Photo: ‘This is a photo of me and some more rolling these blocks up to the mess rooms’ – Bert Egan, 20th Battalion.
The photo was taken at camp in Sydney, probably at Menangle. The logs would most likely be used as butchers’ blocks.
Bert Egan is the soldier sitting extreme right and is profiled in this issue. Courtesy Maurice Campbell.
Families and Friends of the First AIF Inc

Patron-in-Chief:
Her Excellency Ms Quentin Bryce AC CVO
Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia

Founder and Patron-in-Memoriam: John Laffin

Patrons-in-Memoriam:
General Sir John Monash GCMG KCB VD
General Sir Harry Chauvel GCMG KCB

President: Russell Curley  ABN 67 473 829 552  Secretary: Chris Munro

Trench talk
Graeme Hosken.

This issue
Thanks to our dedicated contributors for allowing us to publish another bumper issue. Merry Christmas!

New members
We welcome Steve Ager, Dorothy Balcomb, Alain Bouten, Jo Brodie, Jenny Chapman, Julie Dean (for Molong Central School), William Frost, Rebecca Grant, Robyn Horn, Claude Huggett, Margaret Kelly, Jeremy Marples, Lynette McDonald, Paul O’Brien, Bruce Simpson, Eloise Verlaque and Marj Willey. [Apologies to Marjorie and Justin Byrnes for spelling their surname wrong in DIGGER 40.]

FFFAIF member becomes Director of Australian War Memorial
There’s a headline you don’t see every day! But it’s true – congratulations to Brendan Nelson for being appointed to replace Steve Gower as the AWM Director. Brendan has been a FFFAIF member for some years and while in Belgium as the Australian Ambassador to the EU, he often attended the Menin Gate ceremony and Anzac Day services held in villages and CWGC cemeteries. Brendan had to apply for the job which was selected on merit and by interview (rather than just being a direct government appointment), and can there be any doubt his resume was not strengthened by his FFFAIF membership?

Well done, Yves!
Congratulations to our ‘Froggy cobber’, Yves Fohlen, for graduating with the ‘French National degree of Technician of Tourist Welcome: Option, Guiding’. Yves is a very modest person, but his twelve months of hard study to obtain this qualification deserves recognition. He is now more qualified than ever to guide Australians on the Western Front. (For those who don’t know, Yves’ full-time job is for the Aisne County where he works as a guide at the ‘La Caverne du Dragon’ Museum at the Chemin des Dames. The French fought there for the four years of the war. You can visit the website of this fascinating place, which is little known to Australians, at: http://www.caverne-du-dragon.com/fr/default.aspx.)

Interested in seeing Gallipoli in 2013?
Bryan Mackenzie invites members of the FFFAIF to join the 2013 Belmore/Swan Hill College Tour of Gallipoli/Turkey. Bryan is a military historian and has been arranging and escorting tours to Gallipoli and the Western Front since 2000. Bryan first visited Gallipoli with a Ron Austin Tour in 1995 and Ron’s inspiration was important in guiding his current venture. Bryan is a member of FFFAIF, Australian War Memorial, Australian Military History Association, Western Front Association and Friends of the 15th Brigade. His grandfather, Lieutenant Colonel Seaforth Simpson Mackenzie wrote Volume X of Bean’s ‘Official History: The Australians at Rabaul’. The tour extends from Saturday, 29 June to Sunday, 14 July 2013. The tour features all the major historical sites of Turkey and allows plenty of time to explore the Gallipoli Battlefields (Anzac, Suvla, Krithia, etc). This will probably be one of the last opportunities to visit before the restricted centenary period. Bookings are limited and there are ten vacancies. Details from Bryan at bryev@bigpond.com or 27 Palaroo Street, Swan Hill, Victoria 3585, or phone 03 5032 2427.

Flame nearly extinguished
AGL has admitted that an accounting error within the firm was the reason why a technician was sent to Sydney’s Hyde Park Memorial to turn off the gas to the Eternal Flame. The gas supplier believed that the Memorial was overdue in arrears to the sum of $300, but the Memorial staff was able to prove that the bill had been paid. [Thanks to an unimpressed Harry Willey for alerting the Editor to this story.]
The genesis of ‘Digger’

Tim Lycett, Paradise Point.

‘E calls me Digger; that’s ’ow ’e begins.
‘E sez ’e’s only ’arf a man; an’ grins.
Judged be ‘is nerve, I’d say ’e was worth two
Uv me an’ you.
Then ’e digs ’arf a fag out uv ’is vest,
Borrers me matches, an’ I gives ’im best.

From ‘Digger Smith’ by CJ Dennis, 1918.

The derivation of the term ‘Digger’ as a colloquial reference to Australian and New Zealand soldiers originates from the First World War. As the years have passed, it has become more prominently synonymous with the Australian soldier, while its application to New Zealand’s soldiers has waned significantly.

But regardless of which country continues to use the term, debate still exists about who can lay claim to its origin and this is a far more contentious issue.

In his 1945 work, ‘The Digger: A Study in Democracy’, Alan Butler defined what it meant to be called a Digger during the war and the ethos for which it was intended:

‘Digger’ and ‘dig’ were used by soldiers as friendly terms of address equivalent to ‘cobber’ and ‘mate’ ... The term has tended to be defined in high-value laden ways ... ‘a man for whom freedom, comradeship, a wide tolerance, and a strong sense of the innate worth of man, count for more than all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory in them.’

Enlisting in 1914, Butler had served as a Regimental Medical Officer at Gallipoli, earning the Distinguished Service Order for his courage and devotion to duty on the day of the Landing and in its immediate aftermath. He was promoted to the position of Deputy Assistant Director of Medical Services, I Anzac Corps, and later while serving on the Western Front was given command of the 3rd Field Ambulance.

And yet, although aptly characterising what the term ‘Digger’ had come to mean, like many he was unable to pinpoint the origins of its common use by Anzac soldiers in reference to themselves, and by whom it had first been used in this fashion.

It is a well-known fact that on the Australian gold fields of the 1850s, the term ‘Digger’ first appeared, making reference to the huge influx of miners from all over the globe seeking their fortunes at the gold diggings. These miners soon became known as ‘the Diggers’ and before long the name was adopted into the Australian language as a type of informal greeting generally associated with the gold mining community.

Similarly, at about the same time in New Zealand, the kauri gum industry was undergoing change. First used by the Maori inhabitants, kauri gum was formed when the resin of kauri trees leaked out through fractures in the bark, hardening with exposure to the air. Lumps commonly fell to the ground and became covered with soil and forest litter, eventually fossilising.

The gum had many local uses, including chewing, tattooing and jewellery, and because of its highly flammable properties, it was used as a fire starter. But by the 1840s, it had become Auckland’s main commercial export to London and America due in the most part to its particularly effective use in the production of varnish.

Initially, the gum was readily accessible, commonly found lying on the ground but by 1850 most of this surface-lying gum had been collected, and to find further deposits, it had to be dug from the ground. The resultant transient workforce moving from place to place to unearth the gum became known as ‘Gum Diggers’.

It is from both these backgrounds that many of the later claims about the First World War Digger originate.

In the February 1918 edition of the trench newspaper, ‘Aussie’, one submission by a contributor echoed the idea:

About the origin of this word ‘Digger’ – you listen to me. As long as I can remember it’s been used on the goldfields of Western Australia. It’s always been quite common among the gold diggers there.
It came to France when the sandgropers gave up digging on the goldfields of WA and carried on with it on the battlefields of France and Flanders.

A similar enquiry conducted during 1920 by ‘The Diggers’ Gazette’ attempted to get to the bottom of the matter but only brought up a number of suggestions that also stemmed from the Australian gold rush days:

The writer enlisted in Victoria and the term was much in use in camp there before the days of Gallipoli, and as our ranks had a large sprinkling of Ballarat and Bendigo men, I used to think that it derived its origin from that source, and;
I may be wrong but I believe it originated in the trenches of Coolgardie and Ballarat and other pleasure resorts in the days of the rush.

In opposition to the goldfields theory, the renowned war correspondent and author of the Australian Official Histories, CEW Bean, laid the origin of the term squarely with the New Zealanders. In Volume IV of his histories, Bean records during the Third Battle of Ypres, August-September 1917:

It was at this stage that the Australian soldiers – in particular, the infantry – came to be known, together with the New Zealanders, as ‘the Diggers’. The term had occasionally been heard before, but hitherto had been general only among the New Zealanders, who are said to have inherited it from the gum-diggers of their country. It carried so rich an implication of the Anzac infantryman’s own view of his functions that it spread like fire through the AIF, and by the end of the year was the general term of address for Australian or New Zealand soldiers.

Similarly to Bean, in AG Pretty’s ‘Glossary of Slang and Particular Terms in Use in the AIF (1921-1924)’, he also attributes the origin of ‘Digger’ to the New Zealanders:

Mate, friend. Used in the second or third person. This term had been in use on the Aust. gold fields, and New Zealand Kauri gum fields for many years prior to the war. It was not until the end of 1917 or early 1918 that it came into universal use in the AIF or NZEF. The first to use the term, to any extent, were the New Zealanders from whom it quickly spread through the AIF.

But in a more recent analysis of Pretty’s book, Amanda Laugensen annotates the original entry with a note of caution:
The explanation given here as to how it was first used by New Zealanders has no supporting evidence.

And although backing away slightly from this original annotation, in her 2005 book, ‘Diggerspeak: The Language of Australians at War’, Laugensen instead takes the analysis in a different direction and makes a very valid point:

There is some evidence to support the argument that digger may have been brought with the New Zealand Expeditionary Force, from the shortened form of Gumdigger ... During the First World War, the first Australian use of digger to refer to an Australian soldier was in 1916, and this appears very early to be explained merely as a transfer from the New Zealand sense.
Both Bean and Pretty place the timing of the appearance of ‘Digger’ towards the end of 1917 after having been adopted from the New Zealanders, but all available evidence implies otherwise and it is now commonly accepted that both nationalities began using it much earlier. This in turn casts doubt on both men’s theory regarding its origin.

There had also been suggestions that the term had been derived as early as the Gallipoli campaign and a number of proponents claimed it resulted from the order issued by Sir Ian Hamilton just after the initial landings:

*You have got through the difficult business, now you have only to dig, dig, dig, until you are safe.*

However there is no evidence, documented or otherwise, to suggest that ‘digger’ became a commonly used term for the Anzac troops on Gallipoli, and more than likely its occasional use on the Peninsula only stemmed from a handful of men, possibly former miners, who had become accustomed to applying it in its original form during their civilian lives before the war.

The general consensus is that the use of ‘digger’ to refer to Anzac troops came into vogue during the second half of 1916. Given that it was not an unknown term in either country and was no doubt used on the odd occasion amongst the troops in its previous civilian guise, we can only surmise that a particular incident must have occurred involving Australian or New Zealand troops to establish its new meaning and prompt its general use.

One article in Melbourne’s ‘The Age’ newspaper in August 1918, accurately predicted the future for the term ‘Digger’, but at the same time expressed the confusion and debate already evident at that early stage when trying to pinpoint its source:

*Many people have asked for an explanation. Inquiry amongst those recently from the trenches shows that the origin of the expression is vague. There are various definitions, but few of them agree. The general belief is the name ‘just growed’. When severe fighting in France had so changed the personnel of battalions that only a small proportion of the survivors had ever seen Anzac Cove, it is said the modest new recruits hesitated to accept the reflected glory of the ‘Anzac’ name which they had had no hand in burnishing. So many of the later reinforcements came from Western Australia and so many of the eastern men were from the mining fields, that ‘Digger’ came easiest to the lips; and then the Mining Corps were all ‘diggers’. So the whole force seems to have accepted naturally the title which constantly recurs now in letter, cable message and cartoon. For all time the Australian soldier will probably be known as ‘Digger’ though he will not know why.*

In his book, ‘The Maori Pioneer Battalion in the First World War’, historian Christopher Pugsley makes the claim that the nickname ‘Diggers’ was first applied to the Maori Pioneers after their enormous efforts to dig Turk Lane and Fish Alley trenches in the vicinity of Flers during September 1916. According to Pugsley, after the completion of these trenches in record time, the Maoris were given the title ‘Diggers’ which was adopted by the remainder of the New Zealand Division and later in 1917, spread to the Australians.

Countering this explanation, Captain Cyril Longmore the author of the Western Australian 44th Battalion history, ‘Eggs a Cook’, recorded that the term ‘digger’ originated while the battalion was training on Salisbury Plain in England during 1916. He further clarified the timing and circumstances of the event in letters published in both ‘Reveille’ magazine and ‘Western Mail’ newspaper during 1930:

*... the word as applied to the AIF originated in September or October 1916, when Brigadier General Cannan [right], in an address to the 11th Brigade, eulogised the digging prowess of the 44th Battalion after a three days’ occupation by the brigade of the Bustard trench system on Salisbury Plain. The other three battalions derisively labelled the 44th “the diggers” as they marched off the parade. Never mentioned before, it became the common mode of address from that time and when the Third Division went to France a month later it spread rapidly throughout the AIF.*

But what is missing from these various post-war accounts is primary evidence contemporary with the events described. Does written or recorded evidence of any kind exist to support one or more of these theories? Appearing in Kalgoorlie’s ‘Western Argus’ newspaper on 19 December 1916, two letters may help to solve the riddle.
Private 4684 Harry William Bromley had been a Kalgoorlie jeweller leading into the war and had finally enlisted with the 12th Reinforcements, 28th Battalion, in February 1916. First sent to Egypt, he later embarked for England, where in the latter half of 1916 he found himself undergoing further training on Salisbury Plain. It was from here during October 1916 that he penned the letters to his family back home in Western Australia. The lengthy correspondences describing his experiences up to that date were subsequently supplied to the Kalgoorlie newspaper and no doubt published because of their local interest. But more importantly for future historians, they inadvertently provided a clue to the origins of ‘digger’.

In the first of the two letters from Salisbury Plain, amid the tales of his soldiering adventures, Bromley remarks:

In a large camp like this, it is remarkable the amount of good feeling the boys have for one another. As a rule, sociability appears to be the password. You can hear on every side, ‘Give’s a match Digger’ or ‘Give’s a cigarette Cobber’. It’s all Cobber and Digger here.

And in the second letter written later that month, Bromley makes further mention of the emerging ‘Digger’:

Of course drafts of men are being sent to the front at intervals from here, and it would appear as if just sufficient are being sent to maintain a good fighting front until the weather breaks. We recognise that if all the ‘diggers’ and ‘cobbers’ who are here now were sent, and under present weather conditions at the front, the losses from pneumonia and other freezing weather complaints would be increased many fold.

Clearly, Bromley’s letters signal a transitional period between the common usage of ‘cobber’ and ‘digger’ but even more remarkably, coincide exactly in both time and place with the post-war account provided by Cyril Longmore.

Of course, this evidence doesn’t discount all the other theories and it is feasible that there was more than one source. The nature of its pre-existence in civilian times before the war means ‘digger’ can arguably be linked to all manner of conjecture and speculation with some degree of truth. It may also be true that both the New Zealanders and AIF ushered in the use of ‘digger’ quite independently of each other. It is interesting to note that Pugsley’s version of events surrounding the Maori pioneers digging trenches near Flers also occurred at precisely the same time that the 44th Battalion was in training on Salisbury Plain. Although Bromley’s letters would appear to refute Pugsley’s notion that ‘digger’ then spread from the New Zealanders to the AIF later in 1917, it remains possible that both incidents are coincidentally responsible for the emergence of the title.

Nevertheless, regardless of what other narratives may claim, based on the explanation told by Cyril Longmore and the accompanying supporting primary evidence provided in Harry Bromley’s letters, there can be no denying that the 44th Battalion and its occupation of the Bustard trench system on Salisbury Plain in September-October 1916 is, at least in part, responsible for the genesis of the title ‘Digger’. But perhaps even more accurately we can now arguably name the very person responsible for planting the seed: the commander of the 11th Brigade, Brigadier General James Harold Cannan.

Endnote: Tim is very open-minded on this subject and would be very keen to hear from anyone who might be able to provide any other primary source material relevant to the origin of the word ‘Digger’ in reference to Australian and/or New Zealand soldiers. Tim can be contacted via the Editor.

The British War Medal of John Willet Donaldson
Paul Stenhouse, Ashfield.

Recently the British War Medal of Lance Corporal 1889 John Willet Donaldson (59th Battalion) was found amongst the belongings of Private 857 Francis (‘Frank’) Walter Gibson (2nd Battalion). There seems, however, to be no obvious connection between the two men. Frank Gibson was from Newcastle, NSW, and is buried at Lone Pine. The records show that John Donaldson was originally from Cootamundra, NSW. It seems he moved to ‘Calonna Cottage’, Pearce Street, Coogee, NSW, where his parents lived. His father was Robert Donaldson and mother, Edith Donaldson (nee Meek). His unit embarked from Melbourne on 4 May 1916, with John returning to Australia on 15 May 1919.

If there is anyone who can assist in the return of this medal to his family, or shed some light on the connection between Frank and John, could they please contact Julie Gibson at jgibson@trinity.nsw.edu.au.
Sergeant Christopher Sandilands, 16th Battalion
Andrew Pittaway, Fremantle, with Neville Kidd, Pymble.

A photograph of an unknown Digger sergeant with his family appeared in the ‘West Australian’ newspaper’s ‘Can You Help section’. The photo [below] was ‘discovered’ at a property near Dunsborough; an unsold item at a garage sale. On offer to remove it, the photo came into possession of Llewyn and Beth Green, relatives of the FFFAIF’s own Neville Kidd. The only information that came with it was that it had been found when cleaning out a shed at 22 Loch Street, Claremont (an inner suburb of Perth). Knowing of Neville’s great WWI knowledge, they initially asked him to help identify this unknown sergeant.

Neville went and located all the soldiers in the AIF who had some connection with Loch Street, Claremont, and found several. However, the best option so far seemed to be 3002 Sergeant Joseph Benjamin Firkin of the 28th Battalion, who had been wounded at Pozieres on 29 July 1916 but soon returned to his unit and was unfortunately killed on the last day of 1916. His body not being found, Firkin was subsequently commemorated on the Villers-Bretonneux Memorial. The Firkins lived in Loch Street, but not at No. 22.

There were several mentions of Loch Street in Claremont and Nedlands, and Neville found that the odd numbered houses were in Claremont while the evens were in Nedlands. It also appeared that 22 Loch Street only had a residence circa 1942, and it was then occupied by Arthur Francis Tapper and family. Neville continued a search through the old post office directories, but trying to find who the photo was of, and how it came to be at 22 Loch Street, remained a mystery.

Neville suggested to Beth and Llewyn that they put the photo in the paper to see if it elicited any response. The ‘Western Australian’ newspaper runs a column in Monday’s edition called ‘Can You Help’, which is a must-use column for anyone interested in finding relatives of WWI soldiers, and is well-utilised by WA FFFAIF members.

The photo duly appeared and a result came by 9am that same day, when the great granddaughter of the soldier contacted Beth and Llewyn. Natalie Boyd recognised the photo as one in a family history book. The soldier was positively identified as Sergeant Christopher Sandilands, and his story follows.

Christopher Sandilands was born in Bulleen, Kew, on 25 December 1874 to Henry and Lucy Sandilands (nee Hicks). From 1865 to 1892 there were seventeen children born into the Sandilands family in Victoria. ‘Chris’ was educated locally and it appears he took up farm work. His younger brother, John, served with the Victorian Mounted Contingent in the Boer War, and in 1905/06 a number of the Sandilands siblings moved to Western Australia and took up residence in the Goldfields region. Their parents, Henry and Lucy Sandilands, died in Victoria in 1909 and 1910 respectively.

Chris worked as a filter press hand on the Great Boulder Mine and in 1908 he married Phoebe (‘Tottie’) Cooke in Boulder. Prior to Christopher’s service in the AIF they would have five children: Frederica b1908; Frances b1910; Christina b1912; Christopher b1914 and Robert b1916.

When Chris arrived in Kalgoorlie he joined the Goldfields Volunteers, where he attained the rank of colour sergeant. He was also a member of the local rifle club and did well in many shooting events.

The Sandilands were living in Dwyer Street, Boulder, when the Great War broke out, and as Phoebe was pregnant Chris did not enlist straightaway. However, due to his militia experience, he was assigned to the Australian Instructional Staff of the Australian Permanent Forces and through 1914 and 1915 he was on duty at Blackboy Hill and Belmont Racecourse camp.

With his previous attachment to the Boulder/Kalgoorlie area, in 1916 he was transferred to the Goldfields to take charge of the senior cadets.
According to his daughter Rica (whose oral history is held at Battye Library in Perth), despite his home service, Chris received a white feather in the mail. So despite having five children, Christopher offered his services to the AIF on 1 April 1917. The 41 year old Chris was accepted as fit for service and his wife and children moved to the beachside suburb of Cottesloe to be closer to Chris while he was training. He had been given the rank of sergeant and was assigned for duty to the Training Depot at Blackboy Hill Camp. It was at some point during the next few months that Chris and Phoebe took their five children to the photographic studio of Charles Nixon in Fremantle, where they had their portrait taken (a copy of which would mysteriously end up in 22 Loch Street).

It wasn’t until 9 July 1917 that Chris was assigned to the 21st Reinforcements to the 28th Battalion, where he retained his rank of sergeant. He only had a few weeks with this group before they received their departure orders. Unfortunately for Phoebe and the children, they were not leaving from Fremantle Harbour where they could wave him farewell. The reinforcement group had orders to entrain for Albany where they boarded the HMAT Port Melbourne on 23 July 1917.

The ship sailed for South Africa and called in at Durban, where Chris penned a letter to a friend:

We had rather a rough passage across except for about four days. Our lads struck it rather bad for a start, as we struck a gale the night we left WA and it kept up for nearly a week. We never sighted a boat right through. Nearly all the manual labour is carried out by the natives here and there seem to be more of them than whites. The people here think a lot of the Australians and are treating us splendidly. I am forwarding you several pieces of poetry composed by a young lady in Durban, Miss Ethel Campbell. I asked her if she would grant me permission to have them printed in Australian papers. She said she would be only too pleased as the Australian boys had a very warm place in her esteem. I was making inquiries regarding the number of Australians living in Durban, and there is a fairly good number though I have not had the luck to run across any of them yet. The municipality seems to run nearly everything here, including trams, baths (which are splendidly managed), also the lighting. Tickets are obtainable at different places and are taken in payment for almost anything. The rickshaws as you know are pulled by Zulus, who are the finest stamp of men it has been my lot to look at. The morals of the natives here are of a very high standard. I would like to send more news but it would not pass the censor.

After a nearly two month journey, the ship finally arrived at Liverpool on 16 September 1917. Chris and his group were disembarked and sent to the 7th Training Battalion at Rollestone Camp on the Salisbury Plain. Just after arriving Chris reported ill and was sent to Parkhouse Military Hospital, suffering from mumps. After a few weeks he recovered and returned to the 7th Training Battalion on 8 October 1917. Due to his instructional experience it appears that Chris was utilised in training for the next month and on 8 November he was transferred to the 6th Training Battalion at Fovant Camp. Chris remained at this camp through to the end of 1917 and it was only on 23 January 1918 that he got his wish to be sent to France.

On arrival in Le Havre on 24 January, Chris marched into the Australian Infantry Base Depot where he was soon reassigned to join the 16th Battalion AIF. Chris was taken on strength of ‘A’ Company of the 16th Battalion on 29 January 1918 and had to add an ‘a’ to his regimental number to avoid duplication with another soldier. The 16th Battalion had just returned from the Peronne sector and were now back in Belgium, taking up winter quarters as they took turns in the line at Spoil Bank with their sister battalions of the 4th Brigade AIF.

Chris had only been with the 16th Battalion for a month when, on 25 February, he was sent for a period of instruction to the 2nd Army Musketry School. He returned on 22 March to find the 16th in readiness to move. The previous day the Germans had launched their spring offensive which broke through the Third and Fifth British Armies. The Germans were making a speedy advance towards Amiens and the 3rd and 4th Australian Divisions were soon notified that they would be leaving Messines, with the general consensus being that they were heading south to the Somme.

They moved from Belgium down through northern France and on 26 March the 4th Brigade was separated from the rest of the 4th Division and attached to the 62nd British Division (and later the 37th Division BEF). Along with the New Zealanders, they were now in defensive positions at Hebuterne. Initially, they were on a defensive footing against the Germans but the 4th Brigade and New Zealanders soon turned the tide and began to take territory back off the Germans. Chris was involved in the 16th Battalion’s actions during this period and fortunately came through unscathed. On 24 April, the 4th Brigade left Hebuterne and rejoined the 4th Division AIF in the Querrieu sector.

Unfortunately, it seems that Chris would not have not been able to meet his brother-in-law in France. Phoebe’s brother, Clive Alexander Cooke, had enlisted in the AIF in 1915 and was assigned as a 2nd lieutenant to the 11th Reinforcements of the 11th Battalion. Clive then joined the 51st Battalion and saw action.
with them in Belgium and France. By 1918, Clive Cooke was a captain and in command of ‘A’ Company of the 51st Battalion. During the counter-attack at Villers-Bretonneux on 24 April 1918, Clive was at the head of his men when he was killed instantly by machine-gun fire. He was later buried in Adelaide Cemetery at Villers-Bretonneux.

Chris now came into the line near Villers-Bretonneux but he would have been unaware of his brother-in-law’s fate for some time. For the next few weeks the 16th Battalion spent their time between the front line and reserve positions. On 16 May 1918, the German artillery was active on the 16th Battalion’s line, and during the night their planes were up and dropping bombs on the Australian positions. One bomb exploded on the 16th’s trenches near Chris, killing one soldier and wounding four others. The soldier killed was 4972 Private William Stanley Rose, a Bendigo-born engineer who had been living in Kellerberrin in WA when he enlisted. William was later laid to rest at Adelaide Cemetery, Villers-Bretonneux.

Chris suffered wounds to the thigh and hands and was evacuated to the 12th Field Ambulance for treatment. The same day, he was sent for further attention to the 5th Casualty Clearing Station.

The following day Chris was put on an ambulance train which transported him to the 10th General Hospital at Rouen. He would only spend a few days in this hospital, as on 22 May he was marked as a ‘Blighty’ case and boarded a hospital ship which took him across the Channel to England. Upon arrival in England, Chris was put on a train for Birmingham, where he was admitted into the 1st Southern General Hospital. His wound proved to be quite serious and Chris would remain in this hospital for the next three months.

On 26 August 1918, Sergeant Sandilands was transferred to the 1st Australian Auxiliary Hospital at Harefield. Chris was given a medical examination at this hospital to assess his fitness to return to the front. Due to his wounds he was marked as class C2 fitness, which deemed him as unfit for service in the immediate future.

Chris was then transferred to No. 2 Command Depot at Weymouth to await a ship and return to Australia. On 6 November 1918 he boarded the hospital ship Marathon and set sail for Australia, disembarking in Fremantle in December 1918.

Three of Chris’ brothers also served in the AIF. His elder brother Henry put his age down to enlist and was assigned to the 26th Reinforcements to the 11th Battalion with the regimental number 7787. He reached England and joined the 3rd Training Battalion but was soon diagnosed with debility and sent home to WA. John Sandilands had enlisted in 1915 and was assigned to the 9th Reinforcements to the 10th Light Horse Regiment with the regimental number 1227, but in 1916 he transferred to the 11th Field Artillery Brigade. He served with this unit through the war, returning home in late 1918. Roy Sandilands (39842) served in the artillery reinforcement camps in WA and Victoria but did not embark for overseas.

After arriving back in WA, Chris was sent to No. 8 Australian General Hospital in South Terrace, Fremantle, for a medical check-up. He was then released from hospital and rejoined his family. In January 1919 the Sandilands moved back to Boulder. A few months later in May, Christopher was appointed a lieutenant and made an Area Officer for the Boulder district. He also became heavily involved in the Boulder branch of the RSL, and through to 1921 attended the funerals of returned servicemen in the Boulder district, as well as assisting in getting the Boulder war memorial created. After his return from the war, he and Phoebe continued adding to the family and in the next few years three more children arrived: Clive in 1920 (named after Clive Cooke); Phoebe in 1928 and Henry George in 1931, bringing the total number of children to eight.

In 1921 Chris resigned his position as area officer as the family were taking up farming at Kendenup under the De Garis Scheme. Kendenup is near Mount Barker and in the Plantagenet region of the Great Southern of WA. Jack De Garis had bought 47 000 acres of land from the Hassel family with the intent of selling blocks for orchards and crops. According to various reports on Kendenup, De Garis promoted the scheme around Australia, and from late 1920 settlers started to arrive and were granted farm blocks of between 10 and 60 acres on the purchase of ten-year interest-free debenture notes, to grow fruit, vegetables and other farm produce. However, the project was under-capitalised and lot sizes were considered to be too small to be fully viable, and after a peak of about 350 families settling, debenture sales dried up.

