Bugle call rallies generations

ELIAS JAHSHAN

FROM the deadly, dusty World War I battlefields of Europe to Hornsby in 2010, a bugle once owned by an Australian Digger will sound again.

Ninety-four years after he arrived at the Western Front, Private Alfred Charles Elliott's bugle, now 115 years old, will usher in the Anzac spirit at Sunday's dawn stand-to at Hornsby cenotaph — at the lips of his great-grandson Nathan Elliott.

"It is an honour for me because I get to play it for my great-grandfather," the proud 14-year-old told the Advocate.

His mother Moira added: "It is eerie to feel the spirit of his great-grandfather... He will be present on the day of the morning service."

To know that... he will be looking down and seeing his actual bugle and his medals honoured...

"He’d be so proud of Nathan."

Made in Paris in 1895, the bugle was given to Alfred Elliott when he arrived in France in 1916 as a 21-year-old Australian infantryman.

"The army was looking for people to play the bugle. He was just asked to do it," Nathan said. Nathan said his great-grandfather taught himself how to play, practising whenever he could.

All messages on the frontline were communicated by bugle, from daily camp routines to orders for charging and retreating, ships in enemy fire and the names of fallen comrades.

Its small dents and dim shine — marks of endurance from the battlefields of Ypres and Mont St Quentin where Elliott fought.

In 1917, Elliott was poisoned by mustard gas. After spending a long time in an English hospital, he was sent back to France as a stretcher-bearer with an ambulance crew.

He remained there until the end of the war in 1918.

The bugle stayed by his side the whole time and was in his luggage when he returned to Sydney in 1919.

Elliott married and raised a family in what was a fledgling Hornsby Shire.

Today, Nathan will read his great-grandfather's letter to his father John, Nathan's grandfather.

"Pop just held on to it and he used to always clean it and make it look good," Nathan said.

The bugle was then passed around between his children.

Three years ago it was given to Nathan who has taken ownership of the heirloom.

"I polish it as much as I can and clean it out," the year 9 St Leo's College student said.

"On Anzac Day I like to play The Last Post and Reveille wherever I can."

Normally, that has been at school events, or representing Normanby Cadets.

This Sunday at the Hornsby town cenotaph will be his proudest moment on the bugle, he said.

Nathan said he has been honoured by the praise he had already received from war veterans.

"They come up to me and shake my hand and congratulate me on my great-grandfather's honour," he said.

Nathan said he joined the cadets because of his great-grandfather's memory.

The medals Nathan will display on Sunday are from his great-grandfather's collection which has been passed down to him with the bugle.

His forebear collected medals from allies and even former enemies. Medal swapping also went on during his time in hospital in England. Alfred Elliott died in