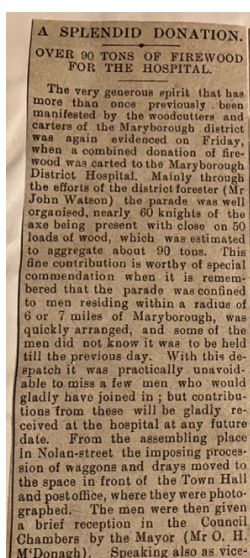


The February edition of *Diggings* featured articles on The Maryborough Hospital, including the "Wood Bees" organised to fuel the hospital boilers.

In the intervening months our researchers have located this wonderful photograph of the 1911 Wood Bee, which documents not only the volunteers but also the various horse-drawn vehicles involved.

Unfortunately the photograph wasn't labelled at the time and the photographer remains anonymous.

Another recent lucky discovery was a scrapbook of newspaper cuttings, presumably from the *Maryborough and Dunolly Advertiser*, describing the Wood Bee and the photograph.



A SPLENDID DONATION: OVER 90 TONS OF FIREWOOD FOR THE HOSPITAL

The very generous spirit that has more than once previously been manifested by the woodcutters and carters of the Maryborough district was once again evidenced on Friday, when a combined donation of firewood was carted to the Maryborough District Hospital. Mainly through the efforts of the district forester (Mr John Watson) the parade was well organised, nearly 60 knights of the axe being present with close on 50 loads of wood, which was estimated to aggregate about 90 tons...

From the assembling place in Nolan Street the imposing procession of waggons [sic] and drays moved to the space in front of the Town Hall and post office, where they were photographed...

The men were then given a brief reception in the Council Chambers by the Mayor (Mr O.H. McDonagh)... MADA (possibly August 1911)

A FOOTNOTE ON WOOD BEES

During World War One Wood Bees were also organised to collect and deliver wood to the wives and families of local residents who had enlisted.

FIRE BRIGADE HISTORY



Details from a certificate awarded to a long serving member of the Maryborough Fire Brigade in 1926 and recently donated to our Society. The inscriptions along the edges read:

EVER READY EVER WILLING
ALWAYS EAGER ALWAYS BRAVE
NEVER FAILING NEVER SHRINKING
STRIVING WITH A WILL TO SAVE

The words (sometimes with variations) were adopted as a watchword by many fire brigades in Australia and New Zealand. They also have religious connotations.

The fire engine is thought to be an English Merewether & Sons horse-drawn vehicle, many of which were imported for use in Australia, particularly in country areas. Some were pulled by a single horse, some by two, and some were modified to allow firemen to pull them.

Unfortunately the artist is not credited, but the company identified on the lithograph is F.W. Niven and Company of Flinders Street, Melbourne

The entry for Frances Wilson Niven (1831-1905) in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* records that Irish-born and educated Niven served his apprenticeship as a sailor before emigrating to Victoria with his wife in 1852. Like many unsuccessful gold seekers Niven turned to new endeavours, choosing printing and specialising in lithography. As his business in Ballarat grew he imported specialised machinery and undertook book printing, ultimately employing 70 workers.

In the 1890s part of the company was relocated to Flinders Street, Melbourne, where this certificate was produced.

One of F.W. Niven's lithographs, produced as an advertising promotional poster for Maryborough, was reproduced on the cover of Betty Osborn and Tren DuBourg's book *Maryborough: A Social History 1854-1904*.

In another possible local connection, it's been suggested that William Tibbits (who painted a number of watercolours of Maryborough district properties in the 1870s) may have worked for the Niven Company because his brother-in-law was an employee. There appears to be little proof of this to date. Perhaps just a good story?



Local resident and former teacher David Bucknall, a descendant of one of the district's pioneering families, is pictured with the historic laundry tubs that he repaired and donated to our Society. The tubs, which were used on a Moolort Plains farm, are now situated along the back wall of Worsley Cottage.

Our energetic garden volunteer Glenys has redesigned and completed the shade sail area adjacent to our Resource and Research Centre, allowing volunteers and visitors to sit outside in fine weather. Only small areas of the garden now remain incomplete. The jungle we returned to after the year-long Worsley Cottage renovation is almost tamed.