Photo: The men of No. 8 Section of ‘C’ Company, 2nd Battalion AIF, in camp at Mena, Egypt. From the Marshal Roy Macdonald collection, courtesy of Jean Chase and Maurice Campbell.
This issue
The Editor’s five week break to travel to WA and SA may have recharged his batteries but meant burning the midnight oil to get this issue out on time upon his return. However, thanks to the support of our writers and proofreader, the job has been done and another 80 page issue is here for you to enjoy.

As a History teacher I find that textbooks and some magazines (no names!) regurgitate the same quotes, biographies and photographs over and over again. Surely Raws’ account of Pozieres is better known to HSC teachers than the words of the national anthem! DIGGER’s strength comes from the ‘new’, unseen primary source material that it contains, often supplied by the families of the soldiers who are keen to share their valuable material with other members. If you know any History teachers in your town or suburb, why not acquaint them with DIGGER and the FFFAIF and build up our membership – and improve their students’ HSC results at the same time!

Thanks to our contributors for enabling us to bring you another bumper issue of DIGGER. Articles are now being sought for our September issue. To ensure delivery, please renew your membership promptly (see form on reverse of mail insert – only supplied if your membership expires at the end of June 2012).

Adopt a grave
Lambis Englezos has approached FFFAIF for assistance with a proposal to have students, families and other interested people in France and Belgium nominate or accept a nomination to ‘adopt a grave’ of an Australian World War One soldier.

He envisages that communication would be established between those in Europe and the soldier’s family in Australia and that photos and information on the soldier would be sent to them. They could visit the grave (say on Anzac Day, Remembrance Day, anniversary/birthday etc), take photos and correspond with the Diggers’ families. This would help perpetuate the memory of the soldier, take away the anonymity of the gravestone, generate awareness of the program and maintain a link between the soldier and his family. It would also serve as a personal representation for those relatives who cannot, for one reason or another, make the journey to visit the grave in person.

If interest is generated in France/Belgium, we will be asking for expressions of interest from members who have Diggers buried in areas where the program has been taken up. More on the website as it comes to hand and in the next DIGGER.

Back issues of some DIGGERs available
The Editor’s spare room is filling up with boxes containing some earlier issues of DIGGER. If you would like to purchase any back copies, the following are available for a cost of $10 a single issue (postage and handling included): Issue 23 (two copies @ $6 each, as only a 40 page issue); Issue 29 (3 copies); Issue 32 (15); Issue 33 (1); Issue 34 (4); Issue 35 (20); Issue 37 (heaps!) and Issue 38 (12). The Colour Copy Shop can print single copies of most other issues. Contact the Editor at the address at the bottom of this page if you would like to purchase any printed back copies of our magazine.

Appeal for material on the Battle of Hamel 1918
Andrew Richardson of the Australian Army History Unit is writing a book on the Battle of Hamel and, like Paul Kendall (Trench Talk, DIGGER 38), is seeking material (diaries, photos, etc) on soldiers who fought in this battle in July 1918. If you can help Andrew with primary source materials, he can be contacted at Andrew.Richardson7@defence.gov.au.

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'Too good for the beastliness of war': Capt Ivor Stephen Margetts MID

Andrea Gerrard, New Town

All too often the average Australian soldier in the First World War is overlooked unless he did something extraordinary. Yet our army was made up of thousands of ordinary men who did their duty as they saw it. This is the story of one such individual who inspired his men by his example and attitude to life in even the toughest and most unforgiving situations. The sense of humour that was admired in the school staff room was also evident on the field of battle, along with his resourcefulness and never-say-die attitude.

By now you will have heard of poor Margetts' death ... It seems that his company and another of the same battalion were absolutely the furthest out ... Margetts was out reconnoitring in advance of the whole front, when he was picked off by a sniper, some say. ... In my aid post all hands deplore his loss. As one said, 'I don't know what that company will do; they worshipped that man!' Such was the general opinion of him ... the battalion mourned him as seldom a man is mourned, and that he left a name behind him that we can all envy ...

1 Letter written by Captain James Sprent, 13th Field Ambulance, to Mr Lindon, Headmaster, Hutchins School, Hobart, soon after learning about the death of this popular sporting figure from Tasmania’s north west coast.

2 Captain Ivor Stephen Margetts, it would seem, was a man who was much admired by fellow officers and those who served under him. It was also the opinion of some of his fellow officers that he had a better military knowledge of both field and office work than ... any other officer in the battalion.

3 Ivor Margetts had excellent prospects of reaching greater heights, having repeatedly demonstrated his leadership qualities on the battlefield. Sadly, a rapid rise through the ranks was not to be the case; the killing fields of Pozieres would claim the life of this bright young captain who inspired many with his sense of humour and his attitude to life.

One claim to fame that Ivor Margetts possessed was that he had been present at the landing at Gallipoli by the 3rd Brigade and was still there when it was evacuated. Captain Ivor Margetts holds the splendid record of being the only army officer, either English or Colonial, to land at Gallipoli ... and stay there right through the eight months of fighting. .... From the time he landed until the troops left Captain Margetts was never off the Peninsula.

'Margo' (as he was affectionately known) often wrote home to his parents, sharing as much of his experiences as censorship would permit. In later years these letters along with a small diary from 1915 were donated to the Australian War Memorial by his family as part of their collection.

Excerpts from Ivor's description of the landing at Gallipoli on 25th April 1915 have from time to time been quoted by historians when recounting what took place in the hours before and after the landing, but the remainder of the letters and diary seem to have been largely overlooked.

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2 James Sprent, medical practitioner of Sandy Bay enlisted on 27 July 1915. Transferred to 12th Battalion when Major Tozer was wounded. Captain Sprent was wounded in action in April 1917. Promoted to the rank of major in January 1917 and returned to Australia in August 1917. Awarded the Military Cross for his work with the 13th Field Ambulance while at Pozieres and Mouquet Farm.

3 See CEW Bean, Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918 Volumes, 2 and 3.

4 Weekly Courier 28 September 1916, p36.

5 Undated newspaper clipping from 1DRL 0478.

6 1DRL 0478 Photocopies and typescript copies of letters of Captain IS Margetts, 12th Battalion AIF World War 1914-1918 AWM File No. 12/11/80 Australian War Memorial. Letters written by Ivor Margetts to this mother and father starting in October 1914 with the last dated 9 May 1916. Also included is a copy of Private GA McKenzie’s eye witness statement for the Red Cross, two letters from Colonel Charles Elliott, a personal letter from Private GA McKenzie and several other official documents and newspaper clippings.
His letters were full of his thoughts on a variety of topics that ranged from the buildings that he saw on his travels and the countryside itself, to the beauty or otherwise of the local women. All were written with his own unique sense of humour and sense of the ridiculous that was clearly appreciated by his family. No topic seems to have been out of bounds. In a letter dated 4th July his parents were informed that it is four months since I have seen a girl closer than 7 or 8 hundred yards away and that was at the Island before we came here. I almost forgot what they are like and I hope they do not forget me.  

On at least one occasion he was prepared to speculate about how well or otherwise he and other soldiers would be able to settle back into normal life after being in the trenches, assuming that he survived the ordeal (which he seemed fairly confident he would). Yet, in another letter, he asked his parents to ensure that any money due to him was banked in a separate account in case he came back to find you had gone where the good niggers go and me have[ing] difficulty about getting any boodle.

Items from the daily and weekly newspapers suggest that Ivor Margetts was a popular individual and quite well known in Tasmania. He was considered by many to be a very good sportsman, which gained him some notoriety along the north-west coast where he had family connections, in Launceston where he had attended school and later in Hobart where he lived and worked prior to his enlistment. He did not see himself as being anyone special, but a very ordinary person who was blessed with a happy disposition. His wit and wisdom comes through in his correspondence and it would seem that it was this quality which was much admired by the staff at Hutchins School and the men with whom he served at the front, both officers and other ranks alike. The fact that he survived the Gallipoli campaign unscathed also brought him some admiration, being one among a handful of officers to do so.

Ivor Stephen was the third son born to Stephen Ward Margetts, an auctioneer and some-time storekeeper and his wife Charlotte, the daughter of Jonathan and Jane House of Green Hills, Stanley. In early September 1891 the family were living at 6 Welman Street, Launceston, when Ivor was born. The family later moved to Balfour Street where Ralph, the next son, was born before moving to Sydney where Vernon was born in 1897 and then to the north-west coastal town of Wynyard, where his father had various business interests.

Ivor received most of his formative education at the Launceston High School where he excelled at sport and later as a senior prefect. While Ivor was among the prize winners in his last two years at the school, it was on the sporting field rather than in the classroom where his talents came to the fore.

In his last two years at Launceston High School, Ivor started to make a name for himself as a sportsman. In 1909 and 1910, Launceston High School was finally successful in its bid to win the Bourke Challenge Cup in rowing. On both occasions, Ivor was the stroke for the team, and according to the account printed in The Mercury, was instrumental in its win for the year 1910. In the same year he also made school champion having won the 100 yards at the athletics championships. The following year he was playing for the North Launceston Football Club, which was disappointed to lose such a young talent when he took up his position with the Hutchins School. In 1909 and again in 1910, Ivor Margetts’ name appeared among the prize winners at the end of year celebrations, being awarded the ‘All Round Prize’ which was presented by Thomas Bourke Esq and the ‘Senior Scripture Prize’ in 1909 and again in 1910 with the addition of the Form VI Prize.

Also in 1910, Ivor sat the University of Tasmania Senior Public Examination and, according to the list of results published in the local press, gained seven credits, which were considered sufficient to gain him admission to the University.

7 Letter dated July 4 1915 in 1DRL 0478.
8 Ivor Margetts also kept a diary during 1915 but many of the entries are brief.
9 Letter dated ‘Somewhere 15 April’ in 1DRL 0478.
10 The family later moved to Wynyard and were for many years associated with this area of the north-west coast of Tasmania.
11 Members.optusnet.com.au/marg
14 The Examiner, 22 December 1909, p6 and 20 December 1910, p3.
entrance to the University of Tasmania.\textsuperscript{15} By September 1911 he was the coach of a Hutchins School rowing team that ventured north to contest the Bourke Challenge Shield. Clearly the school were out to win and were happy to use Ivor Margetts’ experience and knowledge to help them in their quest.\textsuperscript{16} It would appear that Ivor had one year of study at the University of Tasmania, most likely undertaking an Arts Degree before being offered the position of junior sports master at Hutchins School, at which time he seems to have abandoned his studies.

While in Hobart, Ivor Margetts continued to pursue his sporting interests, particularly in Australian Rules football, playing for the Lefroy Football Club and in several representative sides where at six feet three inches (190 cm) and weighing just under 14 stone (88 kg) he made a formidable opponent on the field.\textsuperscript{17} He was in Sydney representing Tasmania when war was declared, and like several other members of that team, rushed back to enlist, anxious that they might be too late. (Ivor also rowed in several representative crews for the Sandy Bay Rowing Club, continuing his interest that had begun in Launceston.)

In 1912 Ivor Margetts’ name appeared among the staff of Hutchins School, Hobart, as an assistant master.\textsuperscript{18} His appointment came at a time when there was great sporting rivalry between Hobart’s major private schools and it would seem that one of his roles was to boost the schools’ sporting prowess and therefore boost the prestige of the school, which was concerned about attracting boys of talent, whether on the sporting field or academically. Over the next couple of years the school achieved some measure of success on the sporting field while he was sports master. He soon became a popular member of the school staff, chairing the School Sport Committee amongst other activities.

Ivor Margetts was also actively involved in the militia and had been for several years prior to the outbreak of war. He was appointed a second lieutenant with the 12\textsuperscript{th} Infantry Regiment, Launceston Regiment, in early 1911.\textsuperscript{19}

Keen to continue his involvement with the militia, on moving to Hobart he transferred to the 91\textsuperscript{st} (Derwent) Regiment. At the end of August 1914 he successfully applied for a commission in the newly formed Australian Imperial Force, entering the officer ranks as a second lieutenant.

Despite the short notice of Ivor leaving for the armed forces and the impending sailing of the first contingent, Hutchins School graciously gave him leave and a fitting farewell was hastily arranged in the Masonic Hall on Saturday evening, 12\textsuperscript{th} September. At 8 pm about thirty fellows assembled – the theme of the evening being ‘Eat, drink, sing, and be merry, for to-morrow we die’.\textsuperscript{20} Proceedings began with cards, to be followed by some lively entertainment, speeches and a presentation. Ivor was presented with a handsome pipe and case on behalf of the staff. Mr Bullow, one of the three masters in attendance, gave a speech on behalf of the school community. In it he referred to Ivor’s happy disposition and his ability to maintain the harmony of the masters’ study by turning everything into a joke. Ivor Margetts suitably responded, saying that if his nature was a happy one, he couldn’t help it, he had been born like it. It was this quality that he would take with him into the Australian Imperial Force. After a hearty supper various toasts were proposed and proceedings concluded with the singing of Auld Lang Syne and the National Anthem.

\textsuperscript{15} The Mercury, 24 December 1910.
\textsuperscript{16} The Mercury, 9 September 1911, p9.
\textsuperscript{17} Height and weight measurements taken on enlistment and included in his service file, NAA, B2455 Margetts, Ivor, 1559947.
\textsuperscript{18} It would appear that he may have had some involvement with the school in 1911 when he coached the school rowing team for the Bourke Challenge Shield in September 1911. Ref: The Mercury, 9 September 1911, p9.
\textsuperscript{19} The Examiner, 1 May 1911, p6.
\textsuperscript{20} A description of the evening’s events appeared in the Hutchins School Magazine, September 1914, pp5-7.
On entering the Brighton Army Camp, Ivor Margetts was allotted to ‘A’ Company, 12th Battalion. On a site adjacent to the main road to Launceston, the 6th Military District set up camp on an area of flat ground near the current Pontville Hall. Despite being used by the militia, the site was hardly a suitable site for a tented camp, with windswept open ground and few facilities. Here the men drawn from all areas around the state trained in marching, drilling and operating as a battalion. Musketry training was a train ride away at Sandy Bay. As a junior officer, Ivor Margetts would have been detailed to help in the training process in whatever way the senior officers saw fit.

By early October 1914, plans were well underway for the departure of Australia’s first contingent. While secrecy surrounded the actual departure date for Tasmania’s first contingent, a march through the city was conducted on Monday, 5th October, to allow for the people of Hobart and surrounding areas to bid the men farewell. In rather unpleasant weather conditions, immense crowds lined the route in order to catch a last glimpse of friends or relatives. The parade was led by the light horse followed by the 9th Battery, with the infantry and other dismounted troops bringing up the rear. Each group was led by its officers and all looked a really fine set of men ... well set up and [holding] themselves as if they were proud of having the honour of Tasmanian manhood placed for the time being in their keeping.

Once the farewell march had been held, the general belief was that the troops would soon depart. Just over two weeks later the first Tasmanian troops boarded the SS Geelong at Ocean Pier, while the SS Katuna was loaded with horses and other equipment for the 9th Battery. Even though their departure had been kept secret and no mention had been made in the local newspapers, again a large crowd lined the wharf and Ocean Pier for one last look and to wave goodbye. While in charge of guard duty, which was detailed to keep people off the wharf and to stop men from getting off the boats to kiss their relatives & girls, sweet hearts etc off, Ivor witnessed some very pathetic scenes, but was buoyed by the presence of some friends who had come to see him off and were very much cut up at my going.

Life at sea soon settled into a rhythm. Not everyone enjoyed the voyage, particularly as the Geelong was apt to roll in heavy seas, but Ivor Margetts certainly did. In his first surviving letter to his parents, written a few days out of Hobart, he wrote:

*I am sitting in the saloon while the old ship is rolling from side to side and some of the officers are talking & [sic] some are playing the piano and we are all as happy as kings. We have had a wonderful voyage very smooth and no doubt you will be very surprised to hear that I have not missed a single meal.*

He was clearly enjoying life at sea as if on a pleasure cruise with a very comfortable cabin with everything I want & a man and a steward to wait on me. This was in stark contrast to the other ranks (which included his brother Ralph, who was also on board having enlisted with the Army Medical Corps), who were without the same comforts afforded to officers and had a very different experience. On boarding,

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21 Hutchins School Magazine, September 1914, pp. 5-7.
22 Approximately 1 000 men were boarded onto the Geelong with the remainder on the Katuna. The date of their departure was not made public, but word soon spread around the city and thousands of people swarmed onto Ocean Pier to say goodbye.
26 See Raymond James Brownell’s account of life on the SS Geelong - PR83 231 Australian War Memorial.
men who numbered among the other ranks were issued with two blankets and a hammock. Their mess desks were down in the hold of the boat, not far from the bilge water by the smell according to Gunner Ray Brownell, 9th Battery (later Air Commodore RJ Brownell) where we had to sling our hammocks on hooks provided about three feet above the mess table. Despite his idyllic account of life at sea, boredom soon set in and to relieve the situation, the junior officers were ordered to set up exercise routines, parades and other activities, including a series of lectures which the men were expected to attend. Evening concerts also helped to pass the time as the heat of the tropics took its toll.

From this same letter it is evident that the men firmly believed that they were heading for ‘Home’, a euphemism which usually meant England [or Britain]. While the Margetts family had lived in Tasmania for several generations at the time of Ivor’s and Ralph’s enlistment in 1914, England for many was still referred to as ‘home’. On the bottom of this letter Ivor tells his parents to write to him care of the 12th Battalion, 3rd Infantry Brigade, 1st Australian Division, England. Just how he feels about this is not mentioned, but in a later letter he does express his relief that they are not going straight home to England. Again no explanation is provided.

Clearly one of the major highlights of the voyage for all on board concerned was the fight between the Sydney and the Emden. If families had not already read accounts of the action near Cocos Islands, then they would soon learn about it from their soldier sons. You have doubtless heard by now of the great sea fight which the Sydney had with the Emden, and I can tell you it was a great sight to see her suddenly put on full speed and then dash off at a tremendous rate with her battle flags flying. We were all sorry that we could not see the action and we anxiously awaited the news of the engagement and were naturally very pleased with the result. [Below: The deck of the beached Emden. AWM Negative Number E110238.]

It would appear that a ripple of excitement went through the entire ship’s company on board, if not the whole flotilla. The loss of life on both sides did not seem to be of great importance in this or other accounts – just that the enemy had been defeated.

In Egypt, the men once again found themselves living under canvas; this time at Mena Camp, located in the desert near the Pyramids. The heat and sand of the desert would dominate the lives of all the Australians at this time as the men trained to take on the Turks, who they now suspected would be their first targets. Sight-seeing provided some relief for the soldiers and Ivor was no exception, writing very vivid descriptions of all he saw to relay to his parents in his next letter home.

Few details escaped his notice, from the buildings and their surrounds, to the people themselves and how they dressed. Egypt evidently made a lasting impression on him from his first day there and one that he felt he would never forget. In his first letter home after arriving in Egypt, he began with the artificial harbour at Alexandria, noting that there were a number of ‘prize’ ships anchored there. The local inhabitants were then scrutinised – commenting on the bright coloured costumes that they wore. Some he thought looked like dressing gowns or night shirts while others looked like very roomy pyjamas.

A rushed trip to Cairo on army business brought to an end his observations about Alexandria but did provide an amusing story for his parents when he tried to overcome the language barrier in order to find the right train and then a taxi. A small amount of French learnt at school saved the day. This trip provided the observant Ivor Margetts with new sights and experiences. He thought the city of Cairo a very pretty place with numerous gardens & [sic] public squares. Naturally it is very up to date in most things such as suerage [sic], electric trams, electric light etc [sic], but in other things it is very funny. Apparently the

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28 Undated letter written after leaving Colombo, p3 1DRL/0478 AWM. It would seem that some of the information contained in this letter was not to be shared with others as he gave instructions at the end of the letter that it should be burned as soon as they had read it and not shared around as would have been the usual case.
29 Undated letter written after leaving Colombo, p2.
30 See also account by Gnr Raymond Brownell, 9th Battery in From Khaki to Blue (Canberra 1978) pp6-7 and Diary of an Anzac compiled by A Orchard (Hobart, 2009) pp25-26.
31 Three letters written during late 1914 and early 1915 survive among the collection and provide lengthy accounts of what Margetts witnessed while in Egypt and of the places he visited: 1 DRL 0478 AWM.
32 Letter dated 9 January 1915, p3 1DRL/0478 AWM.
milkman took the cow and her calf to the house and would then proceed to milk the cow of the quantity required. On the negative side, he thought that the morals of the people in Cairo (English excepted) were not too high and quite different from that which we are accustomed. His trip to the city ended at Mena near the Pyramids. Within a month of being in Egypt he had visited a number of places of interest – quite the tourist like so many Australian soldiers.

After leaving Egypt on 2nd March 1915, the 12th Battalion spent about six weeks at Lemnos. If the men thought that life in the shifting sands at Mena had been unpleasant, Lemnos would prove to be much more difficult due to a shortage of space. The men of the 12th Battalion were forced to live on board the P & O SS Devanha and each day rowed ashore for training. These exercises consisted of route marches, a company or battalion attack, and later embarking and disembarking from the tugs that would eventually take them ashore at Gallipoli. So it was with a certain feeling of relief that the invasion force left Lemnos on Saturday, 24th April, for the Dardanelles, to finally put into practice all that they had learnt during the weeks and months of training.

Ivor Margetts was part of the second tow to go ashore in the early hours of the morning of 25th April 1915. As he prepared his men for their place in the next tow, one man just in front ... dropped, hit in the head. Very soon several others became casualties. But this was not the only problem the men faced after leaving their transports. Each kit weighed about 82 pounds, impeding the men as they tried to make it ashore. Despite being a physically strong man, Margetts felt the weight of the kit and was forced to swim ashore as it was almost impossible to walk with full marching order, absolutely drenched to the skin and I fell twice before I got up to the dry beach where I scrambled up under cover of a sand ridge. Officers and soldiers alike landed wet through, but still needed to move off the beach with little hesitation to take on the enemy who had been firing at them since the 12th settled into the tow boats.

The conditions that the Australians faced as they waded ashore that fateful morning can be seen from the article he sent back to Hutchins School:

*It was just breaking dawn, and as we looked towards the sound of the firing, we were faced by almost perpendicular cliffs, about 200 feet above sea level and as we were of the opinion that most of the fire was coming from this quarter it was evident that this was the direction of our attack.*

As soon as they had caught their breath, the Australians started to climb, often on hands and knees as they tried to reach the heights. Here, on Russell’s Top, the 12th Battalion encountered their first Turkish soldiers:

> About fifty men had reached the Top. With one leap they all ran forward – Margetts ahead, pulling out his revolver, in the hope of getting there first. The Turks scrambled over the back of their trench and fled.

Lieutenant Ivor Margetts and his men pursued the Turks and opened fire at about 350 yards. In the ensuing exchange, Colonel Clarke, their commanding officer, was shot along with his batman.

With the enemy retiring over the hill, Ivor Margetts and his men advanced to the ridge over which the enemy had retired, where they discovered that the enemy were in strong force, and were attempting to get round on our left flank. Subsequently that flank retired and we had to follow suit. According to his account the remainder of the day was spent either in the firing line, lugging ammunition, or trying to secure reinforcements or stretcher-bearers for the wounded and all done without a break or sleep.

On Monday, Margetts and his men reinforced the New Zealanders and on Tuesday staved off a concerted attack by the Turks, followed by standing to arms all day ... awaiting the charge that never came. By Wednesday, on the point of utter exhaustion when some of the steadiest could scarcely trust their eyes or decide whether the sights they saw were realities or creations of the imagination the men were finally withdrawn.

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36 Including the Pyramids and Sphinx; both places seemed to have been compulsory sites for Australian soldiers.
37 Letter dated 23 May 1915, p1 1DRL 0478 AWM.
38 Letter dated 23 May 1915, p2 1DRL 0478 AWM.
41 Colonel Clarke was shot in the heart as he was writing a message for a signaller to take to Brigade Headquarters. Margetts, ‘The Battle of Gaba Tepe’ p6.
During those first few days the 12th Battalion had suffered heavy losses of both officers and ordinary ranks.\(^5\)

Despite this he felt that they had the satisfaction of knowing that they had done what had been asked of them. In a bivouac about 600 yards up a valley the men were able to wash and rest having *dug our little holes to protect us from fire and shrapnel* laid down for the night.\(^6\)

When the battalion was relieved, Ivor arrived at the beach with no overcoat, trousers torn to ribbons and his boots caked in mud. He was dirty, weary and cold through, but nonetheless he was satisfied with the great display of courage by his men and had confidence that they would do so again when next called upon. He later reported home that he had experienced *several very close shaves, but like Johnny Walker still going strong*. Such was his attitude – making light of even the darkest situation.\(^7\)

According to Newton, the 12th Battalion historian:

> *After the turmoil, anguish and exhaustion of the few days after the Landing, a line of defence having been established and re-organisation effected, the Battalion gradually settled down to ‘trench warfare’ a form of warfare not taught in the training manual.*\(^8\)

Each company had its own section of the front line, which was held by one or two platoons with another in support. The firing line was fully manned day and night, supported by snipers’ posts, with support and communication trenches. Troops were required to ‘stand-to’ for an hour before dawn and then again at dusk.

On 29th July 1915, Ivor Margetts was promoted to the rank of captain in ‘A’ Company, still with the 12th Battalion.\(^9\) The high attrition rate among the officers meant that it was possible for a junior officer of ability, but with limited experience, to rise rapidly through the ranks. Captain Ivor Margetts had certainly demonstrated his leadership qualities and his aptitude for battle and, despite his relatively young age, it would seem he was considered worthy of the promotion bestowed on him.

The battalion’s next major engagement was in early August when the 12th Battalion was ordered to provide two companies for the attack on Lone Pine. Ivor Margetts’ pride in the way his men fought can be seen from the following account sent to his parents:

> *Our battalion has just been actively engaged in a fairly heavy operation and, although it cost us some valuable men, yet we did splendidly and received personal congratulations from the Army Corps Commander, the Divisional Commander, and the Brigadier, so naturally we consider our Regiment as top dogs, and are one and all proud to call it ‘my Regiment.’ The men did wonders against great difficulties and I am sorry that I am not able to give you a full description of the operation, but if you*

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\(^5\) Ivor Margetts noted in his article for the school magazine that only six out of thirty officers turned up to a roll call when the 12th Battalion assembled near the Naval Pier. *Hutchins School Magazine*, September 1915, p7.


\(^7\) Letter dated 4 June 1915: 1DRL/0478.


\(^9\) He had been appointed adjutant from 25 April, 1915, see service record NAA, B2455, Margetts, Ivor, 11559947.

**DIGGER**

9

Issue 39
could have walked through the captured trenches on the day after the business you would have gained an idea of what capturing a trench really means.\textsuperscript{50}

This letter is in marked contrast to that of the previous letter dated 9\textsuperscript{th} August. It would seem that Ivor Margetts may have been bordering on hysteria, a common problem at this time, or was just trying to bring some levity to a bad situation:

\textit{I am afraid there will be rather a break between this letter and the last but as we have had a most busy week changing our quarters, and as changing quarters here means first blowing up the house where the other fellow lives and then chasing him out and barricading up doors, windows, etc. and rebuilding the ‘house’ at the same time while the former occupant hurls ‘buck’ pebbles at you without ceasing, when this is finished you sit up and watch lest he should want his shanty back again. Incidentally, I might mention that the former occupant who was not fortunate enough to leave before his domicile was blown up remains and revenges himself by emitting frightful stenches.}\textsuperscript{51}

In the initial period, despite living like rabbits in holes, Margetts thought that the life he was leading at Anzac Cove quite suited him, leaving aside the stench and lack of water for bathing. He informed his parents that he had never weighed more in his life than he did then and that he was as \textit{brown as a berry}.\textsuperscript{52}

In contrast, by late August life in the trenches had become more tedious and difficult, with the stench from the large number of unburied bodies attracting an ever-increasing number of flies. \textit{In the trench I counted 79653821165073982 flies who walked first on the perspiring live men and, so as to cool their feet, they walked on the dead ones.}\textsuperscript{53}

Having endured seven months in the trenches at the Dardanelles, by 25\textsuperscript{th} November it was the 12\textsuperscript{th} Battalion’s turn for a rest away from the hardships of trench life. On a bitterly cold night the men quietly left their trenches for the pier, where they boarded a boat for Lemnos in the darkness. The last sight the men had of their home for the past seven months was of the sun rising over the Peninsula.\textsuperscript{54} They, like all the soldiers, left there with mixed feelings, mostly feelings of sadness for the mates that they were leaving behind, but also proud of the fact that they had been there longer than other troops.\textsuperscript{55} As they left, little did the men realise that they would not be returning to the Dardanelles. Before their rest period had expired, the order had been given for the evacuation of the Gallipoli Peninsula.

Arriving in Lemnos the men soon realised just what poor shape they were all in from lack of exercise and from the poor, monotonous diet that they had been consuming. Rest and recreation were seen as the perfect answer and for a sportsman such as Ivor Margetts, lots of sport was the perfect antidote, particularly when coupled with the pleasure of seeing some real, live, Tasmanian [nursing] sisters.\textsuperscript{56} After a brief period at Lemnos, the 12\textsuperscript{th} Battalion returned to Egypt for rest, roll calling and reinforcements. Among Ivor Margetts’ less pleasant duties was writing to \textit{broken hearted mothers giving them details regards killed or missing men}. It’s not a nice job some of the details. People ask if you can tell them the last words & who was holding their hands when they snuffed out. I could not very well say that t

For the men who had spent all or a greater portion of their time on Gallipoli, leave to visit Cairo was on offer early in 1916. At this time Ivor Margetts was given five days of leave and spent some of it sightseeing in company with several Tasmanian sisters whom he had met along the way.

Having regrouped, by early April 1916 the 12\textsuperscript{th} Battalion was on the move again; this time to the Western Front. In order to fill out the newly created 4\textsuperscript{th} and 5\textsuperscript{th} Divisions, a number of battalions were split in half to form the nucleus of a new battalion. In the 12\textsuperscript{th} Battalion, two platoons of each company, with an equal proportion of officers and senior NCOs were transferred to the newly formed 52\textsuperscript{nd} Battalion, which was then brought up to strength with reinforcements.\textsuperscript{57} The 12\textsuperscript{th} Battalion was then brought back to strength with reinforcements. Ivor Margetts was fortunate enough to remain with the 12\textsuperscript{th} Battalion and continue in the role of adjutant.\textsuperscript{58}

\textsuperscript{50} Letter dated 20 August 1915, p1 1DRL/0478 AWM.
\textsuperscript{51} Letter dated 9 August 1915, 1DRL/0478.
\textsuperscript{52} Letter dated 4 July 1915, 1DRL/0478.
\textsuperscript{53} Letter dated 20 August 1915, 1DRL/0478.
\textsuperscript{54} Newton, \textit{The Story of the Twelfth}, p69.
\textsuperscript{55} Newton, \textit{The Story of the Twelfth}, p69.
\textsuperscript{56} Letter dated 18 January, 1916, 1DRL/0478.
\textsuperscript{57} Letter dated 11 February 1916, p3 1DRL/0478.
\textsuperscript{58} The same was done with headquarters specialists and the transport section. Newton, \textit{The Story of the Twelfth}, p76.
\textsuperscript{59} Newton, \textit{The Story of the Twelfth}, p70.
On 9th May 1916, Ivor Margetts wrote to his parents to let them know that he was now in France. The 12th Battalion was now billeted at Sailly, about three miles from the front line trenches. He thought France was a ‘great country’ and that he was seeing it at its best. After coming from Egypt where everything was sand as far as one could see, you may judge how we appreciated the change. Then also there are some very pretty girls here which makes the country more interesting – naturally. Another positive for him was that now it was possible to get out of the sound range of the artillery, something which was not possible at Gallipoli.

In late May, Ivor Margetts was given eight days leave in England, during which time he toured around and caught up with friends before returning to the battlefields. While his observations are much briefer than those on his arrival in Egypt, he certainly tried to give his parents some idea of what ‘home’ was really like. He was amazed by London’s traffic which was enormous, but marvelled at how it was perfectly controlled by the police. While in London he based himself at the Hotel Cecil while he did things in stile [sic] too. As he left London’s bustle behind to return to the battlefield of France, little did he realise that the next letter that he would write home would be the last.

Shortly after his return to France, the 12th Battalion was in action for the first time on French soil when, on 7th June 1916, they moved into the line in the Fleurbaix Sector near Armentieres to relieve the 11th Battalion, taking over the role of the left battalion of the Petillon Sector. The 12th Battalion occupied a stretch of trench 1 000 yards long, with three platoons from each company in the line and one in support. Margetts and ‘A’ Company were on the right flank. One of the company commander’s duties was to provide daily intelligence reports to headquarters, giving a brief report of all activity during the preceding twenty-four hours. One night, with little else to occupy his mind and to provide a little light relief, Captain Margetts forwarded the following report: such stony silence surely suggested something strangely suspicious his way of bringing a humour to a very tense situation.

