

Trio's service recognised

Handcock receives posthumous medal

WAR HISTORY

PEEL born soldier and blacksmith, Peter Handcock, has posthumously been awarded his military service medals. Handcock, along with Harry "Breaker" Morant and George Witton were posthumously awarded their medals earlier this month, thanks to research and work undertaken by military lawyer James Unkles.

Handcock, along with Witton and Morant, have historically been polarising figures. After being convicted in 1902 of shooting Boer prisoners while serving with the British some view them as brutal war criminals while others see them as victims of a gross miscarriage of justice.

Last year, journalist and author Peter FitzSimons, called for Handcock's name to be removed from the Bathurst War Memorial.

FitzSimons said in a piece published on Anzac Day that Lieutenant Peter Handcock - who features on the Bathurst memorial - was a "convicted war criminal" saying he was "stunned" when one of his researchers found Mr Handcock's name on the Bathurst memorial.

However, this was refuted

by descendants of the trio, who argue the men suffered appalling injustice after a trial and sentencing process that was illegal according to military law in 1902.

As it stands there remains an ongoing campaign for a possible posthumous pardon of all three.

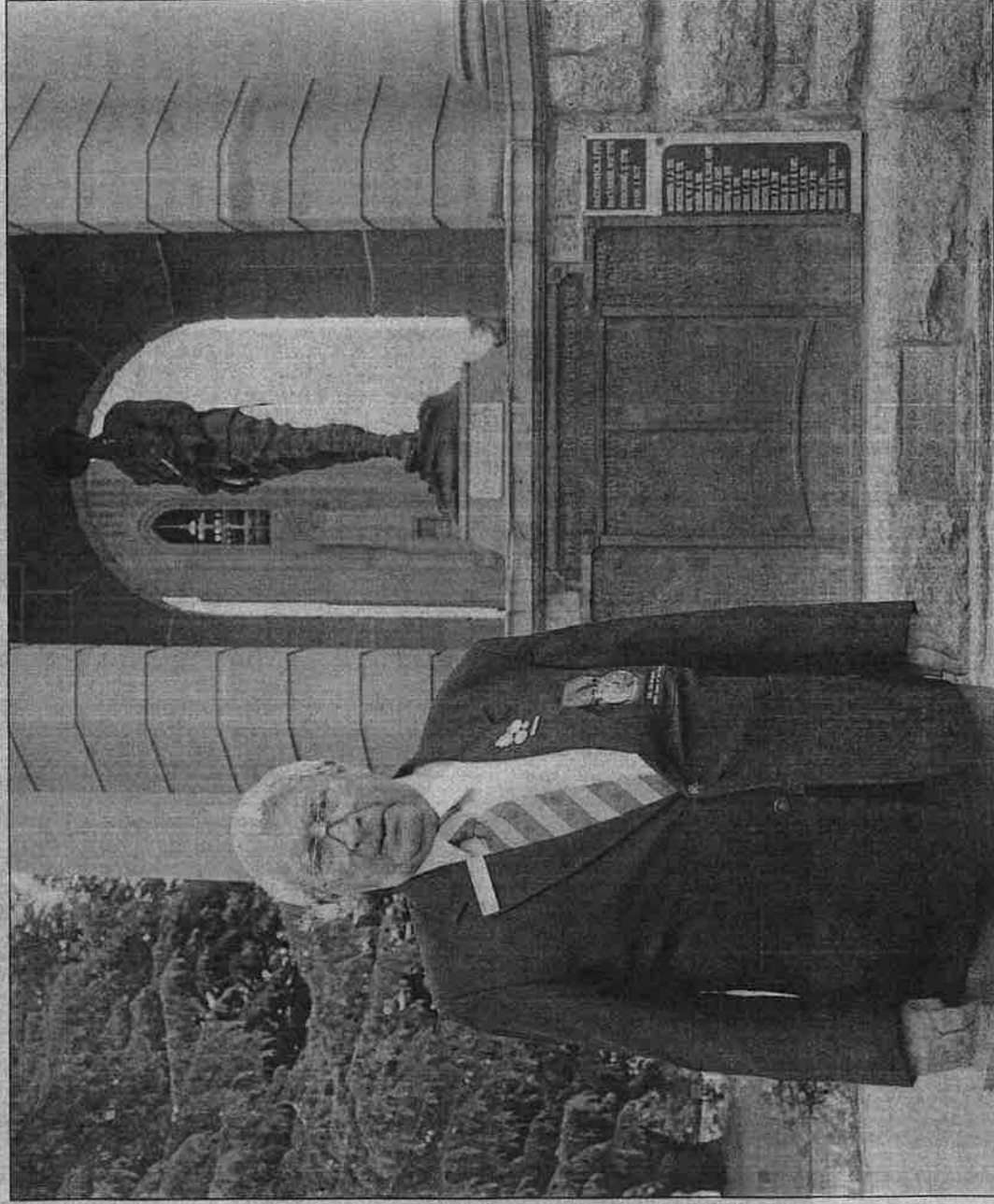
Regardless of the debate, President of the RSL Sub Branch, David Mills said at the end of the day, all three men served the country and are entitled to receive their service medals.

Mr Mills said many men and women have served the country.

"Some did not serve as honourably as others have served, but there are processes in place [to address any issues].

"Where people haven't been as honourable as others, that doesn't take away from the fact they have served, and as such, they are entitled to receive the same service medals which have been given to others," he said.

Local war historian, Denis Chamberlain also agreed the trio deserved their service medals. He spoke of Handcock's ties to Bathurst.



SERVICE MEDALS: War historian Denis Chamberlain, standing in front of the war memorial which Handcock, among others is named on.

Mr Chamberlain said Handcock was born at Peel as a blacksmith and married Bridget Alice Mary Martin in the Cathedral of St Michael and St John, Ba-

to hear that Lieutenant Peter Handcock has received due recognition with his family receiving his war medals." He said there had been much debate if he was a

war hero or a war criminal but said "he would not call Lieutenant Peter Handcock a war criminal, rather a soldier caught in a predicament of time," he said.