Cover photo: A Lee Enfield .303 and the flags of France and Australia mark the site in a French field near Merris where the remains of Lieutenant Champion, Corporal Corby and two other men of the 3rd Battalion were found by farmer, Jean-Luc Gantois, as he was ploughing the soil. In this edition of DIGGER, FFFAIF member and relation of Corporal Corby, John Payne, tells the story of these men and their reinterment. Photo by Jean-Michel Vermuelen.
Trench Talk
From the Editor, Graeme Hosken

In this Issue
The Diggers were keen customers of the photographic studios in The Great War. Kitted out in their new uniform, they would venture into the studios to have their photographs taken in standing and/or seated poses, sometimes including a mate in the snaps. Copies would be sent to family and friends. Once on active service, and contemplating their mortality, many Diggers had fresh photos taken and sent home. Often, they would send a photo of a cobber, asking their family to keep the photo safe. Perhaps they felt that it would ensure the memory of their mate if something happened to him. In DIGGER 12, Trevor Munro has been able to identify two Diggers from the notes on the back of a studio portrait. Both men (brothers), sadly, were killed on the Western Front at Passchendaele within several days of each other.

Yves Fohlen has sent in a photo of a corporal of the 10th Light Horse he would like help in identifying. Occasionally, you will come across photographs of Diggers at collectors’ fairs or second-hand shops, and it is an automatic response to look on the back to see if the soldier is identified. Even if not named, it is worth considering purchasing the photo (if the price is not outrageous) so that the soldier will end up in a home where this reminder of his life and service will be properly cared for.

Mike Goodwin has sent in a story of the link between his family and a family in France that began with a visit to Roz Goodwin’s great uncle’s grave. Have the tissues handy, as it is an emotional tale of friendship across countries and generations.

In response to the appeal for members to send in details on their soldier-ancestor, Elsie Teede of WA has provided sufficient information for a profile to be written of her father, James Inglis, whose military service ended in the tragedy of Fromelles. Member Jean Brennan of Dubbo provided Trevor Munro with her father’s war diaries and photographs, allowing Trevor to provide a lengthy account of Alf’s service in a light trench mortar battery.

The cover story in this issue is by John Payne, who gives a wonderfully moving account of the discovery of his ancestor’s remains near Merris, and his trip to France for the reinterment of Corporal Corby, Lieutenant Champion and two other soldiers of the 3rd Battalion in a nearby Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery.

Membership application forms available on request
This is the first issue of DIGGER to be printed without the membership application form. Readers wishing to join the FFFAIF can obtain an application form from the Membership Secretary, Alan Kitchen, at 11 Faye Avenue, Blakehurst NSW 2221, phone 02 9594 0264, or by e-mail at fffaif@optusnet.com.au.

October AGM, Canberra
Don’t forget the AGM and associated functions being held in Canberra, 7th – 9th of October. Alan Kitchen has planned a variety of activities, beginning with a behind-the-scenes Art Tour at the AWM on the Friday afternoon. I am particularly looking forward to the Saturday night dinner, as it a great opportunity to meet fellow members over a good meal and a few drinks. Hope to see as many members as possible in attendance. Note: Further details of the AGM and Saturday dinner can be found on page 39 of this issue.

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Closing dates
Members are encouraged to submit articles for inclusion in DIGGER. Copy for DIGGER 13 should be in by end November 2005; DIGGER 14 by end February 2006; DIGGER 15 by end May; DIGGER 16 by end August; and DIGGER 16 by end November 2006 for publication in the following months. Send articles (finished or draft) and/or photographs to The Editor, Graeme Hosken, 2 Colony Crescent Dubbo NSW 2830 or e-mail to ghoskenaif@bigpond.com.
Following is FFFAIF President Craig Laffin’s annual report which will be presented at the AGM in Canberra. The Annual Report has been published in this issue of DIGGER for those unable to attend our Canberra weekend.

With much pleasure I present the President’s Annual Report for 2004/2005.

Being in Canberra for our AGM reminds me of the last enthralling time we were here in February 2004 for the FFFAIF Canberra Conference at the Australian National Memorial and Royal Military Academy, Duntroon. Our Canberra Conference 2005 will also prove to be a wonderful opportunity to find out more about digger heritage and to network among a committed group of FFFAIF.

Graeme Hosken, Editor of DIGGER, has again excelled and produced four fascinating editions of our much sort-after magazine. The breadth and depth of articles has been developed to a new advanced standard. I commend Graeme and the contributors, some of whom write regularly, to DIGGER, for their exemplary efforts to sustain digger heritage. The latter is in safe hands.

Since the last AGM in October 2004, a further four editions of DIGGER have been published. Members will be familiar with the covers:
- No 9 Christmas Edition December 2004 (cover – HMAS Sydney)
- No 10 Anzac Edition March 2005 (cover – Kangaroo at the Pyramids)
- No 11 Winter Edition June 2005 (cover – Steele’s Post and Rest Gully, Gallipoli)
- No 12 September Edition September 2005 (cover – A field near Merris, France)

DIGGERs now comprise about 40 pages of varied articles, stories, photographs, historical documents, Trench Talk, Etched in Stone, Campbell’s Challenge, association news, letters and other information. In the President’s Report of 2004 I reported that DIGGER comprised about 22 pages; there has been an almost 100% increase in size. I also warmly thank the readers of DIGGER who have been so kind and constructive with their comments about the magazine. It is great to know that it is being received with so much appreciation.

I wish to acknowledge our speakers to the 2004 AGM. Brian Bywater told the story of the Cooee March from Gilgandra to Sydney. Ross St.Claire outlined the history of the 54th Battalion which he is writing. We thank both gentlemen for their fine talks which those, who were fortunate to be present, found so interesting.

The inspection of Victoria Barracks, the VB Museum, and lecture by Historian Joe Crumlin on the 21st April was another ‘first’ for the FFFAIF and of resounding interest to members and their guests. The tour of the barracks was extraordinarily informative about its colonial and post-federation role in Australian military history. The Victoria Barracks Museum revealed fascinating stories and holds a great collection of WW1 artefacts. However, Joe Crumlin’s lecture about Gallipoli showed a contemporary impression of Gallipoli and of Turks. Joe spoke in glowing terms of the Turks and the understanding and welcome they give to Australian visitors. Great thanks to Alan Kitchen for organizing the visit, to Joe Crumlin for his generous and interesting lecture, and to the excellent Victoria Barracks Corps of Guides.

I wish to thank our FFFAIF members Anny de Dekker, Yves Fohlen and David Bartlett who attended on our behalves, the 22nd April reinterment of four diggers of B Coy. 3rd Battalion, 1st AIF, at the Outersteene Communal Cemetery Extension, Commonwealth Military Cemetery, France. Anny is our representative in Belgium, Yves in France and David in the United Kingdom. The four diggers included 637 Lt Christopher Henry Champion and 5665 Corporal Ernest Corby. John Payne, descendant of Ernest Corby, and his wife Denise, attended the service. John has subsequently become a member of the FFFAIF. Television coverage and reports show it to have been a most moving ceremony.

I had the pleasure on the 30th April to attend the book launch in Wellington of ‘Wellington’s Finest’. The authors, Trevor Munro and Graeme Hosken, members of the FFFAIF Committee of Management, need little
introduction to members. ‘Wellington’s Finest’ tells the stories of Wellington’s WW1 volunteers. It was a privilege to participate in the inspiringly well-attended Book Launch.

The John Laffin Memorial Lectures were again conducted in the fine and historical premises of Richmond RSL Sub-Branch. A power point illustrated talk was given by Greg Keith about World War One recruiting posters. Greg traced the change in posters through the war years, across several nations efforts in propaganda. Michael Pyne presented another interesting talk about the Battle of Pozieres 1916. I commend the annual John Laffin lecture/s to members and their guests; the selected speakers are always fine lecturers.

The John Laffin Memorial Fund has reached agreement with the University of New South Wales for an annual award of $2500 to be made available for a student to visit the battlefields of WW1 where Australians fought. Professor Bruce Scates, a member of the FFFAIF, will administer the award within the university.

Lastly, I commend to members Russell Curley (Vice President and Public Officer), Alan Kitchen (Treasurer and Membership Secretary), Graeme Hosken (Secretary and Editor of DIGGER), Maurice Campbell, Trevor Munro and Jim Dyer, Committee Members. These gentlemen have voluntarily expended an enormous amount of their time, expertise and knowledge in the service of ‘digger heritage’. They have faithfully executed their duties with diligence and integrity. It is a wonderful privilege to serve alongside and with them in this magnificent project, the FFFAIF, which seeks to preserve the memories of our WW1 diggers.

I commend the President’s Report to the members of the FFFAIF

Craig Laffin
President
8th October 2005

Our overseas’ Number One members

The photo below is of our three ‘Number One’ overseas members. From left, we have Anny de Decker (Belgium), David Bartlett (Great Britain) and Yves Fohlen (France). The photo was taken at the reinterment ceremony for four Diggers of the 3rd Battalion in France, as recounted in our cover story by John Payne. Anny, David and Yves are renowned for making welcome FFFAIF members visiting the Western Front.
A letter from Gallipoli for a Mother
Contributed by Yves Fohlen, France

On 6th September 1915 on Gallipoli, 256 Chief Petty Officer Edward Charles Perkins had taken cover in a dugout during some heavy shelling. Unfortunately the dugout received a direct hit and the twenty-one year old boy was killed instantly – his head being blown clean off. ABD William Lonie was wounded by the same shell. Another comrade named Roy Fell saw parts of Perkins’ brain land near his foot. [Source: *First in, Last out: The Navy at Gallipoli*, Kangaroo Press, NSW 1990, Frame TR & Swinden GJ.] Chief Petty Officer Charles Perkins was from Essendon, Victoria, and he became the fourth and last fatality for the RAN Bridging Train while at Gallipoli.

In 1995 I met a relative of Perkins at Bellicourt British Cemetery, and was given a copy of the letter sent to Edward’s mother after his death. The letter reads:

KANGAROO Beach
Suvla Bay
Gallipoli
9th September, 1915.

Mrs Perkins
Madam,

As Commanding Officer I deem it my duty to write and tell you that your son, the late Chief Petty Officer Perkins, met his death whilst serving his country. He was sitting in his “dugout” with a mate, on the forenoon of the 6th September when a Turkish shell entered the corner of his dugout and, poor chap, he was killed instantly and his mate (Lonie) was wounded.

We buried him about 8:15 that night in the military cemetery close by, and I got a British Army Church of England Chaplain to read the service. I am having a proper cross put up with his name and particulars painted nicely on it.

Your son was in my opinion a clean living young man, who was a capable Farrier and well liked by all. His personal valuables and money found on his person, and papers will be forwarded through the proper channel.

May God give you strength to bear the great loss of a loving son, is the wish of his Commanding Officer and Comrades in the 1st R.A.N.B.T.

Yours Sincerely,
L.S. Bracegirdle
Lieut. Commander R.A.N.

Today Edward Perkins is buried at Hill 10 Cemetery, Suvla. Lest We Forget.

Armistice Day Accident
Extract from the ‘Wellington Times’ 1918
Contributed by Trevor Munro

“The inquest on the death of the boy William Arthur Patterson, who met his death on the night of the armistice rejoicing, was concluded on Friday morning. Frank Johnston gave evidence as to picking the boy up, the car was travelling at about 4 miles an hour. J.B. Coutts, owner of the car, stated he came into town that evening, and in Lee Street he encountered a large crowd of people, and he slowed down his car and blew the horn. He saw the boy some yards ahead, and also saw him throw up his hands and fall before the car passed over him. He immediately pulled up and took deceased to the doctor. The coroner found that deceased died on the night of November 11, but there was no evidence to show whether he died from heart disease or the effects of being knocked down by the car. The coroner exonerated Mr. Coutts from all blame.”
Remembering Harry

Mike Goodwin, Mackay

FFFAIF member Mike Goodwin, a teacher from Mackay North SHS, has conducted three student commemorative tours to the battlefields and cemeteries of Gallipoli and the Western Front as part of the school’s ‘Lest We Forget’ Project. Here he shares an interesting personal story from the project.

Taking young people overseas to Gallipoli and France/Belgium on emotional pilgrimages lends itself to the accumulation of many wonderful experiences and memories. However, one of the most incredible stories revolves around my wife, Rozlyn, and her Digger ancestor.

Roz’s great uncle, Sgt Henry Norman Fisher (Harry), from Cairns, was an original Anzac who landed on the first day with the 15th Battalion and fought with the unit throughout the campaign.

In 1916 he transferred to the 4th Pioneers and was wounded at Pozieres. He was a good soldier and spent the next two years of the war alternating between active service and attending instructional schools.

Harry was killed near Le Verguier on 18th September, 1918 during the AIF’s major action against the Hindenburg Outpost Line. His records do not give any indication as to how he was killed, however unit diary records indicate that shellfire was the most probable cause of death.

Interestingly, Harry rests in peace in a French civilian cemetery in the village of Vendelles. His grave has a cement border with the words “Concession Perpetuelle”, meaning he will never be moved.

The FFFAIF’s No. 1 French member, Yves Fohlen, has ‘adopted’ Harry and visits him often. As yet, Yves can find no reason why Harry Fisher was left at Vendelles and not re-interred with his mates in a CWGC cemetery.