The Somme offensive commenced on 1st July 1916, but it was not until 20th July that the 12th Battalion made their way to the front line, having travelled many miles and through many towns and small villages along the way. Billeting was haphazard and the men were soon growing tired of marching in the hot sun. While bivouacked at Hedauville the men learned of the role that they as part of the 1st Australian Division were to carry out when reaching Pozieres – it was their role to capture the village which held a commanding position on the ridge in front of the then front line. Two previous British attempts had failed, now it was the turn of the 12th Battalion. They were warned to expect heavy casualties, and as a guard against decimating the battalion, a group of officers (at least) would be kept back, and should the worse happen they would then form the nucleus of a ‘new’ battalion.

From Hedauville the battalion travelled to Albert via Bouzincourt. All along the road we noticed the tremendous amount of artillery, ammunition and transport of all kinds, until it became apparent that the operations in progress were on a larger scale than any we had yet experienced. Just as the men prepared to move off in their platoons, a couple of shells landed in their vicinity, causing Captain Margetts to order the men to move off by half platoons at fifty yards distance. As the men proceeded along the Bapaume Road they could plainly distinguish the old reserve and No-man’s Land and realised that we were on territory which only three weeks ago had been occupied by Germans, but we were also able to realise the tremendous artillery bombardment to which they had been subjected before being dislodged. Passing through a maze of obliterated trenches, the men negotiated the mass of war litter to Sausage Valley near the village of La Boiselle. Here the men soon discovered the extent of the German fortifications, with their concrete walls, deep dugouts and a system of corridors and rooms used as headquarters. The next forty-eight hours were spent salvaging tons of derelict stores by day and acting as carrying parties at night. Officers were detailed to ensure each soldier had his full complement of ammunition and his gas helm, along with twenty-four hours rations, special gear such as wire cutters and flares for signalling. With the necessary inspections of kit and the area completed, the men had a nervous wait until it was time to move off.

\[60\] Letter dated ‘Somewhere in France 9-5-16’ 1DRL 0478.
\[61\] A roster was established giving priority to those men who had served at Gallipoli since the landing. Ivor Margetts was given eight days leave, the same as the other ranks. English leave was much sought after.
\[62\] Letter dated 9 May 1916, 1DRL/0478. The Hotel Cecil was requisitioned in 1917 and partly used by the newly formed RFC. The hotel was demolished in 1930 to make way for Shell Mex House. The facade still stands as a reminder.
\[64\] Newton, ‘The Story of the Twelfth’, p97.
With a brigade headquarters established at Contalmaison, officers were then given their orders. The 12th Battalion, alongside the 10th Battalion, were to form wave numbers five to eight. According to Elliott’s recollection:

*Our front line consisted of three rather roughly-dug lines of trenches, in rear of which was a communication trench called ‘Black Watch Alley’ running from Contalmaison to O.G.1. By midnight 22nd-23rd July, the first wave was to be lying in the open 150 yards from the enemy trench which formed the first objective, second in our front line, third and fourth in our second trench, fifth in our third trench, sixth in Black Watch Alley, seventh and eighth to be furnished if needed by the support companies of the 10th and 12th Battalions.*

According to the account by **Lieutenant Colonel Charles Elliott** for the battalion history, a message was received that the enemy had evacuated Pozieres and that the 12th Battalion was to occupy the village. As dusk fell, Captains **Vowles** and Margetts went forward with two patrols, passing over the road near the northern prong of the light railway. Satisfied that the ground to the north of the 12th Battalion had been cleared of snipers, the site for a new trench was chosen by Margetts, while Vowles returned to bring up the men of ‘A’ and ‘D’ Companies into their new positions. Vowles and ‘D’ Company had shelter from a crossroad hedge, but no such shelter existed on the left for Margetts and ‘A’ Company. Exposed, Margetts was hit, most likely by a ‘chance shell’. According to one eye witness account, **Captain Margetts was struck by a piece of shrapnel that penetrated his heart**, while another suggested that Ivor was killed by a sniper, a number of whom were known to be active in the area.

Aware of his condition and their current location, Ivor Margetts asked to be pulled down into shelter from shell fire and, knowing his wound was mortal, told his helpers to ‘look after the boys’. Such was the calibre of this officer.

His burial, like so many on the battlefields, took place the following morning amidst the noise and horror of war. While it was not a place for long goodbyes, a party of men from ‘A’ Company were able to say their final farewells.

Private GA McKenzie, a stretcher-bearer, ‘stuck up a little cross on his grave in memory of him’. The following night two other officers from the 12th Battalion were buried closed by. Whether the cross mentioned by McKenzie is that which appears on the cover of Carlyon’s ‘The Great War’ is hard to determine. During the Spring Offensive of 1918, the German Army recaptured the area around Pozieres and Margetts’ grave was obliterated. He is commemorated and his name appears on the Villers-Bretonneux Memorial among those

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67 Over the first five days at Pozieres, the AIF sustained 5 000 casualties. The 2nd Division suffered heavier losses with 7000 casualties in 12 days. See P Burness, ‘1916, a Terrible Year’, *Wartime*, Issue 36, pp 12-13. See also CEW Bean, *Official History*, Volume III, pp540-542.
who have no known grave.  

‘Ah mother’ lamented a fellow soldier in a letter home, ‘I feel I’ve lost a brother. He was a nice fellow, and such a fine officer. His men adored him, and he was such a cheery soul that he kept the men’s spirits up when others failed.’ It would seem that his happy nature that had been commented on in September 1914 had yet again shone through. He had done a splendid work in this war. His record on Gallipoli was wonderful. From landing, 25th April, till end of November without one day from the fire, the noise, the always present danger and the conditions of unparalleled discomfort. Grand old Margo and cheerful through it all. ... He is indeed a lesson to the “shirkers”.

Clearly ‘Margo’ was a man who was much admired by those who knew him, judging by the comments in papers from Tasmania. He was too good for the beastliness of war’ opined a stretcher-bearer, who cried like a kid at his burial. Another felt that he would be hard to replace in the battalion as he had a better military knowledge of both field and office work than most.

When the news reached his home state, a number of articles appeared in both the daily and weekly newspapers mentioning his passing, referring to his popularity as a sportsman and as someone who had gone the distance.

Captain Margetts’ service to his country would later be recognised with an MID from General Sir Douglas Haig dated 13th November 1916, for general good and gallant work during the whole period, [Gallipoli] and especially for the 5 last months during which he was Adjutant. He showed resource and coolness under fire on all occasions and is a keen and zealous officer and a gallant leader. Such praise would have provided a small measure of comfort to his grieving family upon its receipt along with the letters received from those who served alongside him.

Captain Ivor Margetts held the splendid record ... of being the only army officer, either English or Australasian, to land at Gallipoli on the memorable 25th of April and stay there right through. .... Alone, of all the officers, either English or colonial, he remained on the Peninsula the whole time, and with the exception of being struck on the side of the face with a piece of shell, which did not disable him, he was not otherwise wounded. Captain Margetts is a very fine built man, standing 6ft 4 ins high. He is the third son of Mr SW Margetts, of Wynyard. He is well known in Hobart as a footballer having been a prominent member of Lefroy Club.

He brought to the field of battle the same dash and daring that he exhibited on the playing field back home with his cheerfulness and never-say-die attitude winning the admiration of many. Back home his death was lamented by many from all walks of life. The popular ‘long-distance singing footballer’ had paid the ultimate price for his country. Captain Ivor Stephen Margetts was a man of wit, wisdom, dash, courage and just a little humility. The final words come from Mr WE Bottrill: It is with sad regret I see in this morning’s paper the announcement of the premature close of the career of this daring and skilful fighter. Australia has sent to the Great War no worthier specimen of her gallant sons than this tall athlete, this scholar, gentleman and Christian. With sincere admiration I drop this sprig of wattle blossom upon his brier. All who knew him loved him.

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New members this quarter
Welcome to Colleen Braithwaite, Lyn Bugden (Central West Libraries), Dubbo North Public School, Martin Foster, Anthony Gosper, Judith Green, John Lackie, Paul Kiem, Dean Mighell, Dermot Murray, Gregory Rawson, Justin Reading, Kathryn Simpson, Paul Sutton, Greg Swindon and Tottenham Historical Society.

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68 His name appears on several war memorials around Tasmania, including the Roll of Honour in the Hobart Town Hall, Hutchins School, Tasmanian Football League, University of Tasmania and Margaret Street Uniting Church, Launceston. A tree was planted on the Soldiers’ Memorial Avenue, Hobart, in his memory.

69 Tasmanian Mail, 28 September 1916, p10. Part of a letter written by Colonel Elliott to his mother about the death of Ivor Margetts.

70 Tasmanian Mail, 28 September 1916, p10.


72 Weekly Courier, 21 June 1917, p36.


74 These include letters from Lt Col Elliott and Private AG McKenzie who was clearly upset by his death. 1 DRL 0478 AWM. Elliott included a map in one of his letters, showing the location of the grave, perhaps hoping that one day either he or a member of Margett’s family might visit the grave.

75 Weekly Courier, 30 August 1916, p36.

76 Weekly Courier, 24 August 1916, p12.

77 1DRL 0478 undated newspaper clipping.
The mystery of the unknown Trench Mortar lance corporal
Andrew Pittaway, Fremantle

On the FFAIF trip to the Western Front in July 2010, I noticed that Plot V.B.1 in Crucifix Corner Cemetery near Villers-Bretonneux contained the grave of an unknown lance corporal of an Australian Trench Mortar Battery [right].

I thought that there can’t be too many ‘missing’ lance corporals of the Trench Mortars in France, as they weren’t exactly large units. The information was soon at hand when, later the same day, we visited the Villers-Bretonneux Memorial. There are quite a number of missing men from the Trench Mortars in France but only five of them were lance corporals. I initially thought that the unknown in Crucifix Corner would be one of the men below:

1916 L/Cpl James Boe – 1st LTMB;
3773 L/Cpl Albert Alexander Howard – 12th LTMB;
2333 L/Cpl Horace David Hunter – 8th LTMB;
1872 L/Cpl David John McDonald – 15th LTMB;
2361 L/Cpl Otto Walford Bruno Piukkula – 4th LTMB.

Lance Corporal James Boe, born in Stranraer, Scotland, was working as a plumber in Annandale, NSW, when he enlisted in the AIF in January 1915. Assigned to the 5th Reinforcements to the 4th Battalion, Boe served at Gallipoli, and was wounded at Lone Pine. He recovered from this wound to return to Gallipoli in November 1915. He remained with the 4th Battalion until he arrived in France. Promoted to lance corporal, he was transferred to the 1st Light Trench Mortar Battery. Boe lost his life at Pozieres on 20th July 1916. Unfortunately, there doesn’t seem to be any account of his death available, but three other men of the 1st LTMB were killed on the same day, two of whom were buried in Chalk Pit Cemetery. It seems that post-war only one body of the three was officially identified. This man, 984 Private Murdiff, was buried in Pozieres British Cemetery.

Lance Corporal Albert Alexander Howard was born at Walhalla, Victoria, and was working as a labourer in Ballarat, Victoria, when he enlisted in the AIF in July 1915. Initially assigned to reinforcements to the 14th Battalion, he joined the newly formed 46th Battalion in Egypt in March 1916. Howard survived the Somme battles of 1916 but was admitted to hospital with trench feet in November 1916. Returning to the 46th after a short break, he was wounded by shrapnel in February 1917. With the wound not being too serious he was transferred back to the 46th Battalion, though was attached for duty to the 12th LTMB in March 1917. Appointed lance corporal in August 1917, he remained with the Trench Mortars until he was killed at Dernancourt on 5th April 1918. [Right: Albert Howard. Australian War Memorial Negative number P08618.001.]

Lance Corporal Horace Hunter, born at Newcastle, NSW, enlisted in the AIF in October 1915. Assigned to the 4th Reinforcements to the 31st Battalion, he joined his battalion only a few days after they had been in the attack at Fromelles. He was only with the 31st for six weeks before transferring to the 8th Light Trench Mortar Battery. In March 1917 he was appointed lance corporal and at Bullecourt on 3rd May 1917 he was posted as missing. The surviving members of his battery were later interviewed and it seems that Hunter’s trench mortar crew went over in the second wave during a heavy barrage. They reached the enemy front line (OG1) and were in the wire before the second German trench (OG2) when L/Cpl Hunter, who was around 70 yards in advance of the team, could no longer be seen. The surviving members stated that there was heavy machine-gun and artillery fire over the ground they were passing when Hunter disappeared. He was officially classed as ‘Killed in Action’. [Left: Horace Hunter. Australian War Memorial Negative Number P05758.004.]
Lance Corporal David McDonald, born in Christchurch, New Zealand, was working as a tram driver in Melbourne when he enlisted in December 1914. Initially with the 5th Battalion, he served through the Anzac campaign despite being wounded in August 1915. In early 1916 he was sent to the 57th Battalion and embarked with them for France. Surviving the debacle at Fromelles, McDonald served with the 57th Battalion until just after the Bullecourt battle in May 1917, when he was transferred to the 15th LTMB. He was appointed lance corporal in March 1918 and was killed near Sailly-le-Sec on 4th April 1918.

Lance Corporal Otto Piukkula had been born at Abo, Finland, but was working in Adelaide, South Australia, when he enlisted in the AIF in December 1914. He was assigned to reinforcements to the 16th Battalion and joined this unit on Gallipoli. He remained with the 16th Battalion until 1st July 1916 when he was transferred to the 4th Light Trench Mortar Battery. He was promoted lance corporal in October 1916. During the attack at Bullecourt on 11th April 1917, Otto Piukkula was killed. In 1922 his OC at the time, Captain AW Potts MC (later Brigadier of the 21st Brigade in WWII), stated that I clearly recollect the circumstances surrounding the death of 2361 L/Cpl Piukkula, but cannot say what became of his effects. The whole Brigade was withdrawn before we could bury our dead and (if I remember rightly) the 52nd Bn offered to attend to our wounded and the dead. We were notified that effects had been forwarded in their usual way, hence my reference to Piukkula’s belongings in my letter to his mother. His grave was situated at X roads near railway crossing between Bullecourt & Queant.

Of these five men I thought that Boe, Hunter and Piukkula could be discounted as being the unknown lance corporal in Crucifix Corner Cemetery as they were killed on battlefields a fair distance away from this location.

The two most likely cases would have to be Albert Howard and David McDonald, as both were killed closer to the location of Crucifix Corner. Howard of the 12th Light Trench Mortar Battery was killed by a machine-gun bullet to the head at Dernancourt, near the Albert-Amiens Road. Early reports were that his body was not recovered from the battlefield but a map reference is given with a burial reference of ‘62dNE E14C Ref 31012 AT21568’.

Two other men of the 12th LTMB died on 5th April. Corporal 3316 Leonard Henderson was killed in action and is buried at Dernancourt Cemetery while 1956 Lance Corporal Peter Maher died of wounds and is buried at Warloy-Baillon Cemetery.

Lance Corporal McDonald and the 15th LTMB were stationed between Vaux-sur-Somme and Sailly-le-Sec at the time of McDonald’s death on 4th April 1918. The 15th Light Trench Mortar Battery unit diary gives their map positions on 1st April 1918 as J26.D0.3 Vaux Sur Somme and J28.D8.5. Sailly-le-Sec guns covering bridges on Somme River.

For 4th April 1918, the unit diary for the 15th LTMB mentions enduring a very heavy bombardment in the morning followed by an enemy attack on trenches held by English troops in front of their position. They were then relieved and moved to Vaire-sous-Corbie and Hamelet. Two other ranks were listed as killed on 4th April 1918.

A look on the AWM Honour Roll database for 4th April 1918 lists only one member of the 15th LTMB that was killed and that was L/Cpl McDonald. However, there are a few members of the 5th Division listed as killed the same day. It seems that 2497 Private Ernest Nichols, though listed as 60th Battalion, was actually on attachment to the 15th LTMB and was killed with McDonald.

McDonald has no Red Cross file, however Nichols does. Part of the statement from a Private R Walker of the 15th LTMB states:

This man was killed by the same shell that killed Cpl. McDonald, they were both in the same gun team and were standing to ready for action when a shell burst over them killing them instantaneously & wounding Pte Lewis. Pte Nichols was buried besides L/Cpl McDonald and a cross was placed over them, this grave was also cleaned up by me on 25-8-18 and is now in good order but the crosses have been destroyed by shell fire. This grave has been passed on to the Graves Registration but is in a field, not a registered cemetery, the exact locality of both graves is: Extremeg edge of Sailly-le-Sec at T.28 D. 95. 50. Sheet 62 O. 1/40,000.

Private Nichols is also commemorated on the Villers-Bretonneux Memorial. In his service records it states that ‘Buried by Lieut A.C. Davies at Sailly-le-sec at T.28 D 95 50, Sheet 62D, France, 1/40,000’.

Geographically, McDonald was killed closer to Crucifix Corner and I thought he would be the most likely of the five Lance Corporals to be the one buried in this ‘Unknown Soldier’s’ grave.
After researching the above I contacted the Commonwealth War Graves Commission to see if they could tell me whether the burial returns state what battlefield the ‘Unknown Lance Corporal’ in Crucifix Corner was retrieved from. They sent the response that:

According to our records, the unidentified L/Cpl of the Australian Light Trench Mortar Battery who is now buried in V.B.1. in Crucifix Corner Cemetery was found at trench map ref. 62d.P.25.a.4.4 (alongside two soldiers from the 2nd Bn. Rifle Brigade who were killed 23rd April 1918).

This map reference did not correspond to the map references of either of the two men who I thought would most likely be the unknown lance corporal. The map reference for the burial supplied by CWGC shows the spot to be in the vicinity of the 9th Brigade’s action in early April or the 15th Brigade’s during their counter-attack on April 25th 1918.

The problem is that no lance corporals of the Trench Mortars listed on the Villers-Bretonneux (VB) Memorial were killed in that location. I also checked the Trench Mortar privates listed on the Villers-Bretonneux Memorial but none corresponded to this area.

The closest unknown Trench Mortar person listed on the Villers-Bretonneux Memorial would be Corporal Harry James of the 13th LTMB who was killed 26th April, but he is in himself another mystery. According to James’ service record he was exhumed from the railway station near V-B village to Adelaide Cemetery in Plot II, Row R, which doesn’t exist, as Plot II in Adelaide only goes to Row Q!

Did the war graves units err in the map reference from where they retrieved the unknown TM lance corporal? (I recall reading there was some problem with morale within the Australian war grave units so maybe this reflected in the accuracy of their records.)

Is the unknown lance corporal actually a British Trench Mortar lance corporal, not Australian (if the map reference is correct)?

If the lance corporal is Australian, could he be a lance corporal from an infantry battalion who was just attached to the Trench Mortars? However, the Trench Mortar insignia was fairly distinctive so this is unlikely.

Or did they make a mistake when transferring Corporal Harry James to Adelaide Cemetery and the unknown lance corporal in Crucifix Corner is him?

On 26th April 1918, the 13th LTMB were stationed near V-B Railway Station. They have no war diary but in the 13th Brigade war diary there is a Battle Report from the O/C 13th LTMB for the battle, in which he states two other ranks were killed. These two men were 3069 Cpl Harry James and 31590 Pte James Forgie. They were both buried under individual grave markers in the form of a cross.

This was confirmed by Private A Hibberd of the 13th LTMB who, in Forgie’s Red Cross file, states that both men were buried side by side. They were buried outside the V-B Railway Station, as seen on the AWM Photo at left. Both men’s service records are similar in that both men are listed as being exhumed from their original grave and taken to Adelaide Cemetery. Both have the same reference for their exhumation (Report Villers-Bretonneux, 10/24E).
Forgie’s records seem straightforward and in 1924 a letter was sent to his relative in Norwood, South Australia, stating that Forgie had been placed in Plot 3, Row P, Grave 5 in Adelaide Cemetery. In June 1919, Harry James has an annotation (from the Director of War Graves) made on his service record in red pen, stating that James has been buried in Adelaide British Cemetery.

A letter to a Mr IE Thompson of Hay St, Perth, WA, on 12th January 1920 states that the late No. 3069 Corporal H James 13th Light Trench Mortar Battery, he is buried in Adelaide British Cemetery, 2½ miles South of Corbie. A photo of the grave in Adelaide Cemetery was actually sent to his family.

Another undated sheet has Harry James as being buried in Adelaide Cemetery, Plot 2, Row R, then an added annotation in red pen says Mem X No. 15 (Lieutenant Peat) L56/590. This annotation was also put on the original burial sheet in red pen, with what looks to be a date of either 1922 or 1923.

So somewhere between James being exhumed from his original grave and taken to Adelaide Cemetery in 1919, and then when war graves authorities checked in 1922/23, Harry James has gone from having an actual grave in Adelaide Cemetery, to the authorities either assuming his cross was a memorial or the cross over his grave being gone altogether. This is really strange, as when they originally exhumed his grave from outside the V-B Railway Station, why would they have said he was exhumed from this grave if all they had discovered was a memorial cross? As stated earlier, this cross was not a memorial one but a cross that actually marked his burial spot.

The more I looked at it the more I think that Harry James is still in Adelaide Cemetery. Somewhere between 1919 and 1922-23, his cross or burial position was lost and they added in the memorial notation. Perhaps he still lies where the vacant Plot 2, Row R would have been. Annoyingly, as the CWGC does not have the burial returns for Adelaide Cemetery it is difficult to prove beyond a doubt that he was actually buried there.

But the question remains: who is the unknown lance corporal of the Australian Trench Mortars that lies in Crucifix Corner Cemetery?

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**Barford St Martin, Wiltshire, UK**

*Chris Munro, Oatley*

The photographs which appeared in *DIGGER* 38 showing Barford St Martin ‘then and now’ prompted a search through the postcard collection of Private 5028A George Joseph Keith Andrews [4th Div. Train].

From August 1916 through to January 1917, Keith was posted at Hurdcott Camp with the 14th Training Battalion. He sent the postcard below [left] home to his family in Haberfield, Sydney, during this time. A recent visit to Barford St Martin allowed me to compare the present day church with the postcard sent nearly 94 years earlier.

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Keith wrote home from Hurdcott Camp to his mother on 3rd December 1916 saying: *I am going to Church down at Barford tonight. It is sometime since I was in a proper church.*

He wrote home again on 16th December 1916, this time to his aunt saying: *I went to Church down at the village the Sunday night before last. It is a very old & pretty Church with nice chimes. The choir consists of 16 little girls, none over 12 & about 8 boys, the oldest being about 14. We occupied the front seat.*

**Endnote:** The Barford St Martin Church tower was visible in Bert Egan’s postcard published in *DIGGER* 38. Another of those First AIF coincidences!
The Adventures of an Australian Nurse, from the Western Front in 1914 to the Balkans in 1915, to the High Seas 1916 to 1919:
Edith Amy Trebilcock, AVH, BRC, QAIMNSR, AANS

Heather (Frev) Ford, Montrose

Although born in England in 1875, Edith Trebilcock migrated to Australia with her family late 1880-early 1881, and this was to be the first of her many sea voyages. After receiving her early education in Ballarat, she trained as a nurse at the Alfred Hospital in Melbourne for three years between 1899 and 1902. Her training over, she left the Alfred and went into Private Nursing, before taking up the position of Matron of the Sir Samuel Hospital in WA, followed by the Laverton Hospital, WA, in October 1911.

Returning to Victoria – no doubt to visit family – Edith then embarked from Melbourne on 9th November 1912 aboard the Wakool for England, arriving in London on 8th January 1913. The Governor-General had sent a letter to the British Prime Minister stating that my Prime Minister would be glad if facilities could be afforded to Nursing Sister E.A. Trebilcock, Army Nursing Service (5th MD) to obtain training at Netley or other Military Hospitals, during her visit to England, on the understanding that no expenditure to the Commonwealth will be incurred thereby.

On her arrival in England she had been directed to present herself to the Matron-in-Chief at the War Office; however it was noted that as of October 1913 she had not done so. Edith instead appears to have been receiving private tuition in midwifery at the Paddington Workhouse Infirmary, and on 9th June, along with 429 other candidates, she passed the Examination of the Central Midwives Board.

Soon after sitting her exam, she boarded the Baltic for America, arriving at Ellis Island on 5th July. During her time in the US, Edith was employed as head nurse of a sanatorium in Highlands, North Carolina, before eventually returning to the UK, where she was residing in August 1914.

Within days of the declaration of war, many ‘well-heeled’ expatriate Australians in England banded together and made an offer to the War Office of an Australian Voluntary Hospital (AVH), staffed and funded by them, to be sent to the front. Upon acceptance of their offer they advertised for staff, and Edith was one of the first 17 (mostly) Australian nurses to volunteer. With the chief organiser, Lady Rachel Dudley, as Superintendent, Ida Greaves from Newcastle, NSW, as Matron, and Colonel Eames, a doctor also from Newcastle, as the Commanding Officer, Edith sailed for France on 28th August 1914 on board Lord Dunraven’s Hospital Yacht, Greta. She takes up the tale in the following letter:

We left Southampton on August 28 for Havre, then the naval base, but the Germans were encroaching so much in that direction that we hurried from the hotel at which we were staying on to the ‘Greta’, the yacht Lord Dunraven had chartered for our expedition. Here we spent several uncomfortable days and nights, and were again landed in Havre, which was so crowded that a bed was an unknown quantity. And very thankful we were to get on board the ‘Asturias’, which brought us down here (St Nazaire), to what has since been the base. Lady Dudley took the best private hospital here, and opened it for officers only, and in a few days we had more patients than we could accommodate. Then we took over a large school adjoining as an annexe. Here we nurse the Tommies, accommodating ninety at a time, and here it is we have done our best work.

In a month we handled 750 cases, and when I tell you that we are but seventeen nurses and our orderlies for the most part are untrained you can imagine something of our work. Many times we have been strained almost to the breaking point, but have managed to endure and do good work. [Their patients were the sick and wounded soldiers from the Mons front.]

It is different from ordinary hospital work. We hear when the trains with the wounded are expected in, and we are ready to receive them. The serious cases are immediately got to bed. Then we feed them all; after which they all have to be washed and their wounds dressed. We have received as many as 170 patients in a day, so you will see our task has not been an easy one. Their wounds are often filthy and sloughing, having in many cases been undressed for two and three days. We hear that many of the hospitals have a great deal of gangrene, but so far we have had none, though we have had tetanus (lockjaw), which is even worse. We have had seven deaths from it ... It is so awful and so hopeless. Here we see in a very small way some of the horrors of war.

Besides the hospital and annexe we have a camp, a postcard of which I will send you ... One evening last week we attended a concert given by our people at the camp. It was a weird affair. A beautiful moonlight night, a waning camp fire, the inner circle composed of sisters and officers, beyond this hundreds of our British soldiers, and on the outskirts crowds of French people. Lady Dudley was sport enough to contribute to the programme, and we wound up the evening by having supper with the officers and afterwards motored home.
Our home is in the corner of the main street, and we see all the soldiers march past – in one direction to the rest camp, after disembarking; in the other, to the front! They win one’s respect, with their cheerfulness and grit. They are always singing as they march, their favourite songs being ‘It’s a long way to Tipperary’ and ‘Oh, you beautiful doll.’ We see thousands and thousands of them pass. ... Then when they return to us wounded and suffering, their cheerfulness one marvels at! Only here and there one meets with one who whines.

We have packed up here and have to quit St Nazaire. Lady Dudley has taken the Hotel Carlton in Paris, but latest news tells us we are not going there. We certainly hope to get nearer the front, but so far know nothing. When our orders come we shall get out speedily.

[Below: Photo of 16 of the 17 AVH Nurses in the camp at St Nazaire in 1914. Australian War Memorial Negative Number P01064.024.]

It was early in October 1914 when they first received the order to pack up and prepare to move again, and eventually they entrained for Boulogne, where they arrived at the end of the month. The new hospital was speedily set up in the Hotel du Golf in the nearby town of Wimereux, and they were soon receiving wounded from the First Battle of Ypres.

A visitor to the hospital made the following interesting observation:

What the Australians lacked they made or invented. An operating theatre was, of course, needed. The most suitable room having been decided on, it was a question of workmen to transform it. There were none. The men were busy lifting and carrying, so three sisters rolled up their sleeves and ‘turned to’ themselves. They scraped every inch of paper off the walls at a rate which would have caused a paper hanger to faint. Then the tallest sister of the three mounted on an improvised scaffold and manipulated the whitewash brush.

During the first week of the makeshift theatre’s existence, 79 serious operations were performed. The staff laboured on with very little rest, not only treating the thousands of wounded that passed through their midst, but also building up a highly efficient and well-equipped hospital as they went.

Perched on a cliff overlooking the sea, they had to contend with bitterly cold winds, and as winter arrived, gales and even blizzards. One such sudden gale managed to take out a window in one of the hospital wards. Luckily for Edith and the other nurses, they were accommodated in a nearby building. The Medical Officers eventually took over the golf course clubhouse, but the majority of the male personnel had to contend with life under canvas, which a blizzard in mid-November soon made ‘short work of’.

[Left: Photo of the Hotel du Golf and AVH encampment. Australian War Memorial Negative Number P01064.017.]

As the fighting continued around Ypres, the staff were continually on alert, ready to pack up and move again at a moment’s notice. However, as it turned out, the AVH remained in Wimereux until July 1916, when it was taken over by the War Office and renamed the 32nd Stationary Hospital. Edith though, had moved on long before this, having returned to the UK in December 1914.
Responding to the urgent appeal from the Serbian Red Cross for assistance in the Balkan States, Edith had volunteered her services, despite the difficulties and danger she knew lay ahead. Disease was raging in the battle areas and the hospital arrangements and equipment were hopelessly inadequate. Together with two British doctors and three other nurses, Edith was to help establish a British Red Cross hospital in Montenegro. The party reached Salonika on 3rd March 1915 and the following is an account of some of their trek through the Balkan Mountains:

In Nish on the following day [the 4th] the party was met by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, who had provided carriages to convey them to clean, comfortable apartments — a thoughtful provision, as they found the town indescribably filthy, with an absolute lack of all sanitary arrangements. Typhus fever was raging there, and the party met the RAMC Sanitary Commission, consisting of 25 doctors, all striving earnestly to relieve the terrible sufferings of the people. In Scopje the visitors were met by Lady Paget, who was there to welcome the members of her own party of nurses, a typhus hospital having been established a couple of days previously. A special car was provided by M. Petchar, one of the Serbian Ministers, who accompanied the party for several days, and was solicitous for their comfort throughout. M. Petchar is a graduate of the Vienna University, and a splendid linguist, speaking seven languages fluently.

The up-hill journey was begun in earnest in Kruchivats, where they found the railway station full of soldiers, many of them sick and wounded, on their way to Nish. The country was beautiful, with many fertile valleys, but the work of ploughing was being performed by women and boys. The Serbian is a soldier before everything, and at the first call all who were capable of bearing arms flocked to the colours. There were many pathetic scenes by the wayside — ruined villages and cottages, with clusters of graves — crude tombstones and crosses decorated with torn flags — evidences of the great struggles which had taken place between the contending forces. In Ugitze the little party was met by the Minister for Foreign Affairs in Montenegro, and the chief of the Serbian Army in that part of the country. At midday the visitors were entertained at an excellent lunch, a very good orchestra playing several English selections, which sounded strange in such surroundings. In the evening they dined at the officers' mess — the first occasion on which women had been admitted. The dinner was served splendidly, and some of the toasts proposed were very complimentary to the British nation. It was touching to see the love and devotion which they entertained towards Britain — a country practically unknown to Serbians until recently. They are a fine people, their soldiers — both officers and men — being brave, intelligent, and of splendid physique. Miss Trebilcock says that she will never forget the kindness and consideration with which they were received everywhere — they were waited upon hand and foot.

After the party left Ugitze the road ascended rapidly. Rain and driving sleet were succeeded by snowstorms, great pine trees bent under their icy burdens, and the effect was grandly desolate. The country through which they were travelling is termed the Switzerland of Serbia, and the panoramas of majestic mountain scenery could hardly be surpassed in any part of the world. Messengers were sent ahead to ensure that meals and accommodation should be in readiness, and nothing could exceed the thoughtfulness of those in charge of the party. The scenery continued indescribably grand and beautiful, and in places where the snow had melted primroses and other flowers were beginning to peep out.

The town of Vadesta, originally an Austrian possession, was found to be in the possession of the Serbs, and the nurses were taken to the military barracks, where the officers gave up their quarters to provide them with accommodation. There were no female attendants, but soldiers, big kindly fellows, were told off to render any assistance desired. It was a novel experience to have a jugful of water poured on the hands while washing, and to have a towel handed over by a giant in uniform, with sword at side. The situation was embarrassing at times, the nurses having to push their soldier servants out of the room in order to obtain a little time for themselves. The officers entertained the party splendidly, and after dinner a number of complimentary speeches were made on both sides. The officers sang, by request, the National Anthem of Serbia, and in return they were given 'It's a Long Way to Tipperary' and other songs of the trenches.

From there onward the mountainous journey became more difficult. In the absence of an engine, recourse was had to an open truck pushed by soldiers, and in another place the journey was made on horseback. At the Montenegrin frontier they were met by an escort of officers, to whose protection they were assigned. Lunch was prepared by an Austrian woman, who had been captured by the Montenegrins, but was being treated kindly. The scenery was still very beautiful, but the accommodation was primitive, and there was nothing in the way of sanitation. A two-roomed shanty would be entered sometimes. One room would be devoted to an entire family, the other being occupied by horses, cows, and sheep. Later the journey was continued on sleighs, which had been sent out to meet them. A comfortable, clean house had been set apart for them, and they were accorded a great reception as they passed through the streets. It was at this stage that M. Petchar, who had acted as guide, philosopher, friend, and interpreter throughout the eventful
journey, bade the party adieu, having to take up his duties again at the Serbian seat of government. In order to secure the prompt transmission of her letter, Miss Trebilcock brought her story to a conclusion, promising to supplement it with a further communication at the first opportunity. [Unfortunately, no further correspondence could be found – Frev.]

On reaching their destination, Edith was in charge of the Infectious Hospital at Plevlie [Pljevlja] until 6th July 1915. Typhus continued to spread after Austrian troops drove thousands of refugees over the frontier from Bosnia and Herzegovina in April, and Austrian aviators wantonly bombed undefended towns, while plans for invasion continued to build. Luckily for Edith, she moved on before these plans came to fruition.

Returning to England, she applied to join Queen Alexandra’s Imperial Military Nursing Service Reserve (QAIMNSR) on 16th August, but her time with this unit was to be short. Having joined for duty at the Military Hospital in Ripon on 21st September; a month later she was tendering her resignation. When asked for a reason Edith stated: I resign because with my experience and ability I feel myself worthy of a better position than that of ‘staff nurse’ which I now occupy.

Obviously finding it difficult to further her career in England, Edith eventually made the decision to return to Australia, and on 24th March 1916 she boarded the Osterley for home.

This wasn’t to be the end of her war nursing however, as in December that same year she enlisted for overseas service with the Australian Army Nursing Service (AANS). Allocated to the No. 1 Sea Transport Section (STS) she embarked on the Orontes on the 23rd of that month, albeit as a staff nurse.

The Sea Transport Sections, of which there were 10, saw service on the transport ships, catering to the medical needs of the reinforcements going abroad, and the invalids returning home. They were established in 1916 as a partial replacement to the random selection of medical staff for each voyage. The idea was to allow the STS staff to meld together and build on their ship-board experiences to create an efficient team, which would remain together through many voyages. The teams generally consisted of a medical officer, seven nurses, a dispenser, a masseur, three NCOs and 16 other ranks to work as orderlies.

Work on the transport ships was of course extremely hazardous, as unlike the hospital ships which flew the red-cross, they were legitimate prey to the enemy. With nerves often on edge, carrying out their nursing duties was made even more difficult by a continually rolling ship, which at times escalated in stormy seas. The cramped, stuffy conditions below decks were worse at night, when lights were masked in brown paper funnels and much of the work had to be done by touch alone. It was one of the services avoided by many, not only because of these difficulties, but also because of the sheer monotony of the voyage. Edith however, seemed well suited to the role, and over the course of the following two years, together with her team, saw duty on the transports Themistocles, Suevic and Marathon.

Whilst in England between each trip, as Edith awaited the return journey, she was granted furlough, and then attached temporarily for duty to either the 2nd Australian Auxiliary Hospital (AAH) in Southall or the 1st AAH at Harefield. Her last trip home on the Marathon began only days before the Armistice, depositing her back in WA on Christmas Eve, her appointment then being terminated in early February of 1919.

Yet again Edith signed on for more. Her reappointment with the AANS was for Special Service for the one voyage only, and this time she was given the rank of sister. Together with AANS Staff Nurse Catherine MacLean and Miss Gilmore of the NZ Nursing Service, she embarked in Sydney on the SS Kursk on 29th May 1919. The Kursk was carrying German Prisoners of War who had been interned in Australia and were now being repatriated. Following their arrival in London on 23rd July, Edith’s appointment with the AANS was again terminated – it had been whispered that she would be taking up new duties in England which may eventually bring her into a new sphere of nursing.

What these new duties were, or whether Edith entered a new sphere of nursing, is unknown, but what is known is she didn’t remain in England indefinitely. The following year she travelled to Canada, and eventually crossed again to America, where in California on 18th February 1921 she was accepted for US citizenship.

Endnotes: Edith was born 17/1/1875 at Luton, Bedfordshire, England (though she usually gave her DOB as 1878) – the daughter of John Trebilcock and Charlotte Croxford. Her father, a grazier, died in 1909 and her mother died in July 1914 while Edith was overseas. Her brother, Harold Trebilcock, born 12/8/1878, served in both the Boer War and WWI. He lost a leg and RTA in 1918 as a 2nd Lieutenant with the 3rd Tunnelling Coy, AIF. Harold died at the Heidelberg Military Hospital on 21/6/1949.
A mistake on his headstone: Private Robert Mills, 3rd Battalion

Yves Fohlen, Quessy, France

One year ago I went to visit Guard’s Cemetery at Lesboeufs. It is a large British cemetery. Of the more than 3 000 soldiers buried there, 190 are Australian; many of whom are unidentified. A special memorial names seven Diggers who are believed to be buried in the cemetery. One of them is 4104 Private Robert George Mills. As I saw that he died on Christmas Day, 25th December 1916, aged 50, I decided to investigate his case to write an article for DIGGER.

Robert George Mills, the son of David and Elizabeth Mills, was born in Parramatta. According to his National Archives service record, he joined the AIF on 17th August 1915, at the age of 19 years and 8 months. He was drafted into the 12th Reinforcements for the 3rd Battalion. On 28th March 1916, Robert disembarked at Marseilles in the south of France. As a private of the 3rd Infantry Battalion, Robert Mills took part in the assault to take Pozieres village and was wounded in action on 22nd July 1916. He was evacuated to Rouen with a gun shot wound lower jaw (lip). Mills was sent to England for treatment. On 29th August 1916 he proceeded overseas to France and on 24th September 1916 rejoined the 3rd Battalion.

At the end of 1916, the 3rd Battalion was holding the front line in the Flers-Gueudecourt sector. The battlefield was a sea of mud and the weather was very cold.

In the unit history, ‘Randwick to Hargicourt’, Eric Wren gives an account of the circumstances which lead to the death of Private Mills:

Christmas eve was the auspicious night selected for the first inter-company relief. The relieving companies for the right half-sector, close to Gueudecourt village, had barely struggled up to the line and taken over, when a chance 77mm. shell found its billet in one of the outposts. The resultant casualties proving to be too much for the already over-worked company stretchers-bearers, volunteers were called for.

The men who volunteered that night for that extra bit of service will never be likely to forget it in this life. Sponsored by the energetic and somewhat excitable ‘Darky’ Scott, a company bearer, the volunteers found their burdens already chilled to helplessness by the biting cold. Swinging them up shoulder high, the bearers began their march, six men to each stretcher. They were hardly clear of the sunken road at Fritz’s Folly before the colossal nature of their task confronted them. The rain, which for three days had poured with relentless persistency, had by now joined every shell-hole into a brimming, waist-deep marsh where the depth of the darkness was rendered even more confusing by the occasional ghostly gleam of a soaring enemy flare. To walk upright under such conditions was utterly impossible. Every man fell time and again into freezing, waist-deep water. A bare six hundred yards, someone guessed it was, from that sunken road to the regimental aid-post, but that trip took nearly three hours!

Private Robert George Mills was one of the wounded men and the account above gives us an idea of his sufferings, and how small his chances were to survive, despite the bravery and dedication of his comrades. He died the next day, on 25th December 1916, from wounds received in action. Mills was buried at Flers Dressing Station Cemetery but his grave was subsequently lost (the marker destroyed by shell fire). A number of unknown bodies (including Mills) were then later moved to Guard’s Cemetery, where a headstone was erected bearing his name and the words ‘Known to be buried in this cemetery’. His epitaph reads: ‘Their glory shall not be blotted out’.

Mills was 20 years old – but on his headstone his age is given as 50. I have checked the AWM Roll of Honour; it gives his age as 20. I have checked the ROH Circular – his age is given as 20. The CWGC register also confirms that Private Mills died aged 20. [Left: Certainly not the face of a
fifty year old: studio portrait of Robert Mills. Australian War Memorial Negative number P08624.085.

I do not know if the CWGC will correct Private Mills’ age of death. This story shows us how we have to always be careful with the information we are given.

Endnotes: (1) Robert’s brother, 282 Private Frank Mills, 3rd Battalion, aged 24, was killed at Pozieres on 26th July 1916. He has no known grave and is commemorated on the Australian National Memorial, Villers-Bretonneux. See AWM photo P08624.083. (2) Additional research by the Editor: Robert gave his father, David Mills, as his next of kin, but his medals and gratuity were granted to his grandmother and foster-mother, Mrs E North, who informed the army that: ‘He [David Mills] never gave a 1/- [shilling] for 20 years towards his support and now he has claimed the lot, over £32.’ Apparently, Robert’s mother died when he was an infant and he was placed in the care of his grandparents. Robert’s kit was sent back to his father. (3) A (likely) cousin, Lance Corporal 1982 Robert Mazzini North served with the 16th Railway Unit. (4) Since Yves wrote his article, the CWGC has informed the Editor and Yves that they will be correcting the headstone error in the next maintenance cycle.

What happened post-war to Corporal 2716 Len Jones, 3rd Battalion?

Ray Black, Dural

Readers may recall my article, ‘Marginal Truths’ in DIGGER 38. Len had made many comments in the margins of his copy of ‘From Randwick to Hargicourt’, the unit history of the 3rd Battalion. Len had assisted its author, Captain Eric Wren, in the writing of the book with a lot of facts as he was in just about every battle. Len’s marginal comments on almost every page range from dry Digger humour to blunt, honest Digger criticism. Len’s personal overlay to the book makes it unique with this second voice.

My curiosity about Len led me to Len’s post-war address at Epping, in Sydney’s northwest. I took a chance and knocked on the door. Thankfully, I was greeted by a more than sympathetic owner who knew about Len, and this is where the story really begins.

Len fancied himself as a bugle player and was invited to play at every Anzac Day ceremony at the Epping memorial. Such was his enthusiasm for his bugle he used to play it in his backyard. The neighbours quickly got used to it and in turn, liked it. So did Len’s chooks.

Possums were a menace to Len in his chimney so his remedy was to fire his rifle up the chimney. The possums quickly vacated.

Len and his wife lived in Epping until Mrs Jones passed away, leaving Len alone in the house. His two sons lived overseas but he still had many mates at the Epping RSL Club.

I have the feeling Len wrote those marginal notes in the early 1970s because that’s when he started to code every 3rd Battalion survivor’s autograph in the book with an ‘A’ or ‘D’. Most at that time were ‘D’ [deceased].

About that time, I feel Len wrote at the end of the book that extraordinary philosophical piece about men and war:

I shared a task with men of every type and every social station, and was admitted to a fellowship so rare, as almost to justify the beastliness that made it possible.

There is at least this to be said for war. You live simply, if at all, and you do in the company of men at their best, spurred to a passionate unselfishness by a common purpose, which at other times, is lacking. The tragedy of war is that the sense of fellowship it engenders seems unable to survive the coming of peace.

It is an extraordinary paradox that mutual service, the seed of that all embracing sympathy which would make war impossible, appears to flourish in a blood soaked soil.

I read out those words to the current owners of the house in their living room. It was then they told me Len had passed away in that room. Somehow I think Len would have appreciated hearing his words again.

Len passed away March 14th 1975. He was cremated at Rookwood and his ashes were scattered on the main rose garden.

Endnote: The Editor is pleased to advise readers that member and 3rd Battalion enthusiast Phillip Mannell has obtained a copy of the war memoirs of Corporal Len Jones, which will be serialised in DIGGER, beginning in this issue on page 67.
Tragedy was rarely far away from Australian soldiers serving in WWI and the stories we read are littered with accounts of death and maiming under fire. However, with war being the strange beast that it is, not all soldiers lost their lives in the ‘furnace of battle’. Death could come at any time and often and it could come in a most unexpected manner – even when laughter, good fellowship and relaxed excitement were all around.

Whilst researching 14th Battalion information a number of years ago, I was struck by a simple sentence in Newton Wanliss’ book, ‘The History of the 14th Battalion’. Writing of the famous 4th Divisional Race Meeting, held at Allonville on July 22nd, 1918, Wanliss notes, *The races were a great success, but marred by an unfortunate incident – two officers losing their lives in the first race.*

This passing reference stuck with me for a long time but it was only when I was preparing to lead an adult battlefield tour last September that I decided to investigate the circumstances around the death of these two officers. I certainly discovered another typically tragic story of death. However, this story weaved itself into what was, for many of those Australian soldiers involved, one of the most entertaining and enjoyable days of the whole war.

Sports days organised at various unit levels were common events in the AIF throughout the war. Most were designed to foster unit pride and to keep the men fit, occupied and in good spirits. The 4th Divisional Race Day was designed as a day of entertainment and relaxation. It was a huge, well organised event, with an estimated 11 000 men in attendance.

The day was declared a holiday in the 4th Division and the men were clearly filled with expectant excitement on the day of the meeting, a fact noted in Edgar Rule’s classic, ‘Jacka’s Mob’, when he describes the 14th Battalion’s journey to the racetrack aboard light rail cars: *At 9 am everyone scrambled on to the dinky little trucks and away we went with legs hanging over the side almost scraping the ground. It looked for all the world like a Sunday school picnic.*

In addition to 4th Division personnel and those from other Australian units, there were troops from nearby British, Canadian, American, New Zealand and French units. No-one, it seemed, wanted to miss out on this exciting day of racing, as the 45th Battalion History notes: *They came to this race meeting in motor cars, lorries and wagons, on horses and bicycles, by foot and even in aeroplanes. It was an extraordinary spectacle seeing that it was held only nine miles from the firing line.*

As quoted above, the unique nature of the event was further enhanced with the arrival of aeroplanes from No. 2 and No. 4 Squadrons, AFC, with the 13th Battalion diary noting, *This was probably the first race meeting in the world at which there was an aeroplane stand for AFC visitors.* The 12th Brigade diary notes that about twenty planes landed during the afternoon, some of which were destined to become the centre of attention later in the day.

The men arrived to what would be an eleven card program. The races, in order, were: The Pozieres Stakes, Gallipoli Hurdles, Mouquet Farm Plate, Polygon Wood Jump, Messines Gallop, Bullecourt Hurdles, Dernancourt Flutter, Hebuterne Scamper, Villers-Bretonneux Sprint (in two divisions) and the Hamel Steeple. Races 1 – 8 were for horses, whilst Races 9, 10 and 11 were open to any donk in the 4th Division and run over only 600m. One can only imagine the spectacle of a line of donkeys labouring down the straight with their oversized ‘jockeys’ wielding whips with overblown vigour.

The venue was an undulating field just to the north east of the village (today, the site can be easily found – just across the road from the Allonville Cemetery). The track itself was ‘left-handed’ (running anticlockwise), over 1 200m with a very tight turn into the home straight. Enlisted men were located in the ‘flat’ area inside the course itself, and they had access to a tote, bookmakers, a canteen (selling beer) and a YMCA tent. The officers had their own enclosure outside the course proper – right in front of the finishing line, of course.
The race committee, all officers, ensured that the day was organised to the minute. Each race had prize money and all riders wore coloured silks. Most races were run at catch weights over 11 stone (whatever the ‘jockey’ weighed over that) and Major AW Hyman was appointed as clerk of the scales – using borrowed butcher’s scales. Any race protests had to be lodged within two minutes of the race being run and, in keeping with army discipline, the official starter, Major TAJ Playfair DSO, was authorised to disqualify any rider for disobedience of orders. On the other hand, though, the organising committee made it very clear that betting disputes would not be settled by any officials.

Fielding on the day was a total of eighteen registered bookmakers, made up from the different 4th Division units. Each bookmaker had to pay a 50 franc registration fee and a prize of 50 francs was offered to the ‘best sustained character bookmaker or clerk dressed in fancy costume’. The 48th Battalion Diary notes with some derision that, The bookmakers showed that they had lost very little of their cunning through coming to the war. A five franc totaliser was also in operation and all profits on the day were earmarked for the 4th Australian Division Prisoners of War fund. [Right: Crowds of soldiers and officers watch the finish of a race at the 4th Divisional Race Meeting. Australian War Memorial Negative Number C01748.]

So it was that tragedy weaved its way into this relaxed and enjoyable atmosphere, with drama unfolding in the very first race of the day, the Pozieres Stakes. Run over five furlongs (1 000m) and open to officers of the 4th Division, this opening event was marred by a serious fall involving two horses, Etta, ridden by Captain Robert Smith, and Lady Marda, ridden by Captain Ernest Kemmis.

Whilst I could find no specific record to explain how the accident happened, the result was tragic. Both men died from fractures to the base of their skulls, or, in layman’s terms, broken necks. There are ample references to the race day in unit diaries and histories, however only a small number make mention of the deaths and there is evidence that even those attending the day did not realise how tragic the fall was. Les Carlyon records that Major Hyman wrote of the deaths in his diary and that, Fortunately, we were able to keep the fact from the crowd.

As such, the accident had no real effect on proceedings and the day continued with, it seems, the majority of the attendees ignorant to the aftermath of the fall. With the Bands of the 16th, 46th and 51st Battalions entertaining the crowd, the men thoroughly enjoyed the racing and the socialising, with the 12th Brigade Diary stating that, The meet was indeed a Gala Day and everything went splendidly. The 48th Battalion diarist noted, The race meeting was a huge success and reminded one very much of a country meeting in Australia, whilst the 14th Battalion Diary records, An exceptionally pleasant day was spent .... of just such a nature as to appeal to the interest of Australians.

Inter-unit rivalry was, as normal, quite intense. The 46th Battalion Diary records its personal unit successes of the meet, including a first to Brooks in the Heurberne Scamper and third to Narrow Guts in the donkey Hamel Steeple, which was no doubt an entertaining spectacle. Neville Browning describes in his 51st Battalion history that, A member of the 51st Transport Section won a donkey race to tumultuous applause from the men of the 51st. On this particular day, unit pride and fatter pockets went hand in hand.

By the end of the day, those in attendance had thoroughly enjoyed themselves. However, the day’s entertainment didn’t finish with the last race. It was time for the Australian airmen to fly home and, in keeping with the spirit of airmen of the day, they were not going to simply take off and fly meekly back to their bases.

In what appears a somewhat understated note, the 45th Battalion Diary states that, Members of the Aust Flying Corps ... gave thrilling exhibitions of stunt flying raising loud applause from the crowd. Newton Wanliss goes a little further when he writes, At the conclusion of the day, some Australian airmen carried out some flying stunts of hare-brained character before returning to their aerodrome.

Edgar Rule’s eyewitness description of the scene furnishes a more vivid and perhaps a more realistic picture of proceedings: By the time the races were finished some of them [the pilots] were well shickered but it made no difference to them. They climbed into their machines and before they eventually started for home they did some of the maddest capers I’ve ever seen. They would swoop down on top of us, and if you were close you had to get flat on the ground. They put the wind up more than one. He then goes on to explain how one pilot ran his plane into a shed and tore off the wing.

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This impromptu entertainment put the icing on the cake of a wonderful day for the Diggers, many of whom then enjoyed a cinema show in the nearby hangars put on by the YMCA. Mixed in with all this merriment, though, was the fact that two officers had died. In times of peace, this would have caused all sorts of calamity. However, as news of the deaths circulated, the soldiers who attended, so inured to death and suffering, would have no doubt classed the accident as another of those regretful ‘fortunes of war’ incidents. [Left: A large crowd watches the finish of one of the horse races at Allonville. Australian War Memorial Negative Number E02739.]

So, who were these two Anzacs for whom ‘the fortunes of war’ dealt such a cruel blow?

**Captain Robert James Smith MC and Bar** was from Strathfield, NSW, and was the husband of Isabelle and the father of Thelma and Arthur. By the time of his enlistment on 22nd November 1915, at the age of 39, he had established a successful career with the PMG and was an inspector in the line construction department.

He embarked from Melbourne on 28th January 1916 as a lieutenant in the 2nd Division Company of the Australian Engineers and was immediately transferred to the 4th Division Company Engineers on his arrival in Egypt.

Smith’s distinguished service in the AIF saw him promoted to captain and decorated with the Military Cross on two occasions. His first MC was awarded for action at Pozieres in August 1916, when he organised the laying of cables to the front lines under heavy shellfire over three nights. He gained the Bar to his MC for similar action at Polygon Wood in September 1917. His citation for the Bar to his MC states, in part, The work, which occupied several nights, was carried out under continual enemy barrages, and it was only by his untiring energy and dogged perseverance that it was completed in time. He was also mentioned in despatches (MID) for distinguished and gallant service and devotion to duty in the field during the period Feb 26th to midnight 20th Sept 1917.

Through the first half of 1918, Smith served with the 5th Division Signal Company before being transferred back to the 4th Division in late June. His untimely death at the Allonville races was the subject of an army court of inquiry which reported that, Capt Smith was riding in the Divisional Race Meeting when his horse fell. He was picked up unconscious and died later, same day. The official verdict was that he was accidentally killed and that no blame could be attached to any person in connection with the death. What I did find interesting was a letter in his files, dated 2nd August, from the Officer in Charge of Base Records, which discusses Smith’s death: *I beg to state that his name has been withheld from press copies of Casualty List No. 422, and will appear in official copies only*. I can only surmise that the army did not want any awkward questions from the press about how a decorated officer could die in such circumstances.

**Captain Ernest Henry George Kemmis**, from St Kilda, was the son of Arthur and Mary Kemmis. He attended All Saints Grammar School and, prior to enlistment, was working as an accountant. He was four days short of his 23rd birthday when he applied for a commission on 23rd September, 1915.

Kemmis was allotted to the 10th Reinforcements to the 6th Battalion as a 2nd lieutenant and embarked Melbourne on board the RMS Osterley on 29th September, 1915. After arriving in Egypt in late October, he was transferred to the newly formed 25th Howitzer Brigade in early April 1916. He was then promoted to lieutenant in early June and, after arriving in France at the end of that month, he was transferred to the 13th Field Artillery on 9 July.

Kemmis’ tenure with this unit was short lived as he was wounded in action eight days later on the 17th (some records indicate the 18th) and was admitted to the 7th Stationary Hospital in Boulogne suffering from shell shock. Subsequent medical reports give some general idea as to what happened to Kemmis, but no specific record could be found concerning the nature of the incident.

It certainly had a profound effect on him, though, and his recovery was a long, drawn-out experience. The initial medical report on his condition dated 24th July states, *He is suffering from shell shock. Blown up and partially buried by shell explosion. Dazed for 24 hours. Headache, insomnia, bad dreams. Tremor. Reflexes*. The report indicates that the condition was not permanent and it believed that he would be unfit for duty for nine weeks.
This was clearly a premature assessment, as Kemmis’ records contain a series of Medical Board entries assessing his ongoing recovery over the course of 1916 and 1917. He continually complained of nightmares and headaches and it was noted in one report that ... he is nervous and shaky and has a hesitancy in his speech. It wasn’t until June, 1917, that the condition called neurasthenia was diagnosed. In today’s world, this would be classed as a nervous breakdown.

I found it surprising then, that during the latter months of his recovery, Kemmis was seconded for duty as the aide de camp to the commanding officer of AIF Depots in England. It seems that administrative duties were not beyond him and it may have been just the tonic, as his final medical report of 16th July, 1917 states, He says he is now well. He looks the picture of health. He was classed as fit for general service, however, he was never to see the front line again. On 31st July, he was transferred to 4th Division Headquarters and sent to France as the aide de camp to the division’s commander.

He was promoted to captain in January 1918 and his records indicate that he was to remain seconded to 4th Division Headquarters. So, even though his recovery was slow, there can be no doubt that his organisational skills were appreciated at the top levels of Australian command. After periods of leave and sickness, Kemmis rejoined the 4th Division Headquarters staff on 10th July, just twelve days before his death. The final entry in his records simply notes, Killed Accidentally. Frac of base of skull.

Today, Kemmis and Smith are buried side by side in St Pierre Cemetery in Amiens and I was honoured to visit and commemorate them both last September with the ‘Mackay Remembers’ adult tour group. Tour member, Ian Beanland, a keen racegoer who was taken by their story, delivered a fitting and emotional eulogy, and commemorative cards with their service details and race colours were placed on the graves. [Right: Mike (left) and Ian at the graves of Kemmis (left) and Smith.]

Whilst they did not fall in the ‘furnace of battle’, both men served with distinction and deserve to be remembered with honour. Smith was a decorated officer and Kemmis was a dedicated staff officer who had recovered from a devastating event. The final irony in this sad affair lies, I believe, with the fact that both men were members of the official race day committee. Kemmis had the added responsibility of being the Honorary Race Day Secretary – organising all the nominations and the formation of the race fields. It’s an added disturbing thought to know that they put so much work into organising such a successful day for their fellow Diggers – a day that ultimately cost them their lives.

**Author’s note:** One of Captain Kemmis’ medical reports states that, He says he can’t mount his horse on the left side. He can mount on the right side. His seat is insecure due to his inability to grip. This report was in June 1917, over a year before the race fall. Whilst it would be a long bow to relate this report to any possible cause of the fall, I couldn’t help raise a quizzical eyebrow when I read this.

**Endnote:** Heather (Frev) Ford wrote a shorter account of the Allonville race day in DIGGER 23 (June 2008).
Two Beecroft soldiers

Tony Cunneen, Beecroft

Tony is researching the enlistments from his suburb and has supplied a number of profiles to ‘DIGGER’. Here Tony tells the story of two Beecroft men who were killed in the Great War.

Private 408 Henley Thomas Southwell Bembrick, 3rd Machine Gun Battalion

Henley Thomas (‘Tommy’) Southwell Bembrick was the only son of Thomas Bembrick. Thomas was one of the principals in Dobson & Bembrick, listed as House, Estate, Land and Property Salesman and Insurance Experts of Hornsby. The business’ slogan was Be Your Own Landlord. The family lived at ‘Olessen’ in Murray Road. Henley attended Newington College and joined the AIF on 11th May 1916. His attestation paper records his occupation as a clerk and that he had served 12 months in the militia with the university.

On 25th October, Henley embarked on the Ulysses at Melbourne, bound for England, arriving 29th December 1916. After a few months in camp at Perham Downs and Grantham training on the machine gun he sailed to France in June 1917 where he joined the 9th Machine Gun Company. Within a few months he was one of the many victims of the autumn offensives. He was reported as ‘Missing in Action’ near Passchendaele on 12th October 1917. On that day the II Anzac Corps, as part of the Third Battle of Ypres, attacked Passchendaele. The report of Henley as missing commenced an anxious time for the Bembrick family.

There are many letters on file with the Red Cross reporting the family’s attempts to find out what happened to their ‘boy’. He was little more than 21 years old at the time he went missing. The exchange of letters between the family and the Red Cross reveal the kind of worry and rumours which were associated with reports of being missing in battle. The first enquiry was made by the family to the Red Cross on 26th November 1916. On 26th December 1916 the family had still heard no word so Thomas Bembrick wrote to the Red Cross in London. The letter tells of the terrible news they had received the day after Christmas.

I venture to address you in the hopes you will be able to assist in locating my son … We received a message this morning written by one of his former employers [sic] in the Massey-Harris Co’y Limited in Sydney. In a letter the manager said he was sorry to say that ‘poor Tommy Bembrick fell about the 10th of October’, this within two days of the time given by the military. We had a letter from him dated the 8th October and in that he mentioned he was having 24 hours rest but expected to be again at the front in a day or two and it would appear he must have either fell or been wounded or taken prisoner as soon as he rejoined the front again … In the hope you may have some word by the time this reaches you I am enclosing a short letter to him.

The family was left wondering what had happened to their son. No further news came from the AIF, other than the record that Henley was missing. One of the AIF’s letters to the family asked if they had heard anything from other soldiers regarding Henley’s fate. Thomas replied in early 1918, giving the hearsay he had heard from Henley’s workmate. Scrawled at the bottom of the typed letter is the question: Cannot you do something to help relieve the strain? My wife is very much worried.

It is obvious from the content and nature of the written note that the family was enduring a frightful time. Their best hope for now was the Red Cross. The next report to the family of what happened to Henley Bembrick was from another soldier who knew Henley – Corporal 424 Victor Rhodes. It is not clear exactly when the family received the news, but Victor Rhodes wrote to the Red Cross on 13th January 1918:

Being wounded previous to the 12th of October I was not with the company at that time, but as Bembrick was my chum I have got what particulars I could from others in the company. Bembrick was not on the gun at the time and went over the top with the rest of the boys followed by his No. 2, a boy named Pilgrim. A few moments later a shell landed between Bembrick and Pilgrim and exploded. Since then Bembrick has not been heard of. Pilgrim was picked up some days later, but at the Casualty Clearing Station. I take it that my chum was either instantly killed or died before help reached him. Bembrick was short set, being about 5’ 3 or 4”, had fair hair and I think blue eyes … In losing Bembrick I lost one of the best chums ever a chap had.

Perhaps understandably, Henley’s father Thomas was not satisfied with the second hand accounts. On 19th April 1918 he wrote to the Red Cross regarding his son:
So far we have heard little or nothing that is anyways reliable. I have received a report written by Victor Rhodes, who was a close chum of my boy’s, but I cannot accept his conclusions and are [sic] anxiously waiting further news.

Another letter from **Lance Corporal 1627 E Clayton** seemed to confirm Rhodes’ version of events but stated that ‘nothing had been heard of’ Bembrick since the attack. The Bembricks appear to have taken hope from the discrepancy. In May 1918, Thomas Bembrick tried to find out more information from the AIF, writing that he had received a letter through the Red Cross from Lance Corporal Clayton which was ‘somewhat contradictory of the statement made by Private Victor Rhodes 424’. The AIF replied that Henley was still officially reported as ‘Missing’.

The military records office said that there was ‘nothing in the statement made by Lance Corporal Clayton to assist investigations’. It must have been a terrible time for the family, as the various reports alternatively gave some hope then took it away. Further requests for information were made to the 44th Casualty Clearing Station and later in Germany.

Regrettably the news from the witnesses only confirmed what had happened. Another member of the unit wrote that he had been told by a soldier ‘who had been there at the time’ that Bembrick ‘was blown to pieces by a shell during the stunt on October 12th’. A court of inquiry held in June 1918 found that Henley had been killed in action, 12th October 1917. Henley was 21 years of age. He was survived by his mother, father and four sisters, Olive, Ethel, Doris and Jessie. Since Henley’s remains were never found he has no known grave. He is identified as one of the missing listed on the Menin Gate Memorial in Ypres, Belgium.

The Australians suffered 38 000 casualties trying to take Passchendaele.

**Private 3419 Harry Noel Lea, 17th Battalion**

**Harry Noel Lea**, the son of May and Henry, was a true son of Beecroft. He lived on Beecroft Road, Cheltenham, and attended the Beecroft Public School (which has his name as ‘N Lea’ on its honour board).

Harry was a bank clerk before he joined the AIF in January 1917 and was posted to the 17th Battalion which had been raised at Liverpool, NSW. It is not clear when Harry joined ‘D’ Company of the 17th in France, but he certainly joined a busy unit. In 1917 the 17th was involved in three major battles – at Bullecourt in France in May, Menin Road in September and Poelcappelle in Belgium in October. Poelcappelle was part of the large assault by the Allies known as the Third Battle of Passchendaele. With the 17th Harry experienced the full horrors of trench warfare.

Also serving in the battalion was another Beecroft local, and ex-pupil of the public school, **Lieutenant Arthur Frederick Gilbert**. He wrote a letter to the Red Cross in January 1918, stating:

_I would be very gratified to learn of anything you may have been able to find out (about Harry). He was my oldest and best friend and I was responsible for having him transferred to the 17th. Although I am in the same Unit I know little of his death. I happened to be out of the line during the operation of 9th October and vigorous enquiry on my part yielded but little in account of there being so many of his pals killed or wounded during the operation. I went to the base on 20th October and was informed that he died of wounds at the 14th Australian Field Ambulance on 14th October. On enquiring at that unit I was informed that he did not die with them but with the East Lancs Field Ambulance. I wandered around Ypres for some time visiting the various cemeteries and at last came across my pal’s grave in the ‘Irish’ Cemetery, right in the heart of Ypres._

There were other vague reports noted by the Red Cross – that Harry was seen walking back to the rear, only slightly wounded; another that he was seen lying on the battlefield.

Photos from the Australian War Memorial give some indication of the experiences of both Harry Lea and Arthur Gilbert in the 17th Battalion in September-October 1917. Gilbert’s matter of fact letter does little justice to the actual experience of battle on the Western Front. It’s a poignant image to imagine the young officer wandering around the shattered town of Ypres, looking for the grave of his school friend.

In Beecroft in October 1917, ‘The Cumberland Argus’ had just reported that: the new grass was growing well on the tennis court; there was to be a bazaar for the War Chest; a fund raising concert, the ‘Beecroft Bubble’ and the announcement of a school picnic to be held in Mr Chorley’s paddock at Mount Pleasant in Cheltenham.

_Above right: Photo of Beecroft War Memorial from warmemorialsnsw.asn.au._
Impressions from Etaples and The Somme

Gary Clift, Lindfield, with thanks to Iris Field.

Prior to the First World War, the old French fishing town of Etaples in Picardy was the location of a thriving colony of Australian, British and American artists. At the commencement of the war, all but one artist, Australian ‘Iso’ (Isobel) Rae, her sister Alison and her mother, left Etaples for their home country or Britain. Iso’s mother was in poor health and they decided to remain in Etaples rather than relocate. Iso had studied in Melbourne with artists Tom Roberts, Frederick McCubbin, John Longstaff and Rupert Bunny and during her years in Etaples sold her pictures in the Paris Salon and in London.

The Etaples Army Base Camp became the largest of its kind ever established overseas by the British. It was built along the railway adjacent to the town and was served by a network of railways, canals and roads. These connected the camp to the southern and eastern fields of battle in France and to ships carrying troops, supplies, guns, equipment and thousands of men and women across the English Channel. The camp was a training base, a depot for supplies, a detention centre for prisoners and a centre for the treatment of the sick and wounded, with almost twenty general hospitals. At its peak, the camp housed over 100,000 people and altogether its hospitals could treat 22,000 patients.

During the war, Iso and her sister worked for the Voluntary Aid Detachment of the British Red Cross in one of the YMCA huts. Although Iso was not an official war artist, she was one of only two Australian women artists who were able to depict the First World War at close quarters. She produced about 200 pastel drawings while working for the VAD, depicting everyday events behind the lines in Etaples. The AWM has sixteen of Iso’s illustrations. [Left: ‘Rue de la Gare’ (Station Street – Etaples) 1918 – Iso Rae.]

Iso’s sister, Alison, who also became an accomplished artist, wrote the following letter to a friend in Australia. It provides a graphic snapshot of conditions in Etaples at the commencement of the war and was the last letter received from Alison or her sister Iso until 1929.

27th August 1914

You might like to have a few lines from me now. ... As you will see by the papers we are in the midst of a very terrible war, and I cannot tell you how many thousands of English (British) soldiers have passed through here during the last fortnight on their way to the seat of war. We live quite near the station, and from the upper windows see many of the trains pass. Often we go to the station with postcards, flowers, cigarettes, or anything they like to have. They are all in khaki and look splendid. Some jump out on the platforms to shake hands and talk for a few minutes, before being borne swiftly away again – perhaps forever. Ten thousand passed in one day, last week. Another day, fifteen thousand. They are most generous too – too generous it sometimes seems to us – for they tear off their badges and even braid from their coats, to give right and left to the crowds who go to see them pass. They sing, and laugh, and cheer, and kiss their hands and look so bright and happy – so glad to go.

In the night we are wakened by the thunder of their trains and their singing. One of their favourite songs is “It’s a long, long way from Tipperary”. Today some German prisoners went through and the people – the rough people – just raced in crowds past our house to see them. I don’t know how they can go. After all, any prisoner is a sad sight. But a prisoner of war must be something pitiful.
The saddest sight I have yet seen was one of the largest of the English Ambulance Corps. In one sense this is a magnificent sight, in another it is heartrending. Had I known it was passing through the station I would not have gone for a newspaper just at that moment. It went through in great haste without stopping. The engine immediately followed by a long train of trolleys with a large ambulance wagon on each with its white cover with an enormous scarlet cross on it. It was a startling thing to see suddenly and unexpectedly. I felt I must weep, but kept my British self-possession and only said “Ah!” The soldiers in the carriages behind the trolleys cheered and waved their white flags as they flew past; and two old French people, refugees from some other part of the country, just beside me asked “Are there any wounded?” I could barely open my lips but managed to explain that the Corps was on its way to one of the battlefields.

We have seen enormous numbers of guns, cannons, ammunition pass slowly through this way during the last week. It seems to many of us, both men and women, months since the Tocsin* rang out on the Town Hall bell (it is a sound that one can never forget) and the order for mobilisation went forth. The French were grand at that moment. The tense silence of the hours that followed that order can only be understood by being lived through. I cannot write of all the things we have been through since. We are, I believe, the only English in this town now, and yesterday we were kept in anxiety lest we should have to fly from [sic]. Many people went. But we do not wish to break up our home unless absolutely obliged to do so. Nor do we wish to give mother the trouble of going away. She is no longer young and had a very terrible accident last February, a bad fall, which nearly killed her. She is quite well now I am glad to say. We know a great many men who are at the War and though it is very terrible are of course very interested. Please excuse all mistakes as this is written hastily. We get very few English letters and newspapers just now as all trains are being used for moving the troops about.

(Signed) Your friend, Alison Rae

In 1929, Alison and Iso Rae’s friend, Gladys Penry and her daughter, visited them in Etaples, sailing to England on the RMS Orford and having participated in ‘the first Anzac Day Service to be observed’ on the vessel while sailing through the Red Sea. Part of their tour included a visit to the Somme area and Gladys’ diary extracts give some impression of the area 10 years after the end of the war.

2nd July 1929

Spent a beautiful but sad day today, we paid honour to the boys who made the supreme sacrifice, by visiting some of the graves. We left Paris this morning 8.45 arriving at Amiens about 10 o’clock. Visited the church in which the soldiers slept while on active service. We then passed through Villers-Bretonneux and visited the school which the Victorian school children presented to this town. An inscription on the wall is as follows:

“This school building is the gift of the school children of Victoria, Australia to the school children of VILLERS-BRETONNEUX, as proof of their love and goodwill towards France. 1,200 Australian soldiers, the fathers and brothers of these children, gave their lives in the heroic recapture of this town from the invader on the 28th April 1918, and are buried near this spot. May the memory of the great sacrifices in the common cause, keep FRANCE and AUSTRALIA together forever in the bonds of friendship and mutual esteem.”

We then placed a wreath on the first Australian cemetery we passed, it was a very imposing performance. We saw the wrecked remains of BIG BERTHA captured by the 3rd Battalion on 23/8/1918. The Germans, after its capture, bombed it. We had lunch at ALBERT, which was completely wiped out, but has since been rebuilt. (Very amusing incidents in connection with scarcity of tea and knowledge of the English language.)

We passed and visited many cemeteries, some of the party had graves to find. Each little cemetery was most beautifully kept. POSSIERES [sic] has not been completed yet. The trenches and surrounding No-man’s land where the NEWFOUNDLAND BATTALION fought, is being reserved for a memorial park, and is still, as left when Armistice was signed. Helmets and guns lying by, the wreckage of two aeroplanes, all holding secrets of many tragedies which happened during that dreadful time 1914-1918. Saw a British dugout, which took me all my time to get into, how men existed in them goodness knows. Reports said that this morning the remains of five bodies were found, two of them were identified. As we looked around on the plains now covered with poppies and cornflowers, it seems hardly possible that only 10 yrs ago these same plains were blood stained, and the world was in such upheaval. We arrived back at the hotel at 10.45pm.
Endnotes: (1) * The Tocsin is a special bell on the Town Hall which is rung to warn people of a great fire or war. It is sounded on the first Thursday of each month at 11.00am, for practice. (2) Iso Rae died in England in 1940 aged 83 and Alison in 1945 aged 86. The Rae sisters moved to England in 1934 because of Iso’s poor health. They had lived in Etaples for 43 years. Gladys McIntyre, née Penry, whose diary extract is quoted, is now 103 and living in Victoria. (3) Thanks to Iris Field for letters from Alison and Iso Rae, and Betty Snowden for ‘Iso Rae in Etaples, another perspective of war’. (4) A colour version of the ‘Rue de la Gare’ can be seen at ART19597 on the AWM Collections website.

First Mackay man killed in WWI: Private 683 James Milne, 9th Battalion

Mike Goodwin, Mackay

James Milne, known as ‘Jim’, was the son of John and Annie Milne and has the sad distinction of being the first Mackay (Qld) man to be killed in WWI. He was working as a labourer when he enlisted on 29th August, 1914, being one of the first in Mackay to enlist. He was only 18 when he enlisted, so he would have needed written permission from his parents. He was allotted to ‘D’ Company of the 9th Battalion and sailed to Egypt with his unit as part of the first Australian contingent. Jim landed at Anzac Cove on the morning of 25th April and he was never seen again. His company landed at the southern end of the cove, at Hell Spit (or Queensland Point), and he would most likely have moved to the southern edge of the 400 Plateau at Lone Pine, amongst the scattered groups of his and other battalions. The most likely scenario for Jim is that he was killed on 400 Plateau and that his body lay in the area recaptured by the Turks. This was a common fate for many of the 600 Australians killed on that day. Today, Jim, who was only 19 when he died, is commemorated on the Lone Pine Memorial, which is situated in an area close by where he was most likely killed.

Private 5688 Albert Hucker, 26th Battalion

Mike Goodwin, Mackay

Albert Hucker was the only child of Arthur and Alice Hucker of Shakespeare St, Mackay. He was a carpenter by trade and was also a long serving member of the Mackay Army Cadets. He enlisted on 14th February, 1916, as a reinforcement to the 9th Battalion but was transferred to the 26th Battalion in November, 1916 after he arrived in France. He then spent two months in hospital with influenza and rejoined his unit in late February, 1917, only to suffer a severe gunshot wound to his right arm at Lagnicourt on 26th March. He spent another three months in hospital recovering from his wound (the photo was taken after he had been released from hospital) and he was sent back to his unit in July. Albert was killed in action on 9th October, 1917, as his battalion manned the front line trenches near Zonnebeke. After numerous enquiries by his parents, the adjutant of the battalion wrote a report, stating that Albert was killed by shell fire on the 9.10.17 along with three other members of his company, the same shell being responsible for the four casualties. It is regretted there is no record of place of burial ... and the nature of the operations at the time was such as to emphasise the probability that no burial took place. Albert’s parents could not accept that he had no grave. A letter Alice wrote to the army in June 1919 shows how desperate she was to have Albert’s grave located. The letter reads, in part, I would like to ask if you have any further word in regard to the burial of my dear son (the late) Pte Albert AJ Hucker ... hoping you will excuse one for troubling you, but as he was my only child you will perhaps understand my feelings, as I have seen in the papers that they intend as far as possible to place these graves in a cemetery so I am really anxious to know if they remove my dear son’s body and where it may be found ... Despite her pleas, the army was unable to give her any news of a burial, and both Arthur and Alice were forced to live with the fact that their only child, who died at the age of 22, would never be formally buried.

Above right: Albert Hucker. Australian War Memorial Negative Number H07933.001.
Keeping the memory alive: Civic memorials
Geoff Lewis, Raglan

After the Great War, it was common for local authorities and citizens to erect memorials to commemorate the sacrifice of the Diggers. These can still be found in the names of hospital wards and beds, schools (e.g. Hay War Memorial High School), parks and sporting fields and, commonly, in street names. A quick glance in a Gregory’s Sydney Street Directory index reveals eleven ‘Gallipoli’ and thirty-three ‘Anzacs’, as well as the magnificent Anzac Bridge.

Indeed, I grew up in the Sydney suburb of Daceyville in the 1950s and 60s, a ‘soldier settlement’ development. My school faced Joffre Crescent, which ran parallel to Colonel Braund, Sgt Larkin, Jacka and General Bridges Crescents as well as Haig Avenue. The adjoining suburb of Pagewood contained streets which commemorated Wark, Keysor, Monash, Murray and others. Both suburbs were created in 1919 to house ‘returned men’ and their families, and were designed by Walter Burley Griffin. However, looking back, we young boys and girls were never told of the origin or the significance of these street names along which we walked and played every day.

In DIGGER No. 38, Graeme Hosken wrote an interesting article on ‘Arthur Hall VC Way’, the recently re-named Coolabah-Brewarrina Road in northwest NSW. Hall, a corporal in the 54th Battalion, is well known to FFFAIF members and Graeme’s story and images are worthy of close study of a ‘new’ type of memorial.

On a recent visit to Port Stephens in the Lower Hunter Region of NSW, we encountered what we believe is a unique memorial. Along the Lemon Tree Passage Road we noticed a sign at the village of Tanilba Bay indicating ‘The Avenue of the Allies’. Curious, we turned off to investigate. From the main road, the only indication is a three-piller gateway constructed of large round stones [right]. A little dated in its style of construction, we thought. Behind the pillars is a straight road of about one kilometre in length going down to the water. Each side is bordered by a well-tended sward and a row of eucalypts.

At the far end of the avenue, ending in a small but complex intersection is another structure made of the same stone as the gateway. It is composed of six arches about five metres in height [left]. The middle arch is made of wrought iron and has the name of the avenue on it. On the top of each of the centre pylons is a bollard [below] from HMAS Sydney [bottom left]. Several other white marble plaques are fixed to the pillars: commemorating the discovery of Port Stephens by Cook in 1770; the centenary of Tanilba in 1931 and various local dignitaries.

It is the streets which run off the avenue that have the closest links to the war. The complex intersection is Haig Hexagon, from which radiate Diggers Drive and King Albert [of Belgium] Avenue. Other streets include: President Poincare [of France] Parade, President Wilson [USA] Walk, Army Avenue, Navy Nook (!), Pershing Place, Peace Parade, Clemenceau Crescent, Lloyd George Grove, Monash Close, Victory View, Conquest Crescent, Poilus Parade and Beatty Boulevard. There are no Australian political leaders honoured with street names.

I wonder how many of the local residents and school children know the significance of the ‘Avenue of the Allies’ and the names of the streets? However, it is an unusual way of keeping the memory alive. Do readers know of examples of any other unusual memorials to the Great War?

Endnote: The Editor is always happy to receive photos of memorials members come across.
The Traffic Bloke

It’s like the Bank of England with the buildings blown away,
And fourteen streams of traffic coming every blooming way,
Standing by a shell-hole that used to be a farm,
Is the Army’s Traffic Policeman – he’s got ‘Traffic’ on his arm,
He keeps the traffic moving – well into the night,
Limbers, guns, and lorries wedged in very tight,
Strings of G.S. wagons going down the track,
Tanks and ‘Caterpillars’ crawling up the back,
“Where d’you want to go to? What’s your bally game?
Stop that double banking; what’s your number and your name?
Come on with that convoy – hold up with that moke.”
You have to keep your nob on, to be a traffic bloke.

Compiled by Trevor Munro, Dubbo, as a tribute to the Traffic Control Officers.
Private Herbert Stoops volunteered to go to the rear with orders for a section of his unit during the advance from Bellicourt, on the Hindenburg Line on Sunday, 29th September 1918. While he was returning he was hit by a shell. Shrapnel from the shell hit him in the leg and head, penetrating his temple and killing him instantly. Later that day the surviving members of the 34th Battalion were withdrawn, exhausted, from the front line. It was their last action of the war. Rested, they were scheduled to re-enter the fighting on the day the Armistice was signed.

William Herbert (‘Herb’) Stoops, was born in 1894 in Northern Ireland, and was the son of Andrew Stoops and his wife Lucy of Beech House, Altnamachin, Castleblayney County, Armagh. When he enlisted he was 20 years and 4 months of age, six foot (180cm) tall and almost 12 stone (76kg) in weight. Herb had a dark complexion, grey eyes and dark brown hair. His religious denomination was Presbyterian. He was working as a labourer at Gundy when he volunteered for service in the AIF at Scone on 25th February 1916.

Herb was taken into the 34th Battalion (‘Maitland’s Own’), which had been formed from the men who joined the ‘Wallabies’ during their recruitment march from Narrabri to Newcastle (3rd December 1915-8th January 1916). Herb entered camp at Maitland as the 34th was designated to the 9th Infantry Brigade of the newly created Third Division of the AIF. Herb Stoops was assigned to ‘A’ Company of the 34th, which was commanded by Major Walter Fry.

After two months training the 34th Battalion, led by Armidale school teacher Lieutenant-Colonel Malcolm Lamb, and their 1st Reinforcements boarded a train at Maitland for the trip to Sydney on 1st May. The following day the force embarked on A20 HMAT Hororata and sailed at 4.00pm for England.

On 14th September, General Birdwood gave command of the 3rd Division to Major General John Monash. Monash then put the 3rd Division through a training routine that surpassed the training undertaken by any other Australian Division. He distinguished them from the other divisions by instructing them to wear their slouch hats with the brim turned down and to place the large rising sun badge on the front of their hats.

The 3rd Division trained at Lark Hill (UK) until 21st November, when they sailed from Southampton to France to occupy a quiet section of the line near Armentieres. For active training they carried out raids on the enemy trenches.

On 5th January, during the severe winter of 1916-17, Herb was treated in a field ambulance station for pleurisy. When his condition deteriorated, arrangements were made to transfer him to the 3rd General Hospital in England onboard SS Dieppe. On recovering, he was medically examined and downgraded to B1, unfit for overseas service, and granted two weeks leave in London. Returning from his leave he was assigned to the 63rd Infantry Battalion (of the short-lived 6th Division).

In June, Herb attended a signal school at Weymouth and qualified as an assistant instructor before rejoining his unit on 28th June. On 4th August he attended the brigade’s signal school for two weeks before joining the reinforcements for the 34th (his original battalion) on 18th August 1917.

Herb had a further spell in hospital during the winter of 1917-18 before he returned to France on 14th May 1918. Two weeks later, as the first of the American infantry divisions entered the offensive, Herb was gassed when gas shells rained down on his position. On 21st June he was released from the 49th Casualty Clearing Station.

Herb participated in several ‘fake’ attacks at Hamel before the battle, which lasted only 93 minutes when it commenced in the early hours of the morning of 4th July. This battle was observed by 1 000 newly arrived American troops anxious to observe and learn from the Australians. Following the battle their commander withdrew them for further training. The Australians had captured 1 600 Germans and a great deal of the enemy’s equipment during the battle. Private Henry Dalziel of the 4th Division was awarded a Victoria Cross for his part in this battle.

Four days later all five Australian divisions fought for the first time as the Australian Corps. Led by Lieutenant General Sir John Monash they were joined by a Canadian Division as they advanced on the entrenched Germans east of Amiens, accomplishing all their objectives within two hours, capturing 450 German artillery pieces including a 28cm gun mounted on a railway carriage (the barrel of which is on display at the Australian War Memorial).

The Germans suffered 27 000 casualties. The Australians were elated by their victory, with many believing it was the beginning of the end for the German Army. Captain Charles Robert Duke MC is quoted as saying ‘it did my men more good than six weeks in a rest camp’.

Private 201 Herbert Stoops, 34th Battalion

Harry Willey, Scone
Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig, who had always been critical of the Australian troops, broke down and wept as he told the victorious troops, ‘You do not know what the Australians and the Canadians have done for the Empire during this day’.

On 22nd August the 9th Infantry Brigade fought at Bray-sur-Somme, where Dennis Mychael from Moonan Flat received a Military Medal. Six days later they took part in the capture of the village of Curlu. On 29th September, as they attacked the Hindenburg Line near Ronsoy, Herb Stoops was killed.

Herb Stoops was buried five yards from where he fell at Doleful Post, east of Ronsoy, by Private George Alexander Woods of Cessnock and Private Herbert Frank Tew. His remains were later exhumed and re-buried at 212 Unicorn Cemetery, Vend’huile, Aisne, France, in grave I.H.5.

William Herbert Stoops is commemorated on Scone District Memorials as ‘H. S. Stoops’, an unexplained error. These memorials display several surnames spelt incorrectly with an equal number of names showing the wrong initials. In my book, ‘Scone’s Fallen ANZACs’, I have used the names as they are on the Scone Memorial Gateway for the title of each story, giving the correct names in the text.

Recently the secretary of the Scone RSL Sub-branch has received communications from the Stoops family in Northern Ireland, requesting that Stoops’ correct initials be shown on the Memorial Gateway.

Then and Now: The Hill 60 Tunnellers’ Memorial

Graeme Hosken, Dubbo

Most Australian visitors to the Belgian sector would visit Hill 60, where the Memorial to the Australian Tunnelling Corps stands in a small grassed area [right]. The photo on the left shows the Memorial as it appeared when first constructed on the shell-torn battlefield.

Above: Postcard taken from Eddy Lambrecht’s Facebook page.
Midshipman Armitage and the loss of the Ballarat
Greg Swinden, Evatt.

It is well known that during World War I, over 330,000 Australian troops were transported by merchant ships to the killing fields of the Middle East and Europe. Less well known is the fact that the same merchant ships also transported many hundreds of RAN personnel to the Northern Hemisphere as well. Throughout the period 1914 to 1919 there was a steady stream of RAN officers and ratings traversing the oceans of the world as passengers in merchant ships, on their way to join ships in the North Sea, the Mediterranean, the Pacific and South East Asia. Many also returned to Australia, via merchant ship, to take up new postings or for discharge as ‘medically unfit’. A few of these men died en route, from illness or injury, but none from enemy action. One man, Midshipman George William Armitage, however, had the dubious honour of being onboard the troopship HMAT Ballarat when she was sunk by a German U-Boat in the English Channel on 25th April 1917.

Armitage was born at Houghton, South Australia, in July 1899 and joined the navy as a member of the first entry of cadet midshipmen to the RAN College in 1913. After graduation from the college in 1916, Armitage and his fellow 22 classmates, were promoted to midshipman. They were then attached to HMAS Cerberus (the old monitor based at Williamstown Naval Depot) to await a merchant ship that would take them to England to join ships of the British Grand Fleet. Armitage was one of six midshipmen allocated to the battleship HMS Canada based at Scapa Flow. Amongst this draft to Canada was Midshipman John Collins (later Vice Admiral Sir John Collins) who became the first RANC graduate to become the Chief of Naval Staff.

On 17th January 1917, 22 newly promoted Australian midshipmen joined the troopship A5 (RMS Omrah) for passage to England. Armitage, however, was not amongst them. As a result of an eye injury he was left behind and was not fit to travel until mid February. On 19th February he joined the troopship A70 (HMAT Ballarat) at Port Melbourne and departed Australia for the war. During his time in Ballarat he was officially posted to HMAS London Depot, which was the standard procedure for all RAN personnel travelling in troopships from Australia to England (and vice versa) during World War I.

Ballarat was a P & O passenger liner built in 1911 whose master on this voyage was Commander GW Cockman, DSO, RNR. (As was typical of the times, all Merchant Navy officers held commissions in the RN or RAN Reserve). The ship was on her thirteenth troop-carrying voyage of the war and had onboard over 1,550 Australian personnel, including AIF reinforcements (mainly infantry but also men for machine gun companies, light railway units and medical units). There were also chaplains, female nurses, civilian munitions workers and a single RAN midshipman. She also carried a mixed cargo of copper, gold bullion, bags of wheat and general stores. The crew of Ballarat consisted of about 220 personnel, being the ship’s officers, seamen, stokers, cooks and stewards, wireless operators, sickbay staff and a gun crew. The bulk of the crew were merchant mariners but generally the wireless operators, signallers and gun crew were RN or RAN Reserve personnel.

After leaving Melbourne she crossed the Bight to Albany where she arrived on 24th February. After a brief stay she proceeded to Fremantle where she arrived three days later. Shore leave was allowed and some superstitious stokers deserted the ship, believing her thirteenth voyage was unlucky. After leaving Fremantle in early March, the Ballarat crossed the Indian Ocean and arrived at Cape Town, South Africa; it was here that the troopship re-coaled. The quality of the coal taken onboard at Cape Town was to prove to be inferior and hamper the ship’s passage northwards.

On 23rd March 1917, Ballarat sailed from Cape Town, leaving behind the usual assortment of sick troops in hospital and ‘overstayers’ of leave. The troopship headed north along the African coast and reached Sierra Leone on 6th April. She then linked up with a convoy of other ships on 10th April for the final passage to England, but she soon began to fall behind due to the poor quality of the Cape Town coal and could only manage nine knots (compared to her normal speed of 14 knots). Although the ship’s master requested approval to divert to St Vincent (southern Portugal) for coaling, this was refused and the rest of the convoy slowed down to match Ballarat’s slower pace.

While the AIF troops onboard undertook a variety of communal duties and training to keep them occupied, young Midshipman Armitage was most likely kept employed by the ship’s officers on bridge watches and seamanship training, which was standard practice for junior naval officers embarked in

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78 The Royal Mail Steamer Omrah arrived in England in early April 1917. Omrah continued as a troopship until sunk by a U-Boat on 12th May 1918 off Cape Spartivento, Sardinia.
troopships. As an officer he was also kept apart from the main body of troops and avoided their overcrowded living conditions and poor food.

By early on the morning of 25th April 1917, the convoy had reached the English Channel and the convoy was ordered to disperse, with Ballarat directed to head into the port of Plymouth escorted by the destroyer HMS Phoenix. As it was Anzac Day, the embarked AIF men were allowed a day of relaxation and began to prepare for disembarkation that evening. At about 1400 hours, however, the quiet of the day was shattered when a single torpedo struck the ship right aft, destroying the starboard propeller and flooding the engine room, as well as putting the ship’s 6 inch gun out of action. The main steam pipe was fractured and the ship eventually slowed to a halt.

Ballarat had been sighted by the German submarine UB 32 about 24 miles south-west of Wolf Rock. The commander of the U-Boat ordered a single torpedo fired at the midships section of the troopship, but the torpedo had been sighted by the ship’s lookouts and Cockman ordered the vessel to turn away from the torpedo track. The turn almost allowed the torpedo to pass down the ship’s starboard side, but luck was with the Germans that day and the troopship was hit in the stern. [Above: HMAT A70 Ballarat, sourced from Bill Woerlee’s website: http://alh-research.tripod.com/ships_lh.htm.]

The troopship began to settle slowly and this allowed ample time for the crew and embarked troops to conduct an orderly transfer to the destroyer Phoenix or to leave the ship in the lifeboats. Other ships, including the destroyers HMS Hardy and HMS Lookout, were dispatched to assist picking up the ship’s crew and troops. Not a single life was lost in this operation and all personnel were disembarked that evening at Devonport and spent the night in the barracks. The next day the men were dispersed to their training bases and Armitage began his journey north by train to Scapa Flow.

Meanwhile, back in the English Channel, the Royal Navy drifter Midge took the deserted Ballarat in tow and began the attempt to get the vessel to port. The next day, however, the ship continued to fill with water and she eventually sank in 44 fathoms of water eight miles off the Lizard in Cornwall. Commander Cockman was congratulated by the Admiralty for his actions in attempting to avoid the loss of his ship and also for getting the entire crew and troops off without a single casualty. King George V also complimented the embarked troops for their actions in the orderly evacuation of the ship.

Armitage joined HMS Canada in early May 1917 and served in her until October 1918. Although Canada was a veteran of the Battle of Jutland in May 1916, her career in 1917–18 was notably quiet; either spent at anchor in Scapa Flow or in arduous patrolling of the North Sea, in all types of weather, in search of the elusive German Fleet which, after Jutland, remained mainly in port.

In late 1918, Armitage was transferred to the Australian destroyer, HMAS Torrens, where he obtained his Bridge Watch Keeping Certificate. He then pursued an unremarkable career in the RAN as a seaman officer, serving in a variety of ships including the destroyers Huon, Stalwart and Success and the cruisers Melbourne and Sydney. He was promoted to sub lieutenant in 1918, lieutenant in 1920 and lieutenant commander in 1928. While temporarily attached to the seaplane tender HMAS Albatross in 1929/30, he was court-martialled for being absent without leave and was severely reprimanded and lost a year’s seniority. In July 1930, as a result of a general reduction in RAN personnel numbers due to the Great Depression, he was placed on half pay for a year. In July 1932 Armitage was effectively discharged from the navy by being transferred to the Emergency List of Officers.

George Armitage secured a job in the Taxation Department as a clerk in April 1932, and returned to his native South Australia. He returned to naval service in July 1941 and served in the shore bases Torrens (South Australia), Cerberus (Victoria), Lonsdale (Victoria), Brisbane (Queensland) and Moreton (Queensland). During the period September 1942 to January 1943 he was briefly in command of the converted ferry HMAS Koopa (employed as a depot ship for Fairmile motor launches in Moreton Bay). On

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79 HMS Phoenix was an Acheron class Torpedo Boat Destroyer commissioned in 1911 and sunk on 14th May 1918 by U-27.
80 During the period 1929-1933 a large number of naval personnel were discharged and recruiting virtually stopped in order to reduce overall Defence costs during the Depression. Personnel were offered the opportunity to be discharged, but when not enough men came forward, men were involuntarily selected for discharge. In some cases this was done by ballot but in most cases this was done by Divisional Officers who selected the less capable men or those who had earned themselves a reputation as ‘trouble makers’. Officers selected for ‘reduction’ were generally the less capable or those who had blotted their ‘copy book’ in some way.
8th April 1943 he was discharged as ‘Permanently Unfit for Naval Service’ and resumed his job with the Taxation Department.

Overall, George Armitage had a long but unremarkable career in the RAN, spanning two world wars and the peace that intervened. Despite his lengthy career perhaps his most exciting memory was that day in April 1917 when a torpedo slammed into the stern of the Ballarat and eventually sent her to her final resting place at the bottom of the English Channel.

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**Chief Signalman Irwin Chamberlain, Royal Australian Navy**

*Andrew Pittaway, Fremantle*

**Irwin John Chamberlain** was born in Fremantle, WA, in 1892 to Charles and Harriet Chamberlain. He was one of six children, with Harold John being born in 1884; Eunice May in 1886; Charles Gordon in 1889; Glyn Roy in 1894 and Effie Harriet in 1898. The family lived at Price Street South Fremantle. Irwin had a love of the ocean from a young age, which was only natural as his father was a boat builder and also worked for the Harbour and Lights Department in Fremantle.

Irwin was educated in Fremantle and during this time he joined the naval cadets. He continued this service after leaving school when he joined the naval reserve.

At the outbreak of the Great War, Irwin was called up for naval duty around Fremantle Harbour and he continued this service into 1915. On 19th November 1915, Irwin was killed in an explosion on a naval launch in the Harbour. The following article in the Western Mail describes what happened:

*A sad fatality occurred at Fremantle shortly after 8pm on Friday, the victim being a naval reservist named Irwin John Chamberlain, aged 23 years. Deceased was doing duty alone on the District Naval Officer’s launch which was moored at Victoria Quay near ‘B’ Shed, when by some means at present unexplained an explosion occurred, and in an instant the launch was in flames. Chamberlain was seen splashing about in the River next to the launch, and a man named John Paton and the members of the crew of the ‘Lady Forrest’ went to his rescue without success, for he sank. The body was not recovered until 9.30pm when WPC Clarke, with dragging appliances, brought the remains to the surface near midstream. Deceased was regarded as a competent seaman, and had risen to the rating of a leading signaller. He was, however, a rather heavy smoker and it is thought in some way he allowed a naked light to come in contact with the benzene which was used for the engine. It is surmised that the force of the explosion blew him overboard and rendered him unconscious. When the body was recovered the head, face and hands were found to have been badly burnt. Although the hull of the launch was practically undamaged, the internal fittings and machinery suffered considerably.*

The funeral for Irwin [above left] was held on Sunday, 21st November, 1915 and was attended by a large crowd including many of his fellow sailors from the Royal Australian Navy Volunteer Reserve. He was buried in Fremantle Cemetery, plot MON A 0330, in the Church of England section. [Right: Irwin’s civilian headstone.]

Surprisingly, Irwin was never included in the Imperial War Graves Commission lists of war dead. In June 2011 an application was made [by Andrew – Ed.] for Irwin’s name to be included on the Commonwealth War Graves Commission’s database. This was accepted in December 2011 and Chief Signalman Irwin John Chamberlain’s name is now listed among the Australian war dead of the First World War.

Irwin’s brother, **Charles Gordon Chamberlain** (No. 3174) enlisted in the AIF on the 2nd August 1915 and went away with reinforcements to the 16th Battalion AIF. He was transferred to the 4th Pioneer Battalion and saw service with them from 1916-1918. He rose to the rank of warrant officer, and in September 1918 was recommended for distinction. He did not receive a medal but was mentioned in Sir Douglas Haig’s despatches of November 1918. Charles Gordon Chamberlain returned home to WA in 1919.
Seeking statue’s story [Letter, December 2011]
I am seeking information about the fate of the soldier statue which originally stood on the War Memorial at Miranda Public School. Photos taken about 1919 show the statue was atop the memorial, but later photos indicate that it was gone.
There is a photograph in the Sutherland Shire library which shows the statue on a horse-drawn wagon with what appears to be WWI returned soldiers.
A hand-painted banner on the wagon reads ‘Despised and Rejected’.
I know that it is a long time ago, but I wonder if any of your readers could throw light onto the reasons for the statue being despised and rejected.

Mark Adams
Mount Annan

Unpopular Digger [Letter, December 2011]
Regarding the letter ‘Seeking statue’s story’ (Your View, December 6). Miranda Parents and Citizens Association suggested a monument be erected to honour the Miranda men who enlisted in World War I. It was built of local stone, some quarried in Sylvania Road and some from the remains of Thomas Holt’s Sutherland House which had burnt down in 1919.
A stonemason of Sylvania, Mr Dunlop, did the work free of charge, aided by local men, and Mr Austen engraved the tablets.
The soldier figure was moulded from cement by George Evans, a bricklayer of the Kingsway, and reinforced with steel.
An old resident, Mick Derrey, said the figure was life-sized and the structure’s total height was about 15 feet (4.5 metres).
Despite some criticism of the figure standing ‘at ease’ and not ‘at attention’, it was unveiled on August 3, 1918, by the Minister for Education, Mr James, with a Scout guard of honour and the Kogarah School Band.
But controversy continued, with some residents upset about it, and one night the statue was pulled down and buried under some stringybarks.

Undaunted, it was unearthed by some Miranda Diggers and stood against a tree with notices reading ‘Old soldiers never die, they only fade away’, ‘He rose again’ and ‘Rejected and despised by the Miranda P & C Association’.
The soldier statue remained on the site of Seymour Shaw Park and Mick Derrey recalled it being in the yard of George Evans about 1923, in full view of tram passengers.
It seems to have been interred about 1933, as an article entitled ‘Sutherland’s unknown soldier’ appeared in our society’s journal, ‘The Bulletin’, in May 1996 recording “… and one day when no one was looking, he was loaded onto a council dray and dumped unceremoniously into the tram cutting at Malvern Road, when it was being filled in, by someone who was not in favour of his existence’.

Merle Kavanagh
Research Officer
Sutherland Shire Historical Society Inc

Memorial may move [Article, February 2012]
An appeal has been launched to move Miranda’s historical war memorial. Built in 1918, the war memorial stands at the northern end of Central Road, Miranda, and is the site of one of the state’s largest Anzac Day dawn services outside of the Sydney central business district, attracting up to 5 000 people.
It originally stood in Seymour Shaw Park but over the years, Central Road was extended, leaving the memorial isolated on a roundabout in the middle of the road.
The memorial’s current location makes it difficult for veterans on Anzac Day, said Bruce Grimley, convenor of the Miranda RSL Sub-branch war memorial relocation committee … ‘We want to move it 15 metres back into the park, to provide a more appropriate place where people can sit and quietly reflect.’
The park has more space to accommodate the growing crowds at memorial services including large numbers of school students. The relocated memorial will have new lighting and be accessible for people with a disability … The sub-branch hopes to have the work completed by the end of 2012.

Jim Gainsford

_The Editor adds:_ Merle Kavanagh revisited the mystery of the Miranda Digger in the same February issue. She had found a quote by a resident that described the statue as ‘a grotesque figure in cement, so badly moulded, that if the face were not placed on one side of the head, it would be difficult to tell which was its front or back’.

Merle believes the statue, christened the ‘Old Digger’, was dumped in the cutting at Malvern Road, but Bruce Grimley has another theory: ‘He is still missing in action but we think he may have been placed in the war memorial when it was dismantled and moved to Central Road in 1965. We will find out when we move the memorial.’

Right: The 2nd February issue of ‘The Leader’ included a photo of the ‘Old Digger’.

_Endnotes:_ (1) Photos of Miranda War Memorial from: http://maritimequest.com/misc_pages/monuments_memorials/miranda_war_memorial.htm (2) Newspaper clippings sent to the Editor of DIGGER by Mrs Joyce Telfer.

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**Book release: ‘On Dangerous Ground’**

FFFAIF Member and well-known military historian/author and university professor, _Bruce Scates_, has released a new book – one with a difference. Bruce has written a novel! The following is taken from the flyer for the book:

‘In this eagerly awaited novel, Bruce Scates, one of Australia’s leading historians, interweaves fact and fiction to re-create the most dramatic moments of the Gallipoli campaign.

‘In 1915 _Lieutenant Roy Irwin_ goes missing at Gallipoli. The young woman who loves him, and the men who fought beside him, commence their search. Four years later, in 1919, historian _CEW Bean_ returns to Anzac Cove with artist _George Lambert_ and soldier _Harry Vickers_ on a mission to uncover what went wrong with the Gallipoli campaign.

‘Forward to 2015, and Dr Mark Troy’s quest to save the Peninsula from development is sidetracked by political intervention and intrigue. However a flirtation with a dynamic young woman from Army Intelligence uncovers long-forgotten documents that may hold the key to preserving Gallipoli’s graves.

‘This is a story about unresolved loss and reconciliation between countries and generations. Steeped in a deep knowledge of the past, _On Dangerous Ground_ asks what Gallipoli means for Australians in the twenty-first century.’

‘On Dangerous Ground: A Gallipoli Story’ is published by UWA Publishing and is available in paperback for $29.95 or as an e-book for $12.95.

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**Vale – Ivan ‘Shrapnel Charlie’ Sinnaeve (1953-2012)**

On 13th March, after a long illness, Ivan passed away peacefully at hospital in Belgium. He was a much valued member of FFFAIF who dedicated his life to the memory of the soldiers from all Allied nations who came to the defence of his homeland in the ‘war to end all wars’. Ivan came close to achieving the fifty-five thousand ‘soldiers’ he set out to make; one for each name on the Menin Gate. The soldiers he moulded were made with the lead from WWI shrapnel shells found on the former battlefields of the Ypres Salient. Ivan embodied the true spirit of Digger Heritage and will be sadly missed. [See http://fffaif.org.au/?p=10453]
Marshall Roy Macdonald was born at Merewether near Newcastle on 2nd September 1893 to David Laurie Macdonald and Annie (nee Marshall). Roy (as he was known) was the second eldest child in a family of six sisters and three brothers. The family home where Roy grew up was ‘Blair Athol’ in Zara Street, Newcastle. Roy’s father, David, was very active in the life saving movement and it was more than likely that Roy and his brothers and sisters were better than average swimmers.

In 1911, Roy and his best mate, Stephen Harold Perry, were selected amongst the 142 senior cadets to travel to England for the coronation ceremony of King George V and Queen Mary. The coronation cadet contingent sailed on the Themistocles in 1911 and was to be overseas for nearly seven months. Roy Macdonald’s 1911 diary has many fascinating entries of this marvellous journey, including visits to famous Boer War battle sites and memorials. Getting closer to England the Themistocles rounded Eddystone Lighthouse on 14th June 1911 at 6.30am, passing the liner RMS Olympic which was on its maiden voyage to America. The Themistocles docked at Plymouth at 7.30am. In Plymouth Harbour were about a dozen destroyers alongside a large number of battle ships anchored in the bay. The ship again departed at 9am, arriving at London at 5am the next day, where it continued onto Tilbury where most of the luggage was landed. Roy recorded in his diary: We again sailed for Albert docks and arrived here at 2.30pm at No. 6 dock where a special train was caught on arrival. We marched to Victoria Street Station and booked the electric train for Crystal Palace. [Right: Roy as a cadet. Below: The Australian cadet contingent arrives at London docks.]

During the first day of the coronation the senior cadets were placed opposite Buckingham Palace. On the second day they were on Westminster Bridge. Later, when the King reviewed the Navy, the contingent was given access to HMS Plucky. The Australian cadets had great success in rifle-shooting at Bisley where they won the Fremantle Cup, beating the Canadian contingent. One phase of the contingent’s activities in England proved to be a revelation to the English people. Included among the cadets were several members of life saving clubs in New South Wales and they gave practical demonstrations of life saving with the reel on beaches at Brighton, Bournemouth and elsewhere. ‘Life saving’ at that time was an unknown art in England. If a bather was in difficulties, crude methods were employed to save him. English folk were greatly impressed with the Australian system and began to implement the Australian methods.

Below is an extract from a London newspaper:  

LORD ROBERTS  
No cadet living will ever forget the kindness and encouragement of Lord Roberts. When they were in London he dined with them frequently, discussed their training with them and encouraged them in every possible way. At that time, Lord Roberts was doing his best to arouse public interest in defence, and one remark he made in the course of an address to the cadets is of lasting interest – a memorial to all that he tried to achieve. He said to them: ‘You are offering us an excellent example – an example which I sincerely hope and trust our people in this country will follow. I consider it a disgrace to them that they should be without the system that you have got in Australia, and that New Zealand has also. Those dominions have adopted the universal military training which is absolutely necessary to the safety of the country, and trust that it will not be long before our people wake up to the necessity of following your example.’ It must be explained that the very day Lord Roberts made
this speech, military training came into operation in Australia, and the cadets paraded to mark the occasion.

The cadets visited places of historical interest in Great Britain, and many of them enjoyed a holiday on the Continent. After seven months of travelling, of many unforgettable experiences and valuable education, they returned to Sydney. Cadets who were present at the Coronation in 1911 were afterwards presented with the King’s Medal by the then Governor-General, Lord Denman, at Government House, Sydney. The expedition, if one may call it such, had a twofold object – first to be present at the Coronation, and second to train the cadets by practical experience for commissioned rank. The success of the latter object was magnificently achieved when the number of cadets who became commissioned officers during the Great War is considered.

Given his military background, it is no surprise that Roy was an early enlistment in the AIF, joining up on 28th August 1914. He had been working as a salesman and was 20 years old when he enlisted. Roy was given the service number of 705 and allocated to the 2nd Battalion, as a sergeant in ‘G’ Company at the Liverpool Camp.

Roy embarked from Sydney onboard the Suffolk on 18th October. In Egypt he was reallocated to ‘C’ Company. [Below: Sgt Roy Macdonald is seated on the right of the front row. With him are the men of No. 8 Section, ‘C’ Company, 2nd Bn. Back row, l to r: Privates AE Dowse, LJ Brownsmith, R Burns, RD Murray, HM Patfield, W Peat, PJ Haughey. Front row: Privates JE Bourke, J Hides, H Courtis, JA Sykes.]

Roy was with the 2nd Battalion when it landed on Anzac on 25th April 1915. Soon after the Landing, Roy wrote a letter home which was later published in the ‘Newcastle Herald’:

LIVING LIKE RABBITS
NEWCASTLE, Wednesday.
Sergeant Marshal Roy Macdonald, a son of Mr DL Macdonald, of Newcastle, writing from the trenches in Gallipoli under date May 10, says: We had a very hard job in making a landing last Sunday week, and suffered heavily. I am glad to say that I have got so far without even a scratch.

Our officers got it hot and strong, most of them being put out of action during the first three days. We are now well entrenched, and hardly ever hear of any casualties. The stray bullets and shells do most damage to us when we are spelling behind the trenches. We live like a lot of rabbits, and you should see us scatter to our holes when the shrapnel starts.

Shrapnel has done all the damage to us; their rifle fire is rotten. I don’t like to think or to say anything of the battle. It is too terrible. Men were killed and wounded all around me. I think Stan Carpenter, of Newcastle, will get the VC or DCM. He swam out to where a ship’s boat of wounded men had been sunk by a shell, and saved some of them.

Referring to the death of Colonel Braund, Sergeant Macdonald says he was a great man, and was twice mentioned in despatches. The 2nd Battalion has made a great name for itself.
At the time of the battle for Lone Pine, Roy was serving with ‘D’ Company. He was most likely killed on the 6th August as the 2nd Battalion charged the Turkish trenches. His death was reported in the ‘Newcastle Herald’, 4th October 1915, one day after his parents learned of the loss of their son:

SERGEANT ROY MACDONALD
HIS DEATH REPORTED

Mr and Mrs DL Macdonald, of ‘Blair Athol’, Zara Street, Newcastle, received a painful shock yesterday, when they were informed in a letter from the front, that their son, Sergeant Macdonald, was killed in action on August 6th.

On September 2nd, Sergeant Macdonald’s birthday, his father cabled best wishes from home, and an hour after received a cable message from the Defence Department, advising that his son was reported missing since 14th August. Since the date Mr Macdonald has cabled to Egypt and endeavoured also, through the Defence Department, in Australia, to glean some tidings of his son, but all without result. The Defence Department promised to make a thorough investigation, but apparently the investigation was not thorough, for the sad news remained to be conveyed in a letter from the trenches. The late Sergeant Macdonald was a member of ‘D’ Company, 2nd Battalion, 1st Brigade. The letter, which is dated August 20th, is from Corporal AC McInnes of the same company as the late Sergeant Macdonald, and is as follows:-

‘Dear Mr and Mrs Macdonald, - It is with extreme regret I am writing, asking you to accept my deepest sympathy in the loss of your son here on the 6th of August.

‘Roy was killed in a bayonet charge, which was described to us by our General as being magnificent. The one great consolation you have is he died like the brave soldier he was. Never flinching in his duty, he had endeared himself to all his comrades; and we can ill afford to lose such lads as he. I was speaking to him a few hours before, and his determination was that the enemy in front of us had to be shifted; and he had the satisfaction of knowing it was done before he went.

Lieutenant Colonel Scobie was lost in the same engagement, HP Brown was wounded. Roy’s many friends have asked me to convey to yourself, Mrs Macdonald, and family, their heartfelt sympathy in your sad bereavement, and assure you when things settle down we will try to attend to his grave just as a brave boy deserves.’

The late Sergeant Roy Macdonald came from one of the oldest families on the Hunter River Valley. His great grandfather (William Macdonald, son of John Macdonald) arrived in Newcastle in the thirties, and was one of the early free settlers on the Paterson River, and the descendants have lived in the Hunter district. The deceased soldier was a direct descendant of Lord Macdonald (Ne Mare et ne Terras). He was 21 years and 11 months old at the time of his death. [Above right: Roy Macdonald in camp.]

Roy Macdonald has no known grave and is commemorated on the Lone Pine Memorial to the Missing, Panel 16. His family did receive his identity disc, which was most likely taken from his body when he was buried (probably hurriedly).

The history of the 2nd Battalion, ‘Nulli Secundus’ (FW Taylor & CW Cusack) talks about the preparations for the charge at Lone Pine:

On his return to his headquarters from the brigade conference at midday on the 5th, Scobie immediately commenced to issue his instructions. He ordered a conference of company commanders and specialist officers for 3pm. Meantime, all ranks were to be issued with, and to sew on, white armbands and white patches, the latter to be placed on the back of the tunic just below the collar, the purpose being to make the men easily and quickly distinguishable to one another from the enemy, all bayonets were to be sharpened in anticipation of close fighting.

The 2nd Battalion war diary had this to say about ‘D’ Company on 6th August [extracts only]:

1730 … ‘D’ Coy with 60 shovels and 40 picks had also reached the Turkish trench, our men could be seen lining the enemy parados … The enemy’s artillery opened with shrapnel. Their machine
guns also came into action at once & combined with the rifle fire from Lone Pine and enfilade fire from the enemy’s trenches further south, the space intervening between our & the enemy’s trenches was heavily swept with fire.

1900 ... All hands busy consolidating the position.
1915 ... The two sandbags carried by every man proved very useful to enable us to build barricades, and helped us to access the Turkish Communication Trench.
2130 Our wounded lying all over the trenches and are temporarily hampering movement.

Aug 7th, 1915 A start made to clear the trenches of dead and wounded.

1215 We find that material captured in our section, includes two damaged machine guns, some spare barrels, a belt filling machine, several boxes of belted ammo, thirty rifles and bayonets, sixty cricket ball bombs and several thousand rounds of ammo.

It seems likely that Roy was killed in the rush of ‘D’ Company across No-man’s land as his men carried picks, shovels and sandbags across to aid in consolidating the captured position. McInnes’ statement in his letter that Macdonald had the ‘satisfaction’ of knowing that the Turks had been ‘shifted’, indicates that Roy may have lingered for a short while after being wounded.

[Left: Roy completed this field postcard the day before he was killed. His message is contained in the words or lines not crossed out. Below, top: Roy’s photograph of the 2nd Battalion lines at Mena near Cairo. Below, bottom: The Sphinx.]

Endnotes: (1) Roy’s cadet mate, Stephen Harold Perry, enlisted as Private 703 in the 2nd Battalion on 18th August 1914. He was promoted to sergeant on 25th September 1914 but didn’t land on Gallipoli as he fell during disembarkation practice at Lemnos on 7th April 1915, injuring his right knee severely enough to see him returned to Australia in July. After rest, he sailed overseas for the second time on 14th April 1916 with the 17th R/2nd Bn. He was wounded in action on 21st February 1917 (now a lieutenant) and RTA 21st July 1917. He embarked for the third time on 2nd February 1918 and spent the rest of the war with the 14th Training Battalion and the Australian School of Musketry. (2) Corporal McInnes’ letter mentions HP Brown being wounded at Lone Pine. Horace Parker Brown also enlisted on 18th August 1914 as sergeant 589 in the 2nd Battalion. He returned to Australia for recovery and re-embarked on 1st May 1916 with the 35th Battalion as a 2nd lieutenant. He was later transferred to the 9th Light Trench Mortar Battery with the rank of
captain. Captain Brown was killed on 12th May 1917. Gunner 571 Swift had this to say: At Le Bizet, some time in May, I saw a Hun aeroplane brought down by our gunners behind our lines. I was in the village at this time and I saw Capt. Brown come out of the Orderly Room remarking that some of the men who were running over to look at it were likely to get hit as the enemy were sure to try to smash the plane. He went over to get the men back. That was about 11.00pm. In the evening I heard from the other fellows that he had got hit by a shell. He was close by the Dressing Station at the time. The men said he was killed but I do not know whether it was instantaneous. I helped to bury him. His grave is in a Military Cemetery at Le Bizet on the left of Houplines. It was a proper military funeral, a chaplain conducted the service. I saw the cross being made for his grave. He was a commander of the 9th LTMB. He treated a man as a man and he was greatly mourned when he ‘went west’. Brown is buried at Tancrez Farm Military Cemetery, Grave ILF.11, Ploegsteert, Belgium. (3) **Private 658 Alfred Charles McInnes** enlisted on the same day as Macdonald. He was wounded three times during his service and finished the war as a sergeant in the 54th Battalion. (4) Memories and mementoes of Roy courtesy of Jean Chase, Shane and Chris Parry. (5) Harry Willey told the story of **Stanley Carpenter DCM** in **DIGGER** 32. ([Left: Roy Macdonald’s service medals and identity disk. Medals – l to r: 14-15 Star; Victory Medal; British War Medal 1914-20 but with War Medal 1939-45 ribbon attached; 1911 Coronation Medal.] (6) Roy reverted to the rank of corporal before the Battle of Lone Pine.

**New South Wales Coronation Cadets Contingent 1911, Worthing, UK**

Roy Macdonald is standing at right in the back row. The cadet second from the left in the back row is **Arthur Barnes** of Wellington, NSW. Most of these young men are likely to have enlisted in the AIF which began some three years later. If readers recognise anyone else in the photo, please contact the Editor.

**Provisional notice of 2012 AGM date and venue**

At the time of printing, the weekend of 15-16th September is the first choice for the 2012 FFFAIF AGM. The preferred venue is **Canberra**. Second choice is 29-30th September, possibly in the **Blue Mountains**. The committee will make a firm decision after further investigation of these possibilities and will notify members of final date and venue via **DIGGER** 40 mail-out and e-mail.
Members of the Recruiting Train, 1917
Graeme Hosken, Dubbo

The photo below was amongst a wonderful collection of photos (nearly all of the 12th Light Horse Regiment) supplied by member Jeanette O’Brien of Narromine. Jeanette didn’t know why, when or where this particular photograph was taken. At first glance, it was obvious by the eucalypt trees and the presence of civilians that the photograph was most likely taken in Australia. When saving the photo I captioned it ‘Picnic with MM winner’ and thought it might make a good cover picture for DIGGER one day.

When I returned to look at the photo a second time, I noticed that the soldier standing to our right of the MM winner (who is standing, centre) was actually wearing a Victoria Cross medal and ribbon on his chest. Who better to identify the soldier than member Harry Willey, who has co-authored a book on VC winners?

It took Harry little more than a second to recognise the VC winner as William Jackson of the 17th Battalion. (Harry, in fact, has researched Jackson intensively and wrote an extensive profile on Jackson in DIGGER 17, pages 31-37.)

Harry’s article in DIGGER mentioned that soon after Jackson’s return from France on 4th July 1917, he accepted the offer of the [NSW] State Recruiting Centre to participate in a recruiting tour, commencing on 9th July. On his first trip, Jackson visited Hay and the village of Gunbar (William’s hometown), where he was greeted as the returning hero (rightfully so, given the deed for which he was awarded the VC).

Harry’s article gave the names of several other members of the recruiting train: Sergeant Camden DCM, Private George Reginald Salisbury MM and Private Stewart MM.

Mention of a ‘Stewart MM’ reminded me of a news item Trevor Munro and I included in ‘Wellington’s Finest’ (T Munro & G Hosken, 2005). The extract from ‘The Wellington Times’ reads:

The recruiting train, which arrived here this morning, had on a good number of men from the west (recruiters). The staff, which is led by Mr FA Buckleton, an old South African veteran, consists of many Anzac heroes.

The outstanding personality is Private W Jackson, VC, DCM. He lost his right arm in the battle of Bois-Grenier, France. Jackson in this battle was going out for his fourth wounded man, when a shell burst over him, blew him back into the trench and blew his arm off. Tying a tourniquet on his stump, he found Lieut Camden (his mate), was still out, and went out after him, and meeting, they got back together, Camden helping Jackson back. Jackson would not allow the doctor to give him an anaesthetic when about to cut the stump off. So the doctor sent for six strong men. When Jackson saw them he asked what they were for. ‘To hold you down,’ said the doctor, ‘your arm must come off at once.’ ‘All right, cut it off,’ said Jackson, holding out his maimed arm, ‘I don’t want any holding down’.

DIGGER
Private Stewart, MM, won his medal when he was only 15 years of age. He was two years at the front, and was never wounded, and won the Military Medal for distinguished bravery in the field. Since his return he has gained promotion, and is now Lieut Stewart of the Commonwealth Military Forces. He is anxious to return to the front, and is only waiting until he is 18.

Lieut Camden, DCM, had a hole blown in his thigh in the Bois Grenier battle while bringing in wounded men. He won his DCM there.

Sergt Salisbury, MM, of the Camel Corps, saw service in Egypt and Palestine, and distinguished himself by gallantly rescuing three wounded comrades.

Sergt Major Donald is known as 'Little Tich,' because of his height. He is a very fluent speaker, is an Anzac, and fought through France.

Corporal McNamara is another Anzac, sent home wounded, and is also a good speaker. At Bourke, according to the 'Western Herald,' McNamara’s speech is described as the finest recruiting effort ever heard there, besides being an elocutionary masterpiece. ‘Not only did he cause the ladies to weep, but brought lumps into good men’s throats, while he struck the ‘red-raggers’ and I.W.W.’s dumb.’

Private Spencer is the chauffeur and he also saw much exciting work with the glorious Army Service Corps at the front.

I came to the conclusion that the photograph was in fact a snapshot of members of the recruiting team from 1917. But, apart from Jackson, who were the others in the photo?

The two young ladies in the photo appear to be sisters, judging by their close resemblance. I thought I could also see some likeness to Jackson and a visit to the NSW Births, Deaths and Marriages website revealed that John and Adelaide Jackson had two surviving daughters old enough to match the girls in the photo: Elizabeth (born Hay, 1896) and Catherine (born Hay, 1901). These girls would have been 21 and 16 years old in 1917.

If the girls are William Jackson’s sisters, then it is likely that the elderly gentleman partly obscured in the back row was John Jackson, William’s father. (William’s mother had died some 11 years earlier.)

Seven soldiers were in the train when they visited Wellington in November 1917, but only six appear in the photograph. This might be explained by the recruiting team travelling by train to Hay, obviating the need for a chauffeur, or it could be that one of the seven was taking the photo. The Model T Ford in the photograph may have belonged to Mr Jackson and conveyed some of the party to Gunbar from the nearest station at Carrathool. (Note that William is wearing the style of dust coat popular with motorists in the early days of car travel.)

Trevor and I could find no ‘Stewart MM’ who had returned to Australia in 1916/17, which left us in a quandary until we discovered (and 3rd Bn researcher Phil Mannell concurred with us and Harry) that ‘Stewart’ should have been ‘Stuart’. Private 3224 Louis Andrew Stuart enlisted with the 7th Reinforcements for the 18th Battalion on 11th August 1915, not long after he had ‘turned’ 18 years. In fact, with a date of birth of 2nd October 1898, he was 16 when he enlisted. His mother and next of kin was Mrs Stephanie Stuart, c/o Doctor Woods, Wellington. The 6th and 7th Reinforcements for the 18th were transferred to the 3rd Battalion and it was while serving with this unit at Flers that Stuart was awarded the Military Medal for conspicuous gallantry in an attack on the enemy’s trenches near Flers on the night 4/5th November 1916, when, under a heavy barrage, he carried messages over 700 yards of shell-pitted country from a strong point to Battalion HQ. He twice did the journey, crossing No-man’s land on each occasion, owing to the heavy rains, he often fell shoulder deep in shell holes and was wet to the skin. He was cheerful throughout and showed an absolute disregard for danger. The information he brought in proved very valuable at a critical stage of the operations.

Stuart returned to Australia with shell shock but possibly because he was also found to be under-age. He was part of the recruiting train until its disbandment and he returned to the Western Front in April 1918, serving as Gunner 39494 in the 3rd Division Ammunition Column.

Presumably, the boyish-looking MM winner in the centre of the photo is Stuart. However, to help with identification my next step was to gather data on the recruiting train team from their service records, with the intention of establishing ‘who was where’ in the photograph. The following table summarises the information I found:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name and age on enlistment; unit/s; pre-war occupation</th>
<th>Physical characteristics</th>
<th>Citation</th>
<th>Enlistment details; fate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pte 3224B Louis Andrew Stuart MM, stated he was 18 but really 16 years. Allocated to 18th Bn, but transferred to 3rd Bn. Later 3rd DAC. Agriculturalist.</td>
<td>WWI service record amalgamated with WWII; not available online at time of writing.</td>
<td>See previous page for MM citation.</td>
<td>RTA second time 23/6/19. Enlisted in WWII and served as V5711 (was a resident of St Kilda, Vic). Discharged 13/11/45; last unit was 11 District Records Office LHQ.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sgt 503 (Lieut) Hugh Allison Camden DCM, aged 23. Served with 19th Bn. Foreman labourer from Moree.</td>
<td>Height 5’7¾”; weight 140lb; fair complexion, green eyes, brown hair.</td>
<td>Awarded DCM for conspicuous gallantry when rescuing a wounded man [Pte Robinson] under heavy fire after a raid on the enemy’s trenches. He was knocked over by a shell while performing this plucky act. He is a fine scout.</td>
<td>Enlisted 1/3/15; RTA 17/3/17. WIA 27/7/16 with gunshot wound to thigh. Discharged 20/6/17. Incapacity pension claim was knocked back as he was ‘not incapacitated’. His widow was living in Neutral Bay in 1967.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pte 2004 (Sgt) George Reginald Salisbury MM; aged 20. First allocated to 3rd Rein/17th Bn, then transferred to 4th Coy, Imperial Camel Corps, 1/2/16. Orderman.</td>
<td>Height 5’4½”; weight 134lb; fresh complexion, brown eyes, black hair.</td>
<td>Mentioned in Despatches for ‘valuable services rendered’ 1/10/16. MM: On 7th August 1916, for assisting to carry out Private Oates (since died) under very heavy fire. He showed great coolness and bravery under fire.</td>
<td>Enlisted 14/6/15; RTA 21/11/16. WIA gunshot, right thigh (severe) 10/8/16. Also suffered from otitis media. Discharged 18/1/17. Was living at Ashfield in 1920 and in Mayfield in 1967.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sgt Mjr Donald was probably CQMS 584 Bruce Glencairn Donald, aged 24. Served with 2nd Bn. Builder.</td>
<td>Height 5’4½” [hence ‘Little Tich’], weight 10st. Dark complexion, black hair.</td>
<td>No award but must have been a good soldier as he was made Colour Sergeant then CQMS. Had eight years militia experience.</td>
<td>Enlisted 17/8/14; RTA 5/7/15. WIA on Gallipoli, 9/5/15 (probably shrapnel wound to back and concussion). Discharged 10/12/15.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporal McNamara was possibly 1782 Pte Andrew McNamara, aged 44. Served with the 13th Bn. Labourer.</td>
<td>Height 5’10”; weight 11st 4lb. Dark complexion, blue eyes and grey hair.</td>
<td>No bravery award.</td>
<td>Enlisted 8/1/15. Wounded on Anzac 7/8/15, gunshot wound to hand. RTA 8/5/16; discharged 14/8/16. Living at Liverpool in 1918.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Spencer was probably Driver 1479 Oliver George Spencer, aged 22. Served with the 17th Ammunition Sub Park, 2nd Army HQ and 8th Army Service Corps. Was a motor driver pre-war.</td>
<td>Height 5’4½”; weight 11st. Florid complexion, light blue eyes and light brown hair.</td>
<td>No bravery award.</td>
<td>Enlisted 16/9/14, RTA 13/2/17. Was troubled by varicose veins and old leg fractures, which he seemed to re-break (‘severely’) in France, 17/9/16. Was sent to Australia for rest but was discharged 17/5/17.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While I cannot be definite about the identity of the final three soldiers, I am fairly confident I have found the right men. Unfortunately, no photos of the six men are in the AWM collection to allow an easy comparison and hence identification.

So, who do I think is where in the photo? Jackson is known, and the MM winner must be Stuart rather than Salisbury, based on his youthful appearance and hair colour. The soldier on the left with the walking stick could be Camden or Salisbury as both received thigh wounds. I’m going with that soldier being Salisbury, as I believe Camden is the one in the officer’s uniform on the right in the front row (kneeling). The soldier standing on the right I believe to be Bruce (‘Little Tich’) Donald, based on his stature. That leaves the soldier at the front, who due to his slightly older face, I am taking to be Andrew McNamara. That leaves Private Spencer behind the camera! If any readers have photos of any of these men, or alternative theories, the writer would be pleased to hear from you.
Endnotes: (1) On June 12th 1915, George Salisbury’s father, Fred, wrote to the army, giving his consent for George to enlist. He stated: Though my only son, I feel that he is only doing what I would have him do & what I myself would do under similar conditions, & trust that he will do his share in making the name of Australia one to be proud of. The only blemish on George’s record was overstaying a hospital leave pass by 40 minutes. (2) The issue of Jackson receiving a VC and a ‘DCM’ is well covered in Harry’s article in DIGGER 17. Jackson was only awarded the VC but there was confusion as to whether he was also approved for the DCM. (3) The author would like to thank Trevor Munro, Harry Willey and Phillip Mannell for help with this story. (4) Louis Stuart’s return to his mother’s home town of Wellington was not without incident, as the newspaper extract below from 15th November 1917 reveals:

MEDAL LOST, THEN FOUND

On Tuesday, when crossing the Macquarie Bridge, Private Stewart, MM, lost his medal, which somehow became detached from its clasp. His distress may be imagined, when it is remembered that this great and honourable distinction cannot be duplicated. He had to leave Wellington heavy with his sense of loss, but fortunately Mr H Dray found the medal, and handed it to Mr H M Blackmore, who has forwarded it on to Private Stewart.

Henderson brothers buried side by side in Adelaide Cemetery

Mike Goodwin, Mackay

Private 3326 Hugh Henderson, 35th Battalion

Hugh Henderson, born on 23rd April, 1899, was the son of Stephen and Helen Henderson and was from Sutton Forest in NSW. He was a student and enlisted on 13th July, 1917 not long after his 18th birthday. Unfortunately, Hugh would not live to see his 19th birthday. He embarked Australia with the 8th Reinforcements to the 35th Battalion on 2nd August and was taken on strength into the 35th in France on 12th February, 1918. His life as a soldier was short, as he was severely wounded on 4th April near Villers-Bretonneux with a gunshot wound that fractured his arm and penetrated his abdomen. It may not have been this wound that killed him, though, as a Red Cross report from Private Atkinson states ... we had just taken over the line ... when Fritz came over that morning, the 4th and Henderson was wounded later on that morning. He walked with another man to the RAP. While waiting with others in an ambulance to take them down to the dressing station a big HE shell burst close by and killed them all. Hugh was initially buried at the side of Amiens Road but his body was later re-interred into Adelaide Cemetery. Hugh’s older brother, Ronald, was killed five days later in a nearby area. In April 1920, Stephen Henderson received a letter informing him that his sons were lying side by side in Adelaide Cemetery.

Lieutenant Ronald Grahame Henderson MC, 18th Battalion

Hugh’s brother, Ronald Henderson, was born on 5th July, 1892 and was working as a bank clerk when he enlisted on 17th April, 1915. He joined the 18th Battalion in Egypt on 10th January, 1916. Ronald was wounded in the thigh by shrapnel in France on 7th June 1916 and spent three months in hospital recovering. After rejoining his battalion in September, he rose steadily through the ranks and was commissioned as a lieutenant on 1st June, 1917. He was wounded again at Broodseinde Ridge on 9th October, 1917 (gunshot wounds to both arms and right hand) only weeks after the action which saw him awarded the Military Cross. The citation for this award reads: As Brigade Intelligence Officer he showed absolute disregard of personal safety during the first 4 hours of the attack on the 20th Sept, 1917 near Westhoek Ridge. Brigade HQ was under constant enemy shellfire. This officer remained at his post throughout, getting most valuable information, and on the capture of the Green line, moved forward and went along the whole line, bringing back an accurate sketch of the front lines. Ronald’s eventful career was cut short when he was killed by a shell explosion in the French village of Gentelles on 9th April, 1918. There are numerous Red Cross accounts, with Private 6838 Frank Sanders stating: On April 9th we arrived in Gentelles just after midnight. A little after 7.30 when we were getting up the Germans began shelling us heavily. One shell fell close to Lt Henderson, who was not far from me, and the concussion killed him; there was [sic] no marks on him. All Red Cross reports support this and they all report that he was buried just out of Gentelles. After the war, Ronald’s body was recovered and he was buried next to his younger brother in Adelaide Cemetery. Captain JB Lane made comment about Ronald’s character, stating He was a fine chap and a very popular officer.

Endnote: On their sons’ epitaphs, Stephen and Helen Henderson described Ronald as ‘Pure & Beautiful’ and Hugh as ‘Noble & Loving’. – Ed.
I was looking at a war memorial in an Australian country town with an old school friend who commented on the fact that she was disgusted at war memorials and Anzac Day because they glorified war. This was what we used to think as teenagers, but I started to reflect that perhaps there were more complex issues underpinning war commemoration. The more I thought about it the more I wondered about the meaning and social function of war memorials and Anzac Day. I then became intrigued with the idea that young people in the 21st Century were going to Gallipoli on ‘pilgrimages’ to attend the Dawn Service on Anzac Day. Why? What were their motives? They would be unlikely to have had a personal sense of grief or loss, in that we tend not to have direct emotional connections with our great-great-grandparents. What did they expect? Why did they see it as important or meaningful? More importantly, what had changed since I was young in the 1960s? I started by looking at myself in relation to the Anzac legend and then began to research the Anzac story.

I do not recall any history of Anzac feeling or participation in our family. My paternal grandparents were immigrants from Italy; my father was too young to enlist in World War II until just before the end of the war and my maternal grandfather did not serve in the army. The war was never a topic of conversation at home and my mother had no recollection of any discussion of the war or Anzac Day when she was young. The first I heard about Anzac would have been at school, although I have forgotten any Anzac activities or ceremonies.

In the 1960s I became more aware of the impact of war, and by association the Anzac story, when conscription was introduced for the Vietnam War. As a student and teenager, I was caught up in the moratorium and protest demonstrations. I say ‘caught up’ as with only a limited understanding of the political or social implications, I was more worried about boys of my own age going into the army and not being available for boyfriend duties. I knew young men who were conscripted and hated it, yet I also knew boys who valued very highly their masculine identity as a soldier. My friend next door had a boyfriend who was a conscientious objector and who only escaped legal prosecution due to the end of both National Service and Australia’s combat role in the Vietnam War. I was very impressed and excited when he was banned from visiting her and we were all forbidden to associate with him. His relationship with his best friend who had joined the Citizen Military Forces (CMF) became strained and uncomfortable. This was probably my first experience of a heightened emotional reaction to war and associated social action. Needless to say we defied the ban and met up with him at university or a café in the city. We did not connect our experience with the old men of Anzac Day.

We saw Anzac Day activity as a ‘boozy’ day when ex-servicemen would get drunk and maudlin together. My friends and I thought this was masculine, chauvinistic, indulgent and somehow glorifying war. The Vietnam conflict, the moratorium and the withdrawal of Australian combat troops further confused us and our naive reactions to the issues. As a young feminist I had a vague distaste for Anzac activities and disapproved of the glorification of war that was somehow implied on Anzac Day.

To try to understand Anzac in the 21st century I started to research the topic and read as widely as possible. I read The Broken Years (1974) by Bill Gammage, Bigger Than Gallipoli (2004) by Liz Reed, then some of Bean’s historical work about World War I followed by Big-noting, the heroic theme in Australian war writing (1987) by Robin Gerster. I watched the film Gallipoli (1981) and found The Anzac Book (1916), edited by Bean, in my local library. I looked at the Australian War Memorial’s website as well as other government websites.

I began to feel some engagement with and compassion for the Anzac story. Gammage, particularly, describes the Gallipoli debacle with detail and sensitivity, and as I read I became, unexpectedly, more sympathetic and understanding. While I can see the irony and manipulation of a positive ‘spin’ on the war and appreciated Gerster’s ability to reveal what and who was being left out, as well the rhetoric used, I found myself ‘falling for it’. I started to recognise the central strength at the core of the myth and thought maybe that is why it has endured. I wondered about public grieving although I came to the conclusion that is not what commemoration is. There is that awful phrase ‘public outpouring of grief’, but that does not quite fit the Dawn Service or Anzac commemoration. There is also that equally meaningless expression of ‘closure’, although that does not apply to something that people do not seem to want completely ‘closed’. Commemorations by their nature keep the issues alive, but provide some containment to make the grief manageable.

Perhaps for individuals who were directly affected it was a way of packaging and dealing with grief over the unimaginable and unnatural death of the young, their children. Maybe for the rest of us it is the
expression of vicarious grief with some relief, or relief with some grief, that it is not us or our children and not in our time.

I decided to go to the next Anzac Day Dawn Service. I think grief is too strong an emotion to describe commemoration. It seems right for a funeral, but not commemoration. There is a sense of distance; the emotion is controlled and ceremonial, a bit removed, with some sanitisation. The statues and memorial plaques either glorify or reduce it to something manageable. It is a ceremonial phenomenon. People making the pilgrimage certainly seem to feel a genuine emotional connection once they are there, but what motivates them to go in the first place? Why does it still resonate in a postcolonial culture? It is undoubtedly a social performance and ritual but with genuine emotional responses. There is a mystique of the military life and the connection of manliness/masculinity with bravery and competence in war. Is this a matter of sensibility or philosophy?

I attended the local Dawn Service and although I recognised the signs and rituals of mourning and commemoration, I was still underwhelmed. I was surprised at the number of people there – probably 600. It seemed very standard with all the right ‘bits’. I then watched the march and the TV broadcast of the Gallipoli Dawn Service. There were also documentaries on various things about Gallipoli and the Anzacs. There was not much on the individuals going to Gallipoli, no interviews or such. Many words loaded with meaning and emotion were used such as ‘sacred’ and ‘national pride’. I have respect for the individuals and the legend, but I was still puzzled by the whole thing.

I discovered from my mother that two of my great uncles served in World War I, one of whom is commemorated on the Menin Gate at Ieper in Belgium. In 2007 the National Archives of Australia released digitised access to the war service records of participants in World War I. My mother and I looked at the records of her Uncle Maynard and it was a surprising experience. He was killed in September 1917 and has no known grave. Looking at the records connected us to him through the text. We also felt connected to the people who were involved with the original documents, the clerks and medical staff who filled out and signed various forms. The records have been scanned and digitised and appear in their original form. Many are handwritten, sepia-coloured digital copies and because of this they seem very immediate and real. His record has 32 pages. Then we saw where his mother had signed a receipt for his effects, medals and a memorial plaque, a year after his death, and that triggered an emotional and grief-like reaction in both of us. We each had a vivid empathy with a grieving mother facing a devastating loss but still having to do mundane things like sign official documents.

There was a connection between myself and my mother as we had a similar reaction to seeing his mother’s – my great grandmother’s – signature on the documents. The public access means that the text also connected me and Mum to the experience of everyone else accessing their grandfather’s and great uncle’s records. I realised there would be a lot of great uncles who died in World War I. Most of them were too young to have been married with a family and so would never be fathers or grandfathers. Mum then remembered that as a child she was instructed never to mention Uncle Maynard’s name within her grandmother’s hearing as it caused her too much distress. This is an example of an active attempt at silent repression for compassionate reasons eventually turning into family forgetting. My mother also recalled two of her uncles who had returned from the war with scarred faces; ‘eaten away by the gas’ was how she described it. She remembered as a child being frightened of these uncles.

This is one way that the myth is perpetuated; now that there are no more World War I veterans still living, various texts are all we have. The increased access to such personal documents as service records also increases the connectivity of the present generation through the texts. This was the moment when I fully understood an emotional connection to Gallipoli and the Anzac legend across the generations. I had a deep sense of loss from looking at the service records of Uncle Maynard. I never knew of him until then and I had no connection with my great grandmother until I saw her signature on those documents [right]. The moment when she signed for those five pathetic items must have been terrible indeed, and the moment my mother and I saw her signature was an emotional moment for both of us.

The irony was that, while feeling sympathy and sorrow for Uncle Maynard, my emotional connection was with my great grandmother.
This emotional response provided the motivation for more reading and study. My further reading opened up other ways of thinking about commemorating Anzac, questioning the role of women in Anzac Day and the role and attitudes of those veterans who refused to be involved in Anzac Day. I also became interested in those soldiers who did not seem to fit the Anzac legend. The consequence of close reading and subsequent analysis was to provide distancing; a ‘step back’ from my personal attachment to the material, as well as a social context. My emotional reaction was smoothed over by the distance of time and knowledge of the broader social and political context in which Uncle Maynard was killed. This is partly what public commemoration is – an attempt to comfort and contain personal grief by sharing in public rituals while allowing the accretion of meaning over time.

Private 7108 Maynard Septimus Waters, 10th Battalion
Graeme Hosken, Dubbo

The photo of Maynard Waters (Dianne’s great uncle) at right wrongly records his date of death as 26th September 1917. The records show that Maynard was killed on the 20th or 21st September during the Battle of Menin Road.

The Red Cross Wounded and Missing Files indicate that Waters must have been killed without any (surviving) eye witnesses to his death. An inquiry was made as to whether Maynard was a POW in Germany, to which the reply was negative. It was then decided that his status be changed from ‘missing’ to ‘killed in action’.

Maynard Septimus Waters, born in Gawler, SA, enlisted on 17th January 1916. He was a 22 year old labourer from Nuriootpa at the time. Maynard was placed in the 23rd Reinforcements for the 10th Battalion (SA & Broken Hill, NSW) and embarked from Adelaide’s Outer Harbour on 16th December. He arrived in the UK two months later and proceeded overseas to France on 3rd May 1917.

Private Waters joined his unit in France on 11th May 1917 and was reported missing in action, 20th/21st September. On 30th September he was marked as KIA. His death seems to have taken place in the area between Glencorse and Polygon Woods.

The five personal items sent back to his mother were two discs, a photo negative, a book of views, leather wallet and a pawn ticket.

[Right: Private Maynard Waters. Australian War Memorial Negative Number P07558.001.]

Endnote: Dianne’s honours thesis was on deserters in the AIF.

Prizes donated for the 2012 John Laffin Memorial Lecture & AGM
The Australian Army History Unit, in conjunction with Big Sky Publishing, has very generously donated seven of their recent WWI publications to the FFFAIF to be used as ‘lucky door prizes’ at the John Laffin Memorial Lecture Day [see back cover] and at the AGM weekend later in the year.

The books are:
- Craig Deayton’s Battle Scarred: the 47th Battalion in the First World War
- James Hurst’s Game to the Last: the 11th Australian Infantry Battalion at Gallipoli
- David Coombes’ Crossing the Wire: The untold stories of Australian POWs in battle and captivity during WWI
- Michael Tyquin’s Forgotten Men: The Australian Army Veterinary Corps 1909-1946
- Kirsty Harris’ More than Bombs and Bandages: Australian Army Nurses at Work in World War I
- Roger Lee’s The Battle of Fromelles 1916, part of the Australian Army Campaigns Series
- Jean Bou’s Australia’s Palestine Campaign, part of the Australian Army Campaigns Series.

These are terrific books and are an added incentive to attend these two functions. Thanks go to the AAHU.
Follow-up: St Anne’s link to the Shellal Mosaic

Trevor Munro, Dubbo

When the Shellal Mosaic was excavated in 1917, some human remains were found beneath one part of the chapel floor. Chaplain Maitland Woods was convinced that the bones discovered during the excavation [see DIGGER 38] were those of the original Saint George, while others thought they may have been the bones of a local priest.

It appears that instead of the bones remaining with the mosaic as it awaited approval to be shipped to Australia, Maitland Woods contrived to send them to his friend Reverend HJ Rose, who was the minister at St Anne’s Church, Strathfield, NSW. Reverend Rose was a good friend of Maitland Woods and was also considered to be an authority on Palestinian history.

Reverend Herbert John Rose [right, standing] had been as keen a soldier as he was a minister. Rose had served as a chaplain with the New South Wales Contingent which had served in the Sudan in 1885. Upon his return to Australia he had been appointed as a rector to the Parish of Redmyre, which included Strathfield, Homebush and Flemington.

In 1900 he was appointed as Chaplain to the second South African Contingent. Rose was later appointed Senior Chaplain to the Commonwealth Military Forces with the rank of colonel; a rank and appointment that he held up until the outbreak of the Great War.

Three of Herbert’s sons would serve during the Great War. Harold, his second son, would die on Gallipoli. Two other sons, Bernard and Lionel, would survive the war.

It appears that ‘George’s’ bones lay in an ammunition box in the vestry of St Anne’s Church for many years. A more appropriate and visible place of rest for George’s remains was finally organized in 1986 when Mary Hall produced three mosaic tiles, inspired by the original Shellal Mosaic. George’s remains were placed beneath the church’s altar, just behind the tiles. Perhaps this resting place was more akin to his original resting place under the Shellal floor.

Reverend Rose [left] died in May 1930, and his funeral was held at St Anne’s. To my knowledge, Reverend Rose’s remains are not underneath the church’s floor.

[Below left: Mary Hall’s three mosaics in St Anne’s are based on elements of the Shellal Mosaic. Below right: The mosaics are on the floor in front of the altar, where ‘George’ is placed.]

Endnotes: (1) Trevor would like to thank Alan Kitchen and Peter Benson for visiting St Anne’s, taking the photographs and interviewing the current minister of the church. (2) Photos of HJ Rose: top right, Australian War Memorial Negative Number A05493; top left: Australian War Memorial Negative number A05405.]
Private 3889 James Thomas Paterson, 25th & 49th Battalions

Graeme Hosken, Dubbo, with thanks to Peter Roberts.

James Thomas Paterson enlisted in the AIF on 31st August 1915. At the time of his enlistment, James was 27 years old and a single farmer from Wallumbilla, Qld. He stood 5’9½” tall and weighed 150 pounds, with dark hair, hazel eyes and brown hair.

James had two years militia experience in the 3rd Light Horse Regiment but was allocated to the infantry with the 9th Reinforcements for the 25th Battalion (7th Brigade). The first three months of his army service saw him training in ‘C’ Company of the 3rd Depot Battalion before he was placed with the 9th Reinforcements for the 25th Battalion. He embarked on the Wandilla on 31st January 1916. Like many of the men who arrived in Egypt at the beginning of 1916, James was re-allocated to another battalion – in this case, James ended up in the 49th Battalion (13th Brigade) on 2nd April 1916 at Heliopolis.

The 49th Battalion sailed for France on 5th June and took one week to reach Marseilles. The men were then trained to Northern France. (James’ service record indicates he spent the period between 9th June and 3rd November 1916 with the 2nd Pioneer Battalion, but his casualty form does not support this transfer. He may have been confused with another soldier who served in the 9th Battalion. However, several letters from his family do carry James’ address as ‘2nd Pioneer Battalion’.)

James was wounded on 14th August 1916 at Mouquet Farm, receiving gun shot wounds to the ‘upper extremities’. He was admitted to the 2nd Field Ambulance then the 13th General Hospital at Boulogne with a shrapnel wound to the right elbow. On 16th August he was embarked for treatment in the UK at the Middlesex War Hospital. James was treated there until 29th September when he was transferred to Perham Downs.

Two weeks leave expired on 19th October and James then was sent to the 13th Training Battalion. He was fit for return to France on 4th December 1916 and reached his battalion on 24th January.

James’ life would be cut short on 5th April 1917 when he was killed at Noreuil. CEW Bean (Volume IV, p221) records the following events: The 49th (Queensland) Battalion, which now took over the line beyond Noreuil, experienced several days of considerable strain while advancing to [the enemy’s advanced posts] ... Shortly before dawn on April 5th Major Fortescue’s company, advancing on a front of 600 yards under a barrage, rushed first [an advanced post in a large road-crater 600 yards from the Australian line] and then the railway cutting, securing a few prisoners. The Germans, however, were still posted along the railway line farther west, and on this flank they resisted stubbornly, a sharp bomb-fight taking place. The Queenslanders barricaded the cutting on their left, but when daylight arrived they found that the Germans had a machine gun in some well concealed position, sweeping straight down it. Lieutenant DS Maunder was killed at the barricade, and no less than 53 of the company’s 120 men were shot down ...

James’ body could not be found or identified, and he is recorded as one of the Missing on the Villers-Bretonneux Memorial.

James’ story reveals a record of service similar to many other Diggers. His service lasted less than two years and his two periods on the battlefields were both short-lived before his wounding in 1916 and death in 1917. He then became one of the over 10 000 Australians with no known grave.

However, his story gains added pathos when Peter explains that James married ten days before he sailed for the war. James married Elizabeth Maud Cahill in January 1916 [right: AWM P09401.001] and his wife was pregnant when James left Australia for Egypt.

Their daughter, Elizabeth Maud Paterson (Peter’s mother), turns 96 this year. She never met her father.

Elizabeth’s letters to the Base Records Office reveal a range of human emotions as she copes with her husband’s absence and later his loss.

Kielbar
Hume St
Toowoomba
12/1/17
To the Major, Base Office, Melbourne
Sir, as I have shifted to the above address if there’s any news on No. 3889 Pte JT Paterson ... as the above soldier was wounded on the 13th August 1916, and as I am his wife I will be very thankful for any news ...

The army did reply, but it appears that the letter was not received due to Elizabeth moving house. (Elizabeth’s frequent changes of address were, at times, the cause of some tension between her and the army regarding missed communications.)

Aubyn Villa
Russell St
Toowoomba
27/2/17
To Base Records, Melbourne
Major Darcy, would you be so kind to let me know my brother is getting on, also my husband, as I haven’t heard from them lately. My brother’s address is No. 2408 Pte Patrick Cahill, 5th Reinforcements, 52nd Battalion AIF & my husband’s address is No. 3889 Pte JT Paterson, ‘C’ Company, 49th Battalion, France.
I would be very thankful if you would let me know what you would.
Believe me I am Elizabeth Maud Paterson.

Base Records replied that there was no report of casualty in respect of her brother and that James had been discharged from hospital on 29th July 1916.

By 13th June 1917, Elizabeth had heard news of her husband’s death. On that day she wrote to the authorities:

Dear Sir
Can you kindly let me know, or has any news come to hand, about my Dear Husband as I am anxious to know as it is true that he has been taken from his child & myself. Surely I ought to receive some of his belongings as they would be very dear to me. ... Also kindly let me know weather [sic] my Brother is well. As I am his next of kin & sister I would like to know if he is still with his unit. Trusting to hear from you very soon as I [am] anxious & heartbroken. [Elizabeth’s emphases.]

The quest for some of James’ belongings would become a long one, beginning in 1917 as shown above and continuing for decades. Letters were written several times in the 1920s and in 1936, writing from El Arish, Qld, Elizabeth (now Mrs EM Smith) wrote:

Enclosed please find postal note for 3/- for copy also would you kindly let me know if by any chance my late husband’s pay book is at your office as I haven’t received same or any of his belongings & I think there might be some news of same as his only child would like to have same. Trusting you will help me if you can oblige.

In the above letter, Elizabeth was requesting a copy of Part 5 of the Villers-Bretonneux Memorial Register containing James’ particulars. The army informed Elizabeth that all AIF pay books have long since been destroyed; also, in the case of this soldier, no personal effects have been returned to this office to date. In view of the length of time that has elapsed since the report of his regrettable loss, it must be reluctantly concluded that none was recovered.

Peter states that James did receive photos of his daughter before his death and he asked that baby Elizabeth be given an ‘Australian’ nickname, rather than some of the names popularly given in those days. His daughter therefore became known by James’ choice – ‘Cooee’ – for a number of years.
‘Death in the snow’: Bombardier Ray Bishop, 16th Bty AFA

From the diaries of Bombardier Ray Bishop, written-up after the war.
Published by Tony Stephens, 'The Sydney Morning Herald', 23rd April 1999.
Additional research by Graeme Hosken, Dubbo.

The round world offers its children a rich profusion of varied sights, charming, magnificent, lovely, awe-inspiring, grand, from the panorama of the stars to the flower under the garden hedge and, among them all, to grown men their first sight of a wide snow scene is a breath-taking experience.

In January 1917, one morning daylight showed the dreary muddy battlefield transformed by unexpected beauty for miles everywhere when for the first time many saw snow, which had fallen heavily and soundlessly before dawn. Creeping out of small dugouts carved in a trench side, we stood bereft of words, noting familiar landmarks, the road, the ruined houses, the jagged tree trunks, even our ugly menacing gun pits, all altered and purified by a new delicate virtue …

The mind directed one to remember the gun inside that mound, the German boot protruding in that shell hole, the covered graves, the half-concealed barbed wire of the one-time front line … the whole uneven landscape was shell holes, the houses were desolate ruins, the trees mostly stumps of trunks.

Beauty is in the mind and spirit, not theprettying up or ornamentation of horror. Soon it was only snow in winter, a new aspect of the savagery separating men, given special bitter poignancy when occasionally a scene recalled a child’s association with the Christmas story.

Infantrymen lay where they died in white clothes … and months afterwards their still unburied bodies were affecting reminders of the snow that had been …

* * * *

It was no matter of pride, but by a fearful awareness that after a time one learnt to distinguish quickly between various kinds of enemy shells, to acquire an instant ability to judge likely proximity on arrival …

Old hands felt it pitifully ludicrous to see new arrivals lie flat or take shelter on hearing the whine of a shell which would burst 100 yards away but the painful experience by which one’s own skill was acquired would produce in the faces and the attitudes of the old hands a terror which the newcomers had yet to learn.

Of enemy shells we first knew the whizz-bang, emitting a scream and a bang, the descriptive name not including the whistle of the pellets, for it was usually shrapnel. Five-nines, if burst in air above, seemed to shatter heaven like a misplaced infernal violence directed to the springs of fear. Nine-twos, powerful and terrible, were used against strong points and guns.

Another kind of shell, high velocity, arrived faster than its own sound waves, having its peculiar alarm and chastening effect when the shell burst close with no prior warning and the high shriek followed and was mingled like additional malevolence with the detonation of the shell.

* * * *

The June 1917 fighting for Messines Ridge was preceded by increased activity of battle and, not unexpectedly, we found ourselves on the way to join in … Close packed among the vehicles, after a long hot day and now on dry burnt grass for bed, there was merriment and good fellowship as we curled comfortably, with boots perhaps for pillows, and in small groups prepared for the sleep of healthy youth.

I woke to earliest morning with startled awareness of trouble, a babble of excitement, a couple of high-velocity shells had fallen close …

Two more shots, this time very close. I could hear Bob Driver raising a laugh in the excitement as we worked feverishly … shouts of men, two explosions again supported by the near but not quite simultaneous shriek of the trajectory. These two among us, some wounded behind me …

Someone named casualties. Among them Driver, red-headed, freckled, always cheerful, willing, courageous and general favourite. His close friends in silent agony of mind for, as he laughed, one of those shells had burst on his standing place on earth and he was just no more.

The shattering effect of his violent vanishing … left them numb and speechless. A sergeant detailed two men to stay and bury the dead. I was one of them … Peace had returned, except in our troubled hearts. Just here perhaps. A shallow grave … one other and Driver, enough room for two.

We sought the remains … one of the men with whom we sailed on the Persic in 1915 … Searching, the gnomes found some of Driver’s mortal remains. With what dread reverence we lifted on our spades to carry for interment. Then again, elsewhere, but in a tree, 20 feet up, yes.

The gnomes cut a long sapling and brought to earth the unrecognisable sacred remains. We used the spades, then from the sapling, cut, formed and erected a cross, and stood silent for a space, craving the gift of salvation for them and ourselves.

* * * *
The preparation for the attack on Passchendaele involved us in the early part of September, 1917 ... I wrote brother Gordon in the 8th Battalion as we’d agreed to do after stunts. After four weeks, mail arrived with no letter from him.

I set out to locate the 1st Division infantry ... I found them, then 8th Battalion, then ‘D’ Company, then 13th Platoon – ‘The third hut along this duckboard, Digger.’

Near 6pm, end of October, wet, cold, dark, I stepped in, closed the door, approached a small group round a candle. The immediate reply – ‘Oh, he was killed in 20th September stunt.’

And, in the silence, one stood up. ‘You’re his brother, aren’t you?’

‘Yes.’

‘I’m sorry, Digger. Couldn’t see. Didn’t know, but you’re like him. Hadn’t you heard? No. Come over and meet these, his friends.’

It happened in early daylight, in front of Polygon Wood.
I expressed thanks, turned away ...

_____________________________________________________________________________

The Bishop brothers
Graeme Hosken, Dubbo

Gunner (later Bombardier) 7980 Raymond Carnegie Bishop enlisted on 16th July 1915. He was a 20 year old junior engineer from 19 Raglan Street, Ballarat (Vic). Ray was allocated to the 16th Battery of the 6th Field Artillery Brigade and embarked on 22nd November.

Ray was awarded three days confined to barracks for ‘leaving his post without being properly relieved’ at Tel-el-Kebir in January 1916. One week later Ray was in trouble again, this time for being ‘absent from cook’s parade’; the punishment was the same.

The 16th Battery arrived in France on 23rd March 1916. Ray was promoted to acting bombardier on 14th November 1916 and received leave to the UK in July 1917.

Bishop was awarded the Military Medal for: on the afternoon of the 31st June 1917, the 16th Battery was heavily shelled and all ranks were ordered to leave the gun pits and seek cover, five casualties having previously occurred. At 3.30pm the camouflage on No. 1 pit caught fire and burnt fiercely, endangering about 300 rounds of shrapnel and H.E. stored in the pit alongside the gun. BSM Crooks called for volunteers to assist him to put out the fire. No. 7967 Bdr Brown JB, No. 7980 Driver Bishop RC, No. 8003 A/Cpl McSweeney J, and No. 9470 Gnr Baker TCR immediately volunteered, and these other ranks at great personal risk succeeded in putting the fire out by throwing buckets of water over it, the water being obtained from shell holes and a well nearby. The whole of the camouflage was destroyed and many sandbags set alight; also a few rounds of ammunition were charred. All the above took place under very heavy shell fire from the enemy’s 5.9s.

Ray received a dose of mustard gas on 29th September 1917 and was admitted to the 3rd Field Ambulance and later to No. 1 Convalescent Depot at Boulogne. He rejoined his battery on 30th October.

A little over one week later, on 8th November, Ray was wounded in the back by shrapnel. After treatment at Wimereux he was sent to the 4th General Hospital in Plymouth, UK. It was not until 12th April 1918 that Ray rejoined his unit. On 25th July, Ray was promoted to temporary bombardier and then promoted to temporary corporal on 8th October.

A contusion to his left elbow incurred on 23rd November saw Ray sent to England for treatment. He did not return to France prior to his return to Australia.

Ray’s brother was Private 6227 Gordon George Hauser Bishop of the 8th Battalion. He was also 20 years old when he enlisted – one year after his brother, on 19th July 1916. He worked as a clerk and was also living with his parents in Raglan Street.

Gordon left Australia on 11th September 1916 and moved from England to France on 21st December, joining his unit on 4th February after spending time at the Etaples ‘Bull Ring’.

He was away from his unit in April and May of 1917 with trench fever. Gordon was killed on 20th September 1917 as the 8th Battalion advanced in the Battle of Menin Road. Corporal 3907 B Ferri stated that Gordon was killed while they were both sheltering in a shell hole – a piece of shell catching Gordon in the back, killing him almost instantly. Private 551 HW Edginton had a different account of Gordon’s death, saying that he was shot through the head by a shell burst on Menin Road. ‘He just spun round and dropped dead.’ Another witness stated that Gordon was hit in the chest by a shell. Private 6511 M Grant told the Red Cross that he saw the casualty lying dead between Glencorse and Polygon Woods. ‘He was severely
wounded in the left shoulder, abdomen and head.’ In a letter to Ray Bishop, the Red Cross informed Ray that his brother was reported to have been buried at Hooge, just in front of Blackwatch Corner, where he fell, and that a temporary cross had been placed on his grave.

According to the Red Cross statements, Lieutenant Joynt (later to win the VC) of the 8th Battalion gave orders for Gordon to be buried. Private 5684 AE Cleary was the soldier who buried Bishop and while doing so discovered that Gordon’s watch was still on the body. He took the watch and later wrote to the Red Cross so that the watch could be returned to Gordon’s parents. Gordon’s service record shows that he was buried south of Polygon Wood and east of Glencorse Wood (probably at V.15.B.4.9).

Despite his grave being marked, Gordon Bishop’s body was either not found or identified after the war and he is remembered on the Menin Gate. His father informed the Department of Defence in 1928 that Gordon’s middle name of ‘Hauser’ had been misspelt as ‘Houser’ and asked that it be amended. The army replied that it was too late to change the printed copies of the Register, but advised that only the soldiers’ initials were engraved on the panels. The Editor checked the CWGC website and found the mistake has continued to this day. An e-mail was sent to the CWGC to see if Gordon’s father’s request for correction of the error can be made; however, their reply requested that a birth certificate for Gordon be obtained and supplied to the CWGC. I would have thought that the father’s letter, in his own hand, would have been enough proof that an error has been made in the spelling of his son’s name – but I’m not a bureaucrat!

Left: Studio portrait of 6227 Private Gordon George Hauser Bishop, 8th Battalion. An accountant of Ballarat prior to enlistment, Pte Bishop embarked with the 20th Reinforcements on HMAT Euripides on 11th September 1916. Pte Bishop was killed in action on 20th September 1917 at Carlisle Farm during the battle of Passchendaele. He was aged 21 years. Australian War Memorial Negative Number P08073.001.

Endnotes: (1) Raymond Bishop’s memoirs are in the AWM Collection as PR01907. (2) No record has been found of a ‘Bob Driver’ on the Nominal Roll, Roll of Honour or NAA files. Presumably, Bishop gave his friend a pseudonym in his memoirs, but the editor has so far been unable to find a suitable candidate for such a moniker from the list of dead from the 6th FAB for the period May to July 1917. It is likely that the soldier held the rank of Driver and was named Robert/Bob. (3) Gordon Bishop had blue eyes, and in the studio portrait above his haunting gaze catches and holds the attention of the viewer. The expression on his face seems to be imploring that he not be forgotten. Through this article DIGGER has ensured he will be remembered.

Forthcoming books from the Australian Army History Unit

Information supplied by Andrew Richardson, AAHU.

Dr David Coombes is finalising the preparation of his book on Bullecourt that focuses on the Australians. In September the AAHU is publishing [FFFAIF member] Michelle Bomford’s book: ‘Beaten Down by Blood: The Battle of Mont St Quentin-Peronne 1918’. A follow-up shorter Australian Army Campaigns Series title will also be released on the same topic.

With CUP later this year, AAHU is publishing Robert Stevenson’s CEW Bean Prize-winning thesis: ‘To Win the Battle: the 1st Australian Division 1914-1918’.

Just released is Graham Wilson’s, ‘Bullybeef and Balderdash: Some Myths of the AIF Examined and Debunked’.

In June we have a second book by Graham Wilson due out, titled ‘Dust, Donkeys and Delusion: The Myth of Simpson and his Donkey Exposed’.

We also have a title being prepared by Michael Tyquin on ‘Gallipoli: An Australian Medical Perspective’, the first title in the new Australian Army Combat Support Series (an adjunct of the Australian Army Campaigns Series).
Western Mail, 22nd October 1915
WESTERN AUSTRALIA’S VICTORIA CROSS HEROES.
CAPTAIN BELL, VC, LIEUT THROSSELL, VC.
(By Hugh Kalypus)
The fact that the cable has flashed to us the news that our own Hugo Throssell is among those whom our King delights to honour is most stimulating, and it is beyond words adequately to express the gratification that the people of his native state must feel concerning the event.

Appropriately named Hugo, he was one of the brave who did go; so now he may be termed Hugo the Victor – Victor Hugo being one of his father’s favourite authors.

Hugo, VC, is the youngest son of the late Mr. George Throssell, CMG, the man who, by his energy and perseverance, lifted the town of Northam from a struggling hamlet to a thriving centre as Minister of Lands and Premier of the State. Lieutenant Throssell’s father will always be held in the highest esteem, and his many admirers will rejoice greatly over his soldier son’s distinction. Lieut. Throssell is an old Prince Alfred College boy; so there is high jinks among his many chums of Kent Town today.

Western Australia now lays claim to two heroes who have been decorated with the Victoria Cross – our first native-born to have secured the coveted piece of muntz metal being Private (now Captain) Bell, who was awarded the Victoria Cross for distinguished gallantry in the Boer War, about fifteen years ago …

Western Mail, 26th November 1915
HOW LIEUTENANT THROSSELL WON HIS VC.
WITH SERGEANT MACMILLAN OF THE 10th LIGHT HORSE.
(Our Special, Correspondent.)
In the list of Australians who had been awarded the Victoria Cross which appeared in the “London Gazette” on the 16th inst, there appeared the following notification of exceptional interest to Western Australians:

2nd Lieutenant Hugo Vivian Hope Throssell, 10th Light Horse Regiment, Australian Imperial Force, for most conspicuous bravery and devotion to duty during operations on the Kaiajik Aghyl (Hill 60) in the Gallipoli Peninsula on August 29 and 30, 1915. Although severely wounded in several places during a counter-attack, he refused to leave his post to obtain medical assistance till all danger was passed, when he had his wounds dressed and returned to the firing line until ordered out of action by the medical officer. By his personal courage and example he kept up the spirits of his party and was largely instrumental in saving the situation at a critical period.

Some details of this engagement were given today by Sergeant MacMillan, a member of the 10th Light Horse, and said to be heaviest man in the Australian Imperial Forces. ‘I first saw Mr. Throssell,’ said Sergeant MacMillan, ‘at Alexandria, and the feeling I had then in regard to him, was that he was just the sort of man I would like to serve under. By a happy coincidence it soon afterwards came about that my wish was to be gratified. I rode out by his side at training and long before either of us heard a shot fired in action he had won my complete confidence. And I knew that he had equally that of every man in the troop, although not a word was said on the subject.

‘Some weeks before he won his VC he got his first chance to prove how right we were. It was on August 7th, when the Light Horse made that charge from Russell’s Top which has been described by Captain Bean in the Australian Press as the Charge of the Australian Light Brigade. It is still a terrible memory with us how we charged into a boil of shell and machine-gun fire and lost hundreds, of brave fellows without over reaching the enemy’s trench.

‘Before we charged, Lieutenant Throssell said to us, “Boys. I am to lead you in a charge. It is the first time I have ever done such a thing and if any man among you has any misgivings he may go with someone more experienced.” But not a man among us made a move.

‘A few minutes afterwards we were facing that awful concentrated fire of rifle, machine gun, and artillery. When Lieutenant Throssell saw we could not get through he ordered us down, and we lay as flat as we could in the scanty cover of a little hollow. Presently a shell fell a little too near to us to be comfortable, and we got the word to retire.

‘Three weeks later came the fight that will always be the most vivid memory of my life. We were marched out of our trenches at Russell’s Top through the deep sap towards Suvla Bay and across a flat to the foot of Hill 60. There we occupied trenches that had been made by other troops.
‘On the morning of August 29th, Lieutenant Throssell went out with a band of officers one of whom was, I believe, a general, to inspect the enemy’s defences. When he came back he told us that we were detailed to capture and hold a vital position. Soon afterwards the general came up and addressed us. He said that a most difficult and important piece of work had to be done and that we had been selected for it. We were to take and hold a trench, the possession of which was absolutely essential to a big operation. When we got it we were to hold on like grim death. The trench was about 80 or 90 yards away and the intervening ground was flat and clear, but it was a fairly long sprint, and when we got the word to go, there was plenty of bullets flying about. But our losses were not very heavy, and when we rushed the trench, most of the Turks bolted from our bayonets.

‘Lieutenant Throssell was on the right, and I was on the left, but I could see him quite clearly. With him were Sergeant Ferrier, a man named McNee, and at least one other. It was the most exposed part of the trench, and these men were building a sandbag barricade and defending it with bomb and rifle. Time after time the Turks came charging to turn us out, and time after time they were thrown back. Then the fighting spirit that I always knew in Throssell showed up. Standing there like a born leader of men in the hottest part of the fight he rallied us again and again. “Stick it, boys! Stick it!” And not a man of us but heard and understood. He led us and fought like one of us with rifle and bomb. There is no man in our troop who knows better how to use the rifle than he does, and he did deadly work with both. So too did Ferrier, whose bomb work was amazing. The other men in that trench also fought in a way that was worthy of their leader, but we were heavily outnumbered and the enemy was daring and desperate. It was a long fight, and a bitter one, and if any man came out of that trench unwounded, I have got to learn his name, but it was our leader who gave us the supreme confidence to hang on.

‘Once he called me, and I had some difficulty in getting from my end of the trench to his. It was not a deep trench, and I am not a short man so I had some difficulty in manoeuvring my way through our own wounded and the dead bodies that had been left by our predecessors. When I got to him he cried, “Hullo. Mac, are they all right down your way?” Then he gave me some instructions, and I manoeuvred my way back again.

‘All the men fought with a pure enjoyment of it, and of the leadership of our chief. One of them only said to me a few hours ago, “It was the best bit of sport I ever had in my life.” I know when I went down with a bomb wound through the thigh I felt wild that I was going to miss the end of it. But we had our bad minutes. One of them was when we lost Ferrier. He had his arm blown off by a bursting bomb, and died of his injuries. He fought like a hero, a figure in the field second only to Throssell himself.

‘Two of our fellows picked me up when I was put out and tried to carry me off. They were both little chaps, and had a bit of trouble, which was made no better when they tried to get me down a narrow sap, and I stuck in it. [Left: Sergeant McMillan stood 6 foot 6 inches tall and weighed 17 stone.] “You must get him out of here somehow,” said someone. “All right,” said they, “We’ll get some of him out anyhow.” One of them took hold of each hand, and they tugged and wrenched till I nearly screamed out in my agony. But in the end they got all of me out, as you see. In the grey dawn I was carried down to the beach, where General Birdwood ordered the stretcher-bearers to stop, and spoke to me. “How are they going on up there?” he asked. “It’s all right, sir,” I answered. “Throssell’s still on top.” I saw him half smile and straighten himself, and I realised what a lot there must be on the mind of a man like that, when such an operation is going on but he gave me the good word, and I passed on. It’s true that he was indeed the soul of Anzac.

‘I didn’t know that Lieutenant Throssell was then carrying on in spite of three wounds – one of them a most severe one. He had been losing men continuously, and those who remained with him were all more or less wounded, but fighting with the utmost grit, and the attacks of the Turks never slackened. The bomb work was inconceivable.

‘Now all that time there was not a man who thought of giving way. I knew they were all brave men, but it seemed to me that there was something a little more than bravery in it that day. There was spirit and “go” in us, if I may put it that way, and it was communicated to us all by our leader. There are many fine young officers in the Australian army, and some of them, no doubt, are much more brilliant than he in parade work. But the man I want to follow, the man to lead me in a big fight, that is Throssell, VC.
‘They hung on till it was possible to consolidate the position, and the possession of Hill 60 was made good. We still have it, so I have the satisfaction of knowing that the 10th made a clean job of it, and that the VC has gone to a man who earned it if ever a man did.’

Western Mail, 25th December 1915
LIEUTENANT HUGO V THROSSELL, VC, 10TH LIGHT HORSE.
At Hill 60, on August 29th, although severely wounded in several places, he refused to leave his post to obtain medical assistance until all danger to the position was passed. Then when his wounds were dressed he returned to the firing-line until the medical officer ordered him out of action. Lieutenant Throssell’s personal courage and example kept up the spirits of his party, and were largely instrumental in saving a critical situation. Lieutenant Throssell is still a young man, his thirty-first birthday falling on October 2nd of this year. He is the youngest son of the late Mr. George Throssell, one of the pioneers of the State, and at one time Premier of Western Australia. In Northam, where the young hero is best known, the news of the bestowal on him of the Victoria Cross was received with marked enthusiasm and keen delight.

Western Mail, 5th May 1916
LIEUTENANT THROSSELL, VC.
RETURN TO NORTHAM.
A CIVIC WELCOME.

Lieutenant Hugo Throssell VC returned to his native town on Tuesday morning. He was met at the Northam railway station by a large number of relatives and hundreds of admiring friends. Amongst these were the Mayor (Mr AW Byfield), members and officials of the Northam Municipal Council, the Resident Magistrate, Parliamentary representatives of the province and district, the heads of the different Churches, and many representative residents of the town and district. Hearty cheers were given for the returned hero, who was then driven by the Mayor to the Town Hall, where a formal civic reception had been arranged in his honour. Although no invitations had been issued or public announcement made, the function was very largely attended.

Western Mail, 26th May 1916
LIEUTENANT THROSSELL VC.
A COMPLIMENTARY DINNER.
Lieutenant Hugo Throssell, VC, was the guest at dinner at the Savoy Hotel on Wednesday evening of the Old Collegians’ Association of Prince Alfred College, Adelaide, which proudly numbers him amongst its old boys. Mr RT Robinson, MLA, presided over the gathering, and a number of congratulatory messages were read, from old boys who were unable to be present. On Saturday next Lieut. Throssell will be the guest of the old boys of the college at Northam.

Western Mail, 20th October 1916
The Throssell family have many friends in Western Australia who will be glad to learn that Sergeant F Eric Throssell, who was shot through the lungs at Gallipoli, and had a bullet through his hat at Romani, has after two years hard work and much fighting, been raised to the rank of lieutenant. Both Eric and Hugo Throssell worked right up from the ranks, and are now lieutenants.

Western Mail, 20th December 1918
CAPTAIN HUGO THROSSELL.
FIRST VC’S RETURN.
‘Out of work, but never so pleased to lose a job in my life,’ as he himself stressed it, there arrived in Perth by Saturday’s goldfields express Captain Hugo Throssell, the State’s first VC winner in the war. Captain Throssell, who has yet to receive his discharge, returned to Australia in October, but has since been sojourning in the Eastern States. He arrived in the West last Thursday by Great Western express, and
reaching his home town, Northam, on Friday morning, put in 24 hours there before coming to the city. He is now the guest of his sister, Mrs PW Armstrong of Mt Lawley.

Captain Throssell left Egypt before there was any thought of the Armistice, bent on securing reinforcements for the Light Horse – a mission which was entrusted to him as the only Australian VC in Palestine. At the time he had not long recovered from an attack of malaria, contracted in the Jordan Valley. He tackled his job as thoroughly in earnest as he had been in that beating the Turk. To this end he equipped himself with a mass of data of the utmost interest with reference to the fighting in Palestine, with war trophies, with hundreds of photographs of the front, and with a capital series of lantern slides. Much of this material is now of little or no use. Much, however, is well worth retaining, and it is to be hoped that Captain Throssell will find an opportunity of telling this portion of his story in public.

It is something more than two and a half years ago since the VC winner, then lieutenant, made his first return from the front on Anzac Day, 1916. He was then convalescent after the exploit which won him his Cross. His journey back to Palestine was delayed much longer than he had anticipated. Eventually he resumed active service with his regiment early in 1917, and participated in the fighting at Gaza, where he was slightly wounded. After that he was in the advance upon Beersheba, a feat which he describes as a ‘marvellous performance’ from a cavalry point of view. An honour upon which he places an especial value is that of having been the officer in charge of the Australian guard of honour to General Allenby upon his official entry into Jerusalem. ‘It was a wonderfully impressive ceremony,’ he said on Saturday, ‘remarkable chiefly for its simplicity. Accompanying the general were 50 British troops, 20 Italians, 20 French, 20 New Zealanders, 30 10th Light Horsemen, and some Indians. General Allenby’s entry was a great contrast to that of the Kaiser when he entered the Holy City. He had had a huge breach made in the wall of the city, near the Jaffa gate, through which he drove in great state. General Allenby, on reaching the wall, dismounted and humbly walked through the gate, accompanied by his staff and the Allied and Dominion representatives. He proceeded direct to the Tower of David, and there a declaration, proclaiming martial law and assuring the inhabitants of the city of immunity from molestation, was read in the various languages spoken in the city. The General and his escort then retired to the barrack square, and the ceremony was over.’ Captain Throssell has an intense admiration for General Allenby, to whose genius for organisation he attributes much of the success of the campaign.

Australian horses in the war, Captain Throssell declares, have been the greatest advertisement Australia could possibly have had. Their powers of endurance were remarkable. Water supply proved the greatest problem in the desert, the Turks destroying the wells as they retreated. During one period of 10 weeks, during which the heat was well nigh unbearable, the animals did not average one drink per day. Frequently they ran into a second or third day without a drink, sometimes being without water for 50 hours. No horse carried less than 20 stone with rider and equipment, and sometimes there would be no opportunity of removing their burden for days. Sometimes the animals were in such poor condition that they would chew the harness upon them, and it was not an uncommon sight to see them chew one another’s manes and tails. ‘They were simply wonderful the way they stood up to it on their rations,’ the captain said.

A special tribute was paid by Captain Throssell to the officers and men of the Australian Flying Squadron, amongst whom he mentioned Major Peter Drummond, a brilliant young Western Australian, who is a squadron commander and holds the Distinguished Service Order with bar and the Military Cross and the Distinguished Flying Crosses awarded the six air squadrons engaged on the Palestine front up to the time of his departure, said the captain, 12 had been awarded to the Australians. In the eight weeks preceding his visit to the corps in August, 11 Hun planes had been destroyed, 16 had been driven down, whilst the Australians’ losses were only two accidentally destroyed and one lost in combat. Captain Throssell witnessed the arrival of the first and only machine to fly from London to Cairo, a Handley Page machine capable of carrying 20 passengers and four tons of bombs. This machine was subsequently attached to the Australian squadron. He had also the experience of a fly in a Bristol fighter, travelling at no less a speed than 150 miles an hour.

The work of the women in Egypt and Palestine was also the subject of admiring reference. Captain Throssell instanced the case of Mrs Chisholm OBE, who, he said, had started when the boys returned from Gallipoli by running a little tearoom at Helipolis with £50 of her own capital and a like amount given her by the Australian Comforts Fund. When he left the lady had a rest room at Kantara, where the men travelling by rail had a long wait. Here they could get good food at the lowest possible charges. ‘When I was there last
August,’ said the captain, ‘her quarter’s takings had amounted to £33 000, so you can imagine how the enterprise has grown. All the profits go back to the soldiers. Out of her last quarter’s profits she gave £2 300 to the Australian and New Zealand Comforts Fund and £1 000 to the British fund, she built a tennis court for the troops, she installed her assistant, Miss McPhillimey, MBE, in a rest room at Jerusalem, and she made other gifts besides. In one week her orders for lemonade totalled 2,000 dozen, and her orders for eggs in one day alone amounted to 50 000. No two honours conferred in this war have been more richly deserved than those of Mrs Chisholm and Miss McPhillimey.’

‘I have had an opportunity of seeing troops from many parts of the world in this war,’ Captain Throssell observed, ‘and better fighters than the Australians I have never seen. They are second to none when they get up against real hardship. In travelling about since my return to Australia I have noticed a tendency to slow down the despatch of comforts. I just want to say if my opinion is worth having, that this is the time when they will need support from home more than ever they did before. Whilst, as I have said, they are glorious fighting troops, they are the worst garrison troops you could find. They hate inactivity. I don’t know what is happening to them, but I daresay they are doing a good deal of garrison work just now. If that is so they will want plenty of amusement. They should have picture shows, sporting material for games, and plenty of reading matter to keep them occupied. I cannot pretend to say what is wanted in the way of comforts, but I am certainly sending my pals a few water bags. They only cost a few shillings, and I know that the greatest pleasure I ever experienced on receiving a parcel from home was when I found it contained a water bag.’

Captain Throssell has become engaged since his return. His fiancée is Miss Katharine S Prichard of Melbourne, the well-known Australian novelist, who, with ‘The Pioneers,’ won the £260 prize offered, by Messrs Hodder and Stoughton, of London, for the best Australian novel, and who has published other successful stories and verses. The marriage is to take place in the East next year.

Western Mail, 21st February 1919
The marriage of Captain Hugo Vivian Throssell VC, youngest son of Mr George Throssell, at one time Premier of Western Australia, and Miss Katherine Susannah Prichard the well-known authoress, was quietly celebrated in Melbourne a few days back. Captain Throssell returned from the front in October last. He fought with the WA Light Horse, and won the coveted distinction of the VC, as 2nd Lieutenant in the fight at Hill 60 on Gallipoli. The gallant soldier held to his post, and though severely wounded saved the situation against great odds. Miss Prichard’s reputation as a writer is worldwide. Her graceful pen and intimate knowledge of bush life have together earned her high place in the ranks of Australian authors, ‘Straws in the Wind’ is the promising title of her most recent book and those readers already acquainted with Miss Prichard’s work will look forward to its publication with keenest interest. Captain and Mrs Throssell intend to take up residence in Western Australia.

Western Mail, 3rd August 1933

Western Mail, 23rd November 1933
The late Captain Hugo Throssell, VC, whose tragic death at Greenmount on Sunday shocked the community. He won the VC at Hill 60, Gallipoli, in August, 1915, and was the first West Australian to be so decorated in the Great War. He had been in indifferent health for some time owing to war injuries.
Above: The gun carriage bearing the body of the late Capt. Hugo Throssell VC proceeding to the graveside at Karrakatta Cemetery on Monday. The funeral ceremonies were accompanied by full military honours.

Western Mail, Thursday 30th November 1933
Capt. Hugo Throssell, VC.
Fleeting reference to the death of Capt. Hugo Throssell VC, was made by Colonel ACN Olden, a vice-president of the Returned Soldiers’ League, at the meeting of the State executive of the league last week, when a motion was carried, in silence, expressing the executive’s deep sympathy with the relatives of the late Capt. Throssell ‘in the untimely death of that gallant West Australian soldier’.

‘As a brother officer of the same regiment,’ said Colonel Olden, ‘I personally felt the loss of Capt. Throssell, whose war record was irreproachable. The wounds which he suffered at the time he won the Victoria Cross were enough – it was said at the time – to kill a bullock. Yet he returned to the line repeatedly until ordered out. In spite of that order he made another effort to go back to the line, and was restrained only by force. His attack of meningitis when convalescent reduced him to a serious condition. He recovered, however, sufficiently to return to duty, serve with distinction, and be wounded again. During the war there was no brighter example of Australian heroism than that of Capt. Throssell.’

A telegram was received from the secretary of the South Australian branch of the league (Mr Dalziel) conveying to the late Capt. Throssell’s relatives the most sincere sympathy of that branch.

Western Mail 14th December 1933
WESTERN AUSTRALIA VICTORIA CROSS HERO.
CAPTAIN THROSSELL’S DEATH.
War Injuries Blamed.
That Captain Hugo VH Throssell VC, died as the result of a bullet wound, self-inflicted while his mind was deranged as the result of injuries received during the Great War, was the verdict returned at an inquiry into his death held at the Midland Junction Courthouse on Monday, by Mr WR Crosbie, JP, Acting Coroner. Captain Throssell’s body was found about 8am on November 19 on the verandah of his home at Greenmount and he died 15 minutes later.

Evidence was given at the inquiry yesterday concerning the splendid war record of Captain Throssell, who was the first West Australian to be awarded the Victoria Cross during the Great War. The injuries he received during the Gallipoli campaign caused meningitis, a complaint which, according to medical evidence, usually leaves serious after effects on the sufferer’s mentality. Despite his wounds and subsequent illness, Captain Throssell recovered sufficiently to rejoin the AIF and saw active service in Sinai, where he was again wounded. Again, he served with the forces and, on his return to Australia, took an active part in recruiting campaigns.

At the inquiry, Mr Frank Downing, of Downing and Downing, watched the interests of relatives of Captain Throssell, and Sergeant O’Halloran examined the witnesses. Doctor Richard Hildreth Rockett, of Kelmiscott, said that at 7.30am on November 19, when he was practising at Midland Junction, he was called to the home of Captain Hugo Vivian Hope Throssell, at ‘Lazy Hit’ ranch, near the main fork-road,
Greenmount. Deceased was seated in a deck chair on the verandah. His feet were on the verandah railing. A revolver (produced) was firmly grasped in his right hand and was resting on the right side of his chest. He was still alive. With the aid of Mr Withers, deceased’s brother-in-law, Throssell was removed to a couch inside the house, where he died about 10 minutes later. Witness found a bullet lying on the verandah behind the deck chair, and a note which read: ‘I can't sleep and I feel my old war head is going phut, and that’s no good to anyone concerned.’ He (witness) conducted a post-mortem examination on Throssell’s body. Apart from the wound in his head, the body was normal, excepting for some rather extensive pleura adhesions in the left lung. The bullet had passed completely through the head causing extensive lacerations of the brain bringing about his death through cerebral haemorrhage. Witness knew that deceased had suffered from meningitis brought on by war injuries, and this was a disease which usually left definite permanent effects on the mentality, frequently bringing about a deranged mind and fits of depression.

George Henry Forester Withers, of Clifton Crescent, Mt Lawley, said that he had known deceased since 1893. Deceased was his brother-in-law, and, on November 18 witness went to his home at Greenmount to help him burn off some grass. Deceased drew witness’ attention to his ‘rodeo stunt’ and referred to it as ‘Throssell’s folly’. He said that the expenses had been heavy and had landed him further in debt. His wife, he said, had left matters in good order and deceased was very worried as to what she would think of him on her return from abroad.

‘After tea,’ witness said, ‘Throssell seemed all right. At 11 o’clock we had a cup of tea. He asked me where I would sleep and, after giving me some rugs he went to have a shower, remarking later on how fresh it made him feel. He said “goodnight” and went off to sleep in his wife’s room. Next morning, when I woke I expected to hear him call me at any moment as we intended to do more burning off. I lay awake for more than an hour, thinking that, as a strong wind was blowing he had decided not to do the work. Then, at about 8 o’clock, I went to look for him. He was not in the room but the bed had been occupied, I found him lying in a deck chair in his pyjamas with his feet on the railing. There was a bad wound in his right temple and he held a revolver in his right hand. He was still bleeding and breathing heavily. I immediately telephoned for a doctor.

‘For weeks past,’ witness said, ‘Captain Throssell had talked of “getting out of it all,”’ but said that he would not do it. He had contracted meningitis after getting the wounds on Gallipoli which earned him the Victoria Cross, and London doctors said that he would never be normal again. He used to dread going to bed, saying that he had most horrible thoughts whenever he lay down. He was very apprehensive of the meningitis recurring and suffered considerably from brainstorm and depression.’

Constable Brooks, of the Midland Junction police, gave evidence that he had removed Captain Throssell’s body to the morgue and had made the necessary inquiries concerning his death.

Private 3505 Jean Louis Michel Gallanty MM, 7th Field Ambulance
Mike Goodwin, Mackay

Jean Gallanty, known by his second middle name ‘Michel’, was born in Mackay in 1892 and was the son of Jean and Marie Gallanty. The Gallantys belonged to a small community of French-speaking families who migrated from Mauritis in the 1880s. Michel was an apprentice chemist and enlisted on 6th March, 1915 into the Army Medical Corps. He was allotted to the 7th Field Ambulance and joined his unit at Gallipoli on 4th September, 1915. Michel served until the evacuation in December and was awarded the Military Medal for bravery under fire in October. His MM citation states: For devotion to duty at Walden Point, Gallipoli Peninsula, when an 8 inch shell fell into hospital tent and killed a patient on 27.10.15.

Michel [right] served with his unit throughout 1916 and early 1917 until he was killed, aged 24, by a shell explosion on 5th May, 1917 during the Second Battle of Bullecourt. Michel’s fate was described by Private 8529 AA Porter: He was killed near front lines, Bullecourt. Several of them were sleeping in a dugout when a shell killed them all. Michel was buried near where he died and was later re-interred into Vaulx Australian Field Ambulance Cemetery. He was clearly well respected in his unit, as one of his sergeants, GA Schwab, described him as ... a very good soldier and a favourite in the section.
This account of an Englishman’s experiences with the AIF during the Great War was written in 1932, eighteen years after the War started. I have always been blessed with a very good memory but it won’t always be there, although I shall be able to recall the major events in later years, the – to me – interesting sidelights, places, dates, names etc may be hard to recall. I have no literary genius, no diary except a few notes jotted down up to 1916, and no ‘war’ books to refer to. I have read many, ‘Bretherbon’, ‘One Sunday Morning’, ‘Behind the Lines’, ‘Medal without Bar’, ‘The W Plan’, various short histories, and some of Dr Bean’s wonderful work, but I haven’t used them at all, although they have been handy to correct or explain incidents that happened, which I perhaps didn’t understand at the time.

Englishmen of the ‘middle class’ born around 1893 had rather a good time. England was a good place to be in. I had a good education at Bablake School, Coventry, and ‘did’ quite well. I was one of the first 1st Class Scouts in England. At school we had Company drill etc. under a local ‘regular’ warrant officer. A fine chap, but he had lots of nasty things to say to me and a pal in respect to scouting; this playing at being soldiers. But I learnt to signal, ‘sleep out’ in the woods, cook, find my way, create a map of location, etc, and once our troop entertained at Kenilworth a group of German youths. I think they were called ‘Wandering Birds’, a sort of Rambling Club on a visit to England. I won their German Flag in a wrestling match and corresponded with the chap Walter ‘Schring’ of Leipzig for months. I could speak French but very little German. He, however, could speak English. We were a pretty good crowd of Scouts and cock of the walk for miles around.

I had no idea of what to ‘become’ after I left school, although I had had an extra year in the 6th Form, so I had about six months at sea on a tramp steamer, being at Fiume up the Adriatic when King Edward died and from there we went via Constantinople to Poti in the Black Sea. I remember the Narrows very well, for we were in ballast and the skipper pushed the ship very hard to get in before sunset and obtain ‘pratique’. I recall how difficult the ship was to steer up that tortuous channel. Little did I imagine that later on I would be on Gallipoli, or when passing through the Suez Canal and coaling HMS Minotaur that I would be camped on the banks.

However, I took up my father’s business of milling, going into the practical side and visiting many cities in England. My brother had gone to Queensland and an uncle to Western Australia and I – a roamer – decided to go to Queensland and booked by the RMS Otway to leave July 30, 1914. In the latter part of July I had a few days holiday at Brighton on the South Coast and there we heard the Battle Fleet at gunnery practice and later on they visited Brighton. Here was our navy. Somehow we English chaps had some idea that later on there would be a clash, but – there was the navy. Soldiering wasn’t dreamt of. Soldiers – whom we saw occasionally, some with tight fitting trousers and pork pie hats – cavalry I believe, were just soldiers, fellows who couldn’t find a job. I certainly didn’t ‘look down’ on them; just that they didn’t seem of much interest. For one thing we didn’t see or hear much of them. Didn’t know much about them – the Germans evidently didn’t either. They most certainly didn’t know how damnably efficient they were.

Towards the end of July there was trouble in Europe. It didn’t seem to interest us much. England was far away from that. I forget the dates of declaration of war between Serbia and Austria, Hungary etc. That can all be found in histories. But I very nearly missed the Otway. The mail train from the North that I was to pick up at Rugby was hours later. It had stopped at all sorts of potty stations to pick up sailors recalled from leave. There were sailors all through the train and we continued to pick them up at various stations. The Otway sailed from Tilbury and curiously enough when I said goodbye to all, I had a weird feeling of trouble with Germany, although as far as we knew nothing was likely to eventuate. The last words I said were, “Look out for Germany”–. My mother recalled this one day during my furlough from France, later on. And on board the Otway were men hurrying back to Gibraltar. As extra garrison or recalled from furlough I never knew. They were soldiers and kept to themselves a lot. We were delayed by fog in the Channel. South of Finisterre a battle cruiser of the ‘Invincible’ class stopped us and we pulled down our wireless. I remember her well, for often I had looked at silhouettes of British and foreign warships in a scout book. We stopped at Gibraltar I think two days.

War was on, and I tried to return to England but no one was allowed to leave the boat. The only German on board was a barber, eventually landed at Colombo. All sorts of rumours were related. The ship’s notice board told us very little and indeed throughout the voyage we heard very little news except some naval engagements that never took place and the mention of various towns in France that didn’t seem to be of much interest. We made for Port Said at full speed and all lights out. I don’t recall much about the passengers. There was a party of Salvationists returning from a conference and I believe Padre Mackenzie –
‘Fighting Mac’ of the 4th Battalion – was one of them but am not sure. The ‘Colonials’ beat us rather badly in ship’s games.

Through the Canal and I am sure we took the north passage of Socotra Island for I had been here before. There were rumours of a boat called the *Enden* that was waiting for us off Guardafui Cape. Nothing of much interest occurred until a few days from Fremantle, when one morning at breakfast the ship slowed down. Up we went and on the starboard bow was a cruiser. Great excitement, HMS *Encounter*. The officers did some flag wagging, she had a good look around us and then off again. I met my uncle at Fremantle and there was great excitement – the first ship through. All strange to me of course. There were soldiers in the streets in, to me, queer uniforms, leggings, wide hats etc. The same at Adelaide and Melbourne. I remember a light horseman ‘stung’ me for a few bob and asked me if I knew the ‘strong’ of the War. I didn’t understand him.

Evidently troops were being mobilised, but of course Britain was OK. Her job was at sea. I met friends at Sydney, and nearly missed the *Otway* for Brisbane, my port. I had lots of things for my brother up country and very nearly lost them through a ship’s sling breaking. I had to stay quite a long time with my brother at Wondai, out in the bush, very scared of snakes for a time, believe me. He had a baby daughter and I had to help quite a lot. The idea in my mind was to return to NSW where I had a very great friend and if need be to enlist. I eventually arrived south to NSW and he told me a miller at Temora wanted me badly. He had actually promised the man I would go.

This was in January 1915 and the call for men was seemingly not very urgent. So up I went to Temora but the Landing was enough and down to Sydney I went and how my friend argued with me. “I was only just out here and I would be lost with these Australians, right out of place. I was only just 21, etc.” But in the few days that I had had at Brisbane I had met one of my hometown school pals, a friend of my brothers, who had joined up and was at Enoggera Camp and he seemed to fit in with these curious Australians. So to Victoria Barracks I went. Passed through after promising to have a few teeth fixed up and went out to Liverpool Camp, a place I had never heard of. Derisive yells of ‘Marmalade’ greeted us and eventually, we were sorted out into tents, issued with blue dungarees, knife, fork, spoon, pannikin, plate, boots, white soft hat etc. Signallers were called for and I and several more stepped out and were then sent to the sigs camp close by. I was soon at home and there were many English chaps among them with whom I formed a lasting friendship.

Next morning I discovered that all my ‘issue’ of clothing etc had gone. Our officer told me that I had either to pay for them or do the obvious: pinch some more, and being a good soldier I soon pinched some more. Liverpool was a rotten place for a camp. Close to the river with damp mists and low flat land it was often a wonder to me how men were ever brought to any efficiency. It speaks volumes for the staff. We bagged into our job, interspersed with route marches along the very dusty roads. There were thousands of men and when it rained the result was indescribable.

We were a happy crowd with very few ‘boozers’ and in the middle of June a party of us – about 20 – were rushed over to ordnance and fitted out with full uniform. What a job those puttees were. That night – Sunday – we left Central for Melbourne. Broadmeadows camp was practically deserted, the troops having been moved to Seymour. This was the Interstate Signals School under Major T Wilson. It was most important to have uniform signalling, hence there were men from all states. The camp was a bleak deserted place but we were made very [comfortable] with heaps of blankets. Training was pretty severe but we were all keen. After a morning run of ‘O’Grady’ Drill we settled down to flag wagging, buzzer procedure and all the rigmarole of signalling.

The outstanding feature of our visit to Melbourne was the kindness and interest shown by the ‘natives’ to us interstate men. Every week end we had invitations for groups of two or more to visit their homes and they gave us a splendid time. Dick Hitchen [Richard Hitchen, Pte 2715, 3rd Bn/1st Pnr Bn], my cobber, and myself often went to various homes. Once I remember to the home of a suburban mayor who had a large dairy. One memorable visit was to a great hearted fellow out at St Kilda. For 20 years according to his dear wife he had travelled in clothing (actually with whisky). He loaded us with tobacco, pipes, etc. No refusal countenanced. A spread at the CTA Club etc. He soon found out what sort of a night we wanted and acted accordingly. Some other sigs who went there wanted a different type of entertainment and they had it too. And a sore head. I have had always a great feeling for Melbournites ever since.

We were duly examined at the school and I passed well, gaining three 100% out of three: visual, buzzer and written work. Certificate and medal are still a treasure of mine. One Saturday night Dick and I were the only ones left in camp and our tent the only one standing after a gale. We had a great time getting the ordnance tent straightened out. We also helped ourselves a little, for Ordnance had a lot of good stuff in stock. Back to Sydney and detailed off to the 8th Reinforcements, 3rd Battalion.
This had no significance to me for I didn’t know one battalion from another. We were detailed off alphabetically. Three sigs to each Battalion of the 1st Brigade: Bennett and two more to the 1st Battalion; Tom Henham to the 2nd; Hitchen, Jones (myself), Knowles (a South Australian) to the 3rd and Meldrum, Martin and Milner to the 4th. We kept up our signalling at the depot, dodging the usual form fours and rifle drill, and it was only through watching others later on that I ever learnt to slope arms. I passed creditably at Long Bay rifle range although the Lee Enfield was strange to me. I was never ‘gun shy’, possibly because I used to mark in the pits at home for Dad’s rifle club. Dad was a great shot and gathered in many silver Southards and spoons for possibles.

I visited my old friend at Lakemba some weekends. I suppose the boys considered me the usual stolid reserved Pommy but actually I was busy absorbing this new life among a different type of fellow to what I had been used to. I fitted in OK but got a bit of heartache when relatives from Sydney visited my pals. But I received a cable from Dad wishing me the best etc. One sunny day, August 9th 1915, we entrained at Liverpool to Sydney in full kit and after a hectic ‘march’ through the streets of Sydney through cheering crowds we embarked on the Runic A54 at Woolloomooloo. The excitement and interest of pulling out smothered my loneliness through having no one to wave goodbye and after proudly signalling to the Harbour Sig. Stn. we passed out the Heads, a full ship of reinforcements for the 1st Brigade: about 1 000 men. Our officers were Captain Spiers and Lieutenant [Arthur Leslie] Hewish, the latter a great chap afterwards killed at Passchendaele in charge of ‘D’ Company, 3rd Battalion. Good old ‘Swish’.

The ship went nonstop to Suez. A tiresome voyage: horribly muggy through the tropics with the sea like a millpond. Transports – are, well – just transports. No room to move, men everywhere. Two cases of meningitis were discovered. We three sigs did a bit of training; there wasn’t much else to be done. I never got used to the damned hammock. Either closed in like a ‘mummy’ or perilously close to hitting the deck if we fixed them open. We had a gun aft. A 4.7” and the crew had some good practice occasionally at a jettisoned barrel or case. A54 arrived Suez, September 9th, without sighting another ship, with a full complement. The only man left behind was a Digger well sozzled with methylated spirits, whom the authorities refused to embark.

We disembarked on the 10th and entrained to Heliopolis Camp. The boys seemed to take everything as if they had been used all their lives to a strange country. The taking included sundry baskets of eggs and oranges off the gyppos at wayside stations. At Heliopolis we were camped in clean huts with a bamboo stretcher per man. It didn’t take us long to forage around the town and sample some Tucker and beer, picking up Arabic words, mostly I’m afraid of the ‘low’ variety and useful words mostly of the tala-ena, imshi, quies kind. Many men bought souvenirs of silk shawls, etc all at exorbitant prices of course, until they learnt the value of the piastre. Tucker was good and training not too hard. Clear sunny skies and cold fine nights. We sigs had a great time out on the desert, now and again, which we wailed and yelling. We kept up to our work. Several times we had night operations, but they were to all extent and purposes just to occupy the men. More rifle practice hampered very much by mirage. We sigs were in the pits and on the range for transmitting messages, but we did our ‘shoot’. Dick Hitchen and myself had several trips to Cairo doing the round of the pyramids, mosques, bazaars, Tombs of the Mamelukes, the Jewish Synagogue with its gazelle-skin book written by Ben Esra, and in fact we saw everything we could of this ancient land interspersed with some dinners, gharri races and Ezekieh gardens where we yawned with some Australian ladies. We kept out of trouble and had a great time and 99% did likewise.

We were warned for departure in October and the night before we left all the sigs had a great dinner at St James Palace Hotel. It cost us 90 piastras each but it was worth it. That roast quail was bonser. We tried to ‘souvenir’ the brass finger bowls but evidently the hotel people had served soldiers before. We left camp at night and the boys in their exhilaration had a great time potting the lamps in the huts. We embarked at Alexandria in the Borda on October 22nd. The sigs had a great ‘possy’ near the bridge, two at a time being on the bridge, for signalling. We lived well with coffee and rolls at night, etc. Off the coast of Greece we were warned to keep a keen lookout for ships and one night I was surprised to see a Morse light signalling ‘What ship’. There were three destroyers round us. ‘I will escort you to Malea’. (Cape Malea, the most southerly point of Europe, where an old ship-wrecked sailor camped and threw stones at passing vessels. I remember Malea well before the war.)

At daybreak a light cruiser picked us up and took us into Lemnos on October 26th. We stayed on board and were kept busy signalling to the Aragon, the HQ-famous ship that rumour had it would never move again owing to the champagne bottles all around it. But I think there were many sore heads on board caused by other matters than that. We were crowded on to a smaller ship, the Osmanieh on November 2nd and arrived at Anzac on the 3rd at night. There were lights on the hillside and except for some isolated rifle
fire that sounded queerly among the gullies all was quiet. We spoke in whispers, bundled into lighters, shoved on to a pier and sat down on the beach. A guide met us, a gaunt Digger dressed in bits of everything and took us to Shrapnel Gully where we camped as we sat in the scrub. Next morning a ‘ric’ [ricochet] bounced over the top and fell among us.

To be continued in future issues.

In memory of you and yours

Sue Tongue of Red Hill has contributed this poem written by her friend, Artie (Arthur Thomas Jacobson). Artie is a ‘bush poet’ who grew up in the Western District of Victoria. His poetry has been broadcast on ‘Australia All Over’ on ABC Radio.

I never got to hear you talk and listen to how you said things

Or watch you walk and go about your day, and how you really did things.

I never saw you smile or heard you laugh when you all enjoyed the good times

Or watched your sorrow or heard you cry, during the depressed and often sad times.

I never looked into your eyes to see the life you sacrificed for our land

Or shook your hand and wished you well, when you left our home for their land.

But to you so much is owed by many how can this gift be measured

To you who protected our freedom, our rights, your memory will always be treasured.

To those that did what you could not who stayed at home in prayer

To bear their anguish, their fear, their sorrow, for the loved ones, who were to dare.

Mothers and sisters and fathers of sons and daughters so far and away

In alien lands, in alien hands, their bold, their blood, their brave.

Many didn’t come home, you prayed they would how to accept the unacceptable loss

The burden of grief, the dark of night, the torment, the tears, the cost.

To you as well so much is owed how can the gift be measured

You too preserved our freedom, our rights, your memory will always be treasured.
In memory of the Beaton brothers

Artie Jacobson dedicated his poem on the previous page to Herbert, Arthur and Christina Beaton and the Beaton family. Christina Beaton was the sister of the two boys who went away to war and is Artie’s grandmother. Here, Graeme Hosken profiles the Beaton brothers.

Herbert Dugald Beaton was born in Coleraine, Victoria, to John and Edith Beaton and was a 25 year old single farmer when he enlisted on 20th April 1916 at Hamilton. Herbert was allocated to the 8th Battalion as Private 6224. He had been a member of the Nareen Rifle Club for 12 months. He embarked on the Euripides on 11th September for Plymouth, where he arrived on 26th October. (On October 30th, Miss Pearlie Durbidge of 25 Drummond Street, Carlton, wrote to the army asking for Herbert’s address.)

Herbert proceeded to France on 13th December and joined his unit on 23rd January 1917 following further training at Etaples.

Three months later, on 22nd April 1917, Herbert Beaton was killed in action at Bullecourt. Though there is no Red Cross file for Herbert, his brother, Arthur, buried Herbert and then wrote home with the sad news to his parents.

Herbert Beaton has no known grave and is commemorated on the Villers-Bretonneux Memorial.

Arthur Neil Beaton enlisted four days before his brother and served as Private 6221 with the 8th Battalion. Arthur was one year and 4 months older than his brother but was also a single farmer. Arthur sailed with Herbert on the Euripides and joined the 8th Battalion in France on the same day as his brother, so it would seem the two were inseparable.

Arthur survived the Second Battle of Bullecourt but was wounded on 20th September 1917 at Menin Road, receiving a shrapnel wound to his right leg. Two days later he was sent to England for treatment on the hospital ship St David. He was admitted at first to the 2nd Military Hospital at Old Park and then on 28th September to the 3rd Auxiliary Hospital. Following convalescent stints at Dartford and Sutton Veny, Arthur received two weeks leave, and then returned to France on 3rd January 1918.

Arthur attended schools of instruction in March and May (Lewis gunnery) and went sick to hospital on 23rd June. He rejoined his battalion on 7th July and was wounded again, this time with a bullet wound to the right shoulder, on 11th August. Once again, Arthur found himself admitted for treatment in England (Graylingwell War Hospital) and was well enough to leave hospital on 9th September.

Arthur Beaton did not return to the Front and was in No. 1 Convalescent Depot at Sutton Veny when the war finished. In December 1918 a bout of synovitis saw him admitted to hospital. Arthur returned to Australia on 4th February 1919.

War Memorials in the Central Tablelands of NSW

Contributed by Harry Willey, Scone.

Above left: The newly renovated Hargraves Memorial;
Above right and right: The Hill End Memorial features a German machine gun captured by the 45th Battalion.
When Anzacs came marching home
Sandra Playle, Pinjarra

On 4\textsuperscript{th} August 1914, Britain declared war on Germany as a result of the latter’s violation of Belgian neutrality. Australia’s Prime Minister, Andrew Fisher, pledged the government’s full support for Britain with the raising of a force of 20 000 men. This announcement was met with great enthusiasm by Australians, with many patriotic young men keen to sign up for King and Country. Others were lured to enlist because they saw it as an opportunity to travel the world.

The First World War, in terms of casualties and deaths, proved to be most costly for Australia and the other countries involved. When the war began Australia had a population of less than five million, yet over 400 000 men enlisted and from those some 60 000 died and approximately 160 000 were wounded, gassed or taken prisoner. These 160 000, along with the other soldiers that survived the war physically intact, eventually returned home.\textsuperscript{1}

During the ensuing post-war years, soldiers formed ex-service organisations and governments put projects into place, while the communities organised commemorative services, erected memorials, and created honour boards, yet the one thing communities overlooked the most was the soldier himself. Sadly, many still do.

For many years Australians (recently, in particular, school children) have visited the shores of Gallipoli and the battlefields of France and Belgium, as well as the cemeteries where those who died during the battles are buried and commemorated. They do this to both honour and research our war dead. However, the soldiers who were fortunate enough to make it back to the shores of Australia pale into insignificance despite the fact that their experiences were much the same.

The soldiers and nurses buried in general cemeteries across Australia appear to have been largely forgotten. Although some were fortunate enough to be given military funerals, and many have been commemorated with military headstones, there are still too many who have not. The reasons for the lack of markers are varied, but include the family’s lack of ability to afford the expense.

The most tangible part of WWI for Australians in recent years would have to be the soldiers of Pheasant Wood who were re-interred at the new CWGC Cemetery at Fromelles in France. People started to take more notice of the soldiers in their family and evidence of this was the many descendants who registered with the Australian Army’s Fromelles Project administrators. The same was also apparent by the number of articles that appeared in the print media and aired on television channels across the country. More interestingly, several schools on the east coast of Australia encouraged their students to research these particular soldiers.\textsuperscript{2} People wanted to know more about these men and families wanted to tell their stories.

Community and organisations
The people and organisations within our communities are integral to preserving history but often they are stymied by lack of funding, volunteers and resources. It takes some major event before the government’s coffers are opened and sometimes it becomes a ‘feel good’ exercise, as opposed to being purposeful in preserving history.

In 2011 the Commission for the Centenary of Anzac released its report. It is a fascinating document in its scope and content although I am left with questions. The Commission writes: \textit{Research by Colmar Bruton identified a common theme that expressed the need for people outside the capital cities to be provided with ways to engage in the centenary to have a local focus for commemorations and to be left with a lasting legacy from the centenary activities. It was proposed that communities may be engaged in activities centred on refurbishing existing war memorials, honour rolls and avenues of honour. The Commission agrees that these types of activities would provide opportunities not only for communities to come together to restore and enhance memorials leaving them as a legacy for future generations, but to discover the stories and personal histories that played a part in the development of their communities.}

This is a case of ‘reinventing the wheel’ as such projects happen annually across Australia and are funded by Department of Veterans’ Affairs via the ‘Saluting Their Service’ program. Whilst the Commission agrees that these projects could be part of the Centenary, it does suggest that discovering the stories and personal histories would be worthwhile. I was unable to ascertain how they envisaged that this would be done.

Most states in Australia run some sort of educational program outside of the school based curriculum. However, the most comprehensive outside of the Australian War Memorial that I am aware of exists at the Shrine of Remembrance in Melbourne. The education officers do an outstanding job of delivering military history to the state of Victoria. Yet what of the rest of Australia?
Several villages that are near CWGC cemeteries in Belgium and France run cemetery visits for overseas tourists and often include visits to the local museums. Some of the local schools run education programs that study the war and the soldiers buried in their community extension or nearby CWGC cemeteries. Furthermore, some school children of those countries, through their various curricula programs seem to know more about Australian war history and our war dead than we do in Australia (for example, the Harefield Churchyard in Middlesex England where children have been laying wreaths every Anzac Day since the end of the war). Many schools and historians in Turkey, France and Belgium have portfolios on Australian soldiers buried in cemeteries in the vicinity of their community and I am often amazed at the scope and content of their research.

By the same token, these countries celebrate various battle anniversaries, to the extent that the Last Post is played at Menin Gate every evening to honour the soldiers missing in the Ypres Salient. Apart from the Australian War Memorial, I do not know where else the Last Post is played every evening in Australia. [The Last Post is played every morning at 11am at the Sydney Anzac Memorial. – Ed.] It is surprising that the same dedication is not part of the military history psyche in Australia.

In its discussion on student education the Commission says: Between 2011 and 2013, the National History Curriculum for Foundation to Year 10 will be introduced by departments of education into classrooms in every Australian state and territory. The curriculum provides a balanced, rigorous, contextualised approach to Australian, Indigenous and world history, which will enable students to appreciate Australia’s social, economic and political development. It will help students to learn about Anzac tradition, Anzac Day and other important events and symbols in Australian history.

The Commission goes on to say:

In regard to the centenary, class-based activities and projects may be introduced into the national curriculum that discuss not only the activities of the First World War, but the role of all conflicts and peacekeeping operations that Australia has been involved in, from the Boer War through to Afghanistan in helping to shape our national identity.

I have managed to establish what is contained in the Australian History Curriculum concerning the components for Australia’s involvement in war. In Year 3 students learn about ANZAC Day, however there is no further detail as to the content in the national curriculum. It is not until Year 9 that Australia’s war history appears in the curriculum through studies into WWI:

**World War I (1914-1918)**

- Students investigate key aspects of World War I and the Australian experience of the war, including the nature and significance of the war in world and Australian history.
- An overview of the causes of World War One and the reasons why men enlisted to fight in the war.
- The places where Australians fought and the nature of warfare during World War I, including the Gallipoli campaign.
- The impact of World War I, with a particular emphasis on Australia (such as the use of propaganda to influence the civilian population, the changing role of women, the conscription debate).
- The commemoration of World War I, including debates about the nature and significance of the Anzac legend.

WWII is introduced to Year 10 students in the following manner:

**World War II (1939-45)**

- Students investigate wartime experiences through a study of World War II in depth. This includes a study of the causes, events, outcome and broader impact of the conflict as an episode in world history, and the nature of Australia’s involvement.
- An overview of the causes and course of World War.
- An examination of significant events of World War II, including the Holocaust and use of the atomic bomb.
- The experiences of Australians during World War II (such as Prisoners of War, the Battle of Britain, Kokoda, the fall of Singapore).
- The impact of World War II, with a particular emphasis on the Australian home front, including the changing roles of women and use of wartime government controls (conscription, manpower controls, rationing and censorship).
- The significance of World War II to Australia’s international relationships in the twentieth century, with particular reference to the United Nations, Britain, the USA and Asia.
During an e-mail conversation with Paul Kiem, President of the History Teachers’ Association of Australia, I was able to establish that the content of the curriculum components was left pretty much to the discretion of the teacher, thus making the Commission’s ideals for the Centenary celebrations pointless.

Whilst the Commission concedes that the community believes that education is paramount, there appears to be a rather large gap between their report and the National History Curriculum content. Therefore, during such a significant period in Australian history the soldier and his history are passed over once again.

Australian cemeteries
The Office of Australian War Graves tends graves of soldiers buried in a general cemetery when they fall into specific criteria; all others are the responsibility of the family. Very few cemetery authorities tend individual graves, and as family members die or move out of the area the gravesites are rarely visited. They fall into disrepair, thus obliterating some, if not all, of the soldiers’ histories.

Within some state government legislation there is little protection for cemetery preservation and many cemeteries have been demolished, with buildings constructed over the top of the graves at some later date. In many cases, irreplaceable artworks in the form of headstones have been destroyed along with tomes of historic fact. Some could consider it to be legalised vandalism and desecration of sacred sites or consecrated ground. Furthermore, and specific to Western Australia, the desecration of soldiers graves at Karrakatta Cemetery was described as ‘inevitable’ by the secretary of the day for the state’s RSL. In fact, the WA RSL has never publicly taken up the baton to protest about the clearing of soldiers’ headstones anywhere in the state, nor have they considered introducing a project to record them. Large sections of Karrakatta Cemetery were completely cleared of headstones without photographs or transcriptions being recorded. Even as this article is being written, sections of this cemetery are earmarked for clearing.

An example of the types of burial places being obliterated from Western Australia’s military history at Karrakatta Cemetery is that of Corporal Bertie Onions, MM and Bar, whose headstone was removed during the complete clearing of one of the Roman Catholic sections. Bertie was born in England and later his family moved to Denmark, WA, where they took up farming. In October 1916 at the age of 20, Bertie signed up to take part in WWI. Corporal Onions served with 48th Battalion, being wounded twice during fighting in 1918 and his bravery on two occasions saw him awarded the Military Medal and a Bar to that medal. The citations read:

Military Medal: For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty during operations 8th/9th August 1918. During the advance on PROYART, Pte Onions handled his Lewis Gun with great skill and courage in the face of opposition from the enemy. At one stage, seeing the Company on the right being in trouble by an enemy machine gun, Pte Onions crept out with his Lewis Gun and succeeded in silencing the enemy gun which had already caused several casualties. When the final objective was reached Pte Onions got his Lewis Gun into position and gave valuable assistance in beating back a party of 20 Germans who were attempting to regain a strong post. Pte Onions’ conduct throughout operations greatly inspired the men around him.

Bar to Military Medal: For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty during the advance near LEVERQUIER on the 18th September 1918. L/Cpl Onions, in charge of a Lewis Gun section, after the capture of the objective charged a portion of the enemy trench still holding out and preventing our troops on his flank advancing. Although his No. 2 and 3 were shot he worked ahead under heavy machine-gun fire, took up a position from where he could enfilade the enemy trench holding up the advance. From here he gave covering fire which greatly assisted the flank troops to advance and finally capture the trench and its garrison who were unable to escape owing to L/Cpl Onions’ fire. His action displayed wonderful dash and initiative which inspired great confidence in the remainder of his section.
Through a concerted effort within a community, coupled with a school education program, each and every soldier’s grave, outside of the jurisdiction of the Office of Australian War Graves, could be reclaimed, repaired, restored and researched and their story told. Those well researched and recorded personal histories could be given back to the community via local libraries, local government offices, RSL branches, cemetery authorities and historical societies, thus ensuring every soldier in that cemetery has been granted the right to ‘live forever’.

Conclusion

On Anzac Day 2012, the talented 117 member Orchestra from Western Australia’s Churchlands Independent State School played at the opening of the ‘House of Australians’ in Vignacourt in France. Attending this event were prominent Australians and Australian historians. Perhaps I am cynical but I have yet to see such attention given to an event in Western Australia outside of Anzac Day and Remembrance Day. Nor have I seen that amount of money dedicated to the memory of soldiers anywhere in Western Australia outside of the state war memorial or the WA Army Museum in Fremantle.

Paul Kelly of ‘The Australian’ whilst discussing the report of the Commission for the Centenary of Anzac in his article, ‘The Next Anzac Century’, published 23rd April 2011, wrote: The report is prudent but disappointing. It reflects an Anzac story that now carries too many expectations and is weighed down trying to satisfy everybody from traditionalists to the peace movement. Ironically, Kelly missed the way out of those expectations, which is through the stories of the soldiers themselves. Those individual histories can reshape the story of the Anzacs and breathe life into what this generation of men were really like.

It is those men that came home wounded, scarred, limbless, tortured by nightmares and terrorised by their experiences. It is the stories of what their lives were like and what they achieved post-war that need to be told. These were amazing men who did amazing things. These are the stories that are beyond Gallipoli, beyond Simpson, beyond Kokoda – for every soldier has earned the right to live forever.

[Left: An epitaph in Villers-Bretonneux Cemetery reads:
I fought and died
In the Great War
To end all wars
Have I died in vain?]
We shall never forget!
Andrea Gerrard, New Town

On 8th March 2012, in a quiet corner of Cornelian Bay Cemetery (Tas) overlooking New Town Bay, four generations of the Dransfield family, dignitaries including Lieutenant Colonel (Retd.) Andrew Wilkie MHR, the Lord Mayor of Hobart, Mr. Damon Thomas and Ms Jan Hyde the Deputy Commissioner for Veterans’ Affairs in Tasmania, along with a number of invited guests, gathered for the unveiling of a headstone and plaque for Private Percy Dransfield MM.

[Left: The assembled crowd at the ceremony.]

Several years ago, FFFAIF member John Trethewey, while researching a number of World War One veterans, discovered that a number were resting in unmarked graves. So far the names of twenty Diggers have been compiled who were buried in Cornelian Bay Cemetery (Hobart’s main cemetery) which has been in operation since the early 1870s. How many unmarked Diggers’ graves there are around Tasmania is at this point unknown. The same possibly applies Australia wide.

Our soldiers who died during the war, either in the field or in hospital, have their service recognised through either a marked resting place or their name suitably engraved on a memorial. For many men who died in the years after the war, sadly this is not the case – many having no headstone at all, let alone one that recognises their service to their country. To rectify this situation, here in Tasmania a group of people including John Trethewey, historian Andrea Gerrard and Peter Pickering from ‘Sons of the British Empire’ came together to see if they could change this situation. Long ago Australia promised our former WWI soldiers that we would never forget them or their service. This project is endeavouring to honour that promise.

Percy Dransfield MM (40th Battalion), Joseph Patrick McSorley MM (7th Field Company Engineers), Edward Albert Brockman (15th Battalion) and Sydney Rupert Roland Higgins (13th Field Artillery) were selected by our Commissions Coalition for what is hoped to be the first of many groups of men who can have their last resting place marked and their service to their country formally recognised. Six more plaques will be unveiled in July and another six in November to coincide with Remembrance Day.

[Left: Four generations of the Dransfield family after the unveiling of the plaque to Private Percy Dransfield MM.]

As can be seen from the above list of names, two of the men chosen were awarded the Military Medal for bravery in the field. Percy Dransfield was awarded his MM for his coolness and initiative when a party of the enemy was bombing its way up a trench ... He acted as a leading bayonet man and coming suddenly upon the enemy immediately attacked them, bayonetting two and driving the remainder before him. By his prompt and courageous act, he saved a critical situation. Throughout the period his work was uniformly excellent.

Joseph McSorley was serving with the 7th Field Company Engineers in October 1917 at Zonnebeke when he was recommended for the Military Medal: Lance Corporal McSorley was one of a party detailed to construct a strong point in the wake of the attack. Lance Corporal McSorley stepped in and organised the erecting of the wire around the strong point, during which the party was under very heavy shell fire and intermittent machine-gun fire. Despite being knocked out and rendered deaf by a shell that killed two other sappers, Lance Corporal McSorley with a remainder of three sappers stuck to the job and finished the
wiring. On completion of the strong point Lance Corporal McSorley volunteered to stay with the NCO who was almost dead, to see whether anything further could be done for him. Throughout the recent operations Lance Corporal McSorley has shown himself most reliable and cool, and has performed invaluable service.

Different explanations can be given as to why these men were resting in unmarked graves. In the case of Lance Corporal McSorley, it is doubtful whether he had any family or relatives here in Tasmania. His enlistment papers stated that he was born in South Australia and that his next of kin was his brother residing in Perth, Western Australia. Joseph McSorley was working in Tasmania when he enlisted, later being discharged in Hobart where he remained until his death in 1923. A myriad of reasons could explain why the other three had no headstone or marker: lack of finance; passage of time; split in a family and so on.

While a $1 000 donation from Andrew Wilkie MHR provided a much needed financial boost to get the project off the ground, further donations will be needed to keep it going. All donations to this very worthwhile project go towards providing headstones and plaques for our First World War soldiers who currently have no headstone to mark their resting place. The Commemorative Coalition would like to also acknowledge the support of Millingtons Cemeteries, AMS Hire, and Mike Wilkie who designed and constructed the plinths.

Endnote: If you would like more information about this project, please contact Andrea Gerrard by e-mail: andrea.gerrard@utas.edu.au or by mail at 24 Mercer Street, New Town, TAS 7008.

Bullecourt Museum opened

Sadly missing from the large crowd who gathered in inclement weather to witness the official opening of the Bullecourt 1917 Musee Jean and Denise Letaille on 25th April 2012 was its founder, Jean Letaille, who died suddenly just six weeks before.

FFFAIF members known to be present at the opening included Peter Benson, Jacqui Kennedy, Margaret Clark, Chris Munro and Yves Fohlen. Yves played a pivotal role in the refurbishment of the museum. He is secretary and archivist of the Bullecourt Museum Association and was on the Steering Committee for the project. Yves also participated in the drafting of the texts, the historical research and the selection of images and objects for display in the museum, now housed in the renovated buildings of Jean’s original museum. A longer article and photographs on the opening of the museum will appear in the next issue of DIGGER.
ETCHED IN STONE
(Edited by Russell Curley with additional detail sourced from CWGC by Jim Corkery.)

This is the thirty-eighth 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’.

The second episode on the theme “Brief and Beautiful”

Place names in bold type are cemetery names

Perhaps the brevity of epitaphs says something about Australian directness or the belief that in the face of such enormity of loss a few words could mean more than several sentences. It could be – though I do not want to believe it – that some families could not afford the cost of three and a half pence for each engraved letter. If I have a favourite brief and beautiful message it is that on the grave of Pte J. G. Forgie, of a trench mortar battery, in Adelaide Cemetery, Villers-Bretonneux, the original burial place of Australia’s Unknown Soldier:

MY BELOVED
This inscription was requested by James Forgie’s widow, Mary, who lived in Norwood, South Australia. (JL)

HE DIED A MAN
Pte H. Nock, 40th Bn, 7-6-17 (30)
Bethlehem West, Belgium

ONLY A YOUTH
Gnr G. S. Smith, Field Arty, 31-3-17 (20)
Vaulx Hill, France

WITH A LOYAL HEART
Pte L. Edgar, 50th Bn, 2-4-17 (24)
Noreuil Australian, France

TIRED OF WAR AND FELL ASLEEP
Sgt G. Kirkpatrick MM, 17th Bn, 15-4-17 (24)
Trois Abres, France

HE DID WHAT HE COULD
Pte E. Tootell, Trench Mortar Bty, 24-4-18 (21)
Ribemont, France

MY DARLING NED
Pte G. Priest (served as J. Reid), 13th Bn, 1-9-16 (23)
Contay, France

SOON SOON
Pte C. L. Kelly, M-G Corps, 28-6-18 (22)
Borre British Cemetery, France

THE FAITHFUL WARRIOR
Stf Sgt B. A. Almond, 14th Bn, 18-9-18 (29)
Bellicourt British Cemetery, France

FINDS HIS REST
Trpr J. I. Wright, Imperial Camel Corps 3rd Aust Bn, 6-1-17
Beersheba War Cemetery, Israel

HIS THE NOBLE SACRIFICE
Pte A. Johnson, 2nd M-G Bn, 17-12-18 (32)
Ors British Cemetery, France

OURS THE SACRED LOSS

EVER REMEMBERED

ALL’S WELL

REMEMBRANCE CHERISHED

Alexander Johnson (who served in the 65th & 22nd infantry battalions before joining the 2nd M-G Bn on 8 December 1918, after the Armistice) died of accidental injuries received nine days later while passing through an exploded ammunition dump near the village of Flaumont (near Avesnes, France).

Initially buried in the cemetery next to the Flaumont village church, his remains were exhumed before that cemetery was closed and reburied in Ors British Cemetery by 1926.

His widow died in April 1919 and the task of selecting an epitaph fell to his eldest son, Master Cyril Johnson, through his guardian Mr John Hogg (Alexander’s brother-in-law) of Le Roy via Traralgon, Victoria. Alexander’s father, Martin, declined an invitation to select the epitaph. (RC)

The family of Sgt S. Atkinson, 26th Bn, killed at the age of 30 in the Passchendaele fighting on 7 October 1917, gave him an even briefer epitaph for his headstone in Lijssenthoek Cemetery (Belgium), simply:

A HERO
I can imagine his next-of-kin saying ‘What more needs to be said?’ And, indeed, anybody who knew anything of the war would realise that every frontline soldier was a hero. (JL)
The **DIGGER Quiz** for this issue has been held over while Maurice recovers from medical treatment. Maurice is on the mend and will be soon be fighting fit and back with his quiz next issue. – Ed.

### Memories of 1918

*By Eric Fairey*

*The Sydney Morning Herald*, Saturday, 28<sup>th</sup> July 1923.

*Contributed by Heather (Frey) Ford, Montrose.*

Many of our returned soldiers will remember the Bois de Mai at Allonville, the Somme, and the unique Lilliputian village that was built amongst its ancient oaks and elms. Early in May 1918, several Australian units, wearied by long weeks of warfare in the trenches defending Amiens, retired to Allonville, and the springtime glories of the Bois de Mai. In the month after which the wood is named, the latter is the fairyland of the Somme.

It was amongst the ancient trees of this wood that the Diggers built a quaint village, which added a fairylike charm to their surroundings. In a few short hours a colony of miniature homes was erected from brushwood and bundles of tough straw. The usual military atmosphere of a soldiers’ camp was missing. In place of tents, quaintly-shaped mia-mias and gunyahs, not more than five feet high, accommodated the Diggers. This quaint village was a constant source of delight to the inhabitants of Allonville, and to the Diggers themselves, who revelled in a life that recalled boyhood’s camping-out adventures in the Australian bush. You must picture these little brown homes of brushwood and straw, surrounded by seas of blue wood hyacinths, and nestling under the flaming canopies of copper beeches, and the green roofs of ancient oaks. Each house had its garden already planted. Wood violets and primroses formed patches of purple and gold near their doorways; and, here and there, spreading chestnut trees massed their pink blooms over the house-tops. To enter these tiny homes it was necessary, in nearly all cases, to crawl on all fours. After long weeks in muddy dugouts the Diggers took a great pride in the homes they had built. Brushwood huts in a flower-filled wood were a delightful novelty after the usual village rest-billets, and their attendant odours of manure heaps, cow-bails and pig-sties; and with their walls decorated with photographs, a real homely effect was gained. The crowning glory of the Bois de Mai was its feathered choir. Here, undisturbed by the noises of war, the thrush and blackbird all day long poured forth a wondrous flood of melody; while high above the tree-tops, the prima-donna of the songsters, the skylark, sang a song of spring.

The quaint Australian village had many visitors, who evidenced great interest in the ‘petit maisons’ and the Diggers found that Mademoiselle of Allonville was not averse to a stroll along sunny glades in the merry month of May, with its bird songs, sunshine, and flowers. Life in the woods quickly remedied the ravages of long weeks of war. Tired eyes lost their strained look; and ghostly faces recovered their normal expressions under the healing influence of restful days spent in this fairyland of the Somme. It was these restful days of May that gave so many Diggers a new lease of life, and strength to win through the hard victorious months that followed.

**Endnote:** Private 3392 Eric Fairey served with the 38<sup>th</sup> Battalion. He enlisted 12/2/17 and RTA 4/7/19.

### Book release: ‘Farewell, dear people’

FFFAIF member **Ross McMullin** (and author of ‘Pompey Elliott’) has released his latest book, ‘Farewell, dear people: biographies of Australia’s lost generation’. The book contains ten extended biographies of young men who exemplified Australia’s gifted lost generation of World War I. Among them are accounts of an internationally acclaimed medical researcher; a military officer described by his brigadier as potentially an Australian Kitchener; a rugby international who became an esteemed administrator and a rising Labor star; an engineer who excelled on Mawson’s Antarctic mission; a visionary vigneron and community leader who was renowned for successful winemaking at an unusually young age; a Western Australian Rhodes scholar assured of a shining future in the law and/or politics; a Tasmanian footballer who dazzled at the highest level; and a budding architect from Melbourne’s best-known creative dynasty who combined an endearing personality with his family’s flair for writing and drawing. The paperback consists of 608 pages of text and 32 pages of photographs for a retail price of $45 (from all good booksellers).
Notice of John Laffin Memorial Lecture Day 2012

The 2012 John Laffin Memorial Lecture will be held on Sunday, 24 June, at Bathurst RSL Club, 114 Rankin Street, Bathurst, NSW 2795 [ph: 02 6333 2999; www.bathurstsl.com.au], commencing at 11am. Lunch may be purchased at the club’s excellent bistro.

The principal speaker is Charlotte Descamps who will give an in-depth presentation on ‘Life on the Battlefields 94 years later’. Born in Poperinge, Belgium, in 1958, Charlotte Descamps has lived her entire life (to date) on the battlefields of the Ypres Salient. In 1998, Charlotte started the Varlet Farm Bed & Breakfast operation, specialising in hosting guests with an interest in the Great War. Varlet Farm B&B has been listed by tripadvisor.com as one of the ‘Top 10 B&B and Inns’ in Europe in 2011.

Charlotte became a qualified battlefield guide in 2004 and is a founding member of the Passchendaele Society 1917, a charity organisation that organises commemoration events in the Ypres Salient. This society was a driving force behind the events commemorating the 90th anniversary of the Battle of Passchendaele. Charlotte’s role also included carrying out research for the Passchendaele Memorial Museum 1917 at the British National Archives in Kew. She has also:

- guided battlefield tours for the NZ Embassy on Anzac Day from 2004 till 2009
- lectured to groups visiting Varlet Farm from all over the world, including students, army cadets, army officers, bomb disposal squads and amateur and professional historians
- established contact between the Memorial Museum Passchendaele 1917 and the 48th Highlander Regimental Museum in Toronto, and
- represented the community of Zonnebeke at the inauguration of a new WWI memorial in Essex on November 4th, 2011.

In March 2011, Charlotte began her international speaking career at the annual seminar of the Western Front Association – Pacific Coast Branch in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada. Between March and December 2012 she will speak in the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

It was decided to hold this year’s lecture a little earlier than usual so as to allow those members participating in the Gallipoli extension of the 2012 FFFAIF Commemoration Tour a reasonable interval between the Lecture and the 2nd July departure date. Bathurst was chosen as a central venue, not too distant from Sydney and the Central West, where a good number of our members reside. The city was the birthplace of CEW Bean and home of the training depot for the 2nd Battalion AIF. Bathurst has many historic buildings and memorials and is home to the Mount Panorama race track.

Please RSVP by 21st June 2012, with numbers attending, to:

Secretary FFFAIF Inc
PO Box 4208
OATLEY WEST NSW 2223
or e-mail Chris Munro secretary@fffaif.org.au or phone 0448 266 634 (leave a message if unanswered).

FFFAIF thanks Bathurst RSL Club for its kind donation of a function room for the 2012 John Laffin Memorial Lecture.

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