




**Commemorating the Life and Service of
Mr. James R. Bennett
First Headmaster of Ringwood High School**



Name	James Richard Bennett	Service No.	4979
Portrait or Other		Personal Description	
		Age:	22 years 5 months.
		Height:	5'8.5" or 174 cms.
		Weight:	157 lbs or 71 kgs.
		Chest:	34"/36.5".
		Complexion:	Sallow.
		Eye Colour:	Grey.
		Hair Colour:	Brown.
		Distinguishing Features:	Vac. 6 (left upper arm); Scars: 1 Right upper arm, Right hand; Teeth: Gold
		Religion:	Church of England
Occupation prior to enlistment		Secondary Teacher.	
Address:		Bacchus Marsh, Victoria.	
Marital Status:		Married	
Enlistment Date:		20 November 1915	
Rank at time of Enlistment		Private	
Embarkation Details:		3 July 1916, Unit embarked at port Melbourne on board <i>HMAT A33 'Ayrshire'</i>	
Next of Kin		Father—Mr. James Bennett C/- Main St. Bacchus Marsh, Victoria.	
Unit details at time of Enlistment		22nd Infantry Battalion, 13th Reinforcements.	
Summary of War Service			
<p>James Bennett was a 22 year old school teacher at Benalla High School when he enlisted in the 1st AIF on 20th November 1915. After undergoing the initial training provided to all new soldiers, he also attended NCO (Non-Commissioned Officers) school as a Lance Corporal. During these initial weeks as an enlistee he was promoted to Corporal and then to A/g Sergeant. He then attended Officer Training School at Broadmeadows prior to embarking at Port Melbourne on 3 July 1916 for overseas duty.</p>			

Summary of War Service (....continued)

Sgt. Bennett arrived and disembarked at Plymouth, England on 3 September 1916.

After being *"taken on strength"* in England, further more intensive training was undertaken to prepare him for battle on the frontline. Then on 12 November 1916 he embarked on the SS Victoria and proceeded to Étapes, France.

Upon arrival he voluntarily elected to revert to the rank of Private, he joined the 22nd Infantry Battalion for duty in the field on the Western Front.

Between 9 December 1916 and 27 January 1917 he again received promotions on four occasions from Private, Lance Corporal, Corporal, Sergeant and Second Lieutenant.

During the Second Battle of Bullecourt on 3 May 1917 he was severely *"wounded in action"* (WIA) receiving a *"gun shot wound"* (GSW) to the face and was transferred and admitted to the 3rd Australian *"Casualty Clearing Station"* (CCS). On 4 May 1917 Bennett was transferred to the 8th General Hospital in Rouen, France for further treatment. On 16 May 1917 he was evacuated to England to the 3rd London General Hospital for treatment. On 12 July 1917, James Bennett's promotion to Lieutenant was confirmed.

Because of the seriousness of his wounds he was further transferred and admitted to St. Dunstan's Hospital London for treatment. This hospital was renowned for the treatment of the most serious of eye injuries during the War. He spent approximately 4 months in treatment at St. Dunstan's Hospital, when on 1 November 1917 while still recovering he was repatriated back to Australia on board *"hospital transport"* ship H.T. *"Anchises,"* disembarking in Melbourne on 3 January 1918.

Lt. Bennett's war service came to an end on 15 February 1918 when his appointment was terminated *'medically unfit for duty'*, following a Medical Board report dated 26 January 1918 which stated that Lt. Bennett *'was almost completely blind in his left eye and severely deficient in the sight of his right eye.'* This would make Mr. Bennett's driving of a motor vehicle an *'interesting experience'* for his passengers and other road users in the years after the War.

Returned to Australia	1st November 1917.
Date of Discharge	15th February 1918.
Final Rank	Lieutenant
Medals and Honours	British War Medal, Victory Medal
Memorials	Roll of Honour, Bacchus Marsh; Roll of Honour Bacchus Marsh ANA (currently held by the Bacchus Marsh RSL; Roll of Honour Holy Trinity Anglican Church, Bacchus Marsh, Memorial tree Avenue of Honour, Bacchus Marsh.

Family and other information

James Richard Bennett was born in Bacchus Marsh on 20 May 1893 to James Bennett and Christine Bennett (nee Edwards). He taught Woodwork as a secondary school teacher in Benalla when he enlisted in the AIF on 3 November 1915. His war service records show that his service was unblemished, gallant and courageous. This is also supported by his rapid promotion both before and during action overseas, until his fateful wounding in action on 3 May 1917, which ultimately resulted in his medical discharge.

In spite of his serious war injuries, James Bennett returned to his teaching career after WW1. In 1918 he married Muriel Violet Bence. They were married for 61 years during which they raised three daughters—Betty, Dorothy and June.

In 1942 during WW2, duty again called and incredibly and without a second thought, James Bennett applied to re-enlist, only to be placed on the Reserves List—Class B2. His age (now 48 years) and his limited eye sight meant that he would not be sent overseas. Instead he received a posting in the home-based Volunteer Defences Corp. This service saw him attain the rank of Lieutenant –Colonel.

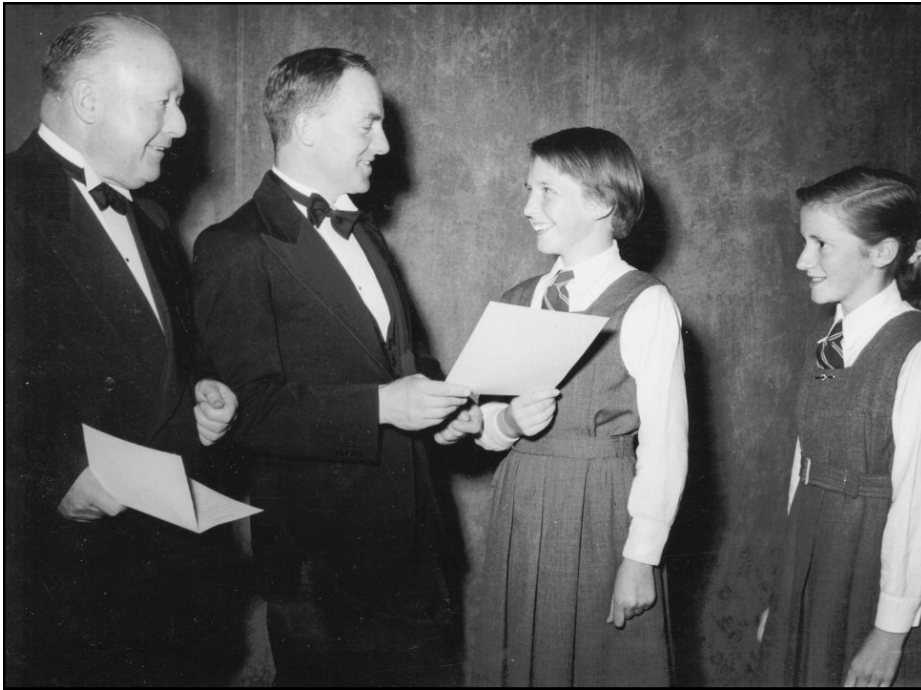
In the 1957 Ringwood High School Magazine there is a reference to him receiving a promotion to “Special Class”, but no details of that promotion have been located. Even the Education Department is unable to provide any information about this promotion that appears to have been lost in the mists of time.

On his retirement, prefects and senior school students from Ringwood High School gathered at Station Pier, Port Melbourne to wish Mr. and Mrs. Bennett “bon voyage” on their long awaited cruise and holiday to England. When Mr. and Mrs. Bennett returned to Australia they lived quietly in their family home in Mont Albert for the rest of their lives.

Lt. Col. Bennett (a title he never used at school) died in 1979 aged 85 years after a rich and rewarding life devoted to the service of his family, his country and to the education of others. His military records are now stored in the college archives.



Mr Bennett and Staff 1954—First staff photo for Ringwood High School



Presentation of award at Ringwood High School Speech Night—1954



Victor Greenham receives award at Ringwood High School Speech Night—1955



Farewell to Miss. Stoll—1957



Mr Bennett and RHS Prefects —1958



**School visit to Stawell – Mr. Bennett,
D.A. Jamieson and N.A. Samson – 1955**



**“Bon Voyage” Prefects and Senior Students farewell
Mr. and Mrs. Bennett on their long-awaited visit to
England, after Mr. Bennett’s retirement.**



**JR Bennett Memorial Tree,
Avenue of Honour
Bacchus Marsh**

**This publication was prepared and edited by :
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— RSC Heritage Committee**