When Roz and the North High student group visited Harry’s grave on the first tour in 1999, the Harry Fisher story took an amazing turn.

Roz was delighted (and intrigued) to find that flowers had been placed on his grave. There were no clues and Yves felt that some French local had probably been doing this for some time.

This act really touched Roz and when she related this to her family on our return, they too were moved. Yves revisited Harry a month after we had left and sent us a photo of the grave. Incredibly, there was a fresh bunch of flowers on it.

This act of kindness was too much for our curiosity, so we sent Yves a photo of Harry [left] and a letter to the anonymous people who were visiting Harry’s grave. The photo and letter were placed at the base of the headstone and we waited to see if we would get a response.

In October 2000, Yves received a phone call from the ‘flower layers’ – an elderly French couple, Claude & Helene Simonin. Helene’s mother is buried next to Harry, and each year they travel over 600 km to visit the grave. At each visit, they ensure they also have flowers for the lonely Australian buried so far from home. In her original letter to Roz, Helene wrote: “We have been touched to find the name of this young man on this grave. Losing his life to protect our country and so far from his home the least we could do was to clean and flower the grave.” Helene Simonin [letter 11th December 2000].
After exchanging numerous letters, Roz and I were finally able to meet the Simonins in Paris whilst on the school’s second tour in 2002. This was a very emotional meeting and, despite the language barriers, we all got on so well – as if we’d known each other all our lives.

The next development of this unique friendship occurred in September, 2003, when Roz and I were in France and staying with Yves. The Simonins came to spend time with us and on the 18th September (the date of Harry’s death) we all visited Vendelles Cemetery together. I will never forget the sight of Roz & Helene hugging each other as they stood next to the graves. Their shared tears seemed to cement a relationship that had been founded in the most unusual of circumstances.

We continue to correspond with the Simonins and plan to one day take our family to visit them at their home. Through all of this, Yves and his family have also developed a strong friendship with the Simonins. Harry must be happy to know that such close friendships have been built out of his sacrifice.

And to think this all came about thanks to a simple bunch of flowers and a French couple’s gratitude to a fallen Digger they didn’t know.

Photos: (Top) Roz Goodwin at Harry Fisher’s grave; (Bottom): Roz and Helene Simonin standing between the graves of Harry and Helene’s mother in Vendelles Cemetery.
Doing research about the Great War and the Diggers is a never ending story about mateship, bravery, sense of duty, sacrifice and sorrow. A couple of months ago I came across the fact that a Digger, 51501 Private Leslie Worthington, 2\textsuperscript{nd} General Reinforcements, is resting in peace at Brooklyn Cemetery, New York, USA.

Such a story always reminds me of a passage written by John Laffin in his \textit{Guide to Battlefields of the Western Front}:

\begin{quote}
‘Even after so many years on the Western Front I often find an Australian presence that surprises me, a lonely grave in an obscure hamlet’s churchyard, for example. ‘What on earth are you doing here?’’
\end{quote}

The Red Cross ‘Missing and Wounded files’ on the Australian War Memorial website gave me the sad and incredible accounts of the circumstances of Leslie Worthington’s death.

\textbf{Drowned 12-6-18}  
\textit{Ex Transport New York}  
Copy from ‘New York Sun’.

\textbf{TRUANT ANZACS VISIT BROADWAY}  
\textbf{YOUNG SOLDIER KILLED IN LEAP FROM TRANSPORT;}  
\textbf{RIVER DRAGGED FOR BODY}  
\textbf{‘LIGHTLESS’ CITY GREETS MEN AFTER STAMPEDE.}

When reveille was sounded this morning on the transport ‘Euripides’, anchored at Pier 53 in the North River at Eighteen Street, every one of the 40 Anzacs, who had taken French leave last night to see the sights of New York, had returned and were sleeping in their bunks. They were tired but happy and being soldiers were ready to take any punishment that might be meted out to them. Although 60 young volunteers, who have been waiting to sail for France since May 1\textsuperscript{st} started from the ship, only 40 reached Broadway. The remainder, with the exception of an 18 year old lad, were rounded up by the guard and policemen before they had gone very far on their journey.

\textbf{BODY STILL UNRECOVERED}  
The youngster, whose body is still being grappled for by the harbour police, was drowned when he leapt from the deck of the ship to the dock. He lost his balance as he left the ship rail, turned over in the air and struck his head on a piling at the water’s edge. It is believed the missing soldier was Leslie Worthing [sic]. Ever since May 1\textsuperscript{st} the Anzacs have been occupied up on board ship, waiting for the day when they would sail for France. Each day their requests for leave had not been granted and at night the bright lights of Broadway would blink at them in an inviting manner. Although officers managed to get ashore there was no freedom in sight for the others.

There was a sudden change in affairs shortly before dusk last sight. A Lance Corporal was patrolling the deck of the transport while the 60 were idling their time away at various things. Apparently a plan of action had been agreed upon, for all at once the 60 surrounded the Corporal and asked for shore leave. He transmitted their request to Lieut. Robert Stevens and returned with the information that leave had been denied.

\textbf{FORTY ESCAPED GUARD}  
Before the Corporal could say a word the sixty wheeled about and dashed for the after rail of Euripides and with a shout jumped to the string piece of the dock. All but the unfortunate Worthing made the jump. Immediately the soldiers disappeared in all directions, but fifteen of the less agile were rounded up by the ship’s guard. Later five more were brought back by the police. The forty who made their escape met at Twenty Third Street and Broadway, but were doomed to disappointment as the famous white lights no longer glittered. Some of them gave up a dollar for a trip to Chinatown on a sight-seeing bus, while others sought the gaiety of Coney Island.

Even the much talked of Coney was dark, but the Australians all agreed they had enjoyed the night off. They resented the reports that they had deserted and said they had grown tired of life aboard ship.

[Copy cutting kindly lent by Sapper Gartrell, 52566 Aust Corps Sigs, 3\textsuperscript{rd} AAH, Dartford. M Priddle, London, 14-11-18, M.I.S]
Sapper H.B. Gartrell gave his own report about this sad accident:

“I was in the above Reinforcements and saw him jumping ashore at the Atlantic Wharf, New York, from the Euripides, stepping on to boat rail and then into doorway of wharf, he slipped on alighting and fell on to the wharf flooring, 60ft below. He was stunned and rolled into the river between side of boat and wharf, the suction of the current at the place of mooring holding his body under. When the Euripides steamed out, it was signalled that his body floated and was recovered. I gladly give print and copy of New York Sun reporting casualty. In the photo he is the one with his back to the camera. He came from Victoria and I think he was in an institute there. He won the lightweight championship on board and had the making of a fine boxer. He was a real “hard doer” and was exempted from C.B. after winning the above boxing tournament. Refer to Major Devine, R.C. Padre, Croix de Guerre, 4th, who refereed the boxing and took great interest in Worthing. This Padre seemed to understand him and was the only one on the boat of whom the boy took much notice of.”

On 16/11/1918 a third account was made by Padre Major CF Devine:

“Accidentally drowned in New York Harbour. The body was not recovered from North River till 21st June, after the transport had moved out of the harbour. The remains were then afforded a funeral with full Military Honours, and buried from the Scotch Presbyterian Church, 96th Street, to the Greenwood Cemetery Brooklyn, New York. Full particulars have been sent to Base Records, Melbourne. All records at headquarters are in the name of Leslie Worthington – not Worthing. I have inspected three signatures and seen letter from Guardian, all clearly reading Worthington.”

Today I do not know if there is an epitaph on his headstone. I also wonder if Australians living in New York are visiting Leslie’s grave on Anzac Day. Perhaps my article will help.

A corporal of the 10th Light Horse

Yves was given this photograph of a corporal of the 10th Light Horse Regiment some years ago. The photo was taken in Egypt in 1916. Yves hopes that someone, someday, may be able to identify the light horseman.

Lucky Thirteen

‘A remarkable recurrence of 13 is recorded by an Adelaide soldier, Archie E Novice, of the Public Stores Department, who was badly gassed in France, but who is now convalescent in England. He has been at the front three years, and writes:-

“I was gassed on May 12, was in No. 13 bed in No. 2 Casualty Clearing Station, and subsequently in No. 13 bed in the 41st Hospital; 13 bed in the 49th Casualty Clearing Station; 13 bed in the 2nd Stationary Hospital, Abbeville; 13 bunk in the ambulance train to Boulogne; 13 bunk on the hospital ship St. Dennis; 13 bunk on the hospital train from Dover to Aldershot, and 13 bed in the Connaught Hospital, Aldershot. Thirteen must be my lucky number. It brought me to Blighty.”

Novice is the 13th grandchild, and his mother is one of 13 children.’
Identifying two 'Unknown soldiers'
By Trevor Munro, Dubbo

Like, I’m sure, most members of the FFFAIF, I’ve always been a ‘sucker’ for any photograph of a WW1 soldier, be the subject named or unidentified. I was recently given four studio portraits (which included two soldiers in uniform) by a second-hand store. They were of no great monetary value, and as the store knew of my interest in the Great War, the photos came into my possession. The photos were not formally labelled, but there was a deal of writing on the rear of one that, I thought, might lead to the identity of the soldiers.

My first attempt at identification, by using a name neatly written on the back, was unsuccessful. The name was not that of a soldier; possibly it was the photographer from The Crown Studios, Sydney. My second attempt proved to be more fruitful. In crude handwriting on the rear of a full length portrait were the words, ‘To Oscar from Owen’; the date ‘1915’ in the same handwriting was not far away. The portrait itself was neatly addressed to what would appear to be the soldier’s mother: ‘Mrs Bartlett, Read’s Gully, Parkes’.

A check of the AIF’s Nominal Roll and the National Archives website soon revealed that the soldier I was looking at was almost certainly Private Owen Bartlett of the 17th Battalion. The second portrait, also taken in The Crown Studio, but this time with the soldier seated in front of the backdrop, didn’t appear to be Owen, and had no writing on the back. There is sufficient facial resemblance to indicate that the soldier could be a brother or cousin of Owen Bartlett.

Private Owen Bartlett’s documents revealed that he had enlisted on 11 March 1915. He sailed with C Company of the 17th Battalion on 12 May. Owen served briefly on Anzac Cove before being evacuated to Malta, suffering from influenza.

Owen rejoined his Battalion in Egypt in mid March 1916, and four days later the 17th Battalion sailed for France to prepare for service on the Western Front. Owen was wounded by shrapnel shortly after the battalion entered the frontline on 10 June 1916; his wounds saw him evacuated to England for treatment.

Upon recovery, Owen was earmarked to join the 53rd Battalion, doing so on the Western Front on 9 October 1916. Apparently not happy in the 53rd, Owen was transferred back to the 17th Battalion a little over a month later.

In early 1917, ill health again sent Owen to hospital, but only to Rouen in France. On 25 September 1917 Owen was promoted to lance corporal. On the 9 October 1917 during the Battle of Passchendaele he was badly wounded, and six days later Owen Bartlett succumbed to his wounds.

Left: Lance Corporal Owen Bartlett, 17th Battalion.
As I came to the end of Owen Bartlett’s service record, the probable identity of the second soldier also came to light. Up until this time I had not found any mention of Owen having any relatives in the AIF. However, a small note from Mrs Bartlett enquiring about her other son, who was killed on 9 October 1917, gave the probable identity of the second portrait subject [left].

Private Bertie Bartlett was two years younger than his brother Owen. He had enlisted later than Owen, not joining up until 17 January 1916. Bertie also opted to join the 17th Battalion (probably using Owen’s right to ask that his brother join the same unit). The brothers were similar in appearance, and both had striking red hair.

Bertie sailed for England in June but didn’t reach the 17th Battalion on the Western Front until late November 1916. [This was around the time that Owen transferred back to the 17th – Ed.] Bertie joined Owen in C Company.

Bertie Bartlett was wounded in action on the 3 February 1917 during the fighting around Stormy Trench.

Evacuated back to England for treatment, Bertie was medically downgraded. He didn’t rejoin his battalion until 15 August 1917. A month later he was admitted to hospital suffering bronchitis, but was fit enough to rejoin his battalion a week later.

Bertie and Owen were part of the attack on Passchendaele in the early hours of 9 October. The companies of the battalion were down to 50 to 60 men, and the 17th Battalion was directed to follow the 20th Battalion in the attack. Early on in the attack the 20th Battalion lost many men. The 17th Battalion soon caught up to the 20th Battalion, and the two battalions combined to take the first objective together.

A Red Cross statement from Corporal C Mansell of C Company gave a graphic account of Owen Bartlett’s last battle on the Western Front:

‘I knew Bartlett, he was in the same section of the Lewis Gunners, he was known as Bluey being red-headed, he was fair medium complexion and build. He was missing after the 9/10/17 on the left of Polygon Wood. The 26th Battalion relieved our battalion in that position. About a month later whilst in England a man in the 26th Battalion asked me if I knew a Lewis gunner in the 17th Battalion called Bartlett, and described him to me and told me that whilst he was taking a message he found Bartlett lying wounded in a shell hole, and that a stretcher party went out and brought Bartlett in. From the man’s description I feel certain he referred to Bluey Bartlett as there was only one man in the Lewis gun section of the 17th Battalion. I heard later on that Bartlett had died of his wounds. The man in the 26th Battalion told me that Bartlett was wounded in the leg.’