However, the Sandilands persisted and made Kendenup their home. Christopher developed a fine orchard and pastures for stock and became a prominent member of the local community. He became President of the local RSL branch and helped set up the Australian Natives Association branch in Kendenup. With the outbreak of World War II, Chris volunteered to help in training of the local recruits before they were transferred to the larger regional centre of Mount Barker for further training. Christopher had to watch as his sons Chris and Clive enlisted for service in the armed forces. Chris (W31532) spent most of the war on garrison duty in Australia, while Clive initially served in the RAAF signals but was discharged due to illness.
in Victoria in 1941. He re-enlisted in Melbourne in the 2nd AIF (VX39801) and embarked for service overseas as a sergeant with the 2/1st Fortress Signals. [Below: Clive Sandilands is on the left in this WWII photograph. Australian War Memorial Negative Number P01239.003.]

Unfortunately, Clive was soon reported missing in Timor and although he ended up surviving as a prisoner of war in Java, perhaps the strain of not knowing his son’s fate had affected Christopher, as on June 8 1942, he suddenly collapsed and died from a heart attack. His funeral in Kendenup Cemetery was very well-attended by family and friends due to the respect for Chris in the region.

Christopher Sandilands’ descendants continue to do well in the state and his grandson, Aaron, is the ruckman with the Fremantle Football Club in the Australian Football League. Chris’ daughter, Frederica Erickson, more widely known as ‘Rica’, was a well-known historian and author/illustrator of native orchid and other wildflower books, such as ‘Orchids of the West’ (1965). Rica also wrote the book, ‘Sandilands of Kendenup’, which details the family history.

Llewyn and Beth returned the photo to Natalie Boyd on Boxing Day 2011. Natalie was overwhelmed and elated at receiving it back into the family. Her plans were to hang it back in Kendenup, either at the farmhouse where the portrait of Chris’s wife Tottie also hangs, or put them together in the local museum.

The mystery of how the photo arrived at 22 Loch Street has not yet been solved.

Endnote: Andrew would like to thank Neville Kidd, Llewyn and Beth Green, and Frev Ford for assistance in providing information for this article.

Men of the 8th Reinforcements/32nd Battalion
This group of ten men from the 8/32nd attended a training course at Lyndhurst, UK, from 1 to 13 January 1917. The acting sergeant in the centre is Thomas Kermode. His grandson, Ed, is preparing a book based on Thomas’ letters home and would like to identify the other soldiers in the photo. If you can help in any way, please contact the Editor. [Check out Ed’s YouTube clip featuring some of Thomas’ UK photos at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CrLSwHHJZ7g]
The Anderson brothers  
Anne Betts, Cobram.

Ernest Sleeman Anderson was born in Hughenden, Qld, on May 15, 1890. His brother, Ralph Anderson, was born in West Maitland, NSW, on October 18, 1891. They were the third and fourth of seven children born to Ernest Augustus and Amelia Constance Isabel Anderson. When the boys were five and four years old respectively, their father became the Anglican Bishop of the Riverina and they moved to Bishops Lodge, Hay. On the completion of their education at Melbourne Grammar, Ernest went to the Ballarat School of Mines and graduated as a mining engineer and metallurgist. Ralph returned to Hay and worked as a jackaroo.

At the outbreak of WWI, Ralph was the first of the brothers to enlist. He enlisted in the AIF at Liverpool, NSW, on 16 October 1914. He was 23 years old, 5ft 9ins tall and weighed 10st 9lb, with fair complexion, grey eyes and fair hair. It was noted during his physical examination that the middle and ring fingers of his left hand were amputated at the second joint.

Trooper 181 Ralph Anderson, ‘A’ Squadron, 7th Light Horse Regiment [left], embarked from Sydney aboard the Ayrshire on 20 December 1914, bound for Egypt. The ship arrived there on February 1, 1915. On 14 May in Maadi, Ralph was promoted to lance corporal. The next day he sailed for Gallipoli on the Lutzow.

Ralph spent the next four months surviving the horror that was Gallipoli. He was hospitalised with dysentery between 23-26 September and then contracted influenza and was evacuated to Malta on 2 October. He was so ill that he was transferred to a hospital ship and arrived in Gibraltar on 8 October. By 6 November he was in the 2nd Southern General Hospital at Southmead, Bristol (UK), where he recovered, then attended training school until March 1, 1916, when he returned to Maadi.

On 17 March 1916, Ralph was promoted to 2nd lieutenant and transferred to the newly formed 52nd Battalion. He left Alexandria on 5 June 1916 aboard the Ivernia, bound for Marseilles. In early July the battalion was engaged in heavy fighting in the Petillon Sector. On July 29, Ralph Anderson was promoted to lieutenant.

According to the 52nd Battalion diary, the battalion was addressed by General Cox (GOC 4th Division) where he expressed his pleasure at the way the 13th Brigade had carried on its work whilst in action in the vicinity of Mouquet Farm. He also distributed congratulatory cards to several officers, NCOs and men for work in the last action. Among the recipients was Lieutenant R Anderson.

For the remainder of 1916, the 52nd Battalion alternated between frontline duty, training, and labouring behind the lines. Christmas and New Year 1916 was spent at Vignacourt. Ralph attended a school of instruction in February 1917 at Bendigo Camp, Bazentin le Petit. It is noted in the battalion diary: During a stay in Reserve Area a class covering 10 days for prospective NCOs was conducted by Cpt. FC Wilson and Lieut. R Anderson. The men worked well and the results were very satisfactory.

The early months of 1917 found the 52nd Battalion participating in the advance that followed the German retreat to the Hindenburg Line. They took part in the attack at Noreuil on 2 April. On 27 April, Ralph was promoted to captain (replacing Steele sent to Australia).

By late May the battalion was at Hill 63 on the Messines Ridge. On 7 June, during very heavy shelling in the Odour Trenches, Ralph received a gunshot wound to the thigh. He was taken to the 77th Field Ambulance Station. Sadly, he died there the next day, on 8 June, 1917, aged 25 years. Ralph died without knowing that his mother, Amelia, had died two months previous to him, on April 7th. Captain Ralph Anderson is buried at Westhof Farm Cemetery (Plot I, Row C, Grave No. 10), Neuve-Eglise, Belgium.

Ernest Anderson enlisted in Melbourne on 15 March, 1915. He was 25 years and 10 months old, 5ft 10ins tall and weighed 11st. He had a medium complexion, grey eyes and dark brown hair. Because of his qualifications (five years in the senior cadets at Melbourne Grammar and two years in the Militia Forces in Ballarat), Ernest was placed with the No. 2 Mining Corps and very quickly was promoted to 2nd lieutenant on 16 July.
Ernest married Clara Chapman in Melbourne on July 29, 1915. On 1 January 1916 he was promoted to lieutenant. Ernest embarked for overseas duty from Sydney aboard the *Ulysses* on 20 February 1916. The ship had a stopover in Melbourne, where it took on additional stores and equipment. During the stay, the miners were camped at Seymour. The *Ulysses* departed Melbourne on 1 March and sailed to Fremantle, where more troops were taken on board. The ship’s departure was delayed for a month due to it needing repairs after running aground on rocks as she left Fremantle harbour. Finally, on April 1st, they were on their way to Europe.

Twelve days into the voyage, on April 12, Ernest was promoted to captain [right]. They arrived at Suez on April 22 and soon departed for Port Said, then to Alexandria and finally arrived at Marseilles on May 5th. Most of the men went by train to Hazebrouck where they set up their first camp on May 8, 1916.

A ‘Mining Corps’ didn’t fit with the structure of the British Expeditionary Force, so the corps was disbanded and three Australian ‘Tunnelling Companies’ were formed, as well as the Australian Electrical and Mechanical Mining and Boring Company (AE&MMBC), dubbed by the men as the ‘Alphabetical Company’.

Captain Ernest Anderson became part of the 1st Australian Tunnelling Company. He took part in the campaign at Messines, where 19 mines were dug in and around Hill 60. On June 7, 1917, at 3.10 am, the Allies detonated the mines, creating history’s largest explosion (to that time). The 19 explosions constituted about 425 tonnes of high explosives and, when detonated, killed around 10 000 unsuspecting Germans. This also was the day Ernest’s brother, Ralph, was mortally wounded. It is not known whether Ernest was with Ralph when he died, or if he even knew of Ralph’s demise.

Ernest received a ‘special mention in General Sir Douglas Haig’s despatches of April 9, 1917’ and was again mentioned in despatches on 1 June 1917. He was recommended for a Military Cross on 20 June. The recommendation read:

*For displaying at all times a remarkable courage. His conception of, and devotion to duty, has been of the highest standard in connection with mining operations and has been particularly noticeable on one occasion during the last two months when he superintended the loading of a charge in proximity to a suspected enemy charge, thereby ensuring a successful camouflet.*

Ernest Anderson was awarded the Military Cross on January 1, 1918.

In November 1917, Ernest was granted the rank of major and was given command of the 1st Tunnelling Company. He remained as commanding officer of the 1st ATC for the duration of the war, leading the company through many mining operations around the Ypres Salient.

He returned to Australia aboard the *Ypiranga* on 15 November, 1919. His commission was terminated on 4 March 1920.

Although his commission was terminated in the regular army, Ernest served with the Army Reserve and was appointed colonel in 1926. He re-enlisted for service at the outbreak of WWII at age 53 and was appointed Chief Engineer, Eastern Command. After the war he returned to the Newcastle steelworks and remained there until his retirement in 1955. Colonel Ernest Sleeman Anderson died in Sydney on May 27 1963, aged 73 years.

**Right:** Brandhoek, Belgium, around June 1917. Outdoors group portrait of the officers and regimental sergeant major (RSM) of the 1st Australian Tunnelling Company at a camp near Poperinghe. The men are (left to right), back row: Lieutenant Cyril Henry Clayton; 2nd Lieutenant Robert John Finlayson, accidentally killed 25th June 1917; Lieut John MacDiarmid Royle; Captain Donald Yates MC; Lieut Samuel James Lindsay; Lieut John Edward Armstrong. Second row: Lieut SH Jones; Lieut Henry David Hill; Lieut Walter Moore; Lieut James Bowry; 3521 RSM Walter George Lyne. Front row: Capt Ronald Butler Hinder MC; Capt Robert Adam Clinton MC; Capt (later Major) Ernest Sleeman Anderson [arrowed]; Major James Douglas Henry CO, OBE, DSO; Capt Oliver Holmes Woodward, MC and two Bars; Lieut Hubert Henry Carroll MC; Lieut Willoughby Manton MC. [Australian War Memorial Negative Number P02333.001.]
‘Dentures and a shaving brush’: clues to one of the missing

Stephen Brooks, Barooga.

The three married sons of James and Sarah Allen all died in France and Belgium. All three are remembered on the Beverley War Memorial in Western Australia.

**Private 4744 Owen Moore Allen** of the 16th Battalion AIF was killed in action 31 August 1916, aged 28. He was the husband of Alice Mary Allen of Claremont, WA. Owen has no known grave and he is remembered on the Villers-Bretonneux Memorial in France. He was a wood-cutter in civilian life, and lived at Smith’s Mill, which is now known as Glenn Forest, a suburb of Perth.

Owen Allen only joined the 16th Battalion in France twelve days before he was reported missing. He was later confirmed as being killed in action on 31 August 1916, just near Mouquet Farm. **Reverend Lenthall G Dickenson**, DSO (vicar of Downton, Salisbury, 1910-16, and senior chaplain to the 25th Division BEF 1916-17), reported that he had buried Allen. However, Allen’s grave was never found after the war.

In 1929 the handle of a shaving brush with the initials ‘OA’ and upper and lower sets of false teeth were found on the remains of an unknown Australian soldier exhumed from an isolated grave near Mouquet Farm. The CWGC informed the AIF, who subsequently wrote to Owen’s wife, stating, after careful investigation, it is ascertained there were only two casualties bearing initials OA in this area. **319 HO ARGENT** 21/AIF (26.8.1916) and **4744 OM ALLEN** 16/AIF (31.8.1916) and as the first named has a grave in Villers-Bretonneux Military Cemetery, in the circumstances there would appear little reason to doubt that the remains of the unknown soldier, are actually those of your husband, and in order to obtain conclusive evidence of this I should be glad of your advice as to whether the late Pte. Allen was in possession of false denture sets as described. The favour of your prompt attention and reply will be appreciated in order that the necessary steps may be taken to register the grave accordingly and proceed with the erection of a permanent headstone.

Alice Allen replied: Having received your letter concerning my husband and his possession of false teeth, I have to inform you he had no denture sets at all and as to the shaving brush I do not know. He had a wristlet watch given to him from myself with his name on the inside.

The remains were buried at the Serre Road Cemetery No. 2 in Plot XXVIII, Row B, Grave 2, over which I presume the headstone still reads, ‘An Unknown Australian Soldier’, as on checking the CWGC records there is no name recorded for that particular grave.

So if the soldier was neither Argent nor Allen, who might he have been?

On visiting the honour roll on the website of the Australian War Memorial, I searched for all surnames beginning with ‘A’ and all given names beginning with ‘O’, of men who were killed during July, August and September of 1916. There were only three men who matched. All three were killed near Mouquet Farm, and all three had no known grave at the time (they were first reported missing, then much later confirmed KIA).

**319 Harry Oscar Argent.** 21st Battalion, mentioned in the AIF’s letter to Mrs Allen, had his remains discovered in 1924. His identity was verified by the presence of his identity disc and Argent was interred in the Villers-Bretonneux Military Cemetery.

The wife of Owen Allen, 16th Battalion, stated that her late husband did not have false teeth, and as he had only left Australia three months before his death, he is most likely not connected to the discovered remains.

A third soldier, whom the AIF did not mention in the letter to Mrs Allen, **5043 Private Oliver Oswald Abbott.** 11th Battalion, also went missing around the same time as the aforementioned soldiers. Abbott was reported missing between the dates of 20 and 23 August 1916.

The remains of the unknown soldier (found with the shaving brush marked ‘OA’ and upper and lower dentures) were discovered near Mouquet Farm at map reference 57d.R.28.c.35.00. This appears to be at a point some several hundred yards, almost exactly due east, of Mouquet Farm.

In the Red Cross file of Private Oliver Oswald Abbott is the following statement: Witness states:- was alongside when Abbott was sniped in the head while standing on the parapet. Killed immediately. It was about 400 yards in front of Mouquet Farm. Helped to bury him at side of trench. We were in the front line. Abbott was a fine chap, champion rifle shot of SW district of WA. He was rather deaf.

**5149 E McRohan, 11th Batt., Harefield Hospital 17.1.17.**

The 11th Battalion participated in the 3rd Brigade attack on the Fabec Graben trench, just south east of Mouquet Farm, on 21 August 1916. Only a few companies of the battalion took part, as they were late getting up to the front line. However, the direction of the 11th Battalion’s advance was almost exactly over
the ground where the body of the unknown soldier was recovered. The area allotted to the 11th Battalion is quite clearly pictured in a map on page 794 of Bean’s ‘Volume III’, and the tip of the arrow showing the 11th Battalion’s intended advance is almost precisely the spot where the remains of the soldier were found in 1929 [arrowed on Bean’s page 800 margin map at left]. The 11th Battalion war diary reports 14 other ranks were killed in action during the small scale attack.

Based on the above, I feel that the evidence strongly points to the unknown Australian soldier buried in Plot XXVIII, Row B, Grave 2 of the Serre Road Cemetery No. 2, located about eight kilometres north west of Pozieres, being 5043 Private Oliver Oswald Abbott of the 11th Battalion AIF.

Sadly, Oliver Abbott’s brother, Private Henry Edgar Abbott, 10th Field Ambulance, Army Medical Corps, was also killed in action. He lost his life on 12 October 1917. Henry Abbott’s body was also lost and he is remembered on the Menin Gate Memorial at Ieper, Belgium.

The man originally thought to be the unknown soldier, Private Owen Allen, also had two brothers subsequently killed in action. An older brother, 5794 Private Robert Allen, 28th Battalion AIF, joined his unit in France in January 1917, not long before he was mortally wounded in action on 26 March 1917. He died the next day at a field ambulance, aged 30. Robert Allen was the husband of Florence Beatrice Allen of Fremantle, WA. He is buried in the Pozieres British Cemetery, France, close to where Owen Allen was lost on the battlefield.

A third and youngest brother, 3026 Private Ernest Allen, 48th Battalion, was killed in action in Belgium, 12 October 1917; ironically on the same day and at the same place as the second of the Abbott brothers was killed. He was 27 years old and the husband of Rosetta Allen, of Beverley, WA. Ernest Allen is buried in the Buttes New British Cemetery, Polygon Wood, Zonnebeke (Plot VI, Row C, Grave No 14).

Oliver Oswald Abbott and Henry Edgar Abbott were the sons of Absalom and Lavinia (nee Norris) Abbott. Both were born at Burra in South Australia. Oliver was born 28 December 1881, and was 34 years old when he was killed. Henry was born 29 August 1888 and was 29 years old when he died.

Both men were living at Katanning, WA, when they enlisted, and they were two of a large family of ten siblings. Both have plaques in Kings Park, WA. Oliver’s plaque is under a tree planted by his father, and Edgar’s under a tree planted by his sisters. It appears the family moved to WA sometime prior to the war.

A death notice appeared in ‘The Western Mail’ in September 1916:

ABBOTT. – Killed in action, somewhere in France, between August 20 and 23, Oliver Oswald Abbott, of Woodvale, Katanning, third loved son of A Abbott, and brother of AW Abbott, Fremantle; Mrs BG Green, Katanning; Mesdames Gray and Bath of Guildford, and Harry Abbott (on active service).

A year later, ‘The West Australian’ (21 August 1917) published an In Memoriam:

ABBOTT. – In loving memory of our dear brother, Private Oliver Oswald Abbott, of the 11th Battalion, who fell somewhere in France between August 20-23, 1916; also of my brother-in-law, Sergeant Duncan Bain, who fell at Gallipoli, August 7, 1915. Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away. – Inserted by Lillian Green, Shenstone, Katanning.

The death of Oswald’s father was notified in the ‘Sunday Times’, Perth, on Sunday 19 August 1928:

In his 85th year Mr Absalom Abbott, one of the oldest and most respected residents of the Katanning district, passed away recently. He arrived in this State from Burra, SA, 22 years ago and purchased a farming property near Katanning, where he had resided ever since. Two of his sons and a son-in-law were killed in the Great War. Two married daughters and a son survive him. Representatives of the Katanning RSL were among the numerous gathering at the gravesite.

Endnote: Stephen has supplied this information regarding the possible identity of the unknown soldier to the Army’s investigations unit, Unrecovered War Casualties, in February 2012 but has not yet received a reply – Ed.
A few notes on an old bugle:
Private 3505 Ernest John Waterhouse, 11th Battalion
David Bartlett, UK, with additional research by Graeme Hosken, Dubbo.

Ernest John (‘Jack’) Waterhouse stated he was 16 years and one month old and gave his calling as ‘scholar’ when he enlisted on 8 September 1915. Not surprisingly, Jack stood only 5’4” tall and weighed 98lb (seven stone). Jack was the son of Ernest and Mary Ann Waterhouse of Irvine St, Cottesloe, WA. His brothers Frederick [1276, 10th LHR/4th DAC] and Francis [3504, 11th Bn] had enlisted in the AIF in June and August 1915 respectively. He had two years service in a school cadets unit associated with the 87th Infantry Militia, where he was trained as a bugler. [Below: Jack (centre) with his brothers: Frank is on the left and Fred is on the right.]

As Jack was under 21 years, he obtained written consent from his parents to serve overseas. Jack did not pretend he was over 18 so it appears that the Army was prepared to accept the 16 year old and utilise him as a bugler. After a brief period of training at the 29th Depot Company, Jack was allocated to the 11th Reinforcements for the 11th Battalion on 27 September. He departed for overseas service on 2 November 1915.

Jack was admitted to hospital in Abbassia, Egypt, on 27 March 1916 suffering from diarrhoea. On 1 May he was transferred to Ras-el-Tin (a rest camp) and one month later was discharged to Moascar.

Jack sailed for England aboard the Megantic from Alexandria on 27 August. He was taken on strength at the 3rd Training Battalion at No. 6 Camp, Perham Downs, on 7 September 1916.

On 7 March 1917 Jack was admitted to Parkhouse Hospital with orchitis. He was discharged to depot on 22 March. Jack’s next move was to AAMC Details at Parkhouse on 29 June and then to duty at 1st Australian Dermatological Hospital at Bulford on 10 October 1917. Jack remained there, perhaps working as a medical orderly or clerk, until he was transferred to the 2nd Training Battalion at Sutton Veny on 17 April 1918. Eight days later he transferred to the 1st Training Battalion, also at Sutton Veny.

Finally, after nearly two and half years in uniform, Jack proceeded to France on 6 May 1918. He was now aged 18 years. Following a two-day stay at Etaples, Jack Waterhouse joined the 11th Battalion in the field on 13 May. On 2 June he was admitted to the 3rd Field Ambulance with influenza. This illness saw him sent to the 54th General Hospital one week later.

On 18 June, Jack marched in to the 1st Convalescent Depot at Boulogne, then on to the 1st Australian Base Depot at Havre on the 20th. On 10 August Jack arrived at the Convalescent Depot at Havre and proceeded back to his unit on the 14th, rejoining it three days later.

On 18 September 1918 the 11th Battalion advanced towards the Hindenburg Line and fought an action to capture the village of Villereit. In the fighting they lost four officers and 16 other ranks killed.

This was probably Jack’s first experience of battle and thoughts of his possible death must have weighed heavily on his mind. On that day (the 18th), Jack penned a note on a postcard that he had recently received from his parents [left].

Jack’s parents wrote:
My Darling Jack,
With love & best wishes for a happy birthday & many, many more happy birthdays,
from Dad & Mother xxxxxxx
Jack wrote on the bottom of the card:

_In The Field, 18 Sep 1918_

_My Darling Mother,_

_Life is worth nothing now so if I go under you know I have done my duty. Don’t grieve as we will meet in the new world. Love to all, Jack._

_PS. Will finder please see that Mother gets this._

Jack must have carried this note into battle. Luckily, it was not needed to be found and sent home to his mother.

The 11th Battalion was relieved on 24 September by American troops and withdrew to billets at Tincourt. One of their first duties was the burial of the dead. This was carried out at Tincourt Cemetery with the playing of the ‘Last Post’ by the battalion buglers, including Jack.

Private Waterhouse was taken ill again on 27 October 1918 and was admitted to the 3rd Field Ambulance with myalgia. He was transferred to the 3rd AGH at Abbeville on 1 November. Five days later he was put on an ambulance train and taken to Havre. There he boarded the Hospital Ship _St David_ to be taken to England for treatment, which he underwent at the Beaufort War Hospital, Bristol, between 7 and 30 November.

Jack was fortunately well enough to be given furlough over Christmas and New Year, before reporting to No. 2 Command Depot at Weymouth.

Jack returned to Australia on the _Euripides_, departing England on 19 April 1919. He was discharged on 23 June 1919 after serving in the AIF for three years and nine months – and he was still only 19 years old!

---

Jack received his bugle as a 16th birthday present from his father, Ernest Frederick Waterhouse (retired captain, South Australian Rifles), on 18 September 1915 – ten days after he enlisted. [Note: This means Jack was actually aged 15 years and 11 months when he volunteered.]

In 2010, Jack’s son, Bob Waterhouse, was a participant in a battlefield tour led by FFFAIF member, David Bartlett. Along for the journey was the bugle that his father had carried to the Great War.

Bob visited the Tincourt Cemetery and located the headstones of the men from the 11th Battalion who were killed on 18 September 1918. There, the bugle that was played over their graves in 1918 was placed on the flower bed, in silent reunion some 92 years later [below left].

Bob’s next stop was the Menin Gate at Ieper, where arrangements had been made for Jack’s bugle to be played by one of the Last Post Association buglers.

So it came to be that on the evening of 8 August 2010, the ‘Last Post’ was played by a solo instrument – the bugle of Private Jack Waterhouse, 11th Battalion AIF.

_Centre: Bob Waterhouse with the LPA buglers at Menin Gate. He is holding his father’s bugle._

_Right: Jack’s WWI bugle sounded the Last Post to close the evening ceremony at Ieper._

_Endnotes:_ (1) For his 16th birthday, Jack also received a copy of the ‘Military Music Book for Bugle and Trumpet Calls for Parades and Active Service’, printed for the Army in 1912. (2) Francis was badly wounded at Pozieres. He married an English widow in 1919. (3) Fred RTA in 1917 after being wounded in the neck and suffering shell shock. (4) David runs Bartlett’s Battlefield Journeys and offers a discount to FFFAIF members. See [www.battlefields.co.uk](http://www.battlefields.co.uk) for contact details.
How likely is it to find an authentic Rising Sun cap badge in a museum shop in France? Common, you say? What if that badge was found two, maybe three days, earlier, encased in mud and buried for 96 years at Pozieres? What would you say if I told you that I am writing this story on 26 July 2012 from a hotel room in Albert in France?

Here is the story, and my part of it (at least) is authentic, although I think the rest is too. I arrived on the Somme on July 24, turning off the A1 motorway at Bapaume at about 5.00 pm in the afternoon. It was 96 years exactly from the second day of the Battle of Pozieres.

Now, I did not go directly to Pozieres. It is my first visit to France and I could not go past the village of Ligny-Thilloy, where my Great Uncle Ernie [Pte 3145 Ernest John Mannell] was killed on February 28, 1917. But I digress for now and I will get back to Ligny-Thilloy later, as it forms part of my story.

I visited Pozieres and walked the main street, talked to Dominic at the Tommy Café and looked at the First Division Memorial etc, before going to Albert to find a room.

I had missed seeing the Somme Museum at Albert on the 25th as I had returned too late from looking around Villers-Bretonneux, Ribemont, Amiens and a few other places. So I visited there this afternoon (July 26).

After looking at the excellent museum displays, I emerged into the gift shop area of the complex and noted the fine array of battlefield souvenirs on display. They had lots of helmets, bayonets, belt buckles etc. for sale. I already had a desire for a German ‘Gott mit uns’ belt buckle and there was one there for €50’ish. But I looked further and saw a Rising Sun cap badge, nicely presented by a UK firm specialising in battlefield souvenirs and available for €59. I thought, ‘Bugger the German belt buckle, look at this.’

Then I spotted, a little further on, another Rising Sun badge; this one [right] on cardboard backing with the handwritten words, ‘Original badge found on the battlefields – Badge original trouve sur le champs de bataille’. The badge was priced at €70.

Being a little suspicious, I wondered if the badge really was authentic and when and where it was found.

‘Bonjour’, I started, then realising that my French was too limited to ask what was needed to be asked, I continued with the typical cop-out, ‘Vous parle Anglais?’

The mademoiselle serving replied, ‘Yes, may I help you?’

Now, it’s a funny thing hearing people speak in your own language abroad. And you don’t expect to hear your own accent from a shop assistant, so it doesn’t immediately register when you do.

I wanted to see the badge, which the young lady retrieved from the cabinet. There was no doubt it was authentic, but what about the story?

‘Yes, it was brought in yesterday, covered in mud, by a local man. The museum director himself cleaned it and prepared it for display and sale.’

She assured me that she saw him cleaning it.

‘So, it came off the battlefield yesterday? Which battlefield?’

‘I don’t know, and the boss is on his way to Corsica for a vacation.’

‘Corsica? Does he think he is Napoleon?’ I joked. ‘I would love to know where it came from.’

She called him on his mobile and he confirmed that a local Albert man found it and it was from near here. He was almost sure, but not certain, that the man found it at Pozieres.

That was good enough for me! Here I am, the great nephew of a Pozieres veteran, with the chance to buy an authentic Rising Sun cap badge on the 96th anniversary of the fourth day of the Battle of Pozieres, and most likely found on that battlefield on the 96th anniversary of the first or second day. Needless to say, it was cheap at €70.

‘You speak English with an Aussie accent’, I said after finally noticing the obvious. I mean she could have said, ‘Ow ya goin’ mate? It’s a ripper of a bloody gong, ain’t it?’ up until then and I would not have noticed.

‘Yes, I came to live in France at fourteen. I am fourth generation Australian’, she replied.

So there you have it, the third and fourth persons to touch this badge after 96 years, if the story behind its discovery is true, are both Australians.

Anyway, I started to tell her how my great uncle fought at Pozieres and was killed at Ligny-Thilloy.

‘Ligny-Thilloy, I live at Ligny-Thilloy’ she exclaimed.

Phillip Mannell, Mawson (via Albert).
Trooper 1392a Walter Robert Bonser,
Camel Corps/11th Light Horse Regiment

*Trevor Munro, Dubbo, with thanks to Steve Becker, Capalaba.*

**Walter Robert (‘Tunna’) Bonser** was the brother of William (‘Wagga’) Bonser, profiled in *DIGGER* 40. Tunna’s next of kin was recorded as ‘William Bonser (father)’ on his attestation papers, probably an error on the part of the clerk recording the details. Tunna [right] was nearly 22 years of age when he enlisted on 30 July 1915 and had been working as a labourer in Toowoomba, Qld. Tunna was part-aboriginal, but the only hint to that fact on his attestation papers is the acknowledgement that he had ‘dark complexion, dark brown eyes and curly black hair’.

Trooper Walter Bonser was initially allotted as part of the 11th Reinforcements for the 5th Light Horse Regiment. Most of Tunna’s draft of 100 men sailed from Sydney aboard the *Mashobra* on 4 October 1915. Although departing from Sydney, most of the men were from Queensland, the Northern Territory or northern New South Wales and had carried out the bulk of their training at the Enoggera Army Camp, west of Brisbane. Tunna’s surname incorrectly appears as ‘Bouser’ on the *Mashobra*’s embarkation roll.

