

The world as it was when we were born

1919 IN HORNSBY
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WHEN the sun came up on January 1, 1919, the people of Hornsby shared the joy of a New Year not tarnished by the anguish of battle.

The previous four years had seen WWI, 1914-1918. Newspapers were full of tragedy, especially news from Gallipoli and the Western Front.

But as dawn ushered in 1919, there was hope for a new beginning.

WWI finished in November, 1918, but the movement of troops back to Australia was slow. When the first batch arrived back in Hornsby, it was a cause for great celebration.

Early in July, Corporal Joe Foster, Sapper P. Whitehead, Sergeant Bradley and Bombardier J.Harris arrived by train from Sydney.

Hornsby was a railway town and celebrated in fine railway style – steam engines in the goods yard opened their whistles and the town buzzed to a cacophony of sound.

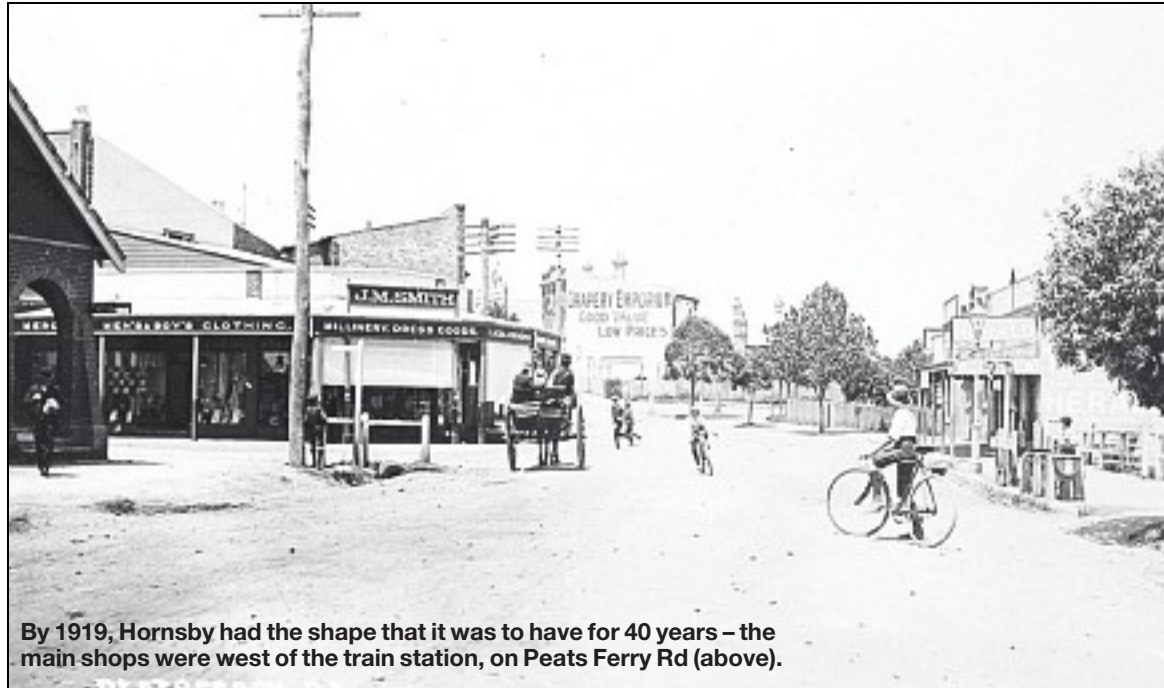
Hornsby Shire President, Cr P.A. James, greeted the men and made a speech of welcome.

Foster and Whitehead were former railwaymen and the staff welcomed their heroes.

Cpl Foster had been wounded in the face, chest and feet and was badly burnt on the body by mustard gas.

Returning soldiers would have had no difficulty in recognising their home town. Hornsby had taken on the shape that it was to have for 40 years: a shopping centre was on the western side of the train station, mostly on Peats Ferry Rd (later to become Pacific Highway).

Hornsby was already a major rail



By 1919, Hornsby had the shape that it was to have for 40 years – the main shops were west of the train station, on Peats Ferry Rd (above).

terminus, the junction between the North Shore line and the main line.

To the north of the station, a large area contained goods sidings, a train depot and sidings for carriages.

Trains loaded from sidings down the North Shore line each night, bringing the goods back to Hornsby.

North Shore line passengers disembarked at the harbour, as the Harbour Bridge had not yet been built. Ferries took them to Circular Quay.

On Peats Ferry Rd, where the picture theatre now is, an older theatre was advertising shows such as *Violo Dana in Parisian Tigress* and *Mildred Harris in Forbidden*.

Of course, all of the films were

silent, but that did not detract from the audiences on Saturday nights.

There were familiar shops: Somerville's produce store in Jersey St; W.S. Hales was "the cheapest butcher in the Commonwealth"; W.G. Camps was an ironmonger and glazier in Peats Ferry Rd; Shire President James was a timber merchant; and Mr McKenzie was a dentist in George St.

By 1919, McIntyre and Justice had a steam laundry with "the latest and finest" machinery on the market.

Hornsby fell into the grip of a flu epidemic in 1919. There were deaths from the illness and many people suffered prolonged sickness.

That April, Shire President James reported there were 200 cases and that relief depots were to be built urgently at Hornsby and Beecroft.

During the epidemic, Cr James was a tower of strength and became an even more respected leader.

A new Local Government Act had been passed and Cr James described it as giving councils "very extensive commercial powers which must be approached with caution".

Councillors in 1919 were James, Best, Crittendon, Chapman, Hellmrich, Higgins, Moore, Morris, and Ramsay, and records of council meetings tell us what was happening.

Priority went to roads and paths.

Bennett Rd at Berowra was repaired; Harris Rd at Dural was reformed to cope with a watercourse; a low section of Denison St at Hornsby was raised by two men with a horse and cart; pipes were laid on Pretoria Pde; James St's path was tarred; and Peats Ferry Rd's path was widened.

In 1919, the move to have a new road through the Central Coast to Newcastle was gathering impetus.

At Asquith, orchards were already giving way to residential areas.

Its station had been built during the war and many of the streets had the names of British politicians.

Brooklyn was a village in its own right, with no road to Hornsby.

Its School of Arts building, opened in 1915, was the primary building in the village and the area's big issues were the need to dredge the channel and the need for a road to Hornsby.

The area was not without its occasional serious crime in 1919.

In September, James Hobson, of Mt Colah was charged with the manslaughter of William Allen.

Central Criminal Court heard an altercation erupted near Asquith station in which two men were drunk and Hobson knocked down Allen.

Allen later died, but a jury accepted the wound which caused death occurred when Allen tripped upon reaching his house. Hobson was acquitted.

The council started construction of baths at Berowra in 1919 – the tidal pool at Berowra Waters.

By the end of 1919, most of the soldiers had returned. Some established themselves in business, displaying the tag, "Late A.I.F".

And in April, they would all have welcomed the arrival of Hornsby's own newspaper, the *Advocate*.