Owen’s documents and a further Red Cross statement from the 59th General Hospital confirmed these details. The hospital records showed that Owen’s wound was high on his right thigh and buttock region and was a gunshot wound. Owen died at the 59th Hospital on 15 October 1917 and he was buried nearby in the Saint Omer Souvenir Cemetery.
Bertie’s death was quicker. The following statements from other members of C Company confirm details of Bertie’s death:

I know Private Bartlett, his number was about 4977; about 20, short medium build, very red hair, clean-shaven, freckled. He was in my company and I saw him killed instantly by a bullet hit in the head at Passchendaele on October 9th 1917 in “No Man’s Land” at about 6 am. daylight. I was within a few yards of him. We did not take our objective and the body was left behind when we retired the same day.

Private R.J. Niddrie

I knew him well, he came with the 11th Reinforcements to the 17th Battalion, but I don’t know where he came from. He was a very short man, with reddish hair, about 24 years old. I know his number as I have his oilsheet in the place of mine. On the 9th October we were at Passchendaele. We attacked our objective about 9 am and had obtained our objective when Bartlett was hit by a bullet and died at once. The advance was going on so we had no time to bury him. We had to retire afterwards so we had no chance of recovering his body.

Private T. Power

He was in C. Co. XL Pltn. L.G.S. I knew him fairly well; he was thin, with sharp features, red hair, about 24. We called him ‘Bluey’ Bartlett. He had a brother, O Bartlett, in the same Company and same platoon. There were two other Bartletts in the Battn but were no relation. On the 9th Octr we were attacking between Polygon Wood and Westhoek. On the way over I was about 10 yards from Bartlett, I saw him fall, he was one of the first to fall, I don’t know how bad he was. We carried on.

Lance Corporal A Ulm

Despite these statements being made seven months after Bertie’s death they would seem to give a fairly accurate interpretation of his demise. Corporal Ulm’s statement is possibly confused by him knowing both Bertie and Owen, as it was Owen that was in the L.G.S. (Lewis Gun Section), not Bertie.

The fact that Bertie’s body could not be recovered during the attack would also partly account for why none of the personal effects (that he was carrying) were ever sent back to his mother. In August 1919 Mrs Bartlett wrote to the Officer in Charge Base Records Melbourne:

Sorry to trouble you, but could you tell me if there is any soldiers in the Randwick Hospital suffering from shell shock very bad, is there a place where they put all the poor soldiers that don’t know anything, and are out of their mind? I would like to know as my poor boy was supposed to be killed in action on the 9th October 1917 yet we have not even received one thing belonging to him, not even his disc. His name is Private Bartlett, 17th Battalion, (13th Reinforcements) A.I.F. If you would kindly let me know I will be much obliged.

Base records could only reply with the same information that they had supplied Mrs Bartlett during the war – that none of Bertie’s personal belongings ever appear to have been sent to his mother.

The other two photos that I had received were of two young boys with probably their father or grandfather (taken in Eden Studios, Sydney) and an elderly female (possibly their Grandmother, as it was taken in England). The age difference between the two boys indicated that I was probably looking at the young Owen and Bertie Bartlett.

Whilst writing Wellington’s Finest I came across several families that had lost several sons while fighting in the Great War – but I had a sadder feeling with Owen and Bertie, having uncovered their identities from these photos. I can only hope that elsewhere in New South Wales, Owen and Bertie's portraits are still kept and treasured by other members of their family.

Left: Presumed to be a photo of young Owen and Bertie.
This is the eleventh in a series of extracts, from John Laffin's "We Will Remember Them - AIF Epitaphs of World War 1", which will appear in successive issues of "DIGGER".

We continue the theme of “A Life for Freedom and Liberty”

Pte L.F. Gilbert, 2nd Bn. 18/9/18 (22) at Doingt, France. His inscription reads

HE LEFT HIS HOME AND DEAR ONES TO FIGHT FOR LIBERTY
OUR TEARS ARE MINGLED WITH OUR PRIDE
HE DIED THAT ALL MAY LIVE
HE DIED THAT WE MIGHT LIVE UNFETTERED
HIS LIFE FOR OUR FREEDOM FROM HIS SORROWING BROTHERS AND SISTERS
HE SLEEPS WITH THE NOBLE DEAD WHO SIGNED THE CHARTER OF OUR FREEDOM
HE DIED THAT WE MIGHT BE FREE
IN THE FULL TIDE OF LIFE LIKE ONE DIVINE
HE DIED TO SET MAN FREE
DEAR TOM YOU GAVE YOUR LIFE FOR US THAT WE MAY BE FREE PEACE
HE DIED THAT WE MAY BE FREE SLEEP ON DEAR BOY TILL WE MEET AGAIN

Pte A.W. Dark, 53rd Bn. 5/12/16 (27)
Bernafay Wood, France
Pte D. Pratt, 41st Bn. 5/10/17 (21)
Lijsenthoek, Belgium
Pte F.J. Cormack, 25th Bn. 11/6/18 (21)
Vignacourt, France
Pte A. Lambert, 57th Bn. 4/9/18 (41)
Peronne, France
Pte J.A.P. Scott, 54th Bn. 24/7/18 (21)
Franvillers, France
(Pte Scott served as W. Jamieson)
Pte H.R. Smith, 49th Bn. 27/4/18 (27)
Crouy, France
Cpl J.J. McCague, 5th Bn. 3/11/17 (31)
Lijsenthoek, Belgium
Pte T.H. Burrows, 7th Bn. 24/8/18 (24)
Cerisy-Gailly French National, France
Capt N.B. Lovett MC and Bar, 54th Bn. 9/4/18
Aubigny, France

Captain Norman Lovett was one of the AIF’s most outstanding young officers and he won the Military Cross twice, not once as was shown on his headstone. As a second lieutenant with the 53rd Bn during the Battle of Fromelles, 19/20th July 1916, he led his platoon during a charge on enemy trenches. Though wounded, he continued in command of his men throughout a terrible night and took charge of portion of a captured line. He returned to the Australian front line at daybreak to have his wound dressed, but as a counter-attack by the Germans then developed he disregarded his wounds and organised a party of wounded men and stragglers to beat off the attack and cover the retirement of the rest of his company and an adjoining company. Unaided, Lovett took charge of a machine-gun, the crew of which had been killed. ‘He showed a great example of coolness and courage throughout’, in the words of his citation. On the night of 4/5th February 1917, now a lieutenant, Lovett was on liaison duty with the 13th Bn during an attack by that unit. After the target position had been captured the Germans made a counter-attack and the CO of the 13th wanted the 15th Light Trench Mortar Bty to bomb the enemy’s flank. As all communication had been cut, Lovett carried the request himself and had to pass through a particularly heavy double hostile barrage. He performed this task gallantly and the trench mortar gunners stopped the enemy at the critical moment.

FOR FAITH FOR LIBERTY FOR TRUTH HE OFFERED UP HIS STALWART YOUTH
TELL ENGLAND WE DIED CONTENT

Pte Cleve Milne, MG Corps. 17/10/17 (20)
Dochy Farm, Belgium
Lt H.M. Wall MC, 22nd Bn. 27/8/18 (22)
Fouquescourt, France

This last epitaph tells us about Australians’ emotional ties to England at the time – more so than any other.
Digger profile: James Inglis, 32nd Battalion
Compiled by Graeme Hosken and Elsie Teede

FFAIF member, Elsie Teede from Victoria Park, WA, is the daughter of James Leonard Forrest Inglis. Elsie has sent in her father’s photo and regimental details for inclusion in DIGGER. The following profile is based on James’ service record available on the National Archives website.

James Inglis was born in Daylesford, Victoria. When he completed his Attestation Papers on 6th July 1915, he was a 20 year old farmer working in Western Australia. He nominated his father, William Inglis of Cottesloe Beach, WA, as his next of kin. James was recorded as being 6 foot tall, weighing 159 pounds, with fair complexion, blue eyes and light brown hair. James was allocated to C Company of the 32nd Battalion as Private 966.

James disembarked at Suez, Egypt, on 18 December 1915. His battalion sailed for France after desert training on 17th May 1916, arriving in Marseilles six days later. The 32nd Battalion was in the 8th Brigade of the Fifth Division, and so James found himself in the Battle of Fromelles on 19th July 1916. Fromelles was a disaster for the 5th Division (as readers will be aware) and James was fortunate to survive the attack with only a ‘mild’ gunshot wound to his right hand, received on the 19th.

Private Inglis was admitted to hospital in Wimereux, France, on 22nd July, where it was decided that his wound needed treatment in England. On 23rd July he sailed out of Boulogne and the next day was admitted to the 2nd Western General Hospital in Manchester.

After treatment and a spell in the Red Cross hospital in Cheshire, James was transferred to Weymouth on 20th October 1916. His wound must have been more than mild, as it was decided that James would be sent back to Australia for ‘change’ (rest and recovery). He sailed from England on 12th November 1916. It appears that his hand wound was not conducive to military fitness, and so James Inglis was discharged from the AIF on 12 May 1917.

James Inglis passed away on 24th August 1987. Though his war service was shorter than he may have anticipated, James could proudly state that he was a “19th of July man”.

The Hell of Fromelles
Extract from ‘The Hell, The Humour and The Heartbreak’
by Bert Bishop, 55th Battalion [Kangaroo Press 1991]

Bert describes the scene as his company are designated to carry ammunition to the captured German trenches: “I was pushed forward. I stepped over dead bodies, I stepped over live and smashed bodies, I stepped over pieces of what had been bodies. Wounded were crying out in agony. Shell-shocked men crawled and clung to each other, some blubbering like babies. And every few seconds another shell would burst into my nightmare. Men were trying to dig a trench across no-man’s-land. We got into it, but in a few yards it fizzled out. We got out of it, and bullets hissed about us. ‘Keep going on top, we’ve got to get our stuff over,’ our officer was yelling. No-man’s-land was littered with dead and wounded.”
John Laffin Memorial Lecture Day, Richmond 3rd July 2005

The third John Laffin Memorial Lecture day was held in historic Richmond on 3rd July. Unfortunately, a clash with the Coo-ee March re-enactment reduced attendance somewhat. Nevertheless, the twenty-eight people present heard two very interesting talks and enjoyed catching up with fellow members. History teacher, Greg Keith, gave an insight into recruitment posters of World War I and demonstrated how he teaches this aspect of the History course to his Year 9 students. Member Michael Pyne presented a talk on the Battle of Pozieres 1916. Both Greg and Michael used PowerPoint slides to illustrate their very interesting presentations. Following the lectures, afternoon tea was enjoyed by all. The committee will be considering whether the lecture day should be moved from the first weekend in July to avoid a clash with Reserve Forces day in the future. [Photos by Alan Kitchen]

Photos clockwise from top left: Greg Keith and FFFAIF President Craig Laffin; Michael Pyne with his Certificate of Appreciation presented by Craig; Afternoon tea was provided by the Richmond R & SL and was a great way to end the afternoon; Three photos showing members and guests who attended and enjoyed the Lecture Day.
Coo-ee March Re-enactment, training day, Sydney, 2nd July
This year marked the 90th Anniversary of the Coo-ee March from Gilgandra to Sydney. The Coo-ee March became the model for recruitment marches from other districts of NSW and Queensland. To celebrate the anniversary, a march was held on Reserve Forces Day through the Sydney CBD on 3rd July. Alan Kitchen ventured out to the Anzac Rifle Range at Malabar the day before the march to view the camp and the training of the ‘volunteers’. Around six FFFAIF members were involved in the re-enactment. The photographs on this page were all taken by Alan Kitchen.
### DIGGER Quiz No. 12: ‘Campbell’s Challenge’

Test your knowledge of the Great War and the Victoria Cross, amongst other things, with another quiz from Maurice Campbell, Dubbo. Responsibility for questions and answers in ‘Campbell’s Challenge rests with the author. Sources quoted are believed to be the authority at the time and it is accepted that others sources may contain differing views and opinions. Comments should be addressed to the Editor. Answers are on the next page.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The following four military terms are a selection from the Glossary in <em>The Battle of Hamel</em> by John Laffin (Kangaroo Press, 1999). Give an explanation of each term.</th>
<th>10. What colour ribbon has, or colour ribbons have, been used with the VC medal since its inception?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Ack Emma</td>
<td>11. Every VC awarded has been manufactured by the same firm. Where is that business located?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Battle order</td>
<td>12. The Victoria Cross is made of what metal?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Communication trench</td>
<td>14. When was the Legacy organisation founded?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Now try these sixteen questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5. The Victoria Cross (VC) was originally awarded to the members of which service branches?</th>
<th>15. Who was the Captain of HMAS <em>Sydney</em> in its battle with the <em>Emden</em>?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6. Between 1858 and 1881, the eligibility for the VC was extended to cover what acts of bravery?</td>
<td>16. Why was the slouch hat so popular with the Diggers?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. In what year did members of the British Colonial military services become eligible to win the VC?</td>
<td>17. In what year did the slouch hat become standard army issue?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. During World War One, what other service became eligible under the VC conditions?</td>
<td>18. Who was the Australian Prime Minister to wear the slouch hat on his visits to the front line during WWI?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Where did the first investiture of the VC take place?</td>
<td>19. Who commanded the AIF’s 1st Brigade during the attack at Lone Pine in August 1915?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. What colour ribbon has, or colour ribbons have, been used with the VC medal since its inception?</td>
<td>20. On what date was the Australian Red Cross established during WWI?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Yves Fohlen, Our ‘Froggy Cobber’**

It is uncanny how many FFFAIF members have met Yves Fohlen in France. Yves is a great admirer of the Diggers and spends countless hours a year showing Aussie tourists and school groups the battlefields of the Western Front. Yves has written two books on the AIF [available from the book shop below] and is a regular contributor to the pages of DIGGER. Member, Mark Warner, paid this tribute to Yves in a letter to the Editor:

“In April this year, we [Mark and his wife] had the rare privilege of being able to engage fellow member, Yves Fohlen, as our guide for three days over some of the battlefields on the Somme as well as Bullecourt and eastward over the ground which was fought over in 1918 … It was a totally moving and engrossing three days that Yves provided for us and he conveyed his teachings to us in such an informative and knowledgeable way that my wife (who is blind) derived at least as much fun from our time with him as I did.”

Members Clive Baker and Greg Knight have an excellent range of Military History books at Gymea (Sydney) and invite you to contact them if you would like to receive a regular mail order catalogue.

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Answers to DIGGER Quiz No. 12

1. Ack emma: The ‘morning’; the hours between midnight and midday (from ‘am’ in the phonetic alphabet.

2. Battle order: Infantry equipment reduced to the essentials, with the pack removed and replaced with the haversack. [See photo below. Courtesy of R Clayton]

3. Breastwork: A trench built above the wet or marshy ground with the front and rear walls made of loose earth sandbags, tree trunks and branches, masonry, smashed furniture and anything else available.

4. Communication trench: Any trench dug at an angle to the fighting trench and along which men and supplies passed.

5. The award of the Victoria Cross (VC) was originally for naval and military [land] forces.

6. Between 1858 and 1881, eligibility for the VC was extended to cover acts of bravery not in the face of the enemy (for example, saving lives at sea). Since 1881, such bravery would see the awarding of the George Cross.

7. British Colonial Forces became eligible for the VC in 1867.

8. During WWI, members of the Royal Flying Corps became entitled to the award of the VC.

9. Lieutenant CD Lucas was invested in Hyde Park, London, in 1857, for his bravery during the bombardment of a Russian fortress in the Baltic on 21st June 1854.

10. Since 1918, the VC has had a crimson ribbon, but before then it was blue for naval awards and red for army awards.

11. Every VC awarded has come from Hancock & Co, a modest jeweller’s shop in the West End of London.

12. All of the VC’s have been made from the metal of two bronze Russian cannon captured at Sebastopol during the Crimean War.

13. Genghis Khan, the Mongol warlord, is said to have brought seeds of the white poppy with him on his advance across Europe during the Thirteenth Century. Legend has it that the flowers turned red, with the shape of a cross in the centre, when they sprang up after a battle. On the Western Front it was found that the scarlet poppy proliferated on shell torn battlefields, particularly those of the Somme. For this reason, the poppy has been adopted as the flower of remembrance.

14. Legacy was founded in 1923 by Sir Stanley Savige.

15. The Sydney was captained by John Collings TASwell Glossop (later Vice Admiral).

16. The slouch hat provided shelter to the wearer’s head and neck from both sun and rain.

17. The slouch hat became official Australian army headgear in 1903.

18. The Prime Minister was William Morris (‘Billy’) Hughes, the ‘Little Digger.’

19. The First Brigade was commanded by Major-General Nevill Maskelyne Smyth.

20. The Australian Red Cross was established on 13th August 1914.

[Source for Questions 5 to 12: Australian and New Zealand Free Masons and the Victoria Cross, by Graeme H Cumming; for Question 13: article from unknown source and by unknown author in Maurice’s collection; Questions 14 to 20: The Oxford Companion to Australian Military History]

Quiz feedback

It is pleasing to hear that members are reading Campbell’s Challenge. David Bartlett, one of our UK members, has supplied the following information to extend the answer to Q13 from DIGGER 11.

“The 1914 star (Mons Star) was awarded for service in France and Belgium between 5th August and 22nd November 1914. The 1914/15 Star was awarded to those who saw service in any theatre of war between the 5th August 1914 and 31st December 1915 (other than those who had already qualified for the 1914 star). The British War medal was later extended to cover the period 1919 to 1920. It also covered home service. The Victory medal was issued to recipients of the 1914 and 1914/15 stars and to most of those who had the British War Medal.”
The ‘malingeringer’
by Claude Porter, 18th Battalion

Claude Porter was born in Wellington, NSW, and enlisted in the AIF in June 1915 as a 19 year old. Claude served with the 18th Battalion on Gallipoli and the Western Front. He was wounded at Pozieres Heights on 4th August 1916, and was killed on 15th April 1918 when his advanced post at Villers-Bretonneux was surrounded and attacked. The following account is taken from Claude’s diary, which was serialised in the ‘Wellington Times’. Claude describes several actions of an un-named soldier, whose ‘malingering’ at Pozieres showed that not all the Diggers could lay claim to fitting the ‘Anzac legend’. [Taken from ‘Wellington’s Finest’ by Trevor Munro and Graeme Hosken]

“It would be about 7pm when we laid down, and at 9pm we were re-awakened and off again up to the front line. This time we didn’t stop in the trench, butfiled out over the parapet towards the centre of Pozieres. We each had a pick or shovel, but didn’t know whether we were on our way to Berlin or to, perhaps, Heaven; perhaps it would finish up in a charge. But it didn’t. When we got out we extended to about four yards interval, at about 200 yards from the German trench; then we were told to dig for our lives, as the trench had to be finished by daylight. But we didn’t need any telling, because most of us were old warriors, and knew that the sooner we got behind a mound of earth thrown out of the newly-born trench, the safer we would be. Fritz discovered that we were there about 10 minutes after we had started; then he started shooting flares, making the surrounding places as bright as day. Then the machine guns started to spit a few pellets at us, but did no damage. After that nobody wanted telling to dig, except one man, who, instead of digging his bit, laid down in a shell hole; his name is R____, and when the chaps on either side had got down the required depth, they found out that he had been ‘malingering’, so they had to start to do it, but didn’t have enough time to get down about more than 9 inches before it was daylight, and of course work that the Germans could see had to cease. Then we had to get out of it again, and when we came to this shallow place, we had to run across, exposed from the knees upwards, for a length of four yards, with three machine guns ‘playing’ on it continually, besides all the rifles. As we ran we crouched as low as possible, but it only made a bigger target. Two of our chaps got killed as we were getting out, and of course filled up the trench. Anyhow, the remainder of us got out OK, and went down the sap to get some breakfast. After we had breakfast, we laid down with the pleasant thoughts of a blissful sleep. But ‘he that doesn’t expect won’t be disappointed’, and we were awakened after being asleep for one hour (six till seven), and told that we would have to go up and finish the trench, as they were going to charge that night from it. Well, we went up again, most of us walking in our sleep, as it were, and as we were going over the shallow place some fellows crawled up and lifted the two dead bodies on to the parapet; then we had orders to crawl through on our hands and knees, or stomach, if possible (which wasn’t). The captain (Coen) led the way and got a bullet through the right eye. The next chap got five or six bullets in his shoulder blade; one more killed, and another mortally wounded; and all through one ‘malingering.’ As it happened, the only chap who knew R_____ was the offender was wounded early, and we didn’t know who it was, and he didn’t say so.”

[Later] . . . “The preliminary bombardment and barrage started at 9.12, and lifted at 9.15pm, and we hopped over the parapet. The shells were as thick as hailstones, and all of a sudden I felt a thud in my arm, and lost the use of it straight away, so I tossed my gear off and made back to the trench we had just left. When I got in I saw R_____ lying on his stomach in the trench groaning, and muttering that he was hit with shrapnel in the kidneys. He asked me to help him off with his equipment, so I tried, and as I only had one good hand, and it happened to be the left, I had to give it up, so he rolled over on his side and tossed it off himself. As I was leaving I told him that I would send a stretcher for him, which I did. But he was gone. When the communication sap had been dug to the captured trenches he had got up and rejoined his platoon as if nothing had happened, and as if he had been with them all the time. You see he was malingering again, and what’s more, he never got wounded till the next day at about 5pm, and then it was only a little scratch in the neck, but he cleared for his life.”

Photo: Claude Porter (left). Courtesy of B Horsley and taken from Wellington’s Finest.
The war service of Alf Heywood
Compiled by Trevor Munro, Dubbo
with the assistance of Jean Brennan

Above left: Brothers, Charlie (left) and Alf Heywood (right). Above right: Charlie (left) and Alf (right) in a studio portrait taken whilst serving on the Western Front

Who would have thought that the two Heywood boys sitting so innocently in the first photo would, by 1915, be part of a war that would involve nearly every major country in the world?

Tales of the Boer War would no doubt have excited Charlie and Alf, but nothing would prepare them for their part in the Great War of 1914-1919. Both Alf and Charlie were prolific writers, recording their daily action in their diaries and often writing back to friends and family. This is a brief look at Alf’s life during those times.

Alf Heywood was born in July 1897 at Hebel in Queensland. As a young lad he lived in Moree, and he and his three brothers worked on the land. Alf also did a spot of shearing. Alf turned 18 in July 1915 and enlisted at Moree on 18 July. On joining up he described himself as a stockman.

For some reason Alf wasn’t called up until August, a month later. At this time he and older brother Charlie both went into camp. Alf’s formal enlistment date is recorded as 4th August, and Charlie’s as 5th August 1915.

Left: Photo of Alf taken prior to embarkation.
Alf became part of the 11th Reinforcements for the 1st Light Horse Regiment. In a summary from his diary Alf described his departure from Australia:

'We left Sydney on the 14th of October 1915 on the SS Mashobra. On 11th of Oct we passed George’s Sound at 8 o’clock. Arrived at Albany at 10 o’clock. Sailed at 12am. We passed the last of the Australian coast on the 23rd Oct. Came onto Colombo, were allowed to land there, we had a good time old time whilst it lasted.

We arrived at Suez on Nov 6th, November 7th. We disembarked off the boat and were trained onto Heliopolis; we arrived there about 7.30pm. We were granted leave for 48 hours, so we visited Cairo and seen [sic] pretty well all we wanted to see. It was not long before we found out it wasn’t the place we thought it was. We were in camp at Heliopolis for two weeks.'

As the 1st Light Horse Regiment was fighting on the Gallipoli Peninsula, Alf became part of a Composite Regiment, and was allocated to ‘A’ Squadron. Alf’s first taste of action was with this Regiment when, on 23 January 1916, they engaged a strong Turkish Force. During the fighting the enemy camp was seized, but at the cost of 270 wounded and 30 Australians killed (according to Alf).

In early February the Composite Regiment was broken up. Those men of the 1st Light Horse returned to the 1st Light Horse Training Regiment at Heliopolis. Mid-February, men from the 14th Reinforcements for the 1st Light Horse Regiment arrived from Australia.

Alf remained with A Squadron (of the Reserve Regiment). The time at Heliopolis was spent doing various pickets and guards. On the 9th March a call was put for 400 volunteers for the DAC (Divisional Ammunition Column). A further call was made two days later.

On 14 March the whole troop to which Alf belonged volunteered for the DAC. With the change in unit, so to came a change in routines and duties. The DAC was part of the artillery, and the men now started learning artillery drill, with more pickets and guards.

On 4 April the new DAC men began a march to a training camp at Tel-el-Kebir. They arrived at their new camp on 11 April. Ten days later Alf was formally taken on strength with the 10th Field Artillery Brigade and the following day he was posted to the DAC (Brigade Ammunition Column) and made a driver.

The attempt to maintain BAC’s was only brief. On 23 May the BAC’s were abandoned and a DAC for the whole Division (the 4th) was formed. Alf and his mate, Boston, remained drivers in the 4th DAC.

All this reorganisation was leading to one thing – a move to the Western Front. On 7 June 1916 the 4th DAC moved to the harbour at Alexandria ready to sail to France. Alf described that move in his diary:

Mon 12 June 1916
Sailed into [the] Harbour at Marseilles, anchored for a while and pulled into the wharf about 10am. Remained on board all day, whilst they unloaded the boat. Very pretty harbour.

Tue 13 JUNE 1916
Unloaded off [the] Oriana 9 am. Sat on w[h]arf until 2.30. Then marched to the train and were counted into our carriage by eights, moved off about 6.30pm, very nice scenery all the way.

Wed 14 JUNE 1916
Still on train, pulled up about 5am and had a wash. Officers put a guard on the train to stop any of us getting off at every station. Pulled up again at 10.30 and had breakfast alongside of train.
The following day the train stopped at the Le Havre station and the men were offloaded. The troops then had a five-mile march to their camp.

It was not long before the 4th Division went into action. The 4th DAC primarily utilised mules and wagons to move ammunition forward to the artillery. Much of their mornings would be occupied in the cleaning of harness, harnessing up the horses and mules, and moving up to and back from the batteries.

**Thur 27 JULY 1916**

*Cleaning harness and route march [until] about 11pm, the Sgt came into our hut and called for volunteers for the Trench Mortar Battery. Boston and myself transferred [and] reverted to Gunners straight away.*

Trench Mortar Batteries had been formed in the BEF (British Expeditionary Force) in March 1916. The trench mortar’s role was therefore still in its infancy when the AIF started to arrive in France. The batteries were initially numbered the same as the Infantry Brigade to which it was attached. The batteries drew men who were detached from infantry battalions or other support units, generally from within that Division. A Trench Mortar Battery comprised of 4 Officers and 46 men.

A small number of Australians had limited use of mortars on Gallipoli. For most, like Alf and his mate, Boston, it was a new experience, one to which they quickly adapted.

Alf’s unit was the Y4A Medium and Heavy Trench Mortar Battery, and it followed the numbering system as laid down by the British. The 4th Division’s Infantry comprised of the 4th, 12th and 13th Infantry Brigades; hence the ‘4’ (for brigade). The three batteries of each brigade were designated X, Y and Z.

The Y4A Battery to which Alf belonged initially used 2-inch medium mortars. In 1917, 6-inch Newton mortars replaced these 2-inch guns. It is apparent from Alf’s diaries that he was also familiar with the use of the mortars used by the light batteries.

Alf joined his new trench mortar unit on 1 August 1916. It was not long before Y Battery began to take casualties; on 10 August two of its men were wounded. By mid August Alf was well and truly familiar with his battery’s routines and methods.

**Sun 16 AUGUST 1916**

*Reveille at five, and orders came for two detachments out of each battery to go up to the trenches, I happened to be one. We dug our guns out. I [we] were going to take them up to the frontline but the shell fire was too hot, so we remained in trenches all the day. The German shells were coming over fairly thick.*

The following day Alf caught up with his brother Charlie. Charlie was serving with the 1st Signals Company with the 1st Division and the pair would occasionally cross paths on the Western Front when their divisions were in the same vicinity.

In September Alf was able to catch up with some of his mates that had continued to serve with the DAC when the No 1 Section of 4th DAC were close to Alf’s billets at the time.

**Wed 11 OCTOBER 1916**

*Breakfast 8 am (were told) off on our guns, three men to a gun. Putting tails in the bombs in morning. Two guns fired in afternoon. Fritz retaliated a little; he put a few a few of his ‘Rum Jars’ over and wounded a few infantry. [Rum jar was the slang term used for a certain type of German mortar, the round being a large unwieldy shape.]*

**Thurs 12 OCTOBER 1916**

*In the morning we had to put some tails in our bombs and put the bed of one of our guns into position. Fritz put over a few High explosives and wounded a few more infantry. Unloading bombs until 10pm, one of our guns fired with the Stokes [light trench mortars], on account of a raiding party going over.*

**Fri 13 OCTOBER 1916**

*Told off to guide some infantry fatigue with some bombs up to our Gun, took [the] bed up to line in the afternoon, fired a few shots. Fritz got wild and sent some back. At night [I] was on fatigue[s] carrying bombs to our guns. Received some letters.*
Sat 14 OCTOBER 1916
On fatigue party first thing in the morning tailing bombs. Went with a carrying party to one of our guns with a few bombs. Digging a gun bed all afternoon and carting bombs through the night.

Sun 15 OCTOBER 1916
Went with a dispatch to headquarters and then on to our billet to buy a bit of bread, as we were fairly short. Building a gun pit all afternoon. Raiding Party went over to Fritz lines; we fired whilst the bombardment was on. The boys came back, they got no information but had a few of their men wounded and killed. Received letters.

Mon 16 OCTOBER 1916
In the morning I was carrying ammunition to our gun, putting a few fuses in bombs in the afternoon. The Germans got a bit nasty at dark and started to bombard us, our artillery quietened him after a while, we fired our gun. Carting bombs until 2 am.

Tue 17 OCTOBER 1916
Filling sand bags to build a dugout, running with dispatches all the afternoon. At night we were carting bombs up to our dump, it was raining like blazes. Received a letter from America.

Wed 18 OCTOBER 1916
Filling sand bags for a dugout in morning. Afternoon went with a dispatch to headquarters. At night carted some more bombs to dump, finished early, so had a rest. Was paid 20 Francs.

Trench mortar crews soon developed a reputation for initiative and, when needed, improvisation. A close-knit unit, when preparing positions even the officers and the senior NCO’s would lend a hand.

However the presence of trench mortars was a double-edged sword. It could also attract retaliatory fire; often from the heavier and more accurate minenwerfer [see 11 October entry]. The batteries were often nicknamed ‘the shoot and scoot brigade’, with their tactics of firing several rounds and then vacating that section of trench for a time, leaving the infantry to wear the retaliation.

With their high rate of fire (a good team could have several rounds in the air at one time), the supply of ammunition was an important factor. Often parties of weary infantrymen were supplied to carry bombs to the guns, further lowering the infantry’s opinion of the Mortar Batteries.

Alf’s diary shows that the gunners themselves bore much of the burden for the fatigues, including the carriage of ammunition. The ‘bed’ that Alf refers to on 14 October refers to the preparation of a site ready for
the mortar to be placed there and fired. A battery would have several of these pre-prepared and in line with their “shoot and scoot” practices.

At first trench mortars were regarded as a mainly defensive weapon, with only occasional use offensively to support trench raids [see Alf’s 12 October diary entry]. It was soon realised that using trench mortars to ‘thicken’ an artillery barrage was also a waste of ammunition.

The trench mortar role turned more to the harassing of German trenches or protecting flanks. As the batteries refined their shooting skills, it was realised that they could fire barrages to support advancing infantry.

On 2 February 1917 Alf fronted at the 13th Field Ambulance, where he was told what he probably already knew. Shortly after he was sent back to the 45th Casualty Clearing Station (CCS) suffering from urethritis (venereal disease). From the CCS Alf was sent back to the 51st General Hospital at Etaples for treatment.

After 58 days Alf was deemed fit to return to duty. Whilst undergoing treatment a soldier was not paid, so getting a clean bill of health also had financial benefits.

Alf marched into the Base Depot at Etaples on 1 April. Thirteen days later he marched back into the 4th DAC, and a week later rejoined his battery.

![Left](image1.png) A postcard that Alf sent to younger brother Albert back in Australia in 1917.

Shortly after returning to the frontline Alf was wounded in action. Alf’s documents show that he received a gunshot wound to his left buttock – but in fact it was probably shrapnel wound, probably as a result of German retaliatory fire. The lightness of the wound is confirmed by his release back to duty from the CCS the following day.

On 17 September Alf was once again evacuated to hospital suffering from venereal disease. After being diagnosed at the 17th CCS Alf was sent back to the 39th General Hospital at Le Havre for treatment.

After 45 days Alf was released and sent back to his unit. Once again, a brief stint at a base depot (this time, Le Havre) preceded his return to the 4th DAC and then on to the mortar batteries.

Alf rejoined his unit on 2 January 1918. Instead of rejoining Y Battery Alf was temporarily attached to X Battery (X4A). Around this time (no exact date known) the Mortar Batteries were re-designated and the medium and heavy batteries became the 7th and 8th Medium Trench Mortar Batteries. The light batteries still remained and retained their numbering as per their Brigade.
Above: Alf’s copy of a March 1918 photo of the 7th Medium Trench Mortar Battery. Alf is in the third row, fifth from the right (pen line pointing to him).

Above: Alf’s copy of a March 1918 photo of the 8th Medium Trench Mortar Battery.
As the war started to enter a more open phase across the Somme Valley in 1918, a way had to be found for the trench mortars to be easily and quickly moved to keep up with the infantry. Crews commandeered all form of transport to achieve this; mules, horses and all forms of limbers. If necessary, crews could actually carry their guns forward minus the legs and fire by guesswork.

**Sun 20 January 1918**

*Building up No 2 possy [position] all the morning. Fritz was over with his planes and was slinging the shells around. The infantry changed over, so we couldn’t fire, wrote home to Uncle Alf and Ken.*

**Mon 21 January 1918**

*Fired 50 rounds this morning, got a letter from Chas and Ella _____. Mucked out No 2 possy. All the afternoon fixed it up; Fritz was dropping a good few shells round the place. Wrote to Chas, got gift [of] socks and cake.*

**Tue 22 January 1918**

*CARRYING BOMBS FROM RECESS [DUMP] TO NO 1 POSSY, FIXING UP NO 2 POSSY. THE MOB CAME FROM BIVVY’S TO CARRY BOMBS. Fritz was shelling round the possy after lunch, very fine day. One of the 1st Brigade [light mortars] got wounded.*

**Thurs 24 January 1918**

*Inspection by Cpt (Captain) Sherwood, got some wood. Charlie came to camp and had lunch with us, went round to pictures with Hilton W. Received letter from mother and Mary. Had to clean up our clothes.*

**Sun 27 January 1918**

*Inspection, got bike and rode into Poperinghe. I found Maskey’s grave*, got home teatime, got letter from Lille and couple off Suno[?]. Wrote to Miss Maskey and West, things very dull in camp.*

*[Note: *1404 Gunner Claude Maskey, Trench Mortar Battery. Died of wounds 24 Sep 1917, buried Lijssenthoek, Belgium. Alf and Claude had been good mates; one of Alf’s photos that he sent home was of him and Claude. Alf asked his mother to take good care of it after Claude’s death. Alf and Claude served together from the start; they had both been in the Light Horse Composite Regiment and then the 4th DAC. Like Alf, Claude had transferred to 4th Division’s trench mortars; initially he was (like Alf) with the Y4A Battery. Claude Maskey died from shrapnel wounds to his back and right arm on 24 September 1917. Claude was buried in Poperinghe; this is where Alf had arranged for a more substantial cross to be erected.]*

**Mon 28 January 1918**

*Inspection, cleaning up V4A’s Gun. Nothing else doing, gathered wood and fixed our dugout up. Received two letters from Blighty and two from “Antwerp”*. Fritz came over dropping bombs. Wrote to Lees and Aunt Tilly.*

*[Note: *Antwerp was a property name back in Australia, not the European city.]*

**Tue 29 January 1918**

*Inspection first thing by OC, X4A, carted wood for the dugout, took tunic to get lengthened. Went through La – Clyte (?). Mail came through from WA, none from NSW. 5th Div pulled into the 1st Div huts, things very slow.*

**Wed 30 January 1918**

*On fatigue[s], carting wood for QM’s store, got issue of breeches, salvaged _____. Was paid 5 Francs, collected some for Maskey’s cross. Things very dull in camp.*

**Thurs 31 January 1918**

*Inspection, first thing Buck and I walked to the cemetery and I made arrangements for the cross. Had a look around Poperinghe, Reninghelst, seen [sic] if tunic was finished, got back to bivvy’s about 7pm, had tea, pretty tired too.*

**Mon 4 February 1918**

*Went round to No 4 Possy and finished it off, coming back to dugout we met Gen[eral] Birdwood and staff in sap. He had a chat to us. Fritz was putting a few shells round. Wrote to Bully, got tobacco issue.*

**Tue 5 February 1918**

*Went round to No 4 Possy, intended to register [fire], but infantry would not allow it. Dug ammunition recess till 1pm ____ to dugout. Fritz put over gas shells in Imperial Avenue; also HE rounds at Anzac Avenue.*

**Wed 6 February 1918**

*On ration fatigue first thing, nothing doing. Salvaged some Fritz ammunition. After lunch fired 17 rounds, watched our artillery shelling a village. Fritz threw a few shells round the sap.*
Thurs 7 February 1918
Went round to No 4 Possy and started digging another emplacement behind the pill-box. Things [are] very quiet finished 4pm. I got back to dugout, BUT, went straight on SOS Guard at No 4 Possy, it rained all day.

Fri 8 February 1918
Round No 4 Possy, Les and I salvaged ten bombs and carried some timber for the bed. Worked on the emplacement until 4pm, things very quiet in the line, very few shells thrown about. Rained all day.

Sat 9 February 1918
Took kits up to pill-box, was working on Possy till 3pm, Fritz put a few shots over. Fixed pill-box up to sleep in and got 10 bombs ready in case of an SOS. Fritz put a few big shells round our Possy, things a bit dirty.

Alf was promoted to Acting Bombardier on 8 March 1918 in order to complete the battery’s establishment strength. However on 19 May he requested that he revert to being a gunner.

In May some of the men, including Alf, took to shooting pigeons to supplement their army rations. However in late May Alf met with an unfortunate accident (no doubt leading to a ban on pigeon shooting!).

Thur 30 May 1918
Salvaged 4 Fritz helmets, flare pistols, machine-gun magazine, Fritz cap. Went shooting pigeons, my mate’s gun went off and shot me in the back. [I] was sent to the 10th Field Ambulance. I got a dressing on wound, arrived No 5 CCS about 4am.

What Alf failed to record in his diary, was the region of his back where he was struck. His wound was in fact to his right buttock and was not too serious. Alf’s documents show that he was admitted to the 1st USA General Hospital at Etretat on 2 June.

By 17 July Alf was fit enough to go to the 1st Australian Convalescent Depot at Le Havre. On 20 July Alf transferred to the base depot, ready to return to his unit. Alf rejoined his battery on 29 July.

Alf’s third and last wound was probably caused by shrapnel. He was wounded on 16 August 1918, suffering wounds to his head and face. Alf was treated firstly at the 7th Field Ambulance, before being sent back to the 61st CCS. On 18 August he was transferred to the 5th General Hospital at Rouen.

Three days later Alf was evacuated to England and admitted to the 4th Southern General Hospital at Plymouth. He remained at Plymouth for a month.

Upon his discharge from hospital on 23 September, Alf was granted furlough. At the completion of his leave on 7 October he was to report to the Littlemoor Camp at Weymouth.

Three days after arriving at Weymouth Alf was charged with failing to salute an officer, and he received 3 days CB (confined to barracks). On 15 October Alf was sent to No 1 Command Depot (still at Weymouth).

Alf went AWL (absent without leave) on 20 November. In Alf’s diary he gleefully describes sightseeing with friends and relatives for the next couple of days in the Manchester and Bath districts. Alf failed to record the reason he was able to play tourist. On 25 November Alf was arrested by the Police (possibly the Military Police).

Tue 26 November 1918
Sgt Police [Military?] took particulars about me, went before the civil police at 1030, remanded for an escort from Warmington (?). Escort arrived 3.30 pm travelled to ____, put in clink with a few more Aussies for the night.
Alf forfeited 14 days pay for his absence. Alf also over indulged on New Year’s Eve and was once again charged for being AWL on 1 January 1919. He forfeited a further 4 day’s pay for his over-exuberance.

On 9 January 1919 Alf boarded the Orsova and began his voyage home to Australia. The first few days of the voyage were pretty rough and as Alf described it, “The troops were feeding the fish!” The ship docked briefly at Gibraltar on 13 January. Here Alf got stuck on a guard duty for 24 hours. Concerts and life belt drills helped to fill in the time during the voyage.

On 19 January the Orsova pulled into Port Said. It was over two and a half years since Alf had been in Egypt. As the troopship was pulled by tug through the Suez Canal many familiar sites reminded some of the troops of their time in the Middle East. Ismailia and then Serapeum were passed and then they were once again on the open sea.

The Orsova’s next port of call was Colombo. The ship pulled into port early on the morning of 31 January, and Alf was once again placed on guard. The troops got restless and started to hop over the side.

Not surprisingly, Alf also ducked away from his guard, joining the others amongst the bustling markets and bazaars. Alf settled down to a nice meal before returning to the ship about 7pm. The ship sailed at 10pm.

On 6 February the Orsova passed the Cocos Islands, the scene of that morale-boosting victory when the HMAS Sydney sank the German raider, the Emden, in late 1914. Finally, on Tuesday 11 February, the troopship pulled into Fremantle, where the ship was immediately placed under quarantine, preventing the men from stepping onto Australian soil (presumably the ship was moored away from the wharf as Alf makes no mention of the men breaking ship to go ashore).

The following day, after offloading several hospital cases, the Orsova once again sailed. The ship re-coaled at Albany on 13 February.

Adelaide was reached on 18 February, with all those on board undergoing a medical examination. Next to Port Phillip on 20 February, where once again all on board were medically checked and the Victorians on board were then offloaded.

The Orsova finally arrived at Sydney Harbour on 25 February. The New South Welshman were taken to shore at North Head and underwent their period of quarantine before returning to normal camps to await discharge.

Alf Heywood was finally discharged from the AIF on 25 April (Anzac Day) 1919. Alf’s discharge certificate indicates that his discharge was as a result of GSW (gunshot wounds) head and face.

After discharge Alf returned to the Moree district and went back to shearing. Alf would remain in New South Wales for the remainder of his life. In February 1926, Alf married Sylvia Child. Sylvia was one of Alf’s regular letter writers while he was overseas. The couple would raise a family of six children.

Alf and his family lived briefly at Uralla and then Mungindi, before settling at Gurley from 1919 to around 1941. From 1941 to 1948 Alf had the Post Office at Greta. While at Greta, Alf joined the CMF, serving with the 1st Aust L of C Postal Unit from May 1942 until December 1943. In later years Alf and Sylvia had the Post Offices at Quambone and then Wongarbon. Alf Heywood died at Dubbo on 16 February 1974.

Endnotes: (1) Alf’s youngest daughter, Jean Brennan, provided the bulk of the information for this article. Jean is a keen member of the FFFAIF and is the custodian of Alf’s diaries and photographs. (2) The unusual and often confusing designations of the trench mortar batteries presented a real challenge when piecing together Alf’s WWI history. (3) Charlie Heywood had worked in the Post Office as a messenger and signal boy before the war. With his postal experience Charlie could already read Morse code, so the choice of a signals unit for Charlie was a logical one. (4) Boston Kirkby served with Alf throughout the war. He is also amongst the group photo of the 7th MTMB. Boston and Vic were cousins, and both hailed from Moree. Boston’s particulars are: 1401 Gunner Harold Boston Kirkby, 7th MTMB, enlisted 18/7/15 RTA 2/3/19.
From a Grateful Nation

*John Payne from Bathurst reports on the funeral of the remains of four World War I Australian soldiers in France, including those of his great-uncle, Corporal Ernest Corby, 3rd Battalion, AIF.*

**Background**

I was born in 1942 in the small NSW country town of Wellington where my grandfather Vince Corby was a shearing contractor. I grew up knowing that my grandfather was one of 12 children, that two of his older brothers had served in the First World War, that one of them (Ernie, a shearer like my grandfather) had died in France, and that Ernie had no known grave.

In the 1990s both my children attended university in Canberra. During visits to see them I also visited the National War Memorial and researched the circumstances of my great-uncle's death. I found that the location (northern France, near the Belgian border) and particulars of the action in which he was killed were detailed in “From Randwick to Hargicourt – a History of the Third Battalion,” quoted elsewhere in this article. I also read the 3rd Battalion War Diary on microfiche.

During the 1997 Christmas holidays my wife and I visited Europe. I noted that the Eurostar on which we were travelling from London to Paris actually went very close to the spot where my great uncle had died, so we decided to break our journey, hire a car and see if we could find the spot of Uncle Ernie's death.

Armed with Leaving Certificate French and a section of the Battalion history translated into French by our daughter, we drove 30 kilometres from Lille to the small village of Merris. There the mayor, Cecile Dujardin, welcomed us with open arms. She bundled us into her vehicle and took us to several local farms. None of the farmers who she spoke to had ever heard of a “Gutzer Farm”, the spot from which the history recorded that a German sniper had shot my great-uncle and two of his companions at 10:30 a.m. on April 14th, 1918. We did, however, work out the approximate location of where the action had taken place.

Cecile Dujardin also told us that two of her great-grandparents had died in the bombardment associated with the German occupation of Merris, and that her grandparents had told her many stories of the wonderful Australians who had come to try to save their village.

In the year 2001 our daughter, who is a teacher of French, gained a French government assistanceship which by chance placed her in a school in Roubaix on the outskirts of Lille. We had maintained contact with Cecile Dujardin since our first meeting, and so when we visited our daughter at Easter 2001 we were invited to stay for a few days with Cecile and her partner Jean-Michel. Once again we went for walks and speculated on just where my uncle had died.

**Remains Found**

In March 2003 a farmer, Jean-Luc Gantois, was ploughing one of his fields to the north of the Mont de Merris. When his plough hit an object, he stopped to find that he had disturbed a pottery rum jar and some human bones. This puzzled him, because the field had been used by his grandfather, his father and himself to grow wheat, potatoes, sugar beet and corn in rotation ever since the First World War, and this was to his knowledge the first time that any World War I relics had been found in this field.

He immediately reported this find to Cecile Dujardin, who arranged for Pierre Duchennoy, a local enthusiast/collector, to do a formal excavation. What was found is detailed in the 2005 media release from the Australian Army, as follows:

“*In March 2003 a farmer near Merris, France, discovered the skeletal remains of four unknown Australian Imperial Force soldiers buried in a communal grave. Artefacts found with the remains included Australian pennies, Australian Imperial Forces ‘Rising Sun’ collar badges, a corroded officer’s ‘pip’ and a fragment of uniform with the clips for attaching the ‘pip’ in place. After historical research and forensic investigation in France and Australia, two of the four soldiers are believed to be 637 Lieutenant Christopher Henry Duncan Champion and 5665 Corporal Ernest Corby. The other two soldiers have not been identified.*

[For some more of the media release, see Attachment 1.]"
‘The Australian’ newspaper published an article on the find in its 2003 Anzac Day edition. It contained speculation by Emmanuel Bril, a local historian, as to the identity of the soldiers. One of those named was my great-uncle!

On reading this article I contacted the Commonwealth War Graves Commission and registered a family interest. There was then a long delay in the identification process, caused in part by the heatwave of that summer in France. This had led to the deaths of thousands of elderly people and occupied French forensic officials for a very long time.

In December 2004 a determination was finally made that two sets of remains could be identified as “believed to be…” Lieutenant Champion and Cpl Corby, and that the other two sets of remains could not be identified. I was contacted by the Army History Unit which had the task of establishing who was the next of kin of each of the identified soldiers. It is Army practice to fly the next of kin to the official reinterment.

Exhaustive searching by the History Unit failed to find any family members of Lieutenant Champion. In the case of Ernest Corby, the next of kin at the time of his death was his mother, as he was single. Today the oldest surviving next of kin is 89-year-old niece Alma Elvins of Crookwell, daughter of Ernest's sister Reubena “Dolly” Reynolds. Next in line is my 84-year-old mother, Nancy Payne of Wellington.

On the basis of my previous involvement in researching my great-uncle’s story, it was eventually decided that I would represent the family at the reinterment.

The Army appointed Major Toni Duffield as Project Officer for the reinterments. She threw her considerable energy and organisational skills into the project, resulting in a most wonderful, moving ceremonial occasion. The Order of Service booklet produced by Major Toni, in liaison with the Army Publishing Unit and Army History Unit, is a testament to Major Toni’s sensitive attention to detail. Major Toni was able to secure original first AIF rising sun badges to put on the slouch hats which were placed on each coffin.

One interesting exercise for our family in the lead up to the funeral was the composition of the epitaph to go on my great-uncle's headstone. My wife and I did this in consultation with Alma Elvins and my mother. (See Attachment 2)

Reinterment Ceremony
The reinterment ceremony was scheduled for 22nd April, 2005, to coincide with the official Anzac Day ceremonies in France which were to be held on the following day. The place chosen for the reinterments was the Commonwealth War Graves Commission’s Outtersteene Communal Cemetery Extension, the nearest military cemetery to where the remains were found. This Cemetery contains the remains of 1140 British, 240 Australians, 2 New Zealanders, 2 West Indians and 1 South African servicemen from the First World War. It also contains the remains of 72 British soldiers who died in the retreat to Dunkirk in the first months of the Second World War.

The Official Party for the funeral consisted of an impressive number of military and civilian dignitaries. Among them were the Australian Chief of Army, Lieutenant-General Peter Leahey, General Baileu, the French commander for the Pas de Calais region, and Penny Wensley, the Australian Ambassador to France. The French Army provided a military band and an Honour Guard with 25 personnel in each. The Australian Honour Guard was made up of 30 Army, Navy and Air Force officers, most of who were training in Britain at the Royal College of Military Science, Shrivenham, while the pallbearers were Australian Army helicopter pilots who were training in the south of France. I estimate that in all there were about 350 people in attendance, including many locals, a battlefield tour group, a large media contingent, and FFAAIF members Annie de Decker and Yves Fohlen. [Member & Tour leader David Bartlett was also present – Ed.]
Every movement of the ceremony was meticulously orchestrated by Jeffrey Hanson, the Australian Army's Regimental Sergeant Major (Ceremonial), while Catholic military chaplain Monsignor (Major) Greg Flynn officiated. The report in La Voix du Nord, the Lille newspaper, beautifully captured the mood of the occasion:

Four deaths among millions -- four Australians killed by German gunfire near Merris on the 14th of April 1918 -- they represent a tiny part of First World War human casualties, but their sacrifice contributed to the maintenance of the free world. They received their due recognition when they were buried with honours. They had rested for more than 80 years in a field. This was the least that could be done for them, away from their home country, in a country where they fought and died in the name of liberty.

Yesterday morning’s ceremony in the Outtersteene Military Cemetery will be engraved in the memories of all those people who took part. Those present ranged from prominent officials and dignitaries to ordinary anonymous people.

Perfectly orchestrated, the burial of the coffins containing the remains of the four Australians was a mixture of sober protocol and emotion. Some in muffled words expressed this emotion while furtive tears were being wiped away ...

At the conclusion of the ceremony I was particularly touched when ‘Shrapnel Charlie’ presented me with four leaden AIF soldiers that he had molded from World War I shrapnel, saying, “While the four Australians soldiers buried today will remain here for ever, these four soldiers will be able to travel with you back to Australia.” I was also presented with an “immortal” Rose made from leather and a poem written for the occasion by Jean-Marie Monka, a local resident of Polish origin.

Reception

The official reception after the funeral was held in the Merris Hall. The speech by Cecile Dujardin encapsulates the feelings that many people from the north of France have for Australians:

Dear Australian friends… for 87 years Merris has held a secret in its soil that is part of your history. This is a story that has deeply scarred our country, plunged our families into mourning, and which saw our village completely destroyed in the bombardment of April 1918.

In 1916 Australian troops were posted to the Western Front in France, a front which ran uninterrupted for seven hundred kilometres from Belgium to Switzerland.

46,000 of the 60,000 Australians who died in the Great War, died on the Western Front – that is to say, in our part of the world.

Since then, the years have passed; the blood, shed in the past, has dried ... but the memories live on.

Today that blood carries names, and it is centred on this place.

The identification of Lieutenant Champion, No 637, and of Corporal Corby, No 5665, both of the Third Battalion, humanises and personifies a small segment of the list of those who died for their country, and of whom has been recorded – “Died somewhere in France.”

The burial of these four soldiers, heroes of the Great War, in proper graves, along with 240 of their comrades, from now on creates an indelible footprint and an unbreakable link in our histories.

These four Australians now rest in peace in our French soil.

The solemn homage which we pay to them today allows us to remember and recognize the allies of France, the 313,000 Australians who volunteered to come and fight in an unknown country, France, against an unknown enemy, Germany.
65% of those volunteers either died or were wounded, in that incredibly violent combat, on these Flanders lands.

The inhabitants of Bailleul and Merris, who today represent the whole of our nation, wish to express our gratitude and our joy in welcoming you here in a climate of fraternity and profound friendship. This climate recalls, without doubt, the camaraderie that was forged in the ancient field of battle.

Speaking of friendship, I wish to mention the deep link which today reunites my family with that of John and Denise, our Australian friends who are here as family members of Corporal Corby.

It is an exceptional day for them. In the past they have traced the story of their ancestor – a path that ended in Merris on the morning of April 14, 1918.

John and Denise, I understand that you cannot believe that all this is happening, but I am sure that it will be most memorable for you.

John, do you remember when you came to Merris four years ago? We went for a walk to Mont de Merris, and you asked your uncle this question:

"Ernest, can you hear me?"

Today, John, Ernest hears you!

Ladies and gentlemen,

I speak for the Municipal Council of Merris; for the Presidents of all the Village Associations; for the people of our Commune; for Abbe Blondeau, our parish priest; for our historian, Pierre Duquennoy; and for all the people who have contributed to the success of this emotionally charged commemoration. We say to you how honoured we are to receive you, each and every one of you, in our little Flanders community.

Afterwards I was presented with the slouch hat from Uncle Ernie's coffin and a framed collection of ‘relics’ found among the remains of the soldiers. I presented the village of Merris and the Commune of Bailleul with framed photographs of Ernest Corby.

There was a wonderful luncheon consisting of lovely French finger food, wine and beer. With Merris being in Flanders, Belgian-style beer is a very popular drink with the locals. Some fine Australian wines provided by the Australian Embassy supplemented these drinks. Several of the French guests commented to me that this was the first time they had tasted Australian wine – and that they quite enjoyed it.

**Surprise Ceremony**

To finish off the afternoon, Cecile Dujardin had planned a surprise for the official party. We were summoned to travel 250 metres out of the village to the place in the field where the remains had been found. A pathway had been made to a spot 50 metres from the road. There, a section three metres square was roped off with a French tricolour ribbon. French and Australian flags were flying side-by-side, while a World War I rifle stood upside down in the middle of the square, its bayonet stuck into the earth. Cecile Dujardin provided a most beautiful wreath which my wife and I laid on the spot with her. Moving as this was, something even more moving was to follow when WO Kevin Woods OAM, the Regimental Sergeant Major for the Australian Army, went down on his knees and placed wattle flowers on the earth.
Finally, after the visiting dignitaries had left, we returned with local villagers to the Merris World War 1 Memorial to lay a wreath in honour of the people from the village who had died in the First World War. The columns in the Memorial [left] came from the ruins of the village's 14th century church. The village’s suffering was significant – of its population of 1000 people, 53 (43 military and 11 civilians, including the local priest) lost their lives, and the village’s buildings were reduced to rubble. In 1921 the French government presented the village with the nation’s highest military honour, the Croix de Guerre, for the heroic role the village had played in the War.

From a Grateful Nation
Placed on each of the four coffins at the reinterment ceremony was a beautiful green and yellow wreath [below]. On each wreath was a ribbon printed with the words “From A Grateful Nation.”

These tasteful, thoughtful wreaths made of Australian native plants, sourced from Israel, North Africa and Spain, were typical of everything that the Australian Army did to honour these four soldiers who died so long ago.

In honouring the four soldiers at Outtersteene in the way it did, the Army was demonstrating the gratitude and esteem it still has for all those 60,000 of its own who gave their lives in the First World War. This was expressed in the poignant words of Lieutenant-General Peter Leahey AO, Chief of Army, in his address at the funeral. I quote some of his speech:

.... The emotions I feel on this solemn occasion are mixed – even contradictory. As I stand here in the uniform of the Australian Army, replete with our distinctive slouch hat, I feel immense pride. It is pride that is justified by the deeds of thousands of young Australians who fought and died here nearly a century ago.

Such pride is, however, tempered by sadness at the loss of young lives. There is something deeply melancholy about the death of the young, especially when it is so far from home and loved ones. But here in France they have found a new home where they are welcome as heroes ....

.... They died in the last great German offensive of 1918. That is how history laid its hand upon them. For the briefest of moments the entire outcome on the Western Front hung in the balance. The young men of Australia played a decisive role in one of history’s crucial battles.

Christopher Champion, Ernie Corby and their two mates from the 3rd Battalion probably had little appreciation of that. They would have been fighting for one another, for their unit, and for the reputation of the Digger. So far as we can glean, they died on the 14th of April 1918 – four deaths amid hundreds of thousands. Yet each made his unique contribution to final victory. Each left a family and a community bereft. But through their actions and sacrifice they changed the world.....

.... Today we honour a solemn obligation to these men. The Army and the nation are as responsible today for these four men as we were on the 14th of April 1918. That is how it must be if our pledge of “Lest we forget” is to be more than hollow rhetoric.

The English poet Rupert Brook, who died in the Great War, memorably wrote that there would be a “corner of a foreign field that is forever, England.” I trust that our generous French hosts will not think it impertinent to suggest that the sacrifice of these four men has transformed this field into a tiny piece of Australia.
In that spirit, I say to them “Diggers we cannot take you back to the land of your birth. But today you are coming home for good. You gave your life for this land – France. I know you are welcome here where you now rest in peace. While your bodies are here, your indomitable spirit lives on today. It lives in the hearts and minds of our modern-day digger. I hope you would be as proud of them as we are of you.

God bless you. You did your duty. We have not forgotten you. We never will.

As representatives of Corporal Ernest Corby’s wider family, my wife and I feel profoundly honoured to have been present at the formal reinterment. Everything that happened on the day was tangible proof of the gratitude still felt by the nations of France and Australia for the sacrifice of so many young Australians so long ago.

Answered Prayers
My mother tells me that during her lifetime Ernie's mother, Catherine Corby, frequently lamented the fact that her son had died somewhere in France, and that she didn't even know where he was buried. Every year around Anzac Day, Granny Corby would ask family members to say a prayer that her son’s remains would be found.

When my mother found out that Uncle Ernie's remains had been identified, her first reaction was to say, “Granny Corby's prayers have been answered at last.”

Postscript
Cecile Dujardin has volunteered to visit the Outtersteene Cemetery each Anzac Day to place flowers on the four graves.

Photos taken by Jean-Michel Vermuelen, partner of Mayor Cecile Dujardin, and John and Denise Payne.
Lieutenant C.H.D. Champion

637 Lieutenant Christopher Henry Duncan Champion was born on 15 September 1892 at Launceston, Tasmania. The son of the Reverend Arthur Hammerton and Mrs Mary Celia Champion, he completed his education at The King’s School, Parramatta, New South Wales. Chris Champion was a dairy farmer, and gave his address as the Rectory, Bungendore, New South Wales at the time of his enlistment as a private soldier on 1 July 1915. He embarked with the 30th Battalion on the troopship Beltana on 9 Nov 1915 for training in Egypt. Chris was promoted to Second Lieutenant, transferred to the 3rd Battalion on 12 March 1916 and embarked for France, arriving in Marseilles on 28 March 1916. He was promoted to Lieutenant on 29 June that year. Lieutenant Champion was wounded at Pozieres on 16 August 1916, and evacuated to England, returning to his unit in December. He was mentioned in Sir Douglas Haig’s Despatch of 7th November 1917 for ‘distinguished and gallant service, devotion to duty and able leadership of his Company’ during the period 26 February 1917 to 30 September 1917.

Lieutenant Champion was commanding B Company, 3rd Battalion in the defence of Hazebrouck, defending the area between Strazeele and Merris when he was killed in action just after 7.00 p.m. on 14 April 1918. The 3rd Battalion history records that, “Throughout the day he had fought bravely and well, and the quick and effective repelling of the enemy attacks was due in very great measure to his inspiring leadership, coolness and initiative”. Lieutenant Champion’s actions at Strazeele were mentioned in despatches on 18 April 1918.

Corporal C.E.W. Corby

5665 Corporal Christopher Ernest (Ernie) William Corby was born on 11 September 1885 at Laggan, the second child of Reuben and Catherine (‘Kate’) Corby of Tuena, in New South Wales. A shearer by trade, he travelled to Sydney in December 1915, and visited the Sydney Town Hall Recruiting Depot on 30 December. He was enlisted on 17 January 1916 into the 18th Reinforcements, 3rd Battalion Australian Imperial Forces. Corporal Corby completed training in Australia and embarked on HMAT A55 Kyarra on 3 June 1916, disembarking at Plymouth on 3 August. On 16 September 1916 he proceeded to France, and was taken on strength to the 3rd Battalion in Belgium on 5 October 1916. Ernie Corby was promoted to Lance Corporal on 13 May 1917 and Corporal on 12 October that year. Two weeks later, on 27 October, Corporal Corby proceeded on leave to England, rejoining his unit on 10 November 1917.

In April 1918 the 1st Australian Division was hurriedly deployed to the defence of Hazebrouck. B Company, the 3rd Battalion defended the approaches between Merris and Strazeele. Corporal Ernest Corby was killed in action near ‘Gutzer Farm’ shortly after 10.30 a.m. on the morning of 14 April 1918.

Historical Context

On 21 March 1918, the Germans launched a major offensive (Operation Michael) against the junction of the British 3rd and 5th Armies at St Quentin. The 5th Army was overwhelmed in the attack and Australian and New Zealand forces immediately rushed to the area to stem the German advance.

On 8 April 1918, the 1st Australian Division began to move south from Flanders to the assistance of the other Australian and allied forces in blunting the German offensive. The day after the Division commenced its move southwards, the Germans launched another major offensive (Operation Georgette) against part of the allied line in the Lys Valley which was weakly held by two Portuguese divisions. The Lys River runs about ten kilometres to the south of Strazeele and Merris. The Portuguese withdrew in disarray and the 1st Australian Division was ordered to return north to plug the gap left in the line and halt the advancing Germans.
Randwick to Hargicourt – A History of the 3rd Battalion, by E.Wren, Sydney, 1935, describes the actions on 14th April, 1918 in which both Lieutenant Champion and Corporal Corby lost their lives.

Page 286 - “At 10.20 a.m., taking advantage of a lull in the fighting, Lieut C.H.D. Champion, commanding B Company, ordered Lieut C.G. Prescott and his platoon of 20 men to attack Gutzer farm, about 100 yards out in front. A sniper posted in this farmhouse picked off Sergeant Jack Mott, Frank Guest, and Ernie Corby, but subsequently was himself killed by one of our snipers.”

Page 289 - “The last effort of the enemy to pierce our line was made at 7.00 p.m. A party, estimated at 150, attacked B Company on the left, but was annihilated by a withering fire from rifles and Lewis guns. The company commander, Lieut C.H.D. Champion – son of the Rev. A. H. Champion, formerly headmaster of The King’s School, Parramatta – was fatally wounded during the action. Throughout the day he had fought bravely and well, and the quick and effective repelling of the enemy attacks was due in very great measure to his inspiring leadership, coolness and initiative.”

The fighting on the 14th of April became an individual soldier’s fight. Despite heavy artillery and mortar support, the German attack on the Australian positions failed.

Regrouping, the Germans renewed the attack on the 17th of April. Ground was gained, despite a very heavy artillery barrage, though they were unable to dislodge the defenders. In just one sector, opposite the railway line, it was estimated that over 700 Germans were killed during today's fighting. Attacks all along the sector continued to be made until the 30th of April when Operation Georgette was finally called off.

Georgette was an operational success but a strategic failure for the Germans. Although they had captured a considerable slice of French and Belgian territory, they had not reached the coast and they did not capture the key objective of Hazebrouck. They could ill afford the loss of material, but the loss of 109,300 of their best offensive troops was a disaster. Without question the whole operation, including Georgette, helped shorten the war by dramatically reducing the German Armies fighting ability.

Attachment 2

Headstone Epitaph for Cpl Ernest Corby

Writing the 20 epitaph was quite a challenge, as we were allowed only 100 characters (including spaces) in four lines, with no more than 25 characters on each line.

FOUND NEAR MERRIS 2003
A SHEARER FROM TUENA
BELOVED SON OF REUBEN & CATHERINE.
SAD...SO SAD

The thoughts behind these four lines are as follows:
- The first line puts into context the unusual circumstances of Ernie's remains being found;
- the second line indicates Ernie's occupation and place of origin;
- the third speaks for itself;
- the last line is a hanging refrain, referring to the sadness so often expressed by his mother Catherine about Ernie's death and about his having no known grave. It is also a reference to the emotions experienced by my wife and myself when we visited some of the many war graves on the Western Front.
Gallipoli landing re-enactment, Sydney 1915

On Saturday 8th October, as part of the AGM weekend in Canberra, the FFFAIF have arranged to visit the National Film and Sound Archive. Part of the surviving silent film to be screened will be vision of a re-enactment of the Gallipoli landing, staged by the 7th Reinforcements of the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 13th Battalions on Wednesday 7th July 1915 at Middle Head in Sydney Harbour. Private 2461 Percy Smythe of the 3rd Battalion was one of the ‘actors’. Here is Percy’s account of this most unusual event.

Tuesday, 6th July 1915: … Mr Tyson told me we were to go to Middle Head tomorrow to act as the landing at Gallipoli for a cinematograph company. Last week’s performance was a failure, for when the operator called out, “Every fourth man fall dead,” the whole crowd went down to it.

Wednesday, 7th July 1915: About 9am [having travelled into the city by train and marching to Garden Island] we were put into boats and taken in tow by motor launches. Enjoyed the run out in the boats to Middle Head. After hanging about there for some time we were landed on the tiny beach at Obelisk Bay. A company of men there were dressed in the Turkish uniform. Some land mines were placed in the sand on the beach and connected up by wires, to be exploded by electricity. There were a few in the water too. After waiting there for a while we got in the boats again. It was rather amusing. We had to wait till the water [waves] receded and then rush down and clamber into the boat before the water came swirling up again. Several would make a rush together, and their frantic efforts to escape the water were very laughable. In the excitement one chap lost his footing and managed to sit down in the water as it came washing up.

Having embarked, we got off a bit and got ready for the great event. The Turks were placed, some on the beach and some further up the hill. The cinema camera was placed on a rock on the left of the beach. When everything was ready and the boats arranged in position, some behind the others, we got the command to fix bayonets, and then the sailors started to pull for the shore. Things began to get exciting.

When we got near the shore the troops on shore opened fire, and some bombs began to explode, and for some time there was quite a respectable din. As our boat, which was one of the last, ran up on the sand, we sprang out and charged up the hill with bayonets fixed. A lot of men, and some Turks, had fallen dead on the beach. With the others I charged up that hill till the whistle blew without noticing myself getting particularly tired. But when we stopped, I was almost exhausted, although it was only quite a short distance. We had full kit on, and the hill was some steep.

Had a bit of a rest and then formed up on the beach again, while a couple of chaps acted the struggle on the cliff between the Australian and the Turk. The Turk was behind a bush sniping and the Australian crept up to bayonet him, but altered his mind, and laid his rifle down and struck the Turk with his fist and then came to grips with him. A brief struggle followed and then the Turk lay helpless. He got up, and a stuffed dummy was put in his place. The brave Australian then picked up the dummy and shot him over the cliff with truly wonderful ease.

That ended the play. It didn’t appear to me to be too well done, but might look alright on the pictures.

One can only imagine what the conversation was like between the 7th Reinforcements and the 25th April men when they met up on Gallipoli, and compared ‘landings’ – Ed.

The map shows Middle Head and Obelisk Bay (arrowed) as it is today. Sydney members may like to visit Obelisk Bay and do a run up the hill wearing full kit! [Map: UBD]
In our last issue we printed a letter from Private Bert Smythe of the 3rd Battalion. We continue his story from Gallipoli:

While observing this morning picked up a couple of snipers crawling back, so I grabbed my rifle but could not see them without the glasses for some time. Found them at last. Both were lying still – one half behind a bush. Knocked the dust up under one with 500 yards up. Saw the other move then so I gave them three each for luck. They were still there some time later in the morning. Was hit again by a spent bullet; only this time it was one of our own and I had a look to see if it went in, it hit so hard. As the Turks were known to use our rifles and ammunition, very likely it was fired by a Turk. I picked it up in the dirt afterwards.

The beggars will go to any length to gain their ends. Several were shot dressed in the NZ uniforms. Some of them were very brave and actually got into our trenches and were giving orders as cool as cucumbers but they invariably got discovered and paid the penalty without any waste of time. They’d get up and order us to cease fire or perhaps to get out of the trenches and prepare to charge and all sorts of other dodges. The enemy every night used to get up to within 50 yards and even closer and you can imagine what would happen if we got out of our trenches and stood up in the bright moonlight. We were not having any, thanks!

Tuesday was our worst night; as per usual no one got any sleep. The Turks evidently intended to attack with the bayonet along the whole front but they got such a reception on the left, where they started first, that they abandoned it. Under fearful fire from our trenches they formed up in line to charge three times and each time they were cut to pieces – mown down like hay. They were brave and by the extreme steadiness must have been trained troops. As a preparatory dose they gave us an awful time with shrapnel right up to a good-while after dark on Tuesday evening.

Had another very lucky escape during the afternoon. A concussion shrapnel landed fair on my observation post about 5 yards off and made an awful mess of it. I said to myself, “By Jingo, the next one will just about land right on top of us.” And it did. Landed right in the trench fair opposite us and buried us up to our necks in dirt. I scrambled to my feet to see if I was hurt and was mighty thankful to find I wasn’t. Major Brown was the only one touched and he got his face still more marked and blood covered. He had a bandage over one eye and the rest of his face was covered in blood from small skin wounds.

Whilst having tea a bit after dark I had to take an officer to a trench he did not know. Only expected to be away 10 minutes so I left haversack, water bottle and rifle and all behind me. While away the enemy suddenly threatened us with a bayonet charge so we all rushed to the front line. I grabbed a rifle – a broken one too – fixed the bayonet and hopped in with them. The trenches were only holes scraped in the earth. Three of us were crammed into a hole too small for one. One chap was in one end, one in the other and I lay on the side with my feet in the trench. No sleep again for any of us. We hadn’t been in position long before a chap decided to rush back for something or other. He’d hardly started before he fell moaning in a heartbreaking tone, “I’m badly wounded, Oh I’m badly wounded.” The poor fellow’s cries ceased before long. He had fought and given his life!

Another chap tried to rush from an outpost trench to us and when about half way they got him low in the stomach. The poor beggar was groaning awfully all the way. He lay in our trench and was alive the next night but there was no possible hope for him. Poor beggar! Our company cook, a letter carrier named Cox, was in a hole dug half way to the outpost trench to repeat verbal orders. After a while they could not raise him and on investigation found that he had gone on the Unknown Journey. A sniper got him in the head. A chap near me the next afternoon had a very narrow squeak. A bullet went through his cap and took a bit of skin off his head.

We had to cross over a hundred yards under fire to reach safety at the rear of the hill so we rushed over. About 10 yards from the safety trench I stopped to walk when I got a knock in the shoulder like a kick off a 12 inch gun. I didn’t want another and tumbled into the trench mighty quick. Got the wound dressed and was
walked back to the rear. I’m hanged if I know where the beggar could have been. He must have been almost under me and the valley beneath us was full of our own boys. The bullet went in at the back of my armpit and came out near the top of my shoulder in front.

Had the good luck to see Vernie [the writer’s brother] near the Ambulance Hospital. He was OK and made me a cup of tea and it quite put me in a good humour … By Jingo they made things hum. Had a fairly good time on the hospital ship on the way to Alexandria but got a bad dose of fever of some sort but am pretty right now, though the fever took a lot of flesh off me. My wounds are healed externally but can’t for the life of me lift my arm sideways yet.

We were all in a high old humour when they told us that we were going to England. The Ghooka [possibly Galeka] was originally intended for an Indian hospital ship but they shoved us into her. Nearly all the medical staff were Hindoes [sic] and a very intelligent lot they were too. The doctor that looked after me was a real intelligent chap and thoroughly understood his work. We arrived at Southampton, Sunday, 16th May. They put us in a lovely hospital train. We absolutely couldn’t feel it starting and we got two meals and every attention on the way to Birmingham. You ought to see the English scenery. I don’t know what it is like in winter but in the spring – well, words can’t describe it. It’s glorious. Lovely green fields fringed in almost every case by either beautiful hedges or trees and some small clumps of trees scattered here and there and the roads lovely and white and smooth. And complexion! Everyone, whether boy or girl, man or woman, have the loveliest rosy cheeks and lips that you could imagine … were eternally blushing.

We got a great reception at Birmingham. As soon as we got off the platform there was a long line of motors waiting for us and an enormous crowd and they cheered us all a treat. It was the same all the way to the hospital. Everybody we passed waved to us and gave us a smile of welcome. It was particularly cheerful after being outside of civilisation since we left dear old Australia.

But this hospital takes the bun. Why, it’s a blooming gaol. The things we mustn’t do that we want to do, are only exceeded by the things we must do that we don’t want to do. Practically all of us have been kept in bed though we are all able to potter round. Lights are out at 8 p.m. We have to get up at 5 o’clock so that the beds can be made and then we have to get back into bed.

There are 44 beds in this ward which is known as ‘B4’. I asked the nurse if we would be put in the ‘after’ ward next week but she didn’t even crack a smile. That’s the worst of these nurses. They don’t smile enough. They all get about as sober as a captured spy. I’ve been working overtime making them smile whenever they come near. Drew absolute blanks at first but thing are improving now. Got one of them to look happy for 10 seconds. It makes me feel quite dispirited.

Good news! The quack has just been around and he says that I can get up, so when they bring me my gaol suit – coat and trousers of blue fleece lined material – I’ll do so. They have all my other clothes, so of course I have to stay in bed. The regulations only allow us to wander in certain parts of the grounds so even our liberty outside is curtailed. As for getting out and looking over Birmingham, I believe the nurses would have a seizure if you mentioned it to them. I haven’t had a shave for a month. You ought to see me. I lost everything but what I stood up in when I was shot, including my razor etc.

**Postscript:** Bert Smythe returned to Gallipoli by mid August 1915 where he rejoined his brother 1174 Private Vern Smythe. A third Brother 2461 Pte Percy Smythe, 7th Reinf/3rd Btn joined them on Gallipoli on the 28th August. [Percy was the participant in the Anzac landing re-enactment described in the previous article.]

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**Details for Canberra, Saturday 8th October 2005**

The AGM starts at 4pm and we ask you please to register from 3.45pm in the Sundown Village Bistro. For those staying for dinner, drinks will be available at the bar in the bistro area after the AGM from 5.00pm. Two-course Dinner at 7pm (main course, dessert, tea or coffee) is in the Bistro at the Sundown Village. Choice of either Roast Veal or Chicken Schnitzel main course for $26.00. Please notify Alan Kitchen of any dietary needs on 02 9594 0254 or by e-mailing fffait@optusnet.com.au.
Survivors of a battle went to much trouble to see that mates were given a ‘proper’ grave marker and they quickly passed information about a casualty to other family members serving in the AIF in France and Belgium. These thoughtful acts are the subject of a letter concerning Sergeant H. J. O’Brien of 5th Machine-Gun Company. It was written by Lieutenant F.G. Slater of 9th Machine-Gun Company to Private H. O’Brien, H. J. O’Brien’s cousin, of 8th Machine-Gun Company.

Your cousin Sergeant H. J. O’Brien was killed after being previously slightly wounded in the advance towards Bony on the morning of 29th September. Your cousin had gone as far as Hargicourt when he was wounded and later killed.

Sergeant-Major McMillan of 9th M.G. Company visited his grave at Hargicourt and erected a cross over his grave. The map location is sheet 62 NE L5G 10.90. I was on leave in England about a month ago and while over there I met Mr Ross of this company, a personal friend of your cousin, and gave him the particulars. He was listed for leave for Australia in four days’ time. The officer who was with your cousin in the stunt was also wounded. Allow me to convey my deepest sympathy at your sad bereavement. Harry and your other cousin Les were personal friends of mine, we all being privates together in Australia. The cross erected over the grave was only a rough one as he didn’t have time to have a proper military one made. Trusting you will be able to find the grave.

The Les O’Brien referred to here had won the MM at Harbonnieres, near Villers-Bretonneux on 8th August 1918, and was killed soon after. He is buried at Daours. Les O’Brien’s mate, Corporal Jack Moseley, said of him in a letter to his parents:

Never have I seen in Australians such deep regard for other men as the great esteem held for Les by all the members of the company – and a man’s qualities are gauged better by his fellow soldiers than by anybody else. He was ever an influence for good and he will be remembered by me as the most honourable and generous of gentlemen. His end was one that many envy and now that he has gone we all have the grand knowledge that he has done his duty well and also the pride and sorrow of remembrance of one of those soldiers who have done so much to make Australia’s good name.

Extract from Chapter 27 – ‘The Pick of Australia’s Youth are Here’. Contributed by Russell Curley.

Photo of Officers and men, 32nd Battalion, WA

Elise Teede’s father, James Inglis, profiled in this issue, is arrowed at left.

Photo supplied by Liam O’Connor.

James Inglis