It is not clear as to where the 11th Reinforcements ended up, but possibly like the 12th Reinforcements they were sent directly to Mudros. At this late stage of the Gallipoli campaign, it is likely that the reinforcements did not join the regiment on Anzac. Tunna Bonser, however, had contracted the mumps during the sea voyage and was instead sent to a hospital at Alexandria and then transferred to No. 4 Auxiliary Hospital at Abbassia on 29 November 1915. Tunna was discharged back to duty towards the end of January 1916.

The bulk of the 5th Light Horse Regiment returned to Egypt in early 1916 and established a new camp at Maadi, a small town on the outskirts of Cairo. There was a railway line to the town, which assisted in the movement of troops and stores. The following AWM photos show, left, part of the Maadi Camp and right, some of the 5th Regiment’s men training.

Trooper Bonser was taken on strength at the 2nd Light Horse Training Regiment on 1 March 1916. Egypt was by now awash with men of the AIF and those recovering from wounds or ill-health suffered on Anzac Cove were now beginning to rejoin their units. The training depots were also full of fresh reinforcements arriving from Australia.

On 6 July 1916, Tunna was transferred to the 2nd Double Squadron, one of several ‘double squadrons’ formed in early July. Although mostly light horsemen, the squadrons were in fact dismounted troops, formed specifically to be utilised in canal defence duties along the Suez.
In September 1916 the double squadrons were disbanded and most of the men, including Tunna, were transferred to the Imperial Camel Corps. The Camel Brigade had been formed in January 1916, initially to help deal with a revolt by Senussi tribesmen in Egypt’s Western Desert. The cameliers had been used in lengthy patrols, during which they encountered the Senussi in brief skirmishes.

By the time Tunna joined the ‘Camels’ the unit had expanded (often referred to now as the ‘Camel Corps’) and been transferred to the Sinai Desert to take part in the operations against the Turks. Like the light horse regiments, the Camel Brigade had a training depot; theirs was at Abbassia.

The training depot was in dilapidated barracks, while officers were billeted in old married quarters. Numerous pests made life uncomfortable for all the men. Tunna would train at Abbassia until the end of October 1916. On 2 November he finally joined the 4th Australian Camel Regiment.

The Camel Brigade had become part of the Desert Mounted Corps, and as such they often fought alongside the light horse. The cameliers were, technologically, mounted infantry but were referred to as troopers. Their dress was a mixture of both mounted and infantry gear. The cameliers wore the distinctive leather bandolier of the light horse, the slouch hat, and infantry puttees instead of leggings. Initially, all in the Camel Brigade had worn the pith helmet, but the Australians and New Zealanders quickly adopted their own hats. The ‘Camels’ fought using primarily infantry tactics, adapted for use with their unusual means of transport.

Tunna was only with his unit for a few weeks before again being hospitalised. On 19 December he was admitted to No. 4 Australian General Hospital at Cairo, suffering from a venereal infection. On 2 January 1917 Tunna was transferred to No. 14 AGH, also in Cairo.

On 22 March 1917 Tunna was discharged back to duty at the Camel Brigade Training Depot at Abbassia. On 23 April, Bonser was posted to the 3rd Anzac Battalion of the Camel Brigade. Late in March 1917, the Desert Column (to which the Camels now belonged) had crossed the frontier south of Rafa. After months of tramping through loose sand the feel of grassed plains was a relief for the cameliers and, perhaps to a lesser extent, their beasts.

Tunna now became part of the 11th Company of the 3rd Anzac Battalion of the Imperial Camel Brigade. The 12th and 13th Companies were also Australian, while the 14th Company was manned by New Zealand troops. Lieutenant Dixon was in command of the 11th Company.

The Camel Brigade had three other battalions: the 1st Australian Battalion had been formed from the Australian infantry brigades after Gallipoli, while the 2nd Battalion was formed from British troops. The 4th Anzac Battalion was exactly that: it was comprised of two companies of New Zealanders and two of Australian light horse reinforcements. The Camel Brigade also had the Hong Kong and Singapore Mountain Battery and a machine-gun squadron in support.

The photo at right shows the diversity of Empire troops serving within the Camel Brigade. For most of its time the Camels came under the command of Brigadier General CL Smith VC.
Tunna was only with his unit for less than a week. On 29 April 1917 he was again evacuated to hospital; apparently his VD was not fully cured. Tunna was sent back to Rafa and from there to El Arish, eventually ending up at the 14th General Hospital in Cairo on 8 May.

On 1 July, Tunna was sent back to the Camel Brigade’s depot company at Abbassia. However, only three days later he was again in hospital; this time at Abbassia, where he was diagnosed as suffering dysentery.

On 7 August, Tunna absented himself from a tattoo roll call at 9.30pm and didn’t report for duty until 5.30 the next morning. Bonser forfeited a day’s pay for his misdemeanour. It was not until 23 August that he returned to the Camel’s depot company.

Since the end of October 1917 the Camel Brigade had continually been in action, advancing from Beersheba to Jaffa over a period of about one month. The 3rd Battalion (which Tunna would later join) had played an important part in the Battle of Khuweilfe during the first week of November. The battalion had initially been in support of three British battalions, but had quickly been involved in the fighting.

At a crucial stage on 6 November 1917, Lieutenant Dixon [right, AWM B01194] had dashingly led twenty men to retake a crucial point (which became known as Dixon’s Post). On 7 November, Dixon again launched an attack, this time with most of 11 Company. With fixed bayonets his men charged and secured the entire ridge upon which Dixon’s Post was located. Dixon was mentioned in despatches, and in February 1918 he would be awarded the DSO.

Walter Bonser did not rejoin his company in the 3rd Anzac Battalion until 28 November. By this time the Camel Brigade was continuing its advance towards Jaffa. When Jaffa was taken in late November the port was used to land supplies for the forward troops.

The following extracts are from a comprehensive article by (FFFAIF member) Steve Becker on the Battle of Bald Hill. Tunna had joined his battalion in the early stages of the fighting. The extracts I have used (reproduced courtesy of Steve) relate primarily to the 3rd Anzac Battalion’s actions during the battle.

By the closing days of November 1917 the Camel Brigade had been in constant movement and action since 29 October, having advanced from Beersheba to Jaffa in about four weeks, fighting a major battle and a number of skirmishes along the way, both animals and men were worn out. The camels, unused to the hard rocky ground in Palestine after the soft sands of the Sinai, were tormented from sore feet which had crippled them by the hundreds, and camel itch (a type of septic sore) had broken out and the good old mange dressing was all that was keeping most alive. Still, numerous animals had to be destroyed.

All companies in the brigade were suffering and they were now so reduced in both men and camels by disease and casualties that they were a shadow of their former selves.

In the week following the battle at Khuweilfe, the Camel Brigade was moved along the Palestine coast where the sandy soils of the coast were more agreeable to the animals than the hard ground of the mountains. There, in support of the Yeomanry Division and the 52nd Division, the brigade fought and chased up the retreating 8th Turkish Army.

On 22 November the Camel Brigade was attached to the Anzac Mounted Division under General Chaytor and ordered to move to Bald Hill to cover the right flank of the Desert Mounted Corps (under General Chauvel) on the Nahr El Auja line. This feature was eight miles northeast of Jaffa, and the 2nd Battalion relieved the 7th Light Horse Regiment at 10am and occupied a line from Yehudiyyeh in the south (tying in with the 1/4th Northamptonshire Battalion of the 54th Division at Wilhelmia) and the 5th Light Horse Regiment of the 2nd Light Horse Brigade in the north around Mulebbis, who supplied and maintained mounted patrols covering the area around Bald Hill to the north and east.

Bald Hill was a large open whale-backed feature which dominated the surrounding area. It was exposed on all sides and little cover was available; only a strip of cactus on the northern side. There
were also a number of large almond-tree orchards around the area in front of Bald Hill, which units of the light horse were garrisoning. The main feature was broken by a re-entrant between Lone Tree Hill and Yafa Hill, while a number of small wadis cut the surface between Bald Hill and Lone Tree Hill, which was to its rear. Bald Hill was an important position in the defence of Jaffa as its loss and a Turkish breakthrough there would expose the Allied defences along the Nahr El Auja, and force General Chauvel to retire south of Jaffa. It was vital that Bald Hill be held.

In the morning of 28 November the battle had quietened down until 10.20am when post 1 was heavily shelled until 11.30am, while the rest of the posts continued to be shelled through the day, mortally wounding Private Sid Coleman, 18th Company, who was hit in the head. The Turks did not attack, contenting themselves on working on their defences and resting after a bitter night. At 8.50pm that night the 4th Anzac Battalion was relieved by the 3rd Battalion which had been waiting in reserve. Its companies had been hard hit in the fighting at Tel el Khuweilfe, and despite the reduced strength of the companies, occupied all posts and extended the old trenches, as well as exchanging fire with the ever-observant Turks.

The Camel Brigade’s position now had the 2nd Battalion south of Yafa Hill holding the right flank, while overlooking Wilhelmia, next in line, was the 3rd Battalion. The 16th Company’s defence took in Yafa Hill and Points 266 and 286 along the south-eastern part of Bald Hill, then came the 4th Battalion, now concentrated around One Tree Hill. All battalions had dug both reserve and support trenches in depth, and barbed wire was used over the next few days to develop and extend the position. The 2nd Light Horse Brigade continued the line from One Tree Hill towards the Auja River and Tel Abu Zeitun.

On 29 November the Turks again remained inactive during the day, except for their artillery, which again shelled the posts. Lieutenant Aubrey Bickford MC, Adjutant, 3rd Battalion [shown right, AWM B01196]) was wounded when hit in the right thigh by a piece of shrapnel. At the Camel Brigade HQ, General Smith and Lieutenant Colonel Lee planned a raid for that night to bomb Turkish work parties which were active on the defences of Bald Hill. This would be in conjunction with a raid by the 6th Light Horse Regiment, who were to assist with two troops (‘A’ and ‘B’ Troops) from ‘A’ Squadron under Captain Stuart Tooth [brother of Owen Tooth on the next page]. They would advance from the north while the cameliers attacked from the south. The 2nd Battalion was asked to assist and Captain Fleming Gregory, commanding the 7th Company, was ordered to send two sections to support the 4th Anzac Battalion by occupying the vacant post. Captain Gregory instead decided to bring his whole company to help and was relieved by the 9th Company that morning. During the afternoon the 7th Company was hit by shell fire, with one shell falling on a section of trench occupied by Fleming Gregory, a well-liked British officer, killing him and wounding Lieutenant James Archibald and forcing Lieutenant John Bell-Irving to assume command of the company.

Lieutenant Black’s reduced 15th Company (now about 60 men) was chosen to carry out the raid as it had held Bald Hill and knew the ground. Using the cover of darkness they moved up to the 3rd Battalion trench near post 4, which was the closest to the Turkish works on Bald Hill. At 10pm an artillery barrage from ‘B’ Battery HAC and the Inverness Battery fell on Bald Hill, and under cover of this fire the New Zealanders of the 15th Company moved forward at the rush with the bayonet. They were met by the Turks with bomb and bayonet, and a desperate fight developed when the New Zealand troops drove the Turks up the hill, where stores lost on 27 November by their company were recovered. Once near the top of Bald Hill they found Turkish resistance growing.

The afternoon passed with insignificant fire as the Turks appeared demoralised by the night and morning battles. This respite allowed the men to continue working on the defences and permitted the companies to be relieved. The terrain around Bald Hill took on the appearance of the battlefields of France, when large areas of trenches and wire began appearing as the companies pushed forward, constructing new lines and tying in all posts held.

The night of 30 November passed without any major fighting; instead, both sides were content to improve their positions as snipers ruled the dark. It was during this time that the 63rd Turkish
Regiment relieved the fatigued 61st Regiment in the firing line, taking over the line from Bald Hill to the Auja River, while the 62nd Regiment continued the line to the area of the 16th Division around Wilhelmia.

The first day of December was also quiet, apart from Turkish snipers, and between 4.30 and 6am the men stood-to before commencing the day’s activities. The odd burst of artillery fire, which all too often betrayed that an intrepid person was trying to move around the battlefield, was all to be heard as the work continued on the defences. The ground around Lone Tree Hill was turned into a redoubt and new works were commenced during the day. Those men not working tried to rest in the shade of their trenches from the burning sun.

German aircraft were active helping the long range artillery by spotting and one salvo scored hits on the camel lines near Brigade HQ at Ibn Ibrak and Saki, killing Lieutenant Horace Hallam RASC, the Brigade Admin Officer, and a large number of animals which were barricaded in close formation near the watering point. The 3rd Battalion still working on the new works was shelled heavily late in the day, wounding two men and damaging the posts. Private Harold Cummin, 11th Company, was evacuated to the 2nd Light Horse Field Ambulance, only to die from his wounds that night. Once darkness came the Turks were heard working on their defences as snipers came out to snipe at the men, one of whom, Private John Currie of the Brigade’s machine-gun squadron, was killed.

On the 3rd December after stand to, another raid was ordered to take place that night. Lieutenant Colonel Lee alerted the 17th Company, being the strongest company remaining in the battalion, to move up to post 9, situated in the 3rd Battalion trenches, that afternoon, and the 18th Company was alerted to support if needed. The plan was for the company to discover how strongly the enemy’s position was held, and three officers were attached to inspect the defences and report on them, as the force was only to be in the enemy’s trenches for 10 minutes before returning. The attached officers were Lieutenant Richard Camm, sent to see how many men could be held in the Turkish trenches, Lieutenant Vic Adolph, to see at what stage the Turks were at in their construction, and Lieutenant Edward O’Keefe, 18th Company, to check their observation posts.

With the raid now completed, Captain Hampton ordered all troops back to the start point, with the 10 minutes allowed for the raid long passed. When the troops retired machine guns from the 3rd Battalion opened on the enemy’s defences, which prevented the recovery of all the wounded. Captain Hampton stayed to help and his direction of the withdrawal enabled all of the wounded to be recovered with the help of Sergeant Lionel Towner, who rescued a number of men in front of the Turkish trenches. They were the last men to return with the Padre, who went among the troops and wounded, keeping their spirits up, and by 9.40pm all had returned other than Lieutenant Adolph who stayed to complete a final check on the enemy’s works before arriving back, carrying a wounded man. Only one man was believed left in the Turkish trenches and he had been killed and could not be recovered. The Turks, still alarmed by the raid, continued to shell to the area till 10pm when all fell silent.

The 6th Light Horse to the north had still advanced at H hour plus 10 and reached their objective, bayoneting 20 Turks from the 2nd Battalion/57th Regiment, where they stayed long enough in the Turkish trenches to capture three prisoners from the 57th Regiment and one prisoner from the 1st Battalion/52nd Regiment and some rifles before returning with the required information with the loss of one officer (Owen Tooth [below left]) and one other rank (Brian Barton [below right]) killed and one officer (Norman Dickson) and 22 men wounded.

December 4 passed quietly, other than for the odd shell, then at 3pm three German planes appeared overhead, resulting in a storm of fire on all posts along the line till it eased off at 5.30 pm. One gun continued to fire during the night at post 10 in the 2nd Battalion area with one shell every 10 minutes and Turkish snipers were out in force till 11pm when all went quiet.
The 2nd Battalion in the meantime had spent the last week covering Yafa Hill, and other than suffering heavy artillery fire had not been attacked. The Battalion had supported the 54th Division on their right with fire during the emergency late on 27 November. Most of the time they contented themselves with holding three posts with half companies and providing fire support for the 3rd Battalion on the left and the 54th Division at Yehudiyeh and Wilhelmia.

The Camel Brigade, once relieved, moved back past Jaffa through thick mud, as it had now begun to rain in buckets. The men and camels struggled across the plains of Sharon and Gaza to Shellal, arriving at 2 pm on 11 December for a well-earned rest.

On 1 January the 3rd Battalion (now reduced through illness and casualties) was sent back to the Canal. The 13th Company, not having been heavily engaged over the last month, was sent to the 4th Battalion on 30 December, replacing the reduced 15th (NZ) Company which returned with the 3rd Battalion. The 1st Battalion arrived from the Canal on 16 January with a strength of 23 officers and 660 other ranks.

Total brigade casualties for the month of November were recorded in the War Diary as five officers and 23 other ranks killed, 12 officers and 109 other ranks wounded and two missing. Most of these losses were at Khuweilfe earlier in the month.

The battle casualties for December at Bald Hill were reported as two officers and five other ranks killed, seven officers and 44 other ranks wounded and three missing.

The Australians of the 3rd and 4th Anzac Battalions had lost six other ranks killed, while six officers and 67 other ranks were reported wounded, of whom 11 other ranks died of wounds. Two other ranks were reported missing, one of whom was captured; the other killed in action and left in the Turkish trenches.

As Steve Becker recorded, the 3rd Anzac Battalion had retired to take over part of the canal defence, with the 1st Australian Battalion taking its place within the Camel Brigade. The 3rd Battalion would not fight in any more battles as part of the Camel Brigade. The Camel Brigade’s effectiveness was now being continually questioned; the camels being unable to keep pace with the mounted divisions on horseback.

On 26 January 1918 while at Kubri (carrying out canal defence), Walter was charged with having been AWL the previous night. Walter forfeited a days pay and was given FP No. 2 for a day.

The Es Salt operations in May 1918 marked the end of the Imperial Camel Brigade. In June 1918 the Australians from the brigade were sent to be retrained and given horses to form the 14th and 15th Light Horse Regiments. A mock funeral [right] was organised by Padre Houston to farewell the Camel Corps. A camel saddle was carried by bearers to a ‘grave’, where it was buried. The two new regiments then came to attention and formally farewelled the Camel Corps. A last volley was fired and the Camel Corps was no more.

Trooper Walter Bonser was transferred to 5th Brigade Details on 14 June 1918. He, like the bulk of the camel corps men, was sent to the Australian and New Zealand Training Centre at Moascar to be turned into a light horseman. On 25 July 1918 the 5th Light Horse Brigade was officially formed. It consisted of: 14th Light Horse Regiment, formed from Australian battalions of the Camel Corps; 15th Light Horse Regiment, formed from Australian battalions of the Camel Corps, and the French 1er Regiment Mixte de Marche Cavalerie du Lavant, consisting of two squadrons of 1er Regiment Spahis and two of 1er Regiment de Marche Chausseurs d’Afrique.

The 3rd, 4th and 5th Light Horse Brigades now formed the Australian Mounted Division.

While training at Moascar, Tunna again went AWL; on this occasion he remained absent for five days. On 16 July Tunna was court-martialled with having been AWL from the 10th to the 15th of July 1918. As a result of being found guilty, Tunna was sentenced to 28 days FP No. 2 and ordered to forfeit six days pay.

Tunna was sent to the Field Punishment Compound at Moascar to carry out his sentence. The compound was a professionally run field prison run by members of the Australian Provost Corps. The diagram on the next page is a plan of the compound from late 1917. The compound had been improved and made more design-efficient by the time Tunna was sent to it in July 1918.
Upon his release from the compound [right] on 12 August, Tunna resumed training but on 1 September Tunna was transferred to the 4th Light Horse Training Regiment. So instead of being sent to either the 14th or 15th Light Horse Regiment (like the bulk of the cameliers), Tunna was instead allotted to join the 11th Light Horse Regiment.

The 11th Light Horse Regiment was probably in camp at Ludd when Tunna joined it. He was part of a group of 41 men led by Major J Lyons which reached the 11th Regiment on 4 September. The unit’s war diary described that the men arrived from the Australian Mounted Division Training Regiment at Moascar and that: Some of these men had previously been with the Regt, some had been with [the] Imperial Camel Corps and [were] re-posted to the Regt, while 18 were posted from general reinforcements from Australia.

It was during September 1918 that Lieutenant General Sir Harry Chauvel, commanding the Desert Mounted Corps, carried out one of the most outstanding mounted operations in the history of warfare. After the infantry corps had broken the advanced Turkish line of defence, two mounted divisions (less one brigade) advanced along the coastline and two other divisions along the Jordan flank, whilst the 5th Light Horse Brigade (14th and 15th LHRs) and a Free French Cavalry regiment advanced in an independent role in the centre and captured Tuzkerram.

Covering up to 500 kilometres in ten days and living ‘off the country’ as the transport were not able to keep up with the fast-moving mounted troops, the corps converged on Damascus in a ‘pincer’ movement. Brigadier Wilson, commanding the 3rd Light Horse Brigade (8th, 9th and 10th LHRs), was ordered to follow Brigadier Onslow’s 5th Brigade (14th and 15th LHRs and the French Regiment) to cross the Barada Gorge and block the enemy escape route to the north. The 4th Brigade (4th, 11th and 12th LHRs), as part of the Australian Mounted Division, also rode in support of the other two brigades. Thus the stage was set for an engagement that was to prove worthy of the men of the Australian Light Horse and produce many examples of individual courage and initiative.

At first, progress was much slower than expected. The 11th LHR’s main contribution to the advance was at Semakh, when all of its squadrons and one squadron from the 12th LHR were ordered to advance on the village on 25 September.

The 11th LHR had joined the push towards Damascus on 18 September when it arrived at Jaffa. The following day the regiment pushed on to Nahr Auja and prepared to attack Semakh. The attack was launched by the regiment early in the morning and was met by stubborn Turkish and German resistance.

Early on, ‘A’ Squadron and part of ‘B’ Squadron mounted an attack against superior numbers of Turks who were barricaded in and around the village’s railway station [shown right after the fight]. The Turks were often fighting from behind thick stone walls and had been supplied with an ample rum ration to help ‘steel’ themselves for the pending attack.

Many acts of individual heroism were displayed that day by men of the regiment. Although the 11th had good machine-gun support, the fire was largely ineffective against the stone wall defences. However, a Hotchkiss machine-gun section from ‘A’ Squadron proved to be highly effective in preventing the Turks from fleeing the town.
After some vicious fighting the village was taken. The regiment seized many Turkish guns and materials, as well as taking 23 officers and 341 men prisoner. Once the village was secure the regiment organised the burying of the dead and the tidying up of the village.

Typical of the aftermath of a battle, several officers (and men) were quickly promoted to fill gaps caused by casualties. The various acts of bravery were quickly recorded and submitted to the orderly room as the regiment prepared to continue its advance. The 11th LHR remained at Semakh until the 26th, before resuming its advance on 27 September. The regiment travelled through Tiberias and then Safed, arriving at Jier Benat Yakub [left] at 1700hrs where the regiment bivouacked for the night.

On 29 September the regiment continued its advance northwards towards Damascus. For its part the 11th LHR was tasked with securing many of the surrounding villages. The bulk of the men advanced to the north of Kuneitra, leaving ‘C’ Squadron to watch the village of Mansoura and several roads near the village.

The 11th LHR began actively patrolling its sector to assist with security in, and around the approaches to, Damascus. The next few days were spent patrolling as well as providing numerous guards and piquets as required. However, Tunna was not part of his regiment’s patrolling, as on 30 September he and four other men were admitted to a field ambulance suffering from various illnesses; in Tunna’s case, an attack of malaria.

Brigadier Wilson conceived the bold plan of taking his horsemen through the city of Damascus itself, and this took place on 1 October 1918. The defenders were taken by surprise and made no effort to stop the Australians, who rode on in pursuit of the fleeing Turks and Germans. Damascus, the oldest city in the world, had fallen to the Australian Mounted Division. However, as the division had largely pushed through the city, much of the credit of first-entering Damascus was given to Lawrence of Arabia, who jubilantly drove into the city in a Rolls-Royce later in the day.

Soon the city was in an uproar: civil government did not exist, Arab fought Syrian, and Sherrifan troops streamed in to loot and pillage. General Chauvel decided on a show of strength, and escorted by a squadron of the 2nd Light Horse Regiment, rode through the city about noon on 2 October, followed by representative units of his cavalry divisions. The effect was electric – the turbulent city was instantly intimidated into order. The crowd dispersed, merchants opened their shops and peace was restored.

The day before (1/10/18), Tunna had been admitted to the 11th LHFA with pyrexia. He was placed aboard the hospital ship Assaye which conveyed the wounded and sick to Alexandria. From Alexandria, Tunna was sent to the 31st General Hospital at Abbassia. After about a week in hospital, Tunna was transferred to a convalescent depot at Beulal where he spent the next nine days.

However, on 21 December Tunna was re-admitted to hospital, firstly to the 31st General Hospital and then a week later to the 14th Australian General Hospital (which was also located at Abbassia).

On 26 January 1919 Tunna was sent back to Australia aboard the Demosthenes. The ship [right] arrived at Melbourne on 2 March, and from there Tunna was trained back to Sydney for further treatment pending discharge. It wasn’t until 22 June 1919 that Trooper Walter Bonser was discharged from the AIF.

Eventually, Tunna returned to Bourke in western NSW and worked at various occupations until his retirement. Tunna Bonser passed away in Bourke in September 1972.
On 9 April 1917, Percy Clare was an English private serving in the 7th East Surrey Regiment of the 12th (Easter) British Division which took part in the 1917 Arras offensive. Percy survived and left an interesting narrative of his fighting day:

*Our platoon officer came to give the boys a last word of advice. McEvoy was a quite a young man, probably not more than 25 or 26 and formerly a private in the Australian contingent; he had been wounded at Gallipoli. He somehow got to England, obtained a commission, and had been gazetted to the 7th East Surreys as a second lieutenant. He seemed to be suffering somewhat from ‘swelled head’. This officer was really a transport officer, and as such his duties precluded him from participation in the attack, and consequently he was not present at any of our practices at Ambrines. McEvoy told the men that once Zero came and we got going, to go ‘Hell for leather’ for the Boche front line. Get there, said he, in the shortest possible time and so escape the Boche’s protective barrage. In theory it seemed alright, but he had overlooked, or perhaps did not know, that our own concentrated fury of gunfire was timed to play for two minutes upon that very Boche trench after it had swept over No-man’s land 30 yards in front of us. In our rehearsals we had been trained to crouch or kneel 30 yards behind it when it reached the German trench, wait for two minutes until it lifted, and advance steadily together at a walk, keeping a good line and true direction. It is obvious that anyone following McEvoy’s advice would inevitably perish under our own barrage. Corporal Steele and some others expressed their intention of following him. McEvoy also said he would unhesitatingly shoot with his revolver any man he saw stopping or hanging back, or seeking cover in shell holes, or going back unless severely wounded. True, he gave any man permission to shoot him if he hung back, but his entreat was quite unnecessary, and the men received it in hurt silence. They were only glad to be given the chance to get close quarters with the Hun instead of having to stand in a trench until invisible death found them from invisible gun. McEvoy boasted that we had been set the task of carrying the first four lines of enemy trenches, but he would lead us to the fortieth if there were so many to take. Such bragging only proclaimed his inexperience and unfitness to command us in so important an action. Poor chap, he was killed before he got to the very first line through his rashness in running under our own barrage fire. Unfortunately, he took some others with him.*

A burial party was detailed to go back over the ground to find our own dead, to bring in where possible the identity discs and bury the bodies. I was included in this party, and during the afternoon until dark we worked hard digging graves through the deep snow. It was through this that I came to learn the fate of our platoon officer, McEvoy, and the others who had so foolishly run into our own barrage and perished.

Some awful sights I saw, and yet they seemed to affect me not in the least: they might have been plants I was burying. I wondered at myself, that in such a short time I could grow callous. And yet I mourned the loss of comrades I had known so intimately, and daren’t think of their folk at home at plants I was burying. I wondered at myself, that in such a short time I could grow callous. And yet I

*This account led me to begin research on that Australian-born officer. I found the file I was looking for in the National Australian Archives.*

**Frank Osmond McEvoy** was born at Brighton in the state of Victoria. Educated at Melbourne Grammar School, Frank joined the 1st AIF on 24 September 1914. He declared to be stockman by trade. He had been member of a cadets school for three years. Attached to the 9th Australian Light Horse Regiment, he embarked for war at Melbourne on 11 February 1915 per A10 Karoo. He fought on Gallipoli and was admitted to 3rd LH Hospital, Mudros, suffering from scarlet fever. Then later he contracted enteric fever and was embarked to England. In England, **458 Trooper McEvoy** applied for a temporary commission in the Imperial Army. Such rare application was obtained with the help and support of the Agent-General of Victoria in London, who was a friend of the McEvoy family. His conduct and character while serving with the AIF had been ‘very good’ according to the records. Frank was discharged from the AIF, being appointed to a commission in the Imperial Army with effect from 2 December 1916. And so he was attached to 7th East Surrey Regiment. Second Lieutenant Frank Osmond McEvoy was killed in action on 9 April 1917. He is today buried at Ste Catherine British Cemetery. He was 24. One day I will go to visit his last resting place.

**Sources:** (1) Imperial War Museum, Department of Documents, P Clare: 06/48/1. (2) NAA B2455, MCEVOY FO.
Bert Laurence Melbourne Egan was born at Bombala in south-eastern NSW and was working as a drover and carter when he enlisted in the AIF on 29 August 1916 at the age of 20 years and 11 months. Bert was the son of Maurice and Ruth Egan of ‘Palestine’, Eden, and travelled to Sydney Showground to be attested and medically examined on 12 September.

Bert was first allocated to the light horse depot at Menangle Park for two weeks but was then transferred to the 11th Reinforcements for the 29th Battalion (8th Brigade, Victoria). On 1 November he was reallocated to the 18th Reinforcements for the 20th Battalion (5th Brigade, NSW).

Bert Egan [right] embarked from Sydney aboard the Suevic on 11 November 1916 but was disembarked at Cape Town and admitted to hospital with measles on 14 December. Bert re-embarked on the Anchises at Cape Town on 20 February and finally reached Devonport, UK, on 27 May 1917. Bert trained in England at Rollestone before reaching Havre in France on 6 June. He joined the 20th Battalion in the field on 28 June, but on the same day he was admitted to the 5th Field Ambulance, and then the 3rd Casualty Clearing Station, with appendicitis.

Bert reached the 5th General Hospital in Rouen on 9 July and sailed for England four days later on the Hospital Ship St George. He was admitted to the Richmond Military Hospital on the 14th and was treated until 20 August when he was granted two weeks furlough. Between 3 September and 16 October, Bert was classified as B1a2, B1a4, B1a2 and then B1a3, before he returned to France on 11 November 1917 (a year to the day he left Sydney).

Bert joined his battalion for the second time on 23 November and remained with his unit (in 6 Platoon, ‘B’ Company) through until 29 June 1918, when he was wounded in action. Bert received a ‘severe’ shrapnel wound to the left leg, which saw him transferred from the 6th Field Ambulance, to the 47th CCS, the 3rd Stationary Hospital and then on to Monyhall Hospital, England, on 3 July.

Private Egan recovered quickly and was able to go on leave from 13 to 27 July before he reported at the 1st Command Depot at Sutton Veny. Bert returned to France on 9 September and rejoined the 20th Battalion three days later.

On 2 October Bert was wounded for the second occasion, receiving a gunshot (shrapnel) wound to a hand and left thigh. Bert found himself on a hospital ship again on 6 October and this time was admitted to the 1st Birmingham War Hospital on the 8th. He was transferred to the 1st Australian General Hospital on 2 January 1919 and to No. 2 Command depot on 23 January.

Bert Egan left the UK for home on 11 April 1919 on board the Medic but was not discharged from the AIF until 29 May 1920, following further medical treatment.

Left: Studio portrait of Bert Egan.

Bert Egan kept photos and memorabilia relating to his service in the Great War. Some of this material can be seen on the next page, courtesy of Maurice Campbell.
Left: ‘Troopship at sea, 1914-1918 War’ [ship not named].
Below: ‘Onboard troopship’.

Below right: ‘In France’. Bert marked with an ‘X’.

Below: Nurses, probably from 1st Birmingham WH.

Below: ‘Officers and nurses, troopship 1919’ [Medic].

Below: 1st Birmingham War Hospital.

Below right: Bert (standing), with Charles Warburton (l) and Peter Sawer (r). Below: Label attached to Bert’s top tunic button when onboard a hospital ship.

Photos and medical tag from the Bert Egan Collection.
The Beerburrum Soldier Settlement was an Australian Commonwealth Government funded and Queensland State Government administered effort to provide land to repatriated servicemen who had served in the Australian and Imperial armed forces during World War One. The settlement was established in 1916 and ran until terminated during the late 1920s, although many settlers stayed on the land beyond that and some of their descendants are still living in the region.

The settlement consisted of over 56 000 acres of land centred on the North Coast Line railway station of Beerburrum, and ran from Elimbah in the south to near Landsborough in the north and from the Pumicestone Passage in the east to the D’Aguilar Range in the west. The settlers were required to clear the virgin bush, establish their landholdings, build their own residence and cultivate a crop of pineapples to be harvested and sold to the State Cannery for ultimate sale to consumers.

Whilst ultimately a failure, the settlement did turn the insignificant railway siding into a town approaching 1 000 residents, complete with schools, a hospital and even a racecourse. It necessitated the building of an even larger station, which had various stores, butchery, a blacksmith, some churches and even a guest house. It was the largest post war Land Settlement Scheme in the country and attracted such dignitaries as the Prince of Wales and General Birdwood (commander of the AIF divisions for most of the war) to visit.

The settlers comprised mainly Australian ex-soldiers but also many who had served in the British and Indian armed forces, as well as munitions workers, some civilians and even a war widow. Their numbers included various MC, DCM and DSO recipients. Men from diverse backgrounds, including writers, school teachers, farm hands, train drivers, sailors and office workers, were lured to Beerburrum by the prospect of cheap land and the opportunity of a ‘fair go’ at establishing themselves on the land after their selfless sacrifice made during the war. These settlers had served in all branches of the armed forces and in every significant engagement of the war, from the New Guinea expedition of August 1914 to the battles of the 100 Days in the autumn of 1918. Their collective experiences were a microcosm of Australia’s entire wartime involvement. [Above right: Early settlers at Beerburrum, December 1916. Image 1127543, Queensland State Archives, from www.adoptadigger.org.]

The Adopt-a-Digger Project (www.adoptadigger.org) is seeking to identify the 600 plus individuals who settled around Beerburrum during this time, to document their experiences and to trace their descendants to the present day. We aim to create a permanent historical record of these settlers in time for the centenary of the establishment of the Settlement in 2016. As such, we are seeking any records that people might have in the form of letters, narratives, photos, family oral history and other memorabilia relating to individuals known to have had a connection with the Settlement between 1916-1930.

If anybody has any such material, no matter how seemingly small or insignificant, we would welcome them contacting the project committee. Additionally, we have a list of 600+ confirmed settlers with a known connection to the Beerburrum Soldiers Settlement, so if anybody is not sure if their person of interest has a connection or not, do let us know and we can check our records.

In the build up to the 2016 Centenary we hope to put on an exhibition relating to the Settlement and we are also available to give talks to interested groups or associations locally.

Endnotes: (1) Paul can be contacted by e-mail at beerburrum@adoptadigger.org. (2) Readers may know this part of Queensland by the spectacular Glasshouse Mountains in the vicinity.
Stewart Macleay Ramsay grew up in Kempsey, NSW, and was the youngest son of Hannah Isabella and John Ramsay. He became a schoolteacher and was teaching at Dorrigo School when he enlisted in the 18th Battalion on 3 August, 1915. Dorrigo, in the Northern Highlands of NSW, had been settled in the early 1900s by tree fellers and cattle farmers and is one of the most beautiful areas of Australia with rainforest, high green valleys and waterfalls.

My grandfather, TH Harvey, had been successful in the Dorrigo land ballots and had established a farm ‘Redlands’, which was managed by his son, Frederick Ogborne (‘Fred’) Harvey, who became a friend of Stewart. My father, Walter Cecil Vandenbergh [see article in DIGGER 40] enlisted in the 18th Battalion and sailed with Stewart on the troopship Euripides. My father had met Fred’s sister, Winifred Kate Harvey, at a rifle camp at Narrabeen near Sydney. Winifred Kate and other young ladies had gone along to cook for the young marksmen. Winifred Kate introduced my father to her brother, Fred from Dorrigo, and to her schoolteacher sister, Eva, who knew Stewart from her teacher training days at Blackfriars.

After landing in Egypt, my father sent postcards to the Harvey family and one [right] is of a group of young Diggers mounted on camels with the pyramids and sphinx in the background. My father is on the centre camel and Stewart Ramsay is in the front on the kneeling camel. On the back of the postcard my father has written: Do you recognise me in the centre at the pyramids? The old sphinx is a saucy cat but he did not frown much at us because we are getting along pretty good. In the front is Stewart Ramsay who used to teach at Dorrigo; he knows Fred real well.

My father was transferred to the 3rd Battalion and fought on the Somme, while Stewart remained with the 18th Battalion where he was assigned to the Lewis machine-gun section and was killed in action at Pozieres on 4 August, 1916 bravely manning his Lewis gun. He was only twenty-three and lies in an unknown grave.

Stewart Macleay Ramsay is remembered at Villers-Bretonneux and with a poppy beside his name at the Australian War Memorial. His parents, Hannah Isabella and John Ramsay, are buried in Grafton Cemetery and their headstone includes the inscription: Stewart Macleay Ramsay, youngest son of the above, who fell at Pozieres, France – Until the Day Break.

Stewart’s death was heartbreaking for his parents. The war records are sad reading, for they contain letters from his father asking for information about ‘our dear lad’. The verse from the Bible, Song of Solomon, ch.2 v.16: ‘Until the day break, and the shadows flee away’, may have been some comfort in those years after his death. My father kept a framed photo of the young Diggers on their camels and I know he always thought of Stewart on Poppy Day and Anzac Day.

Stewart’s friend, my uncle Fred Harvey, enlisted in the Royal Flying Corps on 3 September 1917 as an air mechanic, regimental number 2615. Fred survived the war and returned to farm at Dorrigo. Before the war, Fred had been engaged to a local Dorrigo girl, Vivien Shea of the property, ‘Bald Dene’, but the engagement was broken when my bellicose grandfather accused Vivien’s brother of cattle duffing. Fred married another local Dorrigo girl, Gladys Powell, and Vivien Shea trained as a nurse. Vivien enlisted as a staff nurse on 22 May 1917 and nursed the Australian wounded in Salonika and London. Vivien was promoted to sister on 12 July 1919 and returned to Australia on 8 October 1919, and nursed in Australia and New Zealand. Years later, when Fred was a widower, he met Vivien, who had never married. They were both in their sixties but they decided to marry and they bought a house at Avalon on Sydney’s northern beaches. They had ten years of very happy marriage before they died within a week of each other in the mid 1960s.
Winifred Kate Harvey became engaged to a chemist, Russell Augustson, who enlisted on 11 July 1917 in the Army Medical Corps, regimental number 19048. However, Russell fell in love with an English girl (‘who had eyes like violets under water’) and ended the engagement. Winifred Kate never married and went on to train as a nurse. She was theatre sister at Crown Street Women’s Hospital and Matron of the Thomas Walker Hospital, and ended her nursing career as Matron of the boys’ grammar school, Shore.

My father was invalided home and married my schoolteacher mother, Eva Harvey. My parents, my uncle Fred and my aunts, Winifred, Gladys and Vivien, all knew Stewart Macleay Ramsay, the young schoolteacher who left the waterfalls, ferns and bellbirds of Dorrigo to meet his death at Pozieres. They remembered him as ‘a bonzer chap’, ‘the nicest young man’ and ‘a great mate’.

Endnote: Red Cross files indicate that Stewart Ramsay was in a ‘secret’ trench system, known as The Keep, ahead of the front line, when he was killed by a shell. He was buried in the trench where he was killed.

Follow-up: Walter Cecil Vandenbergh, 3rd Battalion
Judith’s father, Private 2282 Walter Vandenbergh, 3rd Battalion, was profiled in DIGGER 40 and his leading role in post-war fundraising for the WWI veterans and their families was highlighted. Judith has since sent in photos of her father which are found below and in the preceding story of his good mate, Stewart Ramsay.

Clockwise from top left: Photograph of Walter taken when he enlisted in August 1915; Walter in Cairo, 1915: Walter in 1916 after Pozieres (Judith comments how he aged in one year following his wounding, the loss of his cousin, Bert, and many mates at Pozieres); ‘Mr WC Vandenbergh, of Willoughby, who has organised Sydney’s poppy appeal on Remembrance Day for the past 32 years, hands out his last box of poppies as he checks receipts before retiring as organiser yesterday’ [SMH, 12.11.66]; Walter was invalided home in 1917 and when the hospital ship docked, his mother dived under the ropes to greet him. This photo appeared on the front page of a Sydney newspaper and was captioned: ‘Happy Mother greets her Son.’
I lost my senses for about 2 days and then I wandered about eventually arriving at Hazebrouck. I did not like to return after being absent, but I had no intention of staying away permanently. I made up my mind to return to my battalion, but I kept putting it off day after day.¹

On being ordered to ‘scatter’ as the bombs fell, it seems that Rees, in company with Lance Corporal Frank Coles, took off for the village of Pradelles as fast as their legs could carry them. Most, if not all, French estaminets had a cellar, and a cellar offered the men the best protection from the bombing at short notice. On reaching the village they made for the estaminet’s cellar where they took cover. It is possible to imagine these two seasoned soldiers with their nerves quivering with the shock of shells, traumatised by the near misses they had experienced, trembling as they waited for the drone of the planes to pass. A drink would soothe their nerves; maybe two would be better still. It would seem that soon it was more than one or two drinks, with the men losing all track of time as the effects of their drinking took over.

By mid 1918, absentee rates among the AIF had reached an all-time high and among them was Lance Corporal Edward Rees of Sheffield, Tasmania. In one week alone, out of the 2 071 absentee in the British Expeditionary Force, 1 680 (81%) were Australian.² This was enough men to fill nearly two battalions at a time when the Allies could ill-afford to lose men from the front line. By mid 1918 many of the Australian troops were war-weary, particularly those who had served at Gallipoli as well as on the Western Front. While the tide had turned in the Allies’ favour, many men were demoralised by having to recapture ground that the Allies had previously held but had lost again a few months earlier.

Frustrated, and hamstrung to change the situation with regards to the high number of absentees, General Douglas Haig tried repeatedly to push for the Australian government to rescind Section 98 of the Defence Act. This section of the Act laid down that execution could be used as a disciplinary mechanism itself might be ignored in another, what one officer might prohibit another might contrive at. Even the very formal punishments varied widely between battalions. What was ferociously stamped on in one was allowed in another, what one officer might prohibit another might contrive at. Even the very formal disciplinary mechanism itself might be ignored in favour of informal, not to say irregular, summary punishments.³

Despite this, there was a common expectation that the men of the AIF would, when the whistle blew, risk their lives for each other. Yet the men never truly regarded themselves as soldiers. They might have enlisted, donned the khaki uniform of the AIF and been prepared to accept the pay on offer, but this was not who they truly were: they were farmers, miners, clerks, warehouse assistants, labourers, teachers, etc from different towns and communities across Australia. Soldiering was not their occupation, just the job they were doing for the time being.

Lance Corporal Edward Rees is just one of the over two thousand absentees that in any one week might be away from their unit or battalion. While some might see his behaviour as inexcusable, it does need to be understood in the context of his experiences over a longer period of time. His actions that day were possibly the culmination of a series of life-threatening events in which he had experienced psychological trauma as the result of having shells burst in close proximity, and been in trenches which had been subjected to a soldier’s life for each other. Their lives for each other. 

¹ National Archives of Australia B2455 service record of Edward Rees 4356, 25 year old clerk from Sheffield.
³ Stanley, Bad Characters, p21.
to heavy artillery, amongst other horrors. Drawing on Rees’ service record, the battalion and divisional war diaries along with other sources, it is hoped that this story illustrates what can happen to a soldier who has been in the line for some time and is probably suffering from undiagnosed shell shock.

Who was Edward Rees, and why single him out from the many other soldiers who were casualties? Edward Rees was the second son born to Edward John Rees and his wife Amy Johnson. Born on 8 June 1890 at Sheffield he was the third of six children born to the couple, who later lived in the Beulah/Sheffield area of north-west Tasmania. Edward’s mother, Amy Johnson, was a granddaughter of Dalrymple ‘Dolly’ Mountgarret Briggs and the great granddaughter of Mannalargenna and his wife, Tanleeboneyer. This makes Edward Rees part of a unique group of men from Tasmania, but in the line he was just another soldier.

On 2 September 1915, Edward Rees, a nineteen year old clerk, quit his job and volunteered for enlistment in the Australian Imperial Force. Shortly after, he entered the training camp at Claremont on the outskirts of Hobart, having being passed fit for service. The camp doctor described him as being five feet eight inches in height, with a fair complexion, blue eyes and fair hair. There were no tattoos or distinguishing marks noted.

Rees was allotted to the 13th Reinforcements for the 12th Battalion. This battalion had close associations with Tasmania, being raised there in August 1914 and comprising four companies from different areas of the state. The 13th Reinforcements left Claremont on 23 November 1915, arriving at Broadmeadows in Victoria two days later. Here and at Williamstown the men completed the first phase of their training before embarking for Egypt. Private Edward Rees, and about ninety-six other Tasmanians who formed part of the 13th Reinforcements, embarked on HMAT Afric on 5 January 1916, arriving at Suez on 11 February. Here the men prepared for the move to the Western Front to take on the Germans, in what would be a very different landscape from the heat and sands of the Egyptian desert.

According to Private Edward Rees’ service record he was taken on strength with the 12th Battalion in the field on 24 June 1916. If this was the case then he would have experienced a strange couple of days while waiting for the men to return to billets at Sailly Sur-la-Lys after being in the line. The date of his arrival does not seem to correspond with the battalion diary, which makes no mention of any reinforcements arriving on that date. The only reinforcements that are mentioned are those that arrived on 18 May when the battalion received thirty-nine reinforcements and again on 20 July 1916 when a further nineteen reinforcements arrived in time to participate in the battle for Pozieres. Rees stated in his evidence at his second court martial that he arrived in France in April 1916. This may well have been the case, as he disembarked at Marseilles on 6 April 1916 after which he would have spent time training at Etaples at the notorious ‘Bull Ring’ before joining his battalion. In the light of the evidence it is accepted that his service record provides the correct date and that he joined the 12th Battalion in June 1916 in time to participate in the big push on the Somme.

On 2 July the 12th Battalion left Sailly Sur-la-Lys and marched the eight or so miles of winding roads to Outtersteene, passing through a number of small villages. The weather continued to hold while the battalion worked on their training, mainly in the form of route marches to different nearby towns. Nine days later, on 11 July, the battalion marched to Godewaersvelde where they entrained for the Somme. News of the ‘Big Push’ had reached the men and most believed that they too would participate in it sooner rather than later.

Private Edward Rees soon realised that the life of a soldier was not all about taking on the enemy but one often spent pounding the road and byways, moving from one location to the next, doing fatigue duty as well as fighting. Having left Flanders it would be another couple of days before the men reached the Somme, arriving at Naours where they remained for several days. In the meantime they had trudged at least seven miles to the train, endured a long fatiguing train journey, marched at least fourteen miles in the hot sun to Halloy before an overnight respite, and marched again around 18 miles to Naours. Here the men received instruction in a new method of attack – using waves of men and of the principles involved in village fighting.

---

4 Registrar General’s Department.
5 Mollison, B & Everitt, C. The Tasmanian Aborigines and their Descendants (Chronology, Genealogies and Social Data) Part 2, (University of Tasmania, 1976).
8 National Archives of Australia B2455 service record for Edward Rees.
illusions that it would be no small task that they were required to undertake and that there would be many casualties.

As the men reached Albert it quickly became apparent that the operations in progress around Pozieres (about five kilometres away) were on a much larger scale than anything they had experienced so far. The volume of traffic on the roads made progress very slow and even their billets were shelled, forcing many to shelter in the cellars of the houses. It was a bit like going from the frying pan into the fire as they left the largely deserted Albert and made for the reserve trenches. To minimise losses as the battalion proceeded up the line, the men were forced to move off by half platoons with fifty yards in between.

On the outskirts of La Boiselle it was possible for the men to distinguish the old front line and Norman’s land. Three weeks earlier this area had been in German hands. It was also very evident from the mass of war litter that it had taken a tremendous artillery bombardment to dislodge the enemy. All around were the unburied dead mixed up with rifles, ammunition and equipment of all kinds.

An intricate system of deep dug-outs and trenches occupied much of the ground in and around La Boiselle, Pozieres and Contalmaison. The La Boiselle Salient had been considered impregnable due to the fact that the Germans had constructed solid concrete walls in all suitable houses in the village. Underneath were dug-outs fully thirty feet deep, with a system of corridors and rooms done out with every convenience and creature comfort they could purloin, right down to electricity.

The Pozieres Windmill on the outskirts of the village occupied the highest point on the battle field. In order to capture and hold this point, it was also necessary to take the village. While the British had pushed the front line forward, they had failed to take the village of Pozieres during the first three weeks of July. Each time they had met strong resistance from the German army and suffered terrible casualties, most through the heavy bombardments laid down on the area. On the night of 22-23 July it was the Australians’ turn.

The weather remained fine as ‘A’ and ‘D’ Companies moved up to Black Watch Alley at 10.30 pm ready for yet another attack on Pozieres. ‘B’ and ‘C’ Companies moved into the Sunken Road as part of the brigade reserve. The original objective had been the Pozieres Trench but this was later changed to pressing on past the Pozieres Trench to the orchards in front of the village, using the railway track as a guide through the village towards OGl on the west of the village near the windmill.

According to the battalion diary, an attack was carried out at 0030 [23 July] by 9th & 11th [Battalions] successfully & ‘A’ & ‘D’ Companies 12th Bn secured their objective on outskirts of Pozieres, casualties fairly heavy. They then pushed through the village and took up a position on the north east edge of Pozieres.

The fighting continued the following day, and despite making progress and consolidating their position, the battalion sustained heavy losses. The battalion history records three hundred and seventy five casualties, with 67 ORs killed in action, 235 wounded with a further 63 missing in action. Among the ORs

---

9 Battalion diary – AWM 23/29/17, p78.
10 Newton, The Story of the Twelfth, p97.
11 Newton, The Story of the Twelfth, p98.
12 So named as it had been captured by the 1st Battalion, Black Watch.

---
Injured was Private Edward Rees, who sustained a gunshot wound to his left thigh. Rees would take no further part in the hostilities at Pozieres, eventually being evacuated to the 44th Casualty Clearing Station and then transferred to the 1st Canadian General Hospital at Etaples for treatment. On discharge he spent the next four months at Etaples at the 1st ADBD recovering from his wounds prior to rejoining the 12th Battalion.

Edward rejoined the battalion on Christmas Eve, just in time to spend the festive season with his mates. By now the battalion was camped at Bazentin, only a few miles east of Pozieres. Despite being Christmas it was business as usual, which meant when not in the line, providing working parties or training. Digging drains was the order of the day here with the men not working too hard or too long as a concession. To brighten the dreary situation all the troops were issued parcels courtesy of the AIF Comforts Fund, which were greatly appreciated.\(^{15}\) Added to this was a little something extra by way of Christmas pudding, tinned fruit and cake.

By late January the weather conditions had deteriorated substantially, with a thick covering of snow on the ground and prolonged periods of frost. On 11 February the 12th Battalion relieved the 4th Battalion at Butte de Warlencourt. Here the front line afforded little shelter: in many places the front line consisted simply of a line of posts connected by a shallow trench. In some places No-man’s land was a shade under a hundred yards wide, which meant that the German trenches were closer than the Australians had experienced since being in France. In retaliation for the heavy bombing the Germans were experiencing, they peppered the Australians with ‘pineapple’ bombs, which suited the close range admirably, with many bombs falling right onto the line. Over the next few days the battalion was subjected to heavy bombardments before being relieved by the 10th Battalion on the night of 19/20 February.

After just a few days out of the line, the battalion was back in action again at Malt Trench near Le Barque, just outside Bapaume, relieving the 10th Battalion. Once again the battalion came under fairly heavy artillery and machine-gun fire, causing a number of casualties, particularly among the officers and NCOs. However, the men did good work, which resulted in Malt Trench from Blue Cut Road being captured. By 6.00 pm, with the help of the 11th Battalion, they had captured Ligny-Thilloy, the next village between Le Barque and Bapaume, and by the following morning they had also captured the adjacent village of Le Barque. The battalion had advanced the line some two thousand yards, which was quite an achievement.

However, this was not done without considerable casualties. The battalion diary states that the casualties included one officer and 27 ORs killed in action, and nine officers and 61 ORs wounded. Another two were reported missing.\(^{16}\) Amongst those wounded was Private Edward Rees, who sustained a shrapnel wound to his right elbow. This was the second occasion on which he was wounded. An aid post had been set up in Gird Trench and it is likely that Private Rees’ injuries were initially assessed here before he was evacuated by the 1st Australian Field Ambulance to a casualty clearing station and then to the 1st Australian General Hospital at Rouen, where he was admitted on 11 March 1917. Two days later he was transferred to the No. 2 Convalescent Depot at Rouen where he spent the next two weeks before being transferred to the 1st ADBD at Etaples on 4 April. Eleven days later Private Edward Rees was back with his battalion.

While Private Edward Rees missed the action near Louverval, it would not be long before the battalion was again in action, this time near Bullecourt. The 12th Battalion left their billets and moved into the Beugny-Ytres line on 3 May 1917. Initially, they relieved the 26th and 28th Battalions in the Noreuil-Longatte road. The nature of the terrain meant that while effecting the relief they were under enemy observation and subjected to heavy shelling.

The following night they relieved the 2nd Battalion and whilst doing so managed to penetrate the Hindenburg Line. Over the next couple of days the men were involved in some of the severest fighting the battalion had ever experienced – capturing sections of trench, being counter-attacked and then driving the enemy out again, and reoccupying ground previously taken. The men were finally relieved by the 10th Battalion but only moved as far as a nearby sunken road where they were given a hot meal and a rest.

Instead of moving out for a rest and to regroup, the battalion was again ordered into the line the following day. With depleted numbers it was decided to form one company with four platoons, rather than four companies with four platoons. Each platoon would be under an officer. The battalion came under intense shelling at times during the next twenty-four hours, but no attack or bomb fighting occurred on the battalion’s sector. On the night of 8/9 May the battalion was relieved by the 53rd Battalion and the men moved out to a bivouac near Vaulx, where a hot meal awaited them. The following day they were on the move again, this time to a camp in the vicinity of Bieffvillers where tents awaited. Again the battalion had

---

15 Battalion Diary 23/29/22.
16 Battalion Diary 23/29/24.
sustained heavy casualties, with three officers and 30 ORs killed, 12 officers and 201 ORs wounded, and a further 25 ORs missing.

Each battalion was required to have a quota of non-commissioned officers in order to support the officers. During WWI a battalion was made up of between 550 to 1,000 men. These were divided into companies; usually with four companies per battalion, particularly after the March 1916 reorganisation. Each company was divided into four platoons and within each of these there were usually four sections. Each platoon was commanded by a lieutenant, with a sergeant in charge of a section. Under him would be a lance corporal and the other ranks. Having lost at least 15 sergeants from their ranks, it soon became necessary to promote others in order to fulfil the battalion’s complement of non commissioned officers. On 26 May 1917, Private Edward Rees was promoted to the rank of lance corporal. It seems that the officers had sufficient faith in his leadership abilities to put his name forward for promotion.

On 13 August 1917, it was Lance Corporal Rees’ turn to leave the battalion for a well-earned break, when he was given 10 days furlough to England. Men going on leave were warned about the perils of contracting sexually transmitted diseases and all knew that they would be punished if they did so (mainly through stoppage of pay while being treated). Despite every attempt being made by the authorities to reduce the number of venereal cases, a large number of Australian soldiers spent some time in hospital being treated. This often coincided with them having been on leave or out of the line for medical treatment. Having not seen a female for many months, men who had just come out of the front line often sought the company of women. As a result there was a high incidence of venereal disease which required hospital treatment. On 27 August, just as his leave was about to expire, Lance Corporal Edward Rees was admitted to the Shorncliffe Military Hospital. Two days later he was transferred to 1st Australian Dermatological Hospital at Bulford, where he remained until 10 October 1917 before being transferred to the Convalescent Depot, also located at Bulford. Apparently cured, it was time to rejoin his unit, leaving Southampton on 9 December 1917. After passing through the different bases he eventually rejoined the 12th Battalion on 20 December 1917.

It would be interesting to know if Edward actually reflected on the fact that twelve months earlier he had been in a similar situation. In 1916 Edward was rejoining the battalion for the first time and now he was returning for his second Christmas in their company and his third Christmas away from his family. Much would have changed over the intervening period as the battalion had sustained heavy losses. Many familiar faces had disappeared to be replaced by new ones and more changes would have taken place since he went on leave.

As the reserve battalion, the men spent Christmas 1917 in huts andpossies at Wulverghem, Belgium, not far from Messines. On 24/25 December the battalion relieved the 10th Battalion without incident. Despite being Christmas and in the line, spirits were high until Christmas afternoon when battalion headquarters was heavily bombed. A direct hit on ‘A’ Company headquarters resulted in the death of Captain Cruickshank of the 10th Battalion and the wounding of Captain Burt, who suffered shell shock. When not in the line the men were employed on working parties constructing well-sited strong posts and carrying parties for the forward dumps. Despite being in a fairly quiet sector, Christmas festivities were postponed until mid-February when the battalion was ensconced in Nissen huts at Neuve Eglise.

Here the men were able to rest and recuperate, and take part in a range of sports which included football and boxing and undertake a syllabus of training, including specialists’ training in all areas. An increased percentage of men were allowed to go on leave to either England or Paris. In addition, a large party

were sent on a ten day musketry course. Those who remained behind and were not given leave spent their time undertaking a range of short courses, including engineering and map reading. A divisional rifle competition was also held with members of the 12th Battalion acquitting themselves well. Edward was sent to the 3rd Infantry Brigade School which meant that he was away from the battalion between 20 January and 16 February.

[Left: View of camp at Neuve Eglise in early 1918. A boxing match is taking place. One of a number of sports and activities organised during the time the 12th Battalion was there. Australian War Memorial Negative number E01752.]

But like all good things they soon come to an end, and on 2 March the battalion embussed at Neuve Eglise for Voormezeele, then on foot to the Ypres-Comines Canal to dug-outs in the vicinity of The Bluff. By the night of 10/11 March the 12th Battalion were back in action when they relieved the 10th Battalion. Gas was frequently being used by the Germans at this time, with forward areas being blanketed, making conditions very hard for the troops as they continued to carry on wearing the small box respirator. While the respirators kept the gas out, they were very uncomfortable to wear for any extended period of time. The eye-pieces restricted the wearer’s line of sight to a few yards and the mask soon became painful as the nose clip dug into their skin.

The war news in early April 1918 was not good from the Allies’ point of view. Much of the territory captured since the beginning of Battle of the Somme on 1 July 1916 had been lost. Added to this a large number of prisoners had also been taken as a result of the German offensive. Rumours also abounded about a 60-mile gun that could fire shells that had the capacity to reach Paris.

The battalion’s time in the Ypres-Comines line had not been without serious casualties, including about seven gas cases and six from shell shock. This is the first time that those with shell shock were listed amongst the casualties. For many who had been with the battalion since it first went into action at the Landing at Gallipoli, the war was taking a serious toll of their nerves. The recent gas attacks were among the worst the men had endured to date. But worse was to come when the men were forced to endure a night of bombing as they lay out in the open near their entraining point at St Roch Station near Flesselles. The men had been bivouacked in a large paddock with no cover whatsoever. As darkness fell the Germans sent over several squadrons of bombing planes targeting Amiens. Just when they thought they were safe being in the countryside and away from the city, Very light flares were dropped, illuminating the whole area where the men were bivouacked and making it as bright as day. Next came the bombing planes again and about a dozen bombs were dropped within a radius of 200 yards of where the men were camped. While the 12th Battalion was spared any casualties the same could not be said for all. Still, it left many badly shaken.

The men finally boarded the train in the expectation of being able to escape any further bombing raids, but more delays found the men sitting on board a train and waiting to move when the planes returned the next morning. While most of the bombs fell on the city, two fell near the train. Their ordeal was not yet over, for as soon as it was fully daylight a long-range, high velocity gun commenced firing and several shells burst within two to three hundred yards of the troop train. After more delays the train eventually moved off without further incident. As the battalion neared Hazebrouck the men witnessed first-hand the damage that had been done and ‘at one spot passed through a belt of 18-pounders, with guns firing, on either side of the railway line’. On reaching the outskirts of the village of Borre, the battalion had virtually come full circle over the last few days, arriving back where they had been billeted just days earlier.

18 Casualties are given as 16 other ranks killed in action or dying of wounds, 27 other ranks wounded in action; Newton, The Story of the Twelfth, p175.
19 Newton, The Story of the Twelfth, p177.
The 3rd Brigade was to be used as a divisional reserve. The priority was to construct a defence line in front of Borre that was capable of defending the ridge that ran from Strazeele to Hazebrouck. The men were later congratulated on the quality and quantity of the work done in a short space of time, with completed posts sited in the most advantageous positions possible. Two days later the battalion moved to Pradelles and relieved the 1st Battalion as support for the 1st Brigade. While the battalion headquarters was situated in the basement of a brewery in the centre of the village, the four companies were distributed over the surrounding countryside, with platoons sheltering in hedges and into the banks of the sunken roads nearby. All was relatively quiet until:

During the morning of the following day, about 10 a.m., the enemy started a violent bombardment, concentrating first on the high ground around Strazeele and on the village itself, and afterwards extending it right along the ridge, enveloping the villages of Pradelles and Borre. ... The companies suffered badly, as the only available cover – ditches and banks at the side of the roads – proved totally inadequate. Many of the men rushed for shelter in the surrounding farm-houses, but in many instances these became crowded and were therefore veritable death traps.

‘B’ and ‘D’ Companies appear to have suffered the most casualties. The men of ‘D’ Company, according to evidence submitted at Rees’ court martial, were forced to scatter into an adjoining field which would have afforded little protection and would have borne a striking resemblance to that experienced at St Roch Station. Rees, in the company of another NCO, Lance Corporal 3068 Frank Cole, from Fremantle, Western Australia, left the company position and took shelter in the cellar of an estaminet when the company was ordered to scatter. The men soon found some drink in the cellar and proceeded to consume as much as possible over the next few hours to steady their nerves after the shaking up they had experienced. In the meantime the battalion had moved on, leaving them behind.

While it appears that neither of them had any intention of deserting, they were both too embarrassed about returning to the battalion after being absent and so simply kept putting it off. Once the effects of their alcohol binge had worn off, Cole and Rees left the cellar that they had been hiding in and spent the next two weeks wandering around before being arrested by Corporal C Dann of the Military Police at Morbecque, south east of Hazebrouck on 2 May 1918. When the men failed to answer their names at the roll call of the afternoon of 17 April, a notification would have been sent out, complete with a brief description of both men, which meant that their chances of being caught were very much increased, particularly given that they remained close by. What they did during this period does not appear in the records but it seems that they did not leave the Hazebrouck area, so it is quite likely that depending on how much money they had between them, they would have been forced to seek shelter from the locals to keep out of the weather that was cold and still inclined towards snow.

Just what sort of a reception the men would have been given had they returned sooner we will never know. Frank Green, the historian of the 40th Battalion and a fellow Tasmanian, thought that men who willingly or actively evaded a fight forfeited their self respect and that of others and that to do so went against the ‘fundamental principle of the code of the “dinkum blokes”’. Absentees not only betrayed the code of mateship that was a pillar against the ‘fundamental principle of respect and that of others and that to do so went against the ‘fundamental principle of the code of the “dinkum blokes”’.

Absentees not only betrayed the code of mateship that was a pillar of the Anzac legend but placed more work on the shoulders of those who remained, particularly as the number of reinforcements dropped substantially. This meant more lives were put at risk by their absence, which at times provoked an angry response from the men, such as that of Captain Frank Green.

Rees and Coles faced a Field General Court Martial on 21 May 1918, having been held in custody in the meantime. Being absent without leave whilst out of the line was deemed a serious offence, but to do so while in the line was considered a much graver offence. Both men were charged as follows: when on active service deserting His Majesty’s Service in that he absented himself without leave from 17-4-18 till apprehended by the Military Police on 2-5-18 at Morbecque.

The case was prosecuted by Lieutenant Leslie Morriss Newton, later the battalion’s historian. Much of the proceedings were a mere formality despite the men pleading not guilty. Both men agreed to be tried together but pleaded separately. They both made short statements in their defence, briefly mentioning their service to date: Cole had been wounded once and had won the Military Medal, while Rees had been wounded at Pozières and Le Bacque as well as having been in action at Bullecourt and Lagnicourt.

20 Newton, The Story of the Twelfth, p178.
21 National Archives of Australia B2455 Service record of Frank Cole 3068, and Edward Rees 4056.
Two character witnesses were then called to give evidence: Lieutenant Frank Priddey appeared for Cole, while Sergeant 2369 Clarence Lansley appeared for Rees. Sergeant Lansley stated that he had known Edward Rees for eighteen months and that he had found him to be a good honest soldier and when in the line he had always done his duty willingly, no matter how dangerous it may be and without any grumbling or complaints. Priddey, who had only known Edward Rees for a relatively short period of time, agreed with Lansley’s testimony.

Good character references, an excellent service record which included being wounded, and in Coles’ case, awarded for his bravery, were not sufficient mitigating circumstances to prevent the court from making a guilty finding and imposing a two year sentence of detention with hard labour. However, before the punishments could be carried out and the men removed to detention, the sentences were suspended.

While this should have been the end of the matter, with both men returning to the battalion now in camp near La Creule, Rees seems to have had some issues over his pay book that he couldn’t get resolved to his satisfaction. When Sergeant Clarence Lansley read Rees’ name out at the roll of his platoon later that day, Rees did not answer his name. A search was made for him before he was marked absent. Rees was arrested on 5 June 1918 and held in custody until 4 August 1918, when he was charged with while on active service being absent without leave between 27 May and 5 June 1918.

Rees’ version of events was that on 27 May he was released from the guard tent and placed under open arrest. He was also told to report back to his company which apparently he did. Rees claimed that no definite promise of a suspension of his sentence was given. He paraded for his pay book later in the morning but couldn’t get it. He then paraded before Captain Andrews and explained his situation to him and asked Andrews to place him in the guard room. Andrews then took Rees to see the colonel [possibly Elliott], whom he claimed wouldn’t listen to him. Feeling aggrieved at the situation over his pay book, Rees went away from the company. Rees later claimed that Lieutenant Newton hadn’t told him he was to go up to the line. He just asked him if he would play the game. The court found Rees guilty and sentenced him to detention for one year with hard labour. The suspended sentence was also to be put into execution with both sentences to run concurrently.

Rees fighting days were now over. It would seem that the bombing of Pradelles coming not long after that sustained near St Roch Station was just too much for his strained nerves. While the hierarchy probably recognised this when suspending his first sentence, they were unable to overlook his behaviour on the second occasion. Seemingly, Lance Corporal Edward Rees had been pushed too far and wasn’t capable of making the most rational of decisions. He would have plenty of time to reflect on this whilst in prison.

On 26 September 1918, with less than two months of the war to go, Lance Corporal Edward Rees was admitted to the No. 4 Military Prison in France. At a later date he was transferred to No. 1 Military Prison. Edward Rees was discharged from No. 1 Military Prison on 7 April 1919 and rejoined the 12th Battalion five days later.

Edward Rees may not have finished his service to his country in a way that he could be proud of, but he was not one of CEW Bean’s ‘wasters’. While we may wonder at what stories he might have told his family on his return, and how he may have accounted for his time in prison, it should be his previous good service to his country that stands as a testament to his courage and skill as a soldier. Clarence Lansley’s character reference – that Rees was an honest soldier who had willingly done his duty no matter how dangerous the situation without any grumbling or complaining – should be what we remember about him, not that he was crimined towards the end of his service.

Edward Rees was not a professional soldier; he was a clerk from Sheffield who volunteered for military service at a time when his country needed him. He went on to spend the next four years and three months of his life in the Australian Imperial Force before he was finally discharged at Hobart on 13 January 1920. During his time as a soldier he was wounded twice (if not three times) and probably subjected to numerous close shaves when his battalion was under fire. Lance Corporal Rees should not be denigrated in any way for his later actions, rather commended for bravery and his willingness to do his duty.

The following year (1921) he married Hilda Gertrude Cook at Ulverstone, and so began a new chapter in the life of Edward Rees. Rees died at Launceston on 12 October 1954 aged 64 years. He is buried at Carr Villa Cemetery along with his wife.

23 Rees and Lansley appear to have been in the same platoon, although it is not mentioned in his statement to the Field General Court Martial.
In continuing my search for information on the men and women who served during WWI named on memorials and honour rolls in parks, public halls, churches and schools in the Scone district, I have recorded more than seven hundred names, half of whom had their births registered in Scone.

One hundred and thirty-eight of these men were either killed in action or died of wounds or disease. A further two hundred were wounded; some on as many as four occasions.

The story of two who lost their lives, brothers Joe [837] and Oliver Cumberland [1087, both 2nd Battalion], was featured in the Turkish-made film ‘Gallipoli’, which had its world premiere at the Scone Civic Theatre.

Having recorded information on the parents, rank, age, marital status, religion, units and embarkation details of all who survived the war, I am now attempting to detail the service of these men and women. The pre-war occupations of these men and women range from shire clerk to labourer, school teacher to grazier, train drivers to ministers of religion.

One whom I recently came across was a New Zealand shearer: Private Thomas Theophilus Bennett. ‘Ben’ to his mates, he enlisted in Brisbane and served in the 31st Infantry Battalion (8th Brigade). Ben had left his home in Geraldine, New Zealand, in 1909 and moved to Australia. Not a great deal is known about his time in Scone, but it must have been significant enough for the editor of the ‘Scone Advocate’ to include his name in the paper’s ‘Roll of Honour’.


Upon arriving in France, Ben was invalided to England within days, suffering from emphysema. He was a patient in the 1st Southern General Hospital, Birmingham, at the time his unit took part in the Battle of Fromelles. Ben was granted leave in England before returning to France.

Throughout his time in the army, Ben was frequently in trouble – nothing serious, but mainly regular ‘holidays’ (AWL) and having a good time, such as being unfit for duty, after a night of heavy drinking.

Ben received multiple gunshot wounds during the Battle of Polygon Wood on 26 September 1917 and was invalided to England, not returning to France until 8 May 1918.

Ben, however, was to show his true character at Harbonnieres, east of Villers-Bretonneux during the Battle of Amiens in August 1918. During the battle the Allied forces suffered 21 243 casualties; a quarter of whom were killed. Acting as a stretcher-bearer, Ben repeatedly returned to No-man’s land under very heavy fire, carrying in not only his battalion’s wounded, but refusing to stop until all the wounded of the 29th Battalion and the 2nd Division were brought to safety.

Major General Talbot Hobbs, commander of the 5th Australian Division and Brigadier General Edwin Tivey, commander of the 8th Australian Infantry Brigade, recommended Ben for a Military Medal for his actions.

A month after this act of bravery, Ben received a shell wound that brought to an end his active service. Invalided to England, he managed one more ‘unauthorised holiday’ in England before he was returned to Australia. Leaving England on 20 December 1918, Ben Bennett was discharged ‘medically unfit’ on 3 March 1919.

Issued with the 1914/15 Star, British War Medal and Victory Medal by the Australian authorities, it was planned to have HRH Edward, the Prince of Wales, present the Military Medal to Ben on Anzac Day 1920, at a ceremony where the Prince presented New Zealand troops with their unissued medals during his tour of New Zealand.

However, Ben requested that his MM be posted to him care of his father’s home in Geraldine, NZ, where he was residing.

Thomas Theophilus Bennett died in New Zealand on 19 May 1956. Eight years later on 6 March 1964, ‘The Dominion’, a Dunedin Newspaper, published the story of a fisherman, fishing in the Clutha River, who had reeled in a World War One Military Medal, which they believed was issued in 1916.

The fisherman, Colin Brown of Dunedin, then set out on an attempt to contact either Bennett (not knowing he was deceased at the time) or his next of kin to return the Military Medal.

Private 427 Thomas Bennett MM, 31st Battalion
Harry Willey, Scone.
George Thomas and George Thatcher: mates from the 43rd Battalion

Andrew Pittaway, Fremantle.

Private George John Thomas, a 22 year old mechanic from Custon, South Australia, and Private George Albert Thatcher, an 18 year old chair maker from Adelaide, enlisted within days of each other in January 1916. Both had listed their next of kin as their mothers as both of their fathers had passed away. Upon enlistment both were sent to ‘A’ Company of the 2nd Depot Battalion and on 16 February 1916 they were transferred to ‘C’ Company of the 1st Depot Battalion. On 7 March 1916 they were assigned to ‘C’ Company of the 43rd Battalion AIF, with George Thomas being given the regimental number 591 and George Thatcher, regimental number 592.

After training in South Australia, both men embarked upon HMAT Afric on 9 June 1916 as the 43rd Battalion made its way to Europe, disembarking at Marseilles on 20 July 1916. From Marseilles they journeyed to England and set up camp on the Salisbury Plain for further training.

On 25 November 1916, Privates Thomas and Thatcher journeyed with their battalion to Southampton, where they boarded a transport ship for the journey across the Channel to France. The 43rd Battalion would spend the next few months in the Armentieres sector and it appears that both Georges were members of the same Lewis gun team.

In March 1917 the 43rd Battalion moved to the Ploegsteert sector near Messines. On 5 June 1917 George Thatcher was wounded in the leg and was evacuated. He was followed five days later by George Thomas, who was wounded in the buttock. After a short time in hospital in France, both were evacuated to England, with George Thatcher being admitted to the Kitchener Military Hospital in Brighton, while George Thomas was admitted to Silver St Hospital in Edmonton, London. In mid July, George Thomas was then transferred to the 3rd Australian Auxiliary Hospital and after a few days was transferred to No. 1 Command Depot at Perham Downs.

George Thatcher also went to No. 3 AAH, but a month later than his pal, arriving there in mid August. He was then also transferred to No. 1 Command Depot at Perham Downs and they would have a few weeks in the same camp. George Thomas had recovered from his wound slightly quicker and on 20 September he returned to France, rejoining the 43rd Battalion on 8 October 1917. George Thatcher was a few weeks behind his mate, but also soon returned to the action, rejoining the 43rd Battalion on 23 October 1917.

Through the remainder of 1917 and into 1918, both Thomas and Thatcher remained with the Lewis gun team. They both participated in their unit’s actions during the German offensive when they were in the region of Sailly-le-Sec and Corbie in March and April 1918. On 27 May, George Thomas was evacuated for a few days with gas poisoning but after a few weeks rest he resumed duty. On July 4 1918, they were part of their battalion’s successful capture of Hamel village and also their advance from this region on 8 August 1918 in the Battle of Amiens.

On 26 August 1918 the 43rd Battalion was in action at Curlu Wood, north east of Bray, when they were ordered to advance. They were lashed by heavy shellfire but took their objectives. Unfortunately, Private 591 George Thomas and Private 592 George Thatcher were killed instantly by shrapnel. They were buried in a shell hole with 2437 Corporal Reginald Masters and 560 Lance Corporal Reuben Rose MM, a thousand yards north east of the village of Suzanne.

A cross was erected carrying the names of the four fallen soldiers and placed at the head of the shell hole. Privates George Thomas and George Thatcher of the 43rd Battalion were later buried in Assevillers Cemetery. Their names were next to each other in the embarkation rolls, they served in the same Lewis gun team and their service careers roughly paralleled each other in the 43rd Battalion. They were killed together and they lie buried side by side in VIII.G.1 and VIII.G.2.

[Above: The graves of Thomas and Thatcher: mates together.]
Postscript: George Thomas had two brothers serve in the AIF in the Great War. **2253 L/Cpl William Henry Thomas** left Adelaide as a member of the 4th Reinforcements to the 48th Battalion AIF and he was taken on strength of his unit in France on 22 October 1916. On 11 April 1917, William participated in the Bullecourt action and was killed in the 48th Battalion’s objective, the second German line (OG2); his body being seen by a 48th Battalion survivor of the action. William has no known grave and he is commemorated on the Villers-Bretonneux Memorial.

**585 Charles Walter Thomas** enlisted with George in ‘C’ Company of the 43rd Battalion and he survived the fighting. However, he was wounded on four occasions: at Messines on 30 June 1917; at Passchendaele on 17 October 1917; at Hamel on 4 July 1918 and for the final time on 27 August 1918, the day after George had been killed. Charles returned home in March 1919.

Endnotes: (1) **Cpl Masters** and **L/Cpl Rose** have no known grave and are commemorated on the Villers-Bretonneux Memorial. Andrew’s inquiries to the CWGC revealed that there were two unknowns exhumed at the same battlefield burial site, but one is an Australian and the other a British RGA artilleryman. The mystery continues. (2) Photograph kindly taken by Frev Ford on the 2012 FFFFAIF Tour.

---

**Inspired by ‘Shrapnel Charlie’**

*Margot Piggott, Gilgandra.*

One of the highlights of the 2010 FFFFAIF Battlefields tour was meeting **Ivan ‘Shrapnel Charlie’ Sinnaeve** of Ieper [Ypres], Belgium, and receiving one of his lead soldiers to bring back to Australia. The soldier was made by Shrapnel Charlie with the lead of WWI shrapnel balls that were found on the former battlefields of the Ypres Salient in Belgium.

Each of us on the trip was given a soldier with the message: ‘That the lead that once killed soldiers is now moulded into new soldiers who can travel back to their home countries to tell people never to forget what happened here in the past and to bring a message of peace’.

His aim was to make a soldier for every name on the Menin Gate in Ieper but, unfortunately, Shrapnel Charlie died before he completed his dream.

Rees and I are fortunate to be the custodians of two of these lead soldiers and we feel a sense of responsibility to commemorate other soldiers who didn’t make it home.

Originally, in a bid to list all the Gilgandra and district soldiers from WWI, we took photos of the war memorials at Gilgandra, Mendooran, Tooraweenah, Gulargambone, Armature and Collie. Then when we travelled through South Australia, Western Australia, the Northern Territory and back through NSW, it became a habit to look for war memorials and Commonwealth War Graves headstones. The ‘boys’ travel with us and as we read the names we feel we are fulfilling some of Shrapnel Charlie’s dream.

Each town, large and small, has a war memorial. Some are huge statues, some are functional libraries or halls, some are well-maintained in a park or school, while others are in the middle of a busy road or intersection and a little the worse for wear. The memorial at 80 Mile Beach in WA is made of the most beautiful local shells.

So we take our ‘boys’ with us as we travel and visit each war memorial that we see (and is safe to access!), think about the names written there and take a photograph. Rees and I will continue to think of Shrapnel Charlie and his message of peace.

**Above right:** The spectacular war memorial at Kalgoorlie, WA. Additional photos are on the next page.
Above: Collage of photos from Margot's travels around Australia. The central photo shows Shrapnel Charlie’s ‘soldiers’ at Albany, WA, from where the First Contingent sailed in 1914 for the war.
Lyn’s grandfather dictated his WWI diaries to his daughter, Aileen McDonald, when he was in his 80s. They provide a wonderful insight into his experiences on the Western Front as a signaller with (mainly) the 9th Brigade.

Frederick George Thornton and his wife Annie from ‘Riverview’, Warren, in western NSW saw three of their sons go to the Great War: Frederick Victor (b1894), George Harold (b1896) and Norman Federal (b1899).

Frederick Victor Thornton was my grandfather and he dictated stories from his war diaries to my mother when he was in his eighties. He died at the age of 97, which was a great age considering the years of medical treatment for lung problems that resulted from him being gassed.

In early 1915, Frederick Victor (known as Victor or ‘Vic’) and George went to Sydney to enlist. George was accepted but Vic was knocked back due to his bad teeth. However, Vic was finally accepted at the end of 1915 and left for England in early 1916, where the troops trained on the Salisbury Plain prior to transfer to France. The third brother, Norman, enlisted in May 1917, having put his age up by a year. This quote from Vic describes their reunion:

'I received word that my younger brother Norman was in England awaiting draft as soon as he was 18 years old. He duly arrived as reinforcement to 36th [Battalion] but as it was split up I claimed him and he was attached to the 34th Battalion. I was with the 34th mostly and also the 33rd and 35th, signalling, and he could be used as a runner. We were at Rivery in the front of the Americans when he joined us in the Sunken Road. I was very upset at his enlistment, so young, but we made the best of it.'

Unfortunately, George Thornton died of wounds at Fleurbaix, France, on 28 September 1916, aged 20, and is buried at Anzac Cemetery, Sailly-Sur-La-Lys (Memorial Panel 163). He served with the 56th Infantry Battalion as Private 3127.

Vic Thornton started work for the Post Office in Warren at the age of fifteen as a telegraph messenger and then transferred to Sydney in 1911 to train in wireless operation. In 1913 he was attached to South Head Signal Station for nine months as a Morse-operator. It was about this time that compulsory military training was introduced and he joined the St George Rifles at Victoria Barracks and later transferred to the 16th Signal Troop, where he said he was very welcome, being an operator. They had their own horses and gear at the barracks under the command of Major Maher. Annual camps were held and they rode the horses to Parramatta for six weeks – a real holiday from work. Being a farm boy, Victor loved motor-cycles, and his skills with signalling, and also as a motor-cycle rider, were put to good use in France. [Right: Vic Thornton at the time he joined the Post Office, aged 15.]

‘Extracts from my war diaries’ – Frederick Victor Thornton

‘How I won the War when the Germans first used gas and caught the British napping - sometime in 1917, North of Armentieres and Houplines, towards Ypres’

The poor Canadians were the first to cop it as far as I know and some twenty thousand troops were affected. It was of the phosgene type, released unexpectedly and carried towards the Allied line, where they had no protection from it and no means of combating the situation. Gas masks were not available at the time and the soldiers were breathing through woollen articles such as dirty socks.

But the British were equal to the situation and gas masks or hoods were rushed in. They consisted of a hood over the head with plastic eye-holes to see through and a rubber tube for the mouth that you could breathe out, but not in. They were awful contraptions. The bottom of the mask came around the neck.
They were replaced as soon as possible by the bag-type respirator that looked like a school bag of olden days and fastened around the neck and rested on the chest. When in use a rubber hose affixed to a tin of granulated charcoal in the bag and attached to a mouthpiece and a clamp to block the nose. These were improved on but appeared to fulfill the purpose. They were used when gas was present, but later they [the Germans] were able to put over explosive gas shells, some containing mustard gas, against which you could only cover-up.

On one occasion we were issued with a container of four anti-gas tubes that you crushed in their covering of cotton and sniffed. The instructions were so vague so I asked my brother Norman if he knew what to do and he said, ‘Yes, just bust them open and suck them’. Just as well we didn’t have to use them!

When the British had enough gas available they decided to give the Germans a taste of it and the position chosen was on the Australian sector, established in the small village of Houplines, not far from Armentieres, south of where the Germans used it. No-man’s land in this area was about one hundred and fifty yards wide and the front-line consisted of sandbag trenches.

The operation was in charge of the British Engineers and the gas was contained in large cylinders, about six feet long and ten inches through, with a filling tap, etc at one end and hose lines attached to them for run-off purposes.

These were brought up by the English engineers and placed into position in our lines with an English officer in charge. The pipes were laid at night and he required a signaller to accompany him. Unluckily for me I was chosen.

We had to go about seventy-five yards into No-man’s land to ascertain the action necessary to convey the gas towards the German lines. It was a very hazardous and disappointing operation.

The wind had to blow in the Germans direction at about five kilometres an hour. We spent three nights out there waiting for the right conditions for zero hour, under a sheet of rusty galvanised iron.

On the third night it was OK and the officer told me to inform headquarters and then make it back to the lines as quickly as possible. The message was ‘ten bags (meaning ten cylinders of gas) sent, all OK’. I sent the message and found that the officer had disappeared, as he knew what was brewing when the gas reached the Germans. I was at a loss for direction as we were hidden under the sheet of tin but a pull on the trusty little telephone line put me right and I made a hasty retreat in the right direction and reached the lines just as a terrific barrage of German shells and small arms commenced. The Germans had to do this as the gas would ruin their arms and artillery.

I reached our lines and hastily gave the password, ‘Aussie’, when challenged and jumped into the trench used as a machine-gun emplacement. Strangely enough, it was manned by a relation, namely Sergeant Ashley Edds [26 Ashley Sylvester Edds MM, RTA 31.1.18] of the 9th Machine Gun Battalion. He was in charge of the position so I told him my mission and destination but he wouldn’t hear of me leaving until the barrage had died down. The communications trenches were in a bad way as the Germans had shelled them severely, expecting an attack which did not take place.

I was congratulated by the general and our officer and granted ten days rest for my effort, which I enjoyed in Paris.

[Right: A photo from Vic, which appears to be of two Vickers machine-gun crews. Perhaps his relation, Sgt Edds, is in the photo. Vic may be second from the right. Note how his hat has the brim turned down, which was how the 3rd Division wore their hats when this photo was taken in May 1916.]

‘Ploegsteert Wood – How I got caught napping!’

Between Armentieres and Ypres lay a lovely forest called Ploegsteert Wood and it was from this point the mining of the town of Messines on Hill 60 was carried out. There was a dug-out headquarters in the woods, sixty feet deep that contained rooms, offices, sleeping quarters and there were stairs at one end and a ventilation shaft at the other.

It was a quiet period so a cobber and I one day decided to have a rest downstairs. Little did we know that they were going to test for foul air. They lowered coal fires, not knowing of our presence. Luckily, we were discovered in time and taken up to the fresh air. We were suffering from carbon monoxide poisoning.
They rang the battalion doctor who was back in the reserve trenches and he said to stick them out in the fresh air to sleep it off. It was below zero and the frost was thick on the ground. We nearly died of frostbite.

The mining of the Messines Ridge went on via a huge tunnel that took months to construct and load with explosives. Then came the vital day when the switch was pulled. What a crater the explosives made! The Australians had no trouble occupying the whole village with no resistance from the Germans. They must have got a terrible shock.

Only a few years ago a cobber told me that he saw a message in the [Australian] War Memorial in my handwriting, giving a report to headquarters of the progress made at Messines, but I can’t remember taking that message.

‘Passchendaele’
We were moved to Ypres in the winter of 1917 where we had a big operation in conjunctions with Canadian and British troops. The whole of the 3rd Division were given the task of taking a village east of Broodseinde Ridge [on 12 October 1917]. This village was Passchendaele.

We had to follow the Broodseinde Ridge from Railway Hut HQ along the railway line for approximately three kilometres to the hop-over point with the 34th, 35th and 36th in attack and the 33rd in support.

We got there in no time after getting tangled up with Morshead’s 33rd Battalion [Lieutenant Colonel Leslie James Morshead] and he seemed to want all the railway line but our signallers, fourteen of us under Sergeant Dale [10527 Sgt Thomas Dale, 3rd DSC, RTA 5.4.18] and one pigeoneer with five pigeons, started at 4.25am with the battalions.

We had not gone far when ‘Thrifty’, as we called him, was missing with a quantity of gear, then rounding a cemetery corner, poor Sergeant Tom Dale had his right arm shot away with a burst of German machine-gun bullets. We put a ligature on it and sent him back.

After negotiating a line of heavily fortified German pillboxes, on arrival at our destination we had five men left and the pigeoneer, Pretty Woodchamp, who was hit three or four times but refused to quit.

The shells landing in the pillboxes had little effect as they were shockproof but a chap from the 34th, at the cost of his own life, put a grenade into an opposing pillbox that was occupied by twenty-five German soldiers. We soon disposed of them. Several of them went back to HQ for interrogation. One had been working in Manly prior to the war, so he could speak good English.

After examination for booby traps we took possession and soon after Colonel Milne arrived and sought shelter with us. Luckily, we had a supply of water and we were able to make a cup of coffee on a small German cooker.

We had no communication with headquarters for forty-eight hours. Runners were sent back but did not get there and we had no telephone line and ‘helio’ was impossible. At last we got a pigeon message through and HQ sent a runner who got through to us and we were informed that the Canadians to the north did not move, owing to intensive machine gun fire and bombardment and many casualties. The New Zealanders and British troops to the south did not make much progress, so we were instructed to return to our original positions and the 33rd would cover our northern flank.

We were almost surrounded and we were lucky to escape capture. Prisoners who were sent back just crossed over the rear to their own lines again. Our losses were terrific. The 36th Battalion went in with 800 men and returned with 200. The 34th and 35th shared likewise.

I was with another chap from Victoria and we were taking two prisoners back with us. Unfortunately, we were blown up by a huge shell and I lost my cobber and the two prisoners. When I recovered I was minus my tin hat and gas mask.

On arrival at Railway Hut, our point of departure, we found that all that had not gone over with us had been evacuated with gas poisoning, so we made our way further back to Ypres. My cobber Sam was in this group and was lucky to be evacuated to England, never to return.

I reported to the first aid officer in Ypres and my reward was ten days rest in the Catacombs in the city. These were huge underground dug-outs in the inner walls of the city, which at one time was surrounded by a large earthen wall straight up on the outside and sloping on this inside, with a huge gate to enter the city. This was an ancient means of defence.

I was given a bag of straw and a couple of blankets to put on a wire netting bunk. You got little sleep as the beds were lousy and you spent most of the time delousing yourself out in the sunshine if possible. We got a tin of coffee, no cups, and a biscuit from the Comforts Fund daily, and one morning I emerged and who should be in charge of the coffee but Reverend Tom McVitty [Captain Chaplain Thomas McVitty, AACS, RTA 12.5.19], a former Presbyterian minister from Warren. It was a real surprise. He was a full-blown
Major Padre in the forces and he brought our coffee and milk up daily. He arranged a day out together and commandeered a car to take me to Poperinge. We visited the officer’s mess for lunch and also went to ‘Toc H’ as this was the place where the society originated. We had afternoon tea at the YMCA.

On rejoining my unit I found that it was sadly depleted. Colin Simpson, our officer [possibly Lieut Lawrence Gordon Simpson, 3rd DSC, RTA 25.11.17], was gassed and back in England. [Simpson’s service record shows that he was discharged due to chronic bronchitis – Ed.] We had to regroup owing to lack of reinforcements. The 36th Battalion was cut up and placed in the 33rd, 34th and 35th, and we were sent down south on the Somme as it was feared the Germans may attack in that vicinity.

‘Despatch riding’
Time rolled on and General [Charles] Rosenthal was still in charge of the 9th Brigade and General Monash the 3rd Division, but later on Rosenthal took charge of the 2nd Division and Monash took on the Australian Corps of five divisions. The Australians remained ready and mobile.

With my ability and experience of motorcycles, I was offered a job as despatch rider, which I accepted. Could you imagine me on a brand new war model Triumph, fitted with their first gears? I was asked to go for a preliminary test of about ten kilometres over cobbled roads with snow and ice on them and I was allotted to Division HQ and given maps, spare tube, etc.

I lasted about forty-eight hours at Divisional HQ running to brigades etc. and then suddenly I was given a despatch for the 9th Brigade and told to remain with them for instructions. This was about 15th or 18th March 1918, and then came the surprise: I was given the despatches that contained orders to move immediately to a place called Abeele. I managed to find all the 9th Brigade units by map locations but it was rather difficult in the dark. I then had to take a despatch to the 10th Brigade, who were situated a few miles away. They too were out on rest, along with all the other Australian personnel of the 10th Brigade. Headquarters was near an old blacksmith’s shop and I managed to run a horseshoe nail into my rear tyre. As I had to proceed to Abeele, about eighty kilometres distant, I decided it was best to put my new tube in and mend the old one.

I proceeded via St Omer and Hazebrouck and Bailleul, but as the Germans were shelling these towns I had to make detours further west. I got to Abeele about 4am and reported to Major Dunlop who had set up temporary HQ in a chateau. He instructed his batman to get me something to eat. The best he had was strawberry jam and bread and a good cup of tea, but how refreshing it was after a long and hazardous journey. I had a good rest for a few hours.

Next day Australian troops began arriving by train, which consisted mostly of cattle-wagons and old London buses, painted green. It was chaos for two or three days until the troops settled in and I found their locations in case a sudden move was needed. The Germans did not appear to be ready for an attack, although they shelled our positions with long-range artillery.

About 22nd March 1918, word was received that the Germans had broken through north and south of the Somme in the vicinity of Corbie and an urgent appeal for the Australians was received from Divisional HQ. We were to entrain from Steenbecque Railway and the balance by the old London buses. General Rosenthal told me to stay by my cycle on a flat-top railway truck and, believe me, it was some job tying it on as the tracks were very rough. When all were aboard we headed south and reached a place called St Pol, where it was found that it was not safe to proceed further by train. We finished the journey by London buses, and there seemed to be miles of them. This time I had to follow the staff car on my motor-cycle. I can tell you it was a bad trip, with buses pulling out and congesting traffic, etc.

We reached Heilly (19km NE of Amiens) and here we were halted and instructed to dig in, as the German patrols were in the vicinity and the convoy was coping a certain amount of shelling. Headquarters were established and instructions were given to form a line in artillery formation towards the Somme around Corbie to stem the on-rush and to dig in and detain any suspicious personnel and place them in barbed-wire.
compounds that were hastily constructed. Groups of Germans were intercepted making their way to the coast without arms, but carrying shovels, etc.

The British troops had been completely beaten and disorganised – the Germans had really broken through. Troops were racing to the rear and artillery teams, horses, etc were returning without their guns and no-one knew where their units were located. It was chaos indeed. Corps HQ instructed the Australians to link up with the British 66th Division but the trouble was to locate them.

At about 8pm that night I was given a despatch and told to try and locate them south of the Somme. This meant going into unknown territory, so I travelled south to Corbie which was being evacuated. I was challenged at the bridge by armed guards. I was travelling at thirty or forty mph and the only thing I could do was call out ‘Aussie’ and I kept going. Luckily they didn’t follow up their challenge and fire on me. I then avoided Villers-Bretonneux which was being shelled and on to Douaumont.

I searched the town, which had been evacuated and tenanted by Scottish troops who had taken all the Scotch from every hotel. I could find no trace or word of the 66th so I returned to inform the general. All he could say was, ‘Have a good meal and rest and I’ll get you to go out again’. He roused me about 3am and I set out to explore further south of the Somme. I came to a fair-sized town and found it contained the HQ of about six British Divisions who didn’t know of the location of any of their troops. At one HQ I managed to see the general and he volunteered the information that he did not know where the 66th Division were but they were supposed to be south of the Somme, ‘somewhere’. He said that Carey’s forces, which consisted of all the spare troops gathered up by Major Carey from rear camps, etc held the line as far as Hangard Wood, and from there to the Somme was patrolled by British cavalry. I was getting a bit weary but before leaving him I borrowed his map of the area and pressed on.

I travelled north again to Corbie. It commenced to rain and I had a nasty spill off my bike on the slippery, chalky road. I was not badly hurt so I carried on to Corbie where I came across some English soldiers holding several houses. I asked where their officers were and they said, ‘Somewhere down the road’. I saw a small red light which denoted a signal office. It was in an estaminet or wineshop.

After proving my identity, the sergeant allowed me to come in. I told him I was looking for the 66th and I was relieved when he said that they were the 66th. I told him I wanted to see the general and I eventually got into their hideout where they were enjoying a few drinks. It was like trying to break into a strongroom in a bank. When they saw I was Australian I was received with open arms and invited to have a drink. I gave the general my despatch, addressed to ‘The Commanding Officer, 66th Division’ that I had carried all through the night.

When he knew we were to link up with his division north of the Somme, he was elated and gave me a note saying that they would locate us at 9am the next morning.

On my return to our headquarters at Heilly I saw the general who was delighted and thanked me for my effort, but no bronze medals hanging to it! This was the end of the German invasion’s attempt to reach the coast and later attempt a landing on British soil. It was a long, drawn-out affair for some time, with short advances to straighten out the line. We could hold Corbie, Peronne, etc along the Somme.

Things were a bit hostile up around Amiens so they sent our division to the outer suburb called Rivery and we were consolidated in a sunken road. It was here in the month of July 1918 that my brother Norman [Pte 3387 Norman Federal Thornton, 34th Battalion, RTA 4.7.19] joined me.

While we were at Rivery and consolidating into our positions, I was asked to take a run east and try to ascertain the position. We were subject to spasmodic shelling by the Germans. As they rushed up light artillery, things were really chaotic on the roads with troops, wagons and horses beside the retreating French civilians, carrying what goods they could.

I had to travel on motor-cycle mostly overland to get where I wanted to go. I reached a village. I think it was Morcourt, about ten kilometres from our lines and I found the town evacuated. At the railway station I found an officer on horseback. He said he was a liaison officer and another chap who said he was the RTO (railway transport officer). He had all his gear packed ready to leave. I enquired where the Germans were and he said, ‘Just over that hill’. I made a hasty retreat and reported the position to our HQ at Corbie. This was about as far as the Germans got on their trek to the coast.

We defended the area from Amiens to Rivery in the east and later pushed on to Villers-Bretonneux setting up our HQ at Blangy-Tronville, about eight kilometres away from ‘Villers’. I made regular runs on the motor-cycle with despatches for the battalions. I used to leave the motor-cycle in the chalk pits west of the city and run the rest of the way. ‘Fritz’ (the Germans) used to shell this road very heavily, especially at night and I was unlucky to be caught with a burst of fire and hit with a bit of shell in the right elbow. Fortunately, the motor-cycle was still usable and I rode to the first aid station where the shell was extracted.
The arm became very stiff and I was unable to ride for quite a while so I was rested for a week or so and returned to my own unit signalling again.

‘August 8th 1918’

When the big offensive happened, our crowd started from Vaux Wood. Norman was now with the signallers and the 34th went up 24 hours prior to our section, so I was able to see him on his way. We went in to the left of the 34th, acting with the 34th and 35th. He was with the mopping-up party.

It was a lovely day at 4.25am on 8th August but you would think that all hell had broken loose. The crops in the vicinity had been harvested and many of them contained a 28 pounder gun and much heavier howitzers. One had to hang on to the old tin hat when passing between the bursts.

What a day! Thousands of prisoners pouring in and we penetrated twelve to fourteen kilometres into the German territory. We captured the big gun, ‘Big Bertha’, which was later brought to Sydney. We caught some of the Germans just completing their breakfast. I picked up a lovely dagger and was replacing it in its holder and it slipped, cutting my left hand, which resulted in a poisoned hand that was swollen for about two weeks despite first aid dressing.

We halted for the night in a chalk pit opposite Chipilly on the Somme and I decided to look for Norman and he decided to do the same. It was a happy reunion. Our battalions, the 33rd, 34th and 35th, were just south of the Somme, and about 4am we passed our artillery to commence mopping up and they had a great task as we had taken thousands of prisoners. Apparently we had taken the Germans by surprise.

Next morning they decided to send some of our artillery across to help drive the Germans out of the village of Chipilly. We were on the hill opposite the village across the river, watching the lot in perfect safety. The infantry did a good job with their fixed bayonets hunting the Germans out.

[Right: View of the Somme Valley, taken from Chipilly Heights, showing Morcourt on the left. Part of this area was taken by the Australian troops during the offensive on 8 August 1918. Australian War Memorial Negative Number E02989A.]

‘The Somme – Hindenburg Line’

We then proceeded steadily up the Somme until we came to a standstill. We were able to proceed on our way and after a time we came to the Hindenburg Line, and the arrangements were for the Americans to attack it with about four or five thousand men. They were to hop over at about 4.30am. They had tons of artillery barrage and about the only five tanks the British could muster.

Oh, what a result! The barbed wire in front of the line was heavily mined with what we called ‘plum pudding mines’. These were set into the ground with just a plunger on the surface and as soon as anything pushed the plunger, up went the mine and so did you. You can imagine how long our tanks lasted. The whole five burnt out and the occupants were incinerated, approximately six soldiers in each tank.

The Germans had been holding this line of trenches for a considerable time and it consisted of a small canal about 10 to 15 feet deep. They used ladders to reach the top of the parapet. They had also tunnelled into the side facing the British and had access to No-man’s land without being exposed. As the Americans reached the trench, they [the Germans] attacked them from the rear with machine guns. You can imagine the slaughter, and by the time we were to advance there were very few Americans left. What were not killed had retreated as casualties.

We were standing firm in our trenches in case of counter-attack (which did not eventuate) so we had to postpone any action for the time being. We were fortunate that we located the American rum dump which they intended taking forward later. You can guess that this put us in good spirits.

It reminds me that when Norman, my brother, first joined us in the line we used to line up for our issue of rum each morning and I generally had Norman near me. I told him the stuff was no good for him so I managed to get a double issue for some time, until he woke up to me and said if it was good for me then it was good enough for him.
This position was in front of an old town called Bony. The British decided the only way the position could be taken was to soften up a portion with artillery and a battalion to get in and fight the Germans in the trenches. This was done and I think it was the 33rd Battalion’s job. I remember I kept contact from under one of the disused tanks with a D3 telephone and the Germans put over gas shells, so I got another dose, as I could not wear my gas mask and use the telephone. After an anxious time it was now our time to rest. We could see that the Germans were weakening and appeared to have had enough. This was September or October [likely to have been 29 September – Ed].

We were in the reserve at the rear of this position and I was feeling very crook after being exposed to the gas so they granted me leave to England. They might very well have evacuated me as I collapsed on my way to Dunstable, our friend’s place, and I was carted off to Aylesbury Military Hospital, Bedfordshire, which was an Auxiliary English Hospital in the high school.

I had three or four good doctors looking after me. An Australian appeared to be a curiosity up that way. I was not lonely, as I remembered a vicar’s widow from St Leonards-on-Sea often sat by my bedside. My condition was up and down and the military were very good and sent Norman on an eight day special leave to England from France to see me. I told him I was on the mend and felt I would make it and I asked him to spend a few days with my friends at Dunstable and come back and see me before he returned to France. I was at this hospital when the Armistice was signed on November 11th. I was very weak but they let me sit up to hear the rejoicings. What a wonderful day for everyone!

While at Aylesbury the ‘Black Plague’ or flu broke out and as there was a German prison camp nearby they began to pile them into the hospital. They had forty beds but they passed out fairly quickly. Brandy seemed to be a favourite medicine for them and I got the job of helping the nurses when I was up. Many of the Germans wanted you to taste it before they would drink it. I didn’t last long on that job.

I gradually pulled through after three months of great attention and I was transferred to an Australian hospital at Harefield for another three months before being transferred to a convalescent camp at Weymouth, medically unfit for further service.

It was not until May 1919 that I was finally able to board a transport home on the Port Denison.

**FFFAIF donation for Boer War Memorial (BWM), Canberra**

One hundred and ten years after the declaration of peace in 1902, there is still no national memorial to those Australians who served and sacrificed in the Boer War. In 2002 it was decided to erect a memorial in Canberra. In 2007 the memorial was allocated a site in Anzac Parade (the National Military Commemorative Precinct between the AWM and Lake Burley Griffin) and the design was approved in 2011.

All that remains now is to raise the funds without, it appears, any government financial contribution unless there is enough support in the wider community. The Royal Australian Armoured Corps Association NSW Branch [ABN: 49 709 547 198] has the responsibility for fundraising and has three years to raise the money. Donations are tax-deductible and through the BWM website ([www.bwm.org.au](http://www.bwm.org.au)) Australians are asked to consider making an annual donation for the three years.

The National Boer War Association has the Governor-General as its Patron-in-Chief and General David Hurley AC DSC, Chief of Defence Force as its National Patron.

At the June committee meeting, it was resolved that FFFAIF Inc make a donation of $100 a year for three years in recognition of the number of Boer War veterans who went on to enlist in WWI, many as officers and NCOs in the First Contingent and in the AN&MEF.

The design of the proposed Boer War Memorial is explained on the webpage: [http://bwm.org.au/site/Memorial_Design.asp](http://bwm.org.au/site/Memorial_Design.asp). In summary, it shows a patrol moving carefully though the veldt. The memorial represents the men and their horses, which were inseparable, be they lancers, bushmen, rifles, medics, stretcher-bearers, gunners, ambulance men, artillery or supply. The walls grow out of the natural landscape and will be used for the laying of wreaths and poppies, as well as carrying the names of units (both State and Commonwealth), including the nurses. Plants will be incorporated from both South Africa and Australia.
‘It’s no milk & honey over there I tell you’:
Private 116 Herbert Harley, 42nd Battalion

Johan Van Duyse, Stekene, Belgium.

On 3 July 2013 it will be 10 years since Herbert William Harley was commemorated at the Messines Ridge British Cemetery. I came upon the final resting place of this Australian soldier when, being in the military in 1974, I was assigned to help harvest potatoes in the flooded Westhoek area and ended up on a farm in Messines that had its ‘own’ cemetery, right there on the farmstead.

I was suddenly confronted with the international aspect of the First World War. Until then, how aware had I been that Canadians, New Zealanders, Australians, South Africans, Indians, Chinese and another fifty nationalities can be found on this little plot of land that we now call the Westhoek? I hadn’t really been aware of it, or at least not to a sufficient degree – and I felt a bit ashamed of myself. But when we began remembrances with the still-young association, ‘Friends of the In Flanders Fields Museum’, I decided to dig into the life of this particular soldier, Herbert William Harley. Why him and not his neighbour, or that soldier a few rows further on? The answer is simple and perhaps seems trivial. Harley died on 3 July 1917, and I was born on that day 36 years later. As my first investigative act I took a photo of his headstone and saw that a wooden cross was standing in front of it which bore absolutely no reference to the man or woman who had placed it there.

Herbert William Harley was the fifth child and third son of a family of 11 children to Joseph and Mary Harley (nee McMillan). His father was a publican who owned a hotel in Lismore (NSW) and many of the Harley family (of Irish-Catholic extraction) lived in this area. Herb’s name was registered as ‘Herab William’ when he was born on 26 August 1891, which means that he was just short of his 26th birthday when he died, but on his headstone it states that he was 24 years of age.

Herbert was a blacksmith and was living in Ballina (about 20 miles from Lismore) with his parents when he enlisted in the army on 16 October 1915 (1). The best contemporary account of Herb’s short life prior to his enlistment was given in the local newspaper on the occasion of his and his cousin’s send-off. It was published on Tuesday, 19 October 1915, and was a story about dancing until 11pm, receiving gifts, more dancing and singing ‘God save the King’, ‘Rule Britannia’ and ‘Auld Lang Syne’. It is a revealing portrait about how the volunteers were seen off in style by their fellow townspeople, friends and family. The enthusiasm was great (or at least they made it seem that way). Herb himself got up to speak. ‘To loud applause’ he thanked everyone for the gifts and expressed his appreciation for his boss who was there and for whom he had been able to work as a smith for eight years (2). [Above: Studio portrait of Pte Herbert William Hartley, ‘A’ Company, 42nd Battalion. Australian War Memorial Negative Number P08908.001.]

Herb was appointed briefly to the 36th Battalion and then to the 42nd Battalion at Thompson’s Paddock at Enoggera, Queensland. Inside of two years, Herb would be killed in action in Flanders, and apart from a brief leave visit home in March 1916, his family never saw him again. He embarked in Sydney and proceeded on the HMAT Borda to Southampton, England, disembarking there on 23 July 1916. On arrival in England he was sent to camp at Salisbury Plain to complete his training in the machine-gun section of his battalion. On 26 July he wrote to his sister, Hanna Stuart. [Note: spelling and grammar have been modified to improve the flow of the letters – Ed.]

DIGGER 51 Issue 41
26.7.1916
Lark Hill
Salisbury Plain.

Dear Sister

I am scratching you a few lines in a hurry. The mail closes to-day and we don’t get much time to ourselves. They give us plenty of drill here. We had a bosker trip over, Han. We were seven weeks travelling. All the time the only spell we had was at Egypt, five days there. We left Alexandria again by the ‘Borda’ for Marseilles. It took seven days. We had a cruiser escorting us. We had to have our life belts in our hands all the time; we were liable to be blown up at any minute. We struck it lucky; there was a boat on our same course got torpedoed two hours after us and two more a day after. Well Han, our trip through France was bosker. I’m satisfied it’s the prettiest country in the world. The French girls are pretty too; the only thing is you can’t understand them. They are not shy. This is a big camp. Where we are there is over 50 000 Australians here. We are getting four days leave next week [and] we are going to London. All the Lismore boys are good. Well Han, I will say goodbye to you all. Love from
Herb xxxxxxxxxxxx

Will write a letter next time. Give my love to all. Herb.

Herb went absent without leave (AWL) on two occasions. On 18 March 1916 he was late back from home leave by seven hours, and on 10 December 1916 he was absent from roll call in Armentières. On this latter occasion he probably stayed too long at the wine bar! Despite these minor misdemeanours, his superiors described his character as ‘good’.

On November 10, 1916, he wrote another letter; this time to his sister Flo Hollyman (nee Harley):

Lark Hill Salisbury Plains
Nov. 10th 1916
England.

My dear Sister & Brother

Just a few lines hoping it will find you, Alf & kiddies in the best of health. I have a bit of a cold myself. I’m …. neezer. I had a week’s holiday with it but … again.

It’s good weather here Flo for colds; always raining and damn cold. We haven’t struck any snow yet but plenty of sleet. Well Flo, your letters must be on the unlucky side. I haven’t had one from you yet over here; neither from Don or Kate. I’ve got about twenty from Mum. I had one from her the other day, also one from olde Harri [sic]. I also got a bundle of stars. I never miss getting them and a box of things from Mum: tobacco, cigarettes socks & another. They were well appreciated, I tell you. They are bosker socks. Mum said they’re the first ones she ever made. One pair was for Vernie Greaves [Pte 108 Owen Vernon Greaves, 42nd/41st Bn]. He was pleased with them; he says there’s no one like Mum. … This is the second parcel I’ve had from home. The first one had a pair of socks & cigarettes. I suppose you’ve heard of the ‘Arabia’ getting torpedoed the other day in the Mediterranean. She left Sydney on the 30th Sept. There was a big mail, also parcels went down. I suppose a few of mine is [in] there. The letter I had from Mum the other day was the first answer to letters I wrote from England. She had ‘Park Hill’ instead of ‘Lark Hill’ on the envelope. It shows that she received my first letter I wrote from here. I wrote the night we landed here. I remember making the mistake. I wasn’t sure of the name. We’ll be leaving here in the course of a few days, Flo. Some of our heavy stuff have gone now to France. I don’t know whether we’ll be going straight into the firing line. I’m pleased we’ve got a move on; we are all tired of England now, especially Salisbury Plain. I am in the Lewis gun section now I got transferred. J Harley & Bill Surtees from Lismore is in it. They helped to get me into it. I like it better than the Infantry, we have easier times here especially. The Lewis gun we’ll be using in the firing line, I like her to shoot out of. No kick & you can rattle 700 to 800 shots off in a minute. There’s six of us to a gun; we also have revolvers. I’ve been in London three times, Flo. I haven’t been over to see Alf’s people since, I guess you were surprised at me … tiking them. I am sending you a Xmas card, Flo, in this letter. I think you ought to get it in time. What do you think of my girl I got snapped with in London, Flo? I sent one to Mum. She thinks she’s a cert to go back with me. I will have to be very lucky. There’s some characters of girls, you can disappoint them … times they’ll still turn up. I will close now Flo with … love to yourself, Alf & kiddies.
Herb xxxxxxx
Flo, since writing your letter we had a mail from Australia. I got five letters but none from you, worse luck. I don’t know how it is I can’t get any from you, Don or Kate. I believe it’s a fine big boy of Kate’s. I had one letter from Mum, one from Hanna & Walter, a nice little card from Dad, also one the same from Mary & a letter from the Bay. I scored very well. Mum was telling me Alf is in the hospital; also young Allan had the measles. Poor little devil, I pity him. It’s hard luck, Flo, just after shifting. I hope this letter will find you all well.

Love from Herb

I am addressing this in care of Murwillumbah post office, Flo. That’s where Mum said you are living. The other letters I put in care of Mum, Bungalow. Vernie is at his old job boot repairing, nearly ever since we’ve been here. I thought they were still going to keep on here when we left, but he told me today they are going with us. I believe the two Kates have not been too good lately. Mum was telling me. I hope they are all O.K. again. Don’t expect too many letters, Flo, when I leave here. I don’t suppose I’ll get much time to write in France. Our hands will be pretty full. I’ll drop Mum a line whenever I get the chance. The ‘river boys’ have been getting a rough time lately in France, I see by the papers. It’s no milk & honey over there, I tell you.

I will close once more Flo, wishing yourself & Alf a merry Xmas & Happy New Year.

From your loving brother, Herb xxxxx.

On 28 November 1916, the men arrived at Bailleul (France) and marched to Outterstene (about 5 km), where they trained. On 26 December 1916 (Boxing Day), he received his baptism of fire in the supposedly ‘peaceful’ trenches around Armentieres and Ploegsteert. Herb was in the No. 116 Lewis gun section of the 42nd Battalion. He spent Christmas 1916 in the trenches near Armentieres on the French/Belgian border. It would have been very cold and wet.

We can follow the last months of his life from the official unit war diary entries.


6/3/1917 Enemy artillery very active throughout day and night.

8/3/1917 Weather described as ‘Boisterous’, several snow storms throughout, the day, otherwise observation splendid. A quiet day. Two casualties, 1 O.R. killed, 1 O.R. wounded and returned to duty.


16/3/1917 Pont de Nieppe.


4/5/1917 to 17/5/1917 Alquesines.

30/5/1917 Ploegsteert. Increased artillery activity on both sides. Heavy enemy retaliation in our sector.

On 7 June 1917, the day the Battle of Messines started, the official war diary reports of his commanding officers noted: ‘Bunhill Row. Enemy began to shell back areas and Ploegsteert Wood with gas shells. Battalion had to do approach march in gas helmets.’

[Note: After lengthy and careful planning and under cover of the huge explosions of 19 mines, the second battle of Messines commenced at 3.10am on 7 June with the advance of British, Irish, New Zealand and Australian divisions.]

9/6/1917 Catacombs. Received orders 12.30am to proceed to line and take over Black Line. Took over from 38th and 40th Bns and became G Bn. BHQ on Messines Rd near Seaforth Farm. 3 Companies in the line. ‘A’, ‘B’, ‘C’ from right to left and ‘D’ Company in support. Armour occupied. Green line in front of us. Digging and wiring commenced. Subjected to heavy shelling with 5.9” and 4.2” whiz bangs and shrapnel all day. Few gas shells.

10.6.1917 Black line. Subjected to exceptionally heavy shelling as per previous day. Fresh digging and wiring proceeded with. Position well consolidated. Few gas shells reported.

23.6. 1917 Messines sector.


That one soldier killed was Herb William Harley. Herb was killed near Warneton and was temporarily buried near the village. (By this time, and only eight months after leaving England, the battalion had lost over 230 or about 25% of their men.) Herb’s remains were transferred to the Messines Ridge British War Cemetery in 1921.

We can tell the story of 3 July 1917, named the Windmill Feint or ‘the Eighteen Days’, by reading CEW Bean, pages 712-713 of Volume IV.

The work of establishing the 3rd Division deserves to be recorded in detail. Opposite the Second Army, the Germans had been holding almost the same position to which they had fallen back on June 10 after the Battle of Messines. They had kept their main strength behind the Ypres-Comines Canal and the Lys, but maintained their frontline battalions in the Warneton line, west of these waterways. In front of this again they had kept a strong fringe of outposts in shell-holes.

The 3rd Australian Division, which on June 23 had taken over the 25th British Division’s sector between the Blauwpoortbeek and the Douve, found itself faced with a difficult task. Through a mistake (due to the maps not showing the lines of trees), the 25th Division had sited its line too far back at Steignast Farm, and a new system had to be established along the whole divisional front, except on the flanks. This task was commenced on June 23; the 11th Brigade taking over work in the front line for a period known afterwards to its members as ‘The Eighteen Days’. At the same time, the other brigades established three other successive lines of defence: the last being the old ‘Black Line’ of the Messines offensive.

The field artillery, all of which except two brigades for each division was now drawn out to rest, was ordered to refrain from provoking retaliation from the German guns which, probably for the time being, were more numerous. The German air force also had a marked local superiority, shooting down British balloons, attacking working parties, and flying low over the front line.

The 11th Brigade was ordered to not let the Germans establish outposts in front of the Warneton line, and General Cannan [Brigadier General James Harold Cannan DSO, CB, 11th Brigade HQ] informed his battalions that, if they failed to prevent this, they themselves would have to undertake the minor operations for clearing the posts out. Keen patrolling and several encounters, however, proved that the Germans posts were already there, with especially strong resistance coming from a windmill on a low ridge running obliquely across the front.

The 11th Brigade was an exceptionally effective body for the creation of a new trench system. This was due to the excellent liaison between the 11th Field Company Engineers under Major Robert Johnstone Donaldson (DSO, from Broken Hill, NSW), the infantry and the pioneers. In this 18 day tour, working parties, everywhere under the direction of two or three experts, transformed the forward system. Posts were pushed up, a new advanced front line was dug, and a series of bays, with firesteps, became a communication trench behind them. Six cross-trenches were made between the front and support lines. Wells were sunk, and headquarters were located in the old German concrete dugouts around which the fiercest fighting had taken place in the afternoon phase of the Battle of Messines.

But the enemy saw clearly on aerial photographs the rapid extension of the works and the tracks of the working parties that nightly streamed over the ridge. In addition, the Germans enjoyed the daily spectacle of roaming Australians, who would not use the muddy communication trenches; some of which were, indeed, impassable, while one, ‘Pine Avenue’, ran without traverses straight towards the enemy, and was thus universally avoided. The German artillery, machine-guns, and snipers were kept busy and the 43rd Battalion alone is said to have lost over 300 men in this tour in the line.

Not surprisingly, the local German garrison met the threat implied in the Australian activity by strengthening its own posts. Patrols of the 11th Brigade, and of the 9th Brigade which succeeded it, found signs that these posts were being linked by a continuous trench. The enemy’s position along the Windmill ridge shut out the Australians’ view of the Warneton Line. Thus, even the new front line in this sector was not a good one, and Cannan decided to push the German outposts from the ridge. His troops first tried to do so by small patrol attacks on the night of 3 July, but were repelled by two of the posts, and a patrol which captured a third post was driven out by a strong counter-attack. Lieutenant Ernest McKenzie Stevenson (of Burringbar, NSW), 42nd Battalion, was badly wounded. The 42nd had 16 casualties that day, and the 43rd lost 25 men; mostly through the barrage called down by the Germans.

Cannan therefore suggested that his brigade should undertake the minor operation already foreshadowed. It was this operation that General Monash chose for the 3rd Division’s feint for July 31.

Herb’s ‘last will and testament’ left all his possessions to his mother. Following his death, Herb’s mother received a war pension of two pounds per fortnight, from 13 September 1917 onwards.
How did we find the family information? It was Margaret Henderson, president/research coordinator of the Richmond River Historical Society (Lismore) who gave me two addresses of relations for Harley.

At the beginning of 2004 we received a message from Wendy Goldsmith, nee Rayer, explaining that she was a member of his family, since she’s the daughter of Herb’s youngest sister, Nellie:

Yes, I am indeed a relative of Herbert William Harley ... My mother Nell was Herb’s (as he was called by his family) younger sister. My mum was 14 yrs old when Herb went to war. Mum told us often how she knitted him socks and scarfs to keep him warm. Herb came from a large and loving family. My mum remembered the day clearly: the priest from the local Catholic church came to give her parents the devastating news that their son Herb had been killed serving his country ... We find it so amazing that you have shown such interest in Herb. His parents would have been so happy to know their beloved son has not been forgotten in your far away country ...

I look forward to hearing from you again.

Yours sincerely
Wendy Goldsmith
Friday 6th February 2004.

A few days later, she wrote:

... Shortly before my mum died in 1990, I began trying to gather information about our family ... and at that time Marie Churchin, who is my cousin, was helping me out. She wrote to the Australian War Memorial in Canberra, [and] we received back some details of where Herb was buried ... I have never heard of any family member that would have planted a poppy cross near the headstone. I will try to find out more but you seem to have more success than I in that department.

Later on she told me that her mother talked about Herb until her dying day, that she knitted socks for him, and that until the end of her own life, Nellie could recount how it felt when the priest came to bring them the bad news. Also, that Herb’s and her mother was never the same again after that day, even though she survived her son by another 27 years, dying in 1944.

This e-mail was the beginning of a long correspondence between us, and an equally long search within the Australian family for documents and photos of Herb. And they came in, in bits and pieces, but they came, and so the faces of the family became real. A letter from Harley turned up, and his photos taught us that he had been a ‘pre-war’ runner and a ‘war’ soldier.

To bring things up to date: on Christmas Day 2009, my family celebrated together with the family of Herb, ‘down under’ in Lennox Head, not far from Lismore. Under the dazzling Christmas sun, there I visited all of the houses, streets and factories that in the meantime had become ‘familiar material’. Bungabee, Tuncester, Lismore: they all became very much alive.

Nor was history absent in Wendy’s home: the family photos with Herb with her mother occupied a prominent place, as did the photos of Herb as a soldier. When we said farewell to Wendy (who had to decline our invitation to make a return visit due to her age), she expressed regret about one thing; that no-one from the Harley family had paid a visit to Herb’s grave in the faraway little town of Messines. [Right: Herb Harley’s grave. His epitaph reads: ‘To know him was to love him. He fought & died for his King & Country’. Photo courtesy of Matt Smith, Australian War Graves Photographic Archives: australianwargraves.org.]

But she was wrong about that, because in 1986 her second cousin had stood before the grave on the first of his many visits. Harold O’Keeffe was the grandson of Hanna Harley, Herb’s oldest sister, who had been 21 years older than Nellie, his youngest sister. Harold has become something of the family chronicler and thus had also come upon Herb’s story. In 2011 he discovered to his own amazement when ‘surfing’ to Messines Ridge British Cemetery on the website www.wol.be, a link to the brother of his grandmother because Aurel Sercu had written an article on the 2003 Remembrance. Through Jan Matsaert, the webmaster of that site, I then came into contact with Harold. Last year, on 27 October 2011, we agreed to walk together in Herb’s footprints, in order to relive
his last days, as it were. It appeared that in 2008, Harold had written a book about his family in which naturally space was devoted to the Harleys generally and Herb specifically. New photos, new letters and new documents turned up.

In his book, Harold describes the further experiences of Herb up to his death. He also deals with the lasting impact that Herb’s death had on his grandmother. His grandmother had Herb’s Memorial Plaque hanging at home, something that the soldiers called the ‘Dead Man’s Penny’, and it would be impossible to describe its purpose any more clearly than that. Harold now has the Memorial Plaque hanging in his house, and he believes that this ‘souvenir’ would be the first thing that he’d snatch up to save if his house ever caught fire.

It’s odd that Harold and Wendy knew nothing of each other’s searches, although they were both quite actively occupied with the history of their family in general and with Herb’s memory in particular. After all, in the 1990s Wendy had asked for Herb’s military file. But now they do know one another, exchange e-mails and are sharing documents – all via the accident of a flooded Westhoek in 1974, via potatoes and via the coincidence of July 3rd!

On the 27 October 2011, Harold and I, during the Last Post at Menin Gate, laid a wreath in commemoration of Herbert William Harley. And on that day it became clear to me that the wooden cross I’d seen in 2002 before Herb’s headstone had been put there by Harold.

Endnote: Johan Van Duyse is one of our 24 overseas members. He is an official battlefield guide for the Ypres Salient.

Acknowledgments:
Margaret Henderson, Richmond River Historical Society (sent Tuesday, March 18, 2003);
Grafton to the Graveyard – A Family History, Harold RJ O’Keeffe, pp148-149;
Australian Imperial Force in France 1917 by CEW Bean (Second Edition), Angus and Robertson Ltd. 1935;
Alan Kitchen, who helped in putting together Herb’s overseas movements.

A tribute to Ron Austin, 1936-2012

FFFAIF member, Bryan McKenzie, first met military historian Ron Austin in 1995 when Bryan was a member of the Belmore Travel Tour to Gallipoli and the Western Front. Bryan became thoroughly involved in those aspects of Australia’s war service to the extent that he now takes his own tours to these areas, still under the Belmore brand. Over the years, Ron Austin took hundreds of Australians on pilgrimages and he had a special regard for Krithia, in Turkey, and Herleville in France. Ron’s well-researched battlefield histories will be in the library of many of our members, and Bryan has supplied Ron’s obituary from which the following edited extract has been taken.

‘Ron’s first book, “The White Gurkhas”, was launched in 1989, and in 1990 he led the first of his many tours to Gallipoli and the Western Front on behalf of Belmore Travel. As his first book sold well, and having retired from formal employment, Ron started writing more books on our military history, a decision that led to the establishment of Slouch Hat Publications. Although a struggle for about a decade, Sue and Ron’s business became well-known, and the books they have published, including Ron’s works, sell in book shops around the country. His 15th book, “Cycling to War”, was launched at the Shrine of Remembrance in 2008, and since then he has written three more books, the last ones being “The Courtneys”, the “Australian & NZ Honours & Awards for the Boer War” and “Wounds and Scars: the history of the 2nd Field Ambulance”.

‘Ron’s main hobby and interest apart from military history, was travelling overseas, and over a period of 40 years he visited every continent, with 23 visits to each of Turkey and Gallipoli, England and France, the last battlefield tour that he took to Gallipoli being in 2011 and to France in 2012. Often invited to speak at community functions including schools, Rotary, libraries and Probus Clubs, Ron was delighted to be able to pass on to others some of his knowledge of Australian military history.

‘His long association with the French village of Herleville, located in the Somme, dated back to 1992, when he donated a bronze memorial plaque to the village commemorating the sacrifice made by the 6th Battalion AIF in France during the Great War. On 21 September 2008, during an annual visit to the village, he was formally presented with the medaille du merite en or de l’UNC (gold medal of merit).’

Captain Ronald James Austin RFD, ED, whose busy life encompassed roles as a clerk, national serviceman, sportsman and coach, CMF officer, employment officer, university graduate, administration manager, military historian, tour guide, business owner, husband and father, passed away in 2012 from cancer. He will be deeply missed by all those who have an interest in Australian Great War history – Ed.
Behind a photograph: 3249 Private John Sweeney, 54th Battalion
Geoff Lewis, Raglan.

Photographs of the Great War are a primary source for historical research. They need to be closely studied and interpreted so that they can be placed in an historical context, and then the story of the experiences of the men and women who served can be told and appreciated.

I first encountered Private 3249 John Terrence Sweeney, a member of the 54th Battalion, in 2007 while on a Rugby World Cup Tour of France. My life-long friend, Chris Hills, and I took a week out to visit the Western Front. We had to visit Heath Cemetery to pay our respects to Chris’ wife Colleen’s great uncle who died of wounds on 3 September 1918 at Peronne. The resting place of the Armidale saddler was easy to find: Plot X, Row A, Grave No. 1. At the time, I remember Chris remarking that, ‘I am the first of Jack’s [extended] family to pay him a visit!’

Before the 2010 FFFAIF Commemorative Tour, I had prepared a commemoration card to be placed at his headstone. The research involved told me a great deal about Private Sweeney, but there were still questions to be answered about his final hours at Peronne. He had already survived a severe shrapnel wound to his right arm on 25 September 1917 at Nonne Bosschen. Earlier, he and thirty-one others had been congratulated by their corps commander for gallant service rendered during the recent action. He had survived the Battle of Polygon Wood.

There were family stories about his death but, unfortunately, John’s family had dispersed after the war and contact was lost. Most distressingly, the family had no photograph of him. This was about to change, thanks to the detailed knowledge of the 54th Battalion held by FFFAIF member, Ross St Claire.

As we were entering Heath, I was chatting with Ross who, naturally, had a copy of his story of the 54th Battalion, ‘Our Gift to the Empire’, tucked under his arm. Noting the commemoration card, he commented that ‘John is one of my boys in the 54th! I know him!’ I told him how I came to be commemorating John and explained that the family did not have a photograph. ‘No worries, mate! I have three and you will know one really well.’ He opened the book and there they were!

The first image is, in fact, well known to all our readers. It appears in: Volume VI of Bean’s ‘Official History’; in almost every illustrated history of the AIF at war; in the Villers-Bretonneux Museum; and in many school History textbooks. The photo [right] E03183, and is usually captioned: Men gathered around a machine-gun position established by the 54th Battalion during the morning of the attack through Peronne. It was taken by Official War Photographer, Captain Hubert Wilkins MC & Bar, on the afternoon of 2 September. Private Sweeney is on the extreme right, holding what appears to be a compass or range finder. At last, a photograph for his family after ninety years! [Australian War Memorial Negative number E03183.]

The second image [left] was probably taken earlier, as it is an establishing shot. However, it is useful in working out where the photographs were taken. [Australian War Memorial Negative number E03151.]

The AWM caption for this photo reads: One of the furthest points established by the 54th Australian Battalion in its advance through the streets of Peronne on the night of 1 September 1918. In front of the shop on the right are the bodies of two of an enemy patrol killed whilst approaching an Australian post the same night. On 2 September 1918 the whole of the town was in the hands of the Australians. Note the sentry [arrowed] and the Lewis gun in position behind him.
The third image [right] was taken immediately after the previous photo. It shows a Lewis machine-gun crew (with probably Sweeney rightmost) approaching the street from the left. It has a slightly different camera angle as Wilkins attempted to frame the best picture. [Australian War Memorial Negative Number E03152.]

The context

For a close analysis of these images, it is necessary to place them in context: why and under what circumstances were they taken? Following the AIF successes at Hamel, Villers-Bretonneux and Amiens, the 5th Division moved east, roughly along the axis of the Roman Road towards Peronne in pursuit of the retreating Germans. By late August 1918, the 5th Division was ordered to attack and capture the town.

The defences of the town were simple but formidable. They depended on the low-lying marshy land on either side of the Somme River, the river itself and the impressive medieval battlements into which the Germans had carefully placed several machine-gun nests. At the same time, the 2nd Division was given the difficult task of taking Mont St Quentin which was, in itself, heavily defended, since it was a strategically important high point about a mile to the north of the town.

The 14th Brigade crossed the Somme quite easily at Feuillieres and advanced to establish a line roughly between Radegooede and Anvil Wood, on the northwest outskirts of Peronne. Under their commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel Norman Marshall, the first task of the 54th Battalion was to clear the area between Halle and Peronne. Before this could happen, their mates in the 2nd Division had to complete their task at Mont St Quentin. The story of this battle is legendary and the objective was taken by the afternoon of 31 August.

Without the threat from the local high point, the 54th ‘moved steadily’ in an easterly direction in what the Regimental Diary described as a ‘Scottish mist’, at dawn on 1 September. With little artillery support, they chased the Germans into the town itself. As the last of the defenders crossed the bridge/causeway on the Clery Road into the town, the German engineers blew up the structure before the very eyes of Corporal 2361 Arthur Charles Hall (who would win the VC for his work at Peronne) and Private 3719 Ralph Sylvester Scobie DCM. Hall later organised a temporary bridge of planks and other debris that was lying about.

This event is the subject of a fourth photograph [left] in which a soldier, unmistakably Private John Sweeney, is standing. It was probably taken after the other three. [Australian War Memorial Negative Number E03196.]

Note that the image shows the remains of a bridge in the foreground. In the background are the bricks, stones and other detritus of the ramparts.

The destruction of the bridge delayed the advance, but an intact wooden bridge was found half a mile to the south between the town and the Somme. As a result, the battalions split into two, one heading into Peronne from the north and the other, including ‘B’ Company, moving into the area between Boulevard des Anglais and the centre of the town, more or less behind the Mairie. However, the ‘northern’ companies were greeted with heavy machine-gun fire from St Denis and the brickworks, as well as from the battlements, suffering heavy casualties.

Meanwhile, the machine-gun crew at the post had a relatively easier time, experiencing only sporadic gunfire from Flamicourt, a village across the stream. By midday, half the town had been taken and mopped up. Early on the morning of 2 September, the rest of Peronne was taken by the 5th Division.
Where was the famous E03183 photograph taken?

In a letter to Bean, dated 1941, in response to a query from the official historian [‘Bean Papers’, AWM DRL606/1161/1], Arthur Hall describes three machine-gun posts that were established inside Peronne. (These are arrowed on the map. It is likely that Hall’s hand-drawn arrow near the word ‘Peronne’ is pointing to the bridge by which he entered the town and the one John Sweeney is standing near.)

On an enclosed map he has clearly indicated the posts with dots, even though he concedes that the positions are the best of my memory. Using more recent maps, it can be established that the three posts were sited along several blocks of the Rue Beranger (now the D199) which crosses the river over a bridge into Flamicourt. On page 851 of Volume VI of ‘The Official History’, Bean confirms that Posts were placed along the street crossing (to) the town of Flamicourt causeway. [My emphasis.]

Further evidence can be found in Bean’s diary. He had closely followed the 54th from the time they had crossed the river at Feuillieres. On the evening of 1 September, he was joined by Hubert Wilkins, who had been with the 2nd Division during their attack on Mont St Quentin. Wilkins had, in fact, trailed the 6th Battalion as they fought their way up to the summit. On 2 September, he was in Peronne where the 54th Battalion had a HQ near the bridge. He found a Coy Commander who sent a man with him [probably Sweeney] to show him the posts set up by the Battalion. [My emphasis, Diary 1917, p114.]

Bean further notes that there had been some earlier shelling and machine-gun fire which had killed five men. After this, there was no further shelling, which allowed Wilkins to get close to his subjects. About the middle of the day Wilkins was taken to the (Southern) edge of the town – he didn’t realise that the Germans were holding Flamicourt across the moat to the S(nouth). [My emphasis.]

The result of this excursion was E03151, E03152 and the famous E03183, repeated left for easier reference.

This well-used image is posed by men of the 5th Division at a Lewis gun post. Ross St Claire has identified the men as: (L-R) Private 1894 William Francis Cullen (53rd Battalion), Private 3726 Albert Herbert Storen (54th Battalion), Lieut Keith Wark DCM, MID (56th Battalion and brother of Major Blair Wark VC), Sergeant 5392 Herbert Clarence Kelly MSM (56th Battalion) and Private John Sweeney (54th Battalion). He believes that the photograph was taken in the early afternoon.

The street – Rue Beranger – slopes down to a cross street and to what appears to be the balustrade of a bridge, in the centre background. The cross street is the Boulevard des Anglais (now Rue du General Foy) and the causeway crosses the Cologne River into Flamicourt, which is seen in the far background. Knowledge of the geography of Peronne indicates that the centre of the town, including the much damaged Mairie, are up the rise, behind the photographer. The post, then, is the third or lowest one indicated on Hall’s map [AWM 38DRL605/274/1].

Finally, it is worthwhile recalling that a German machine gun at Flamicourt would have a clear field of fire across the river and into the street and Australian posts. By the evening of 2 September when the photograph was taken, the Australians were confident that all was quiet (hence Lieutenant Wark standing up in the photo without cover). Machine guns were well-placed to fire at any movement within range from both the German and Australian sides of the bridge.

The men were exhausted after three days of intense fighting. As Major General Talbot Hobbs, CO of the 5th Division observed, the condition of his men on 2 September, when the photographs were taken: the
white, haggard men, tired almost beyond the limits of human endurance ... an officer is in charge affecting a hearty bearing lest the spirits of the men suffer. [Ellis p35.]

The 54th Battalion war diary notes that before leaving he [Wilkins] took a snap of Private Sweeney of ‘B’ Coy who was shortly afterwards killed. This would most likely be the shot of Sweeney standing at the entrance to Peronne [E03196], as there is no other photograph of Sweeney by himself in the AWM collection. Within a short time of Wilkins taking his photograph, John Sweeney was wounded in the neck by shrapnel [‘GSW in neck’]. The war diary notes that desultory shelling of the town was continued by the enemy through the day but nothing of incident occurred. It is unlikely that a sniper’s bullet had been the cause, as there are no reports of them being active at the time. The other explanation is machine-gun fire from the unsecured Flamicourt which was reported as sporadically heavy. In any case, John Sweeney was taken to the 14th Field Ambulance Clearing Station, where he passed away in the early hours of 3 September, probably about 3.00am. He was initially buried in Proyart Cemetery, but reinterred in Heath Cemetery on 13 September 1923.

**Rue Beranger today**

It does not take long to find Rue Beranger (now the D199) in Peronne. Nor does it take long to identify it as the subject of E03183. Obviously, there have been changes to the streetscape after almost a century. The bend in the road as it approaches the bridge that crosses the Somme tributary (the Cologne) is the giveaway. The Somme’s man-made canal is still there, but some of the wider, swampy marshland has been filled in for buildings and construction of the Peronne Community Great War Memorial. A small section of the original walls of the town remain, adjacent to the memorial. The rather ornate concrete bridge of September 1918 has been replaced by a smaller yellow, wrought iron structure [right]. Wilkins took the shot looking down the slope towards the bridge and it is taking in this view that confirms that you ‘have arrived’. The perspective is that of the Australians in 1918, looking towards the German line across the stream in what is now the suburb of Flamicourt with the old railway station in the centre background (now a smallgoods processing factory).

It is more difficult to locate the exact position of the machine-gun post. In 1918, the buildings were rubble but have been replaced by a mixture of rebuilt and quite recent buildings. Without accurate surveying equipment, one cannot really be sure, but a good estimate is that the pile of rubble behind the men of the 5th Division is now a small block of flats. A line of trees would seem to have been planted across the road, merely for aesthetics and for shade alongside the school and not for any memorial. My theory is that the post where the men posed was down near the buildings on the left of the photograph [arrowed], opposite the trees closest to the camera in my photograph, below left.

The perspective from Flamicourt, looking up the street, presents us with the view the German machine gunners had of the Australian post. It is clear and unobstructed, although gives a narrow field of fire. I believe the post was near the building arrowed.

Somewhere, between the road bridge entering the town of Peronne where he had his photo taken, and on his way back to, or after returning to company headquarters or the machine-gun post, John Sweeney was mortally wounded. However, his visit to the machine-gun post, probably as Hubert Wilkins’ guide, has ensured that his image will be seen by generations of Australians for many years to come.
In Part 3 Len Jones has just arrived in France from Egypt and is ready to put into practice his limited French-speaking skills. Len (‘Jonno’) travels by train to Northern France and enjoys army life in the ‘Nursery’ sector. However, the ‘easy’ times can’t last, and at the end of this part of his memoirs, Len is readying himself to go over the top at Pozieres.

… But we needn’t have worried about the French. The authorities took great care that a lively band of Aussies fresh from the desert shouldn’t get loose in Marseilles of all places. Anyhow, I had a job reading some semaphore re: train arguments. All hurry and bustle we left [the] ship and were shepherded to the railway station and securely locked in.

In a beautiful drizzling rain we squatted, and entrained at 0200 on March 29. We sigs [signallers] had quite a good carriage. The train wasn’t exactly the Blue Express but PLM Ordinary. I think most of us fell asleep when the train gathered speed and rhythm. Up through the lovely valley of the Rhone we sped – a beautiful smiling countryside, white roads, nestling villages and white chateaux. Through Arles, Avignon, Orange, Valence, Vienne – the latter a fine city.

At various stations we gathered rations from the QM [quartermaster] but mostly we filled up on tasty breads, all crusty and brown, and fresh butter bought on the stations with what English money we possessed. The French authorities regaled us with hot coffee and cognac. Via Macon, Dijon, Melun; all these places brought back memories of books I had read. Juvisy must have been near Paris for we saw several suburban trains. Passed an old monastery where the famous DOM Benedictine is made. Through Etaples and around Boulogne, where early in the morning we saw a small dirigible. To Calais about 1100 on March 31. Around St Omer, Hazebruck and at 1630 detrained stiff and tired at Steenbecque. The journey had enchanted us, as we had so much to say that we said nothing.

Back along the road we marched – our first taste of the pave whose very solidness had saved the army, but seeing that since leaving the desert ten days ago we had done no marching, we were soft. We did 10 miles to Ebblinghem through which station we had actually passed. We didn’t billet until 2245 but Colonel Price [Lieut Col Owen Glendower Howell-Price] went to every billet and saw that every man was well camped. We were with portion of ‘B’ Company just outside the village near a creek (stream I called it).

At 6 am the bugle sounded ‘fall in’ but nobody heard it round our way, so the CO gave us a backshee route march, but Lieutenant Howie [2nd Lieut 2444 Clarence Malcolm Howie] took us near Renescure and we tried the local beer. Spring was unfolding herself – a revelation to many men used to the evergreen gums. Great walks we had round the country lanes.

Tom Buckley [Pte 1098 William Thomas Buckley] used to bathe in the ice-cold creek every morning. The Froggy farmhouse folk nearly threw fits: ‘English – quite mad!’ Tom was [from] Lancashire and used to ‘sing’ all the old music hall ditties at the top of a powerful voice. He and Dick Mayo [Pte 162 Richard Stanley Mayo] had a free dip in the creek one night, when the bugle went ‘Fall in at the double’; a try-out for an emergency call. As our creek ran into the village we followed in at the double, but Dick and Tom fell into the water, head first. They took it in turns drying off.

We tried out our PH gas helmets through a trench saturated in tear gas. We sigs clicked for a good job on a sig station. Part of the battalion were in Wallon Cappel some miles away and to keep in touch we had one station near a good estaminet in Ebblinghem, a transmitting station near another good ‘pub’ half way, and the terminal station near another good pub at Wallon Cappel. We took it in turns going out each day. One would watch the stations, whilst the other three sat along the good coffin stoves and sipped cognac. Great stoves those: no waste.

Trust the Froggies, they didn’t waste water either, for we soon learnt that a ‘froggy wash’ consisted of lightly dipping the end of a dirty towel in water and wiping the face. They didn’t waste the ‘soakage’ out of the manure pit conveniently placed at the back either, but pumped up the ‘liquor’ and spread it out on the fields. Cripes, wasn’t it high! We got familiar with these square pits and later on in 1918 near Strazeele a 5.9 lobbed in one and I received years of ripe accumulation all over me, and for days it was, ‘Go away, Jonno,
you smell’, but not half so bad as Tom Munday [Pte 2098 Thomas Joseph Munday] who, to dodge a salvo of big stuff near Flers in 1916, dived into one of the ‘dumps’ of recent vintage, and I told him so. But I wander.

One night coming back from the station nicely full of café rhum [rum], Whittaker [Sgt 990 Ernest Whittaker] stopped suddenly and started to read a flashing light – ‘ACK VIC O, miss, miss, group’ and so on. Ah! A morse lamp: a SPY! Next morning we reported it and had orders to watch carefully again. We did, earlier, and with not so much cognac aboard. It was a goods train passing its signal light and the high and low wagons made the dot and dash. Needless to say we ‘let the matter drop’.

We soon got used to the Francs and centimes and kilometres. I was quickly picking up my French again. The boys behaved very well and the Frogs of course gave us a great time thanks to the francs. I had the usual English insularity against a ‘foreigner’ but the Van Bremerahs at the pub were really good to us. It was funny to see the boys with their halting French trying to pirate Yvonne and Helene. They – the Diggers – thought they [the girls] were quite new to soldiers. They already had 18 months of troops. We have a fond spot for ‘Ebb’ – our first billets. ‘Them were the days!’

On April 10th at 0730 we marched out in good ‘nick’ to near Meteren – a 12 mile tramp. We had no ‘fallen by the wayside’ those days. At Moolenacker we went through Divvy baths and received the famous ‘Tin Hat’. Had a good time here and in the distance heard the rumble of guns – always an ominous sound.

On April 21st at 0800 we moved up in smaller parties to Rouge de Bout in the Sailly Levantie sector. We were now in close reserve but still in billets with a handy estaminet with Grand Vin (‘champagne’) at 5 francs – Moet Chandon, 12 francs. And I celebrate April 25th (my birthday) by having a ‘party’. Bob Graham [Sgt 20 Robert Louis Graham DCM] put me to bed. There was [sic] others. Sergeant Oates [Sgt 12 William Aubrey Oates] went to Blighty leave – seven days. He went away well-oiled and returned ditto, but I couldn’t say how he was for the rest of the time.

Part of our battalion, ‘C’ Company, had been isolated for supposed fever and the 9th Battalion Company who took their place at Weathercock Farm were well and truly shelled and had many casualties. I think the whole crowd of us were lucky to escape heavy shell fire.

Although our men were repeatedly told and [our superiors] made us keep from wandering about, they did their share. I saw many groups from other units inspecting the landscape. And a lot of the old hands were to blame, because on Gallip [Gallipoli] there was a good amount of freedom behind those hills and in the gullies. I bet the wily Hun had a great time marking his maps and no doubt made good use of it later on in the Fromelles dust-up. That was later on in July whilst we were down south. It was months before the news reached us, but from the look of the country the ‘stunt’ was surely the maddest thing possible. It reminded me of many attacks later on. ‘Let’s attack and hope something happens.’

The battalion went into the line – a ‘breastwork’ – on May 3. We were in a farmhouse a few hundred yards in the rear along the Rue de Bois. The boys settled down very well and we signs were kept fairly busy, although it was known that the Hun had amplifiers on the job and only urgent messages were put through. We had camouflaged sentences for various happenings such as, ‘Green grass growing in the tube’ – enemy shelling communication trench. ‘Shells’ was code also for casualties.

The trench mortar crowd woke things up now and again with their ‘apple on the stick’ bombs: big steel spheres full of ammonial, big as a soccer ball – on a steel shaft. Up would go the Hun’s flare to his artillery and down would come his strafe onto our front line – ‘whizz bangs’. But you bet the Toc Emma’s had gone. Cripes, the boys cursed ‘em!

Colonel Price was like a cat on hot bricks, altering and securing this and that. Huggy [Pte 732 George Hugman] and Whit [Whittaker] on the lines used to go out and ladder the lines and they also found a deserted garden and had a great time with early fruit. When they had gathered a few of us here we cooked a fowl and spuds for 10 francs – the toughest bird that ever went near a fire. From then on we pinched what we ate. We had a false alarm of gas here at night and we all fell over each other in our PH abominations but it did good. We learnt quite a lot.

June 23rd we went into the line – Foray Farm – something similar to our last possey: Bottlery Ave, Watling St, etc. Received quite a lot of indirect MG fire, especially down a tram line we shoved rations along. A patrol brought in a sniper and I had to guard him in the cookhouse much to Blacklock [Pte 1307 Edward John Blacklock] the babbler’s disgust.

Scotty Dick [Cpl 486 George Couper Dick MM] was shot through the head looking for a sniper – an old cobber and Anzac. We never saw a Hun but he was there alright.

One evening the ‘Mad Major’ [probably Squadron Commander Christopher Draper DSC, CdeG], an airman who worked alone, came over and brought down the Hun sausage balloons right along the
line. It was funny to see Fritz desperately trying to wind them down before he reached them. How the mob cheered. This was the chap who reported that the area looked like an ant-heap and ‘what the hell were the troops wandering over the forward area for!’

We were relieved by the 5th Division and went back to Sailly on July 4th. Then on to Merris and Moolenacker, where the battalion had been strafed for shaking [stealing] the flat irons used by the French girls at divisional baths, for ironing out chat-eggs. Lord knows what they pinched flat-irons for! Still troops would scrounge anything – the habit persists at times even now.

We marched to Bailleul at 11:30 pm and entrained at 0230 on July 10th after sitting on the cobblestones for hours, and detrained at 1100 next day at Candas, further south. Then we did some foot-slogging – it was hot, up and down the country side – four solid days but it brought the battalion into splendid fettle. It was never better. All keen, well-looked after, full strength; all the better for our time in the ‘Nursery’.

We were bound for the Somme. The country changed. Villages were meaner looking; air heavier; troops on the move everywhere. We hadn’t heard very much of this ‘Somme’ but the guns kept up that constant roll, day and night. Each evening we changed our socks and washed them, and took Joe Oates’ advice and soaped the inside of the fresh pair. Not a man fell out.

First night at St Ouen, then on to Vignacourt, July 13 to Allonville, finishing off up a big hill. I carried an extra pack, Huggy [Hugman] a rifle, Tom Munday in bare feet trotted up the hill with huge blisters on his heels. Then on to Warloy Baillon.

Getting nearer; we could see Albert in the valley. Warloy was full of troops from all units. There was a hospital – and a cemetery – there were ambulances arriving at all hours. We got into battle order and sewed pink calico patches on our tunic backs. Something doing.

At 1700 July 19th out we went through Albert with ‘Annette Kellerman’ still holding on at the top of the Basilica. (The French engineers had made her very secure.) Now in the forward area and in small parties. Past some huge ‘hows’ [howitzers] in action – first we had seen. The row they made! And then sss … bang, sss … bang – five of them from Fritz, just on our left. The further we went the more desolate the country. An evening strafe on but what a difference to Sailly. It took us till 11 pm to get into support in front of Pozieres.

The Hun had recently plastered the area with tear gas shells and we had a Hell of a time for a while, trying to put on goggles, falling into shell holes, and there seemed to be troops everywhere. Past a MG posy with gun cocked up and the crew in bits all over the place. Then, the now familiar sss … sss … over then bang, just in the gully at the back. However, we got into our possy and HQ was in a big ex-German dug-out. These were new to us, splendidly built. Found a hole in a trench and dropped asleep.

We stopped here till July 22nd overhauling equipment, etc. The companies got some casualties and a fair bit of shelling – 5.9s. One salvo lobbed just behind Padre Wilson [Bicton Clement Wilson] and I. He was showing me the ridge and village about half a mile away which the battalion was to attack. ‘I hope you come back, Jonno. Keep up the name of the battalion.’

I had been detailed to hop over with Corporal McKenzie [Cpl 294 Alexander Sawers McKenzie CdeG] with the reel of wire with Don Company. The salvo had lobbed right in the trench, killing several, including Sergeant Elliott [Sgt Henry James Hamilton Elliott], our QMS. We rushed round but we could only clean up a horrible mess of about four men. Strange to say, the dixies on the five were not touched. They had probably drawn the crabs. ‘Porky’ Neil [Pte 2758 Henry Neil] and I. He took the risk, however, and concocted an evil hash of bully and onions. Porky was going with pal Dinny [Pte 2717 Arthur Lyndon Knowles] to Brigade as runner – PORKY A RUNNER! I told him so. He told me I was sure to be safe if only I stood sideways. I was, and am, pretty lean. It was one of Porky’s pet sayings that a dog at ‘Ebb’ used to chase me around the yard thinking I was a bone.

Near dusk, Mac [McKenzie] and I moved up on July 22 to near ‘D’ Company and we worded the rear man of ‘D’ Company to give us the signal when they moved. The whole battalion was to move up and take cover in assembly trenches just behind the parados of the front line. A rotten stunt, for if anything went wrong and especially at night, there would be a Hell of a mess.

There seemed to be men everywhere. ‘D’ Company moved off and we received no word. Found they had gone, so after them we tore and I carried a reel of wire and a big signal lamp in addition to my kit, rifle, etc and etc and then again etc. We were misdirected, passed through a gully with plenty of stiff men about and beaucoup MG fire. The Hun was sending up plenty of lights, but not our side. Somehow we always seemed to leave that job to him. We eventually found ourselves in No-man’s land and what a time we had getting back! Into shell holes, wire and dead men, but we got back and as luck had it, with ‘D’ Company. Hurriedly we lay down. There was no trench just there, all blown in, so I shoved the reel and lamp in front and hugged the earth with a continual buzz just over me of MG bullets. Mac was next to me with his eyes on his watch. Shelling was fair, mostly on our right, but by the sound of things someone was getting hit. It was a
queer stunt, for ‘D’ Company (our right) was to change direction to half left when they got into No-man’s land. I wonder if the Heads knew the condition of things.

I heard someone say – ‘Hey, is Jonno there? Give us the end of your wire.’ I unreeled a few yards and hit him in the eye with it, down in the trench. ‘Goodo. Good luck to both of you.’ It was Chappie [2nd Lieut 1311 Henry Stanley Chapman], our sig officer. Corporal Neil chipped in quietly with, ‘About a minute to go, Jonno’. Down in the trench and all round was ‘Get ready to move, ‘D’ Company’.

[Right: 2nd Lieutenant Henry Chapman, who would be killed three days later on 25 July 1916. AWM Negative Number H12862.]

Then our guns opened up! Ye gods, it was just one continual blast. The noise was terrific. In front, the ground seemed to open up in flames. Great gouts of lurid blotches lit up the remains of a wood and a village. Drum fire crashing and searing the whole area in front.

From what seemed a million miles away, I heard, ‘Righto. Over you go Don Company.’ ‘Come on, Jonno’, says Mac. We rolled into the trench, up a short ladder and we were over the top and groping forward, paying out the wire. In front the Hun was sending up red lights by the score.

To be continued in the next issue.

Endnotes: (1) The ‘Blue Express’ was a luxury express overnight train that ran from Calais to the Mediterranean coast from 1887 onwards (‘Le Train Bleu’). The PLM was a French railway company that operated the Paris-Lyon-Méditerranée (PLM) route. (2) A profile of the British airman, the ‘Mad Major’, can be read at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christopher_Draper. (3) ‘Babbler’ was short for ‘babbling brook’, which in turn was rhyming slang for ‘cook’.

Michele’s book on Mont St Quentin-Peronne released

Congratulations to FFFAIF member, Michele Bomford, on the release of her first book, ‘Beaten Down By Blood: The Battle of Mont St Quentin-Peronne 1918’. Published by Big Sky Publishing, the official launch was held at the Hyde Park Memorial on 18th September. Roger Lee, Head of the AAHU, was the MC and Dr Peter Stanley, Chief Historian from the National Museum of Australia, launched the book.

The book charts an extraordinary journey from the trenches facing Mont St Quentin on 31 August 1918 through the frenetic phases of the battle until the final objectives are taken on 5 September. It is the story, often told in the words of the men themselves, of the capture of the ‘unattackable’ Mont and the ‘invincible’ fortress town of Péronne, two of the great feats of Australian forces in the First World War.

The struggle for control of the battle, to site the guns, to bridge the Somme and maintain communications are portrayed in vivid detail. The story also offers a glimpse of the men’s families at home, their anxiety and their life-long grief.

‘Beaten Down by Blood’ explores the relationship between myth and history and the significance of the Anzac legend. It analyses the forces that drove the Diggers forward even when they had reached the limits of their endurance. The Battle of Mont St Quentin-Péronne represents the Australian Corps at its very best, its Diggers fighting for peace and satisfied that ‘whatever might lie ahead, at least everything was right behind them’.

RRP $29.99, from all good bookstores or direct from the publisher.

Endnote: Michele has also authored a shorter summary of the battle as part of the AAHU’s ‘Campaign Series’, entitled ‘The Battle of Mont St Quentin-Peronne 1918’ (released in January 2013 for $19.99). See www.bigskypublishing.com.au for details and to order online.
The Chalmers: an Australian family at war
Greg Swinden, Evatt.

In a back corner of Waverley Cemetery in Sydney lies a grave [right] commemorating two men who lost their lives during the two world wars and the woman they left behind. One man was an original Anzac who was badly wounded on the day of the Landing at Gallipoli and the other is his son who served in RAF Bomber Command and was posted missing, like so many others, in operations over Europe. The woman was their wife and mother. Few today know of James, Ivor and Edith Chalmers but their sacrifice is the foundation on which much that is great about this country is built.

Gilbert Ramsay James Chalmers (who went by the name of James) was a 34 year old labourer when he enlisted in the 2nd Battalion at Randwick on 19 August 1914. Born at Aldbar Castle in Brechin, Forfarshire, Scotland, he was the son of Patrick Chalmers (a British soldier) and Ellen Chalmers (nee Oldham). Little is known of his early life, other than he served as a trooper in an Imperial mounted unit (the Rhodesia Horse) in the South African War (1899-1902) before immigrating to Australia in 1903. He was single on enlistment and listed his mother, then still living in Scotland, as his next of kin.

After a brief period of training in Sydney, 386 Private James Chalmers embarked with his battalion on the transport Suffolk on 18 October 1914 as part of the first AIF Contingent to be dispatched overseas to the war in Europe. The troops disembarked in Egypt in early December 1914 to continue their training before proceeding to the Western Front, but were soon to find themselves part of the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force being formed to take part in the capture of the Dardanelles.

The 2nd Battalion embarked at Alexandria on 4 April 1915 in the troopship Derflinger (originally a German vessel captured early in the war) and proceeded to the Greek Island of Lemnos for final preparations before the planned landing on the shores of Gallipoli at dawn on 25 April 1915. One can only imagine what was going through James Chalmers’ mind in those last days and hours before the Landing, but one member of the 2nd Battalion later wrote that few, if any, slept on the night before the landing.

At approximately 0700 the 2nd Battalion landed on the beaches at Gallipoli and began to fight their way inland towards The Nek and Baby 700. In the bitter and confused fighting of the first day, James Chalmers was badly wounded when a Turkish bullet hit him in the right thigh and fractured his femur. He was evacuated to the beach, perhaps on the back of comrade, and sent to Egypt where he was admitted to the Ras el-Tin Hospital at Alexandria on 30 April 1915. His war had been short but was far from over. Two months later, on 24 June, he was amongst a large number of badly wounded Australians who were sent to England for further medical treatment in the transport ship Glengorm Castle.

James Chalmers was admitted to a military hospital in Manchester in early July for treatment, but the damage inflicted upon his leg was severe and resulted in a 3½ inch shortening of his right leg. He was unable to walk without the aid of crutches or a walking stick (although a later medical report stated he was to be fitted with a suitable boot to compensate for the loss of length in his right leg). Chalmers spent the next few months in and out of hospital and his condition was not improved when he contracted the almost obligatory case of VD while on leave in November 1915, which saw him admitted to the Verne Military Hospital at Rochester for a month.

Following a medical board in late 1915, a decision was reached by AIF Medical Officers that James Chalmers was permanently unfit for further service and he was to be returned to Australia for discharge. He embarked on the transport Ascanius on 17 March 1916, having been offered discharge in England but eventually choosing to take his discharge in Australia. Chalmers arrived in Sydney on 4 May 1916 and after a brief period in hospital was discharged from the AIF on 22 July 1916.

Following his discharge he was granted a pension of two pounds and five shillings per fortnight and resided at the University Hotel at Glebe [right, as it is today]. His pension was reduced to one pound and ten shillings in March 1917 and then a few months later to 15 shillings, so it can only be assumed he had found suitable work and was receiving regular income by this time. In 1917 he met and married 19 year old Edith Gray, and...
their only child, **Ivor Ramsay Chalmers**, was born on 17 August 1918. The family resided at King Street in Bondi and then later at Coogee Bay Road, Coogee.

Regrettably, James Chalmers was not to see his young son grow to adulthood. In early May 1919 he was admitted to the No. 28 Australian Auxiliary Hospital at Leichhardt (which catered for returned servicemen) and he died there on 15 May 1919 from cerebral thrombosis and epileptic convulsions. His son Ivor was then nine months old.

Edith then raised her young son, surviving on a scant war widow’s pension through the 1920s and the harsh years of the Depression. Ivor Chalmers undertook his schooling at Double Bay Primary School and then attended technical schools at Darlington and Ultimo before obtaining his Intermediate Certificate in 1934. He commenced work as a clerk with Penfolds Wines Pty Ltd in 1935 and also served in the militia as a sapper in the 33rd Fortress Engineers. He was also a keen athlete and owned his own motor boat.

In 1939 another war started and Ivor Chalmers continued to work for Penfolds Wines and undertake militia service before he applied to join the RAAF Reserve in April 1941. On 12 September 1941 he was accepted as an aircrew trainee in the Royal Australian Air Force. Pilot training in Australia followed at 11 Elementary Flying Training School (EFTS), Benalla, and 6 Service Flying Training School (SFTS), Mallala, and Ivor obtained his wings on 2 July 1942. He was then selected to proceed to England for further training as a bomber pilot and he embarked in a troopship from Sydney on 17 October 1942.

Ivor arrived in Britain in mid December 1942 and began training to fly the large four-engined Handley Page Halifax bomber. He was promoted to flight sergeant in mid March 1943 and completed his flying training with the 24th Operational Training Unit (OTU) and 1659 Conversion Unit in August. On 20 September 1943 he joined 431 Squadron (Royal Canadian Air Force), then based at RAF Tholthorpe in Yorkshire (12 miles north west of York). [Above: A Halifax from 462 Squadron RAF. AWM P01523033.]

Less than three weeks later, on the night of 8/9 October 1943, Ivor was piloting a Halifax bomber conducting a raid on Hanover, Germany. His aircraft failed to return from this mission and Ivor Chalmers and his crew of six (RAF and RCAF personnel) were initially posted as missing, but as no trace of the aircraft or crew was ever found, the men were subsequently listed as killed in action. In due course, Ivor Chalmers was commemorated on the Air Force Memorial at Runnymede. His name was also added to his father’s grave at Waverley [right].

But there is also another name on the grave at Waverley – that of Edith Chalmers who died on 14 September 1970, aged 72 (she was cremated and her ashes interred with James’ remains). Edith never remarried and for years endured her own private suffering and remembrance, having lost both her husband and son due to war.

---

**Extract from ‘The Old Digger’s War’ (Jim Hunter)**

*Contributed by Colin Sutcliffe, Birkdale.*

‘One afternoon, a mate, Fred, and I were pinned down under heavy bombardment in a cemetery,’ said the Old Digger. ‘We were trying to make ourselves as small as possible behind tombstones. Suddenly, Fred cried out, “Beauty! I’ve got a ‘Blighty!’” (A wound that could get a soldier out of the front line for a while was rated highly and was referred to as a “Blighty”.) ‘There was a fair amount of blood seeping through Fred’s trouser leg. He rolled up the leg of his pants but, to his disgust, found only a tiny scratch. He had been hit by a bit of glass from one of the shrines that had been exploding around us. The following morning Fred was shot dead, the bullet entering between his eyes. There was no “Blighty” about that one.’

**Endnote:** Colin believes that the author, Jim Hunter, is the son of James Hunter (3497A, 49th Bn). James Hunter was the brother of John, one of the ‘Zonnebeke Five’ now buried at the Buttes New British Cemetery, Polygon Wood. **DIGGER** plans to feature more extracts from this rare book in future issues.
Military historian, author and FFFAIF member, John Hamilton, and his publisher, Macmillan, have kindly allowed ‘DIGGER’ to print an extract from John’s latest book on Hugo Throssell VC, 10th LHR. The Editor has chosen to take the extract from the Introduction, in which John wanders the present-day ‘Hill 60’ with Turkish historian and Gallipoli battlefields guide, Kenan Çelik.

The sign to Hill 60 is near the turn-off to Biyuk Anafarta. It sits on top of a rusting pole planted in a freshly ploughed paddock whose ridges and furrows, deep, brown and rich, contain soil that nearly a century ago became so well fertilised with human blood and bone that even now the crops seem to grow thicker and greener each springtime. The sign points along a track that meanders its way gently upwards to what the Australian war correspondent and official historian Charles Bean described as ‘little more than a swelling in the plain’. Does this track really lead to a hill? Should it qualify even as a mound? To call it a hill seems far too grand, an exaggeration. We follow the sign and wander easily up the rutted road, which is only wide enough for a tractor, towards the mound and its grove of pine trees, where the wind sighs over the war cemetery with its flat grave markers and white memorials.

The Turks once called the swelling ‘Kaiajic Aghyl’ – ‘Sheepfold of the Little Rock’. But as the generals studied the landmarks on their rough map of the Gallipoli Peninsula after the first landings, on 25 April 1915, and as the gunners got to work on the map, simplifying names for the artillery, the Sheepfold of the Little Rock became ‘Hill 60’, as it lay within the 60-metre contour. The sea can be seen easily from the hill, which is really a long, slow rise on the seaward face, but sharper and steeper on the other sides. It is a spur in a branch of the more extensive Damakjelik Bair, a tangled network of hills and valleys that rise eastwards to the dark, brooding heights of Sari Bair.

Late in August 1915, Hill 60 became, briefly, a name symbolic of bloodshed and valour. Then it became a dim memory, overshadowed by the events of battles fought earlier in the same month. Hill 60 witnessed the Anzacs’ forgotten fight.

We walk up the track. Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett, a British war correspondent here in 1915, wrote about a Gallipoli plains landscape of ‘dark green, light green, and bright yellow . . . In a short ride across country you found yourself amid olive groves, Turkey oaks, witch elms, apricots and almonds, Scottish firs, and small tamarisks . . . You ride over fields and through gardens in which flowers abound in a reckless and beautiful profusion’. He also described the bird life: pigeons, kestrels, magpies, rollers, blackcaps, tits and red-throated warblers. We pass about thirty beehives set beside the track. A lone worker bee hovers, buzzing, like a suspicious sentinel, over purple irises that border a cemetery. In springtime Gallipoli hums and sings with life.

The Hill 60 cemetery is small and round, sited over some of the old Allied fire and communication trenches. At the end of the August battles, some were already filled with the dead. A British officer, Captain R Dudley Pendred, wrote: ‘The sight of a dead hand sticking out from the wall of a trench with fingers and great long nails, as if in the act of scratching, was most revolting; as was that of a half decomposed scalp hanging over the parados’.

Today the only smell is the sweet fragrance of fresh pine from the grove to the side. The cemetery contains 754 burials. Only the graves of seventeen New Zealand, fourteen Australian and eleven British soldiers are known. There are also special memorials to another sixteen Australians, sixteen British and two New Zealanders either known or believed to have been buried somewhere here. The New Zealand Mounted Rifle Brigade sustained particularly heavy casualties in the battle for the hill and has its own memorial, a big cross in the centre of the cemetery recording the names of 182 officers and men who have no known graves. The main flat memorial stone in front of the cross provides a convenient table for compass and maps, to help you to get your bearings as you near the ‘summit’ of Hill 60.

Kenan leads the way out of the cemetery and heads onwards up the slight hill. Suddenly the evidence of war is everywhere. Lead shrapnel balls sit in furrows like round grey slugs, squares of rusty iron bomb fragments lie as neat as chocolate blocks, twisted scraps of spent green copper bullet casings pepper the soil, and short lengths of barbed wire sprout from the ridges. Then we see traces of a lost generation. A shirt button. The eyelet from a soldier’s boot, still with a shred of leather attached. And then the human remains. Bone shards at first, some looking like pieces of white honeycomb, but brittle, and crumbly like aged cheese, others smooth, like creamy marble. And, in a deep furrow, unmistakably part of a femur.
The wind sighs again as Kenan leads me into a thick patch of pine forest. We push our way between branches that whip at our faces, our footsteps deadened by the thick brown carpet of pine needles. Kenan points. The forest floor is a maze of deep indentations: the trenches.

I try to imagine here, on this spot, Second Lieutenant Hugo Throssell in the immediate aftermath of the battle early on an August morning in 1915. Still in the trench he had charged, captured and held against the enemy in the darkness, now in the dawn, dazed, wounded and bloody, refusing to leave. A fellow officer, Captain Horace Robertson, described him:

*I gave him a cigarette and ordered him to the dressing station. He took the cigarette, but could do nothing with it. The wounds in his shoulders and arms had stiffened and his hands could not reach his mouth. He wore no jacket, but had badges on the shoulder straps of his shirt. The shirt was full of holes from pieces of bomb, and one of the ‘Australias’ was twisted and broken, and had been driven into his shoulder. I put the cigarette in his mouth and lighted it for him.*

In August 1915, Hill 60 had become of increasing strategic importance for both sides. For the Allies, capturing the hill would mean that they held an unbroken line between Anzac and Suvla. From the hill’s ‘summit’ the generals could keep an eye on what the Turks were up to around the two Anafarta villages. There were also two wells close to the hill, of vital importance during that hot, dry summer.

Today one of them is down the hill from an olive grove. The locals now call it Batarya Kuyusu. It is half hidden by weeds and stray clumps of wild wheat at the side of a creek bed.

Capturing it was ‘worth anything’, according to the British commander-in-chief at the time, Sir Ian Hamilton. Hundreds of men gave their lives for this well. Now it is a worthless small stone and mud brick cone over a deep hole, with a tiny stone trough alongside to provide water to passing sheep and goats. It is seldom if ever used.

The wind is getting up. We walk on to the ‘summit’ of Hill 60, through the olive grove. It is not a long way. Ahead of us, across a gentle valley, a field of vigorously growing broad bean plants sweeps down and then up to another foothill. The Turks waited for the Allies where the broad beans grow today.

The fight for Hill 60 signalled the Allied commanders’ last throw of the dice in the final disaster of the whole disastrous Gallipoli campaign. In eight days of battles for the Turkish trenches that made Hill 60 look like a chequerboard, there were at least 2 500 Allied and just as many Turkish casualties. The hill became a reeking carrion hell of unburied bodies. There came a point in the battle when there were no fresh Allied troops left to fight. The generals had to cobble the remnants of units together. There was always the vain hope, in this one last chance, that something might go right.

Hugo Throssell and his 180 men, thrown into the attack at the end of Hill 60’s battles, were the battered survivors of the Australian 10th Light Horse Regiment. They were on their last legs. The regiment had already suffered 138 casualties, including eighty dead, in an earlier battle. The remaining men had been stuck in the trenches within sight of but unable to reach their dead mates for three weeks before undergoing a forced night march to trenches overlooking Hill 60.

Before sunrise on 29 August 1915 – a roasting hot day – the Australian Light Horsemen stood in a thin strip of trench where the whispering pine grove is today, a trench already so choked with dead men that the first task was to throw bodies over the parapet to make space to fight. That early morning, Hugo Throssell, a tall, handsome Australian with dark eyes, a prominent nose and a firm jaw, led his desperate band of unmounted troopers into that last-ditch battle, for which he was later awarded the Victoria Cross (VC) in recognition of his leadership and gallantry.

The ‘summit’ of Hill 60 was never wrested from the Turks; they always held the hei

This is the story of Hugo Throssell and how he came to be awarded the VC. It is also a story about the tragedy and futility of war and how war claims victims long after the guns have fallen silent.

This is also a love story. War and fate threw Throssell together with a most unusual woman who changed his attitudes and his life. Hailed as one of Australia’s greatest literary figures, Katharine Susannah Prichard was a progressive feminist and campaigner for women’s rights well before her time. The war influenced her into becoming one of the founding members of the Communist Party of Australia.

The Captain and the Communist.
This is a story of his triumph and their tragedy.

The fickle hand of fate: Tragedy in the 5th Australian Pioneer Battalion

Matt Smith, Brisbane.

On 2 April 1918, the fine clear morning that greeted all ranks encamped in the 5th Australian Pioneer lines at Arques\textsuperscript{24} on the Somme would have by no means foreshadowed the tragedy that would befall the unit by noon that day. The usual morning parade was held and orders were issued. By day’s end, a life would be lost and a promising army career in doubt. But were events simply another unfortunate ‘by-product’ of war, or the result of a systemic battalion culture? By 1918, was complacency commonplace within a unit that prided itself on its military professionalism?

The serious and ‘most unfortunate nature’ of the events that day would be dealt with so swiftly and so astutely, that by the following day the battalion had resumed its normal duties. The battalion’s war diaries attest to that. Yet for the individuals involved and the battalion history as a whole, it would place a blot on an otherwise exemplary reputation, and possibly ensure a longer lasting legacy of post-war guilt.

The 5th Australian Pioneer Battalion was formed in Egypt on 3 March 1916, following the Allied evacuation of Gallipoli. Its birth coincided with the general reorganisation of the army and the development and expansion of the First AIF towards its eventual five divisions of infantry. Original battalions that had served with pride on Gallipoli were split and core elements, particularly non-commissioned officers, were used to staff new units. The 5th Pioneers was formed from a nucleus of original ‘Anzacs’ and an influx of reinforcements who had newly arrived from Australia and were designated to serve in the 5th Australian Division. Australia’s other divisions had similar pioneer units, which were given the corresponding divisional number.

A pioneer battalion was essentially a construction and labour unit. During World War I it was employed to construct road works (including corduroy roads\textsuperscript{25}), to dig communication trenches, insert ‘duck board’ tracks, build saps, and extend ‘light rail’ systems. They were considered to be the ‘handymen’ of a division and often completed their essential work under fire. The 1916 influx of 5th Pioneer reinforcements consisted mainly of tradesmen, miners and craftsmen, mostly originating from South and Western Australia.

Of the 14 officers and 600 men who marched into the battalion lines at Tel-el-Kebir, Egypt, on 3 March 1916, only 100 new pioneers had seen previous active service. Their commanding officer, Major (later Lieutenant Colonel) Herbert Gordon Carter DSO,\textsuperscript{26} was an original 1st Battalion man who had recently completed the reorganisation of the 53rd Battalion. Pre-war, Carter was an engineer with the New South Wales Department of Works and at the time he took command of the battalion he was still only 31 years old.

According to the 5th Pioneer history, Carter was a true professional from the unit’s inception and expected the same quality of command and operations from all his battalion officers and other ranks. According to Carter, the battalion was kept at the highest possible standard for infantry training, including the machine-gun companies, and although essentially the same as a regular infantry battalion, there were minor exceptions.

The battalion wasted no time commencing work. On the second day after its formation, ‘B’ Company was assigned the task of constructing a full-sized rifle range, about three miles from Tel-el-Kebir and they encamped nearby to aid access. The three brigades of the 5th Division contributed equal numbers of men to the new battalion. The formation of companies proceeded, with men from the individual brigades

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{figure1.png}
\caption{5th Pioneers repairing the corduroy track at Taylor’s Dump on the Menin Road (AWM E01078).}
\end{figure}

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|}
\hline
\textbf{Figure 1 - 5th Pioneers repairing the corduroy track at Taylor's Dump on the Menin Road (AWM E01078).} &  \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}

\textsuperscript{24} Arques is 15 kilometres WNW of Albert on the Somme.

\textsuperscript{25} A corduroy or log road is a type of road made by placing earth-covered logs or sleepers perpendicular to the direction of the road over a low or swampy area. The result is an improvement over impassable mud or dirt roads. Rough in the best of conditions, they were a hazard to man, machinery and horses during the war due to shifting loose logs or sleepers, or the slimy surface.

\textsuperscript{26} Lieutenant Colonel HG Carter DSO, 5th Pioneer Bn, AIF. Born 1885. RTA 5 April 1919. Husband of Sister Lydia King, see 3DRL/6040. Eldest son of HJ Carter. Elder brother of Captain Robert Burnside Carter MC, AAMC, (RMