

REPORT ON SEPTEMBER MONTHLY MEETING

Mr Alan Clarke spoke of one his most recent projects, 'THE WARATAH MARCH' Of 1915.

It was part of a recruiting drive in 1915 for the World War One effort. The famous "Coo-ee" march from Gilgandra in the north-west of the state was its guiding light but the Waratah March was planned by the Government, Army and co-opted citizen groups to encourage and enthuse enlistments from the south coast area for the war effort. It was all done with considerable local fanfare, no doubt attempting to strike at that raw nerve of adventure, idealism and patriotism which Governments presume is characteristic of every generation.

Camps were set up, first at Nowra Showground, and then along the route to Sydney. Large crowds were attracted and for those who volunteered, necessary distinctive gear was issued. The Waratahs made their way to Sydney, arriving in December 1915. The march did not set a hectic or even a military pace and came to a crawl in the Wollongong area in particular. One reason was that the locals insisted on lavishing food on the marchers; a day to march from Unanderra to Port Kembla, another day from Wollongong to Balgownie, are not record breakers. In the suburbs in Sydney, trains were available. They were received in Sydney by officials and a large appreciative crowd. They marched behind the Waratah emblem.

Personal details of the young men who enlisted on the march are available at the Museum thanks to our speaker.

In terms of response the march was by no means overwhelming. It was after the Gallipoli defeat. There were over 100 volunteers who joined the march.

Alan Clark's address was brief but informative.

The speaker is a prolific producer of items of local history and he has many publications to his credit of the Shoalhaven District and they to are available at the Museum.

Peter Daly