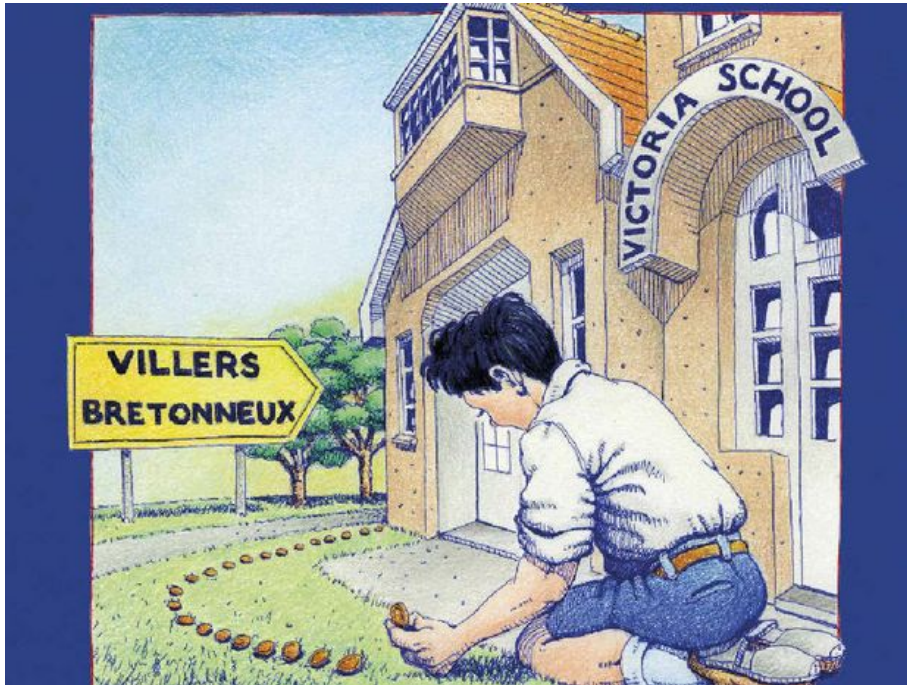


ENTERTAINMENT

Two-penneth dream comes true



John Grey | 7th Mar 2015 6:00 AM



THREE years ago, a dying man placed two old pennies in his daughter's hand and sent her on a mission around the world.

Many years earlier, when George McGregor was a little boy, he was inspired by his father - a veteran of the First World War - to join other Australian children in raising pennies to rebuild a school in Villers-Bretonneux.

The school, like many buildings in that area of France, was destroyed in the terrible battles of the Somme.

Young George dedicated himself to the task - and the two pennies he put in daughter Vicki Bennett's hand were the last he had earned.

Last week Ms Bennett's illustrated children's book *Two Pennies* was launched at RSLCare's Fairview retirement community, in a hall named after George who had been instrumental in Fairview's creation and had spent his last years there.

Two Pennies is a gently inspiring, true story of how George worked to raise his pennies and how he and his schoolmates made a mile of pennies.

George grows up, with his last two pennies still kept in a secret box, and a dream of flying to France to see the school he helped to build. Eventually he makes the trip and is overwhelmed by the reception he and his wife Vida receive.

At the launch, Ms Bennett told how her father had asked her to take those last two pennies to the Villers-Bretonneux school.

The pennies are now on display at the French-Australian museum in the village, which was freed from German forces in 1918 at the cost of more than 1200 Australian lives.

RSL chairman Pat McIntosh, a former Brigadier with the Australian Army, said that nearly 100 years later the people of Villers-Bretonneux had not forgotten Australia.

"This delightful book reminds us that even the smallest effort can make a big difference," he said.

More information on vickibennett.com.au and boolarongpress.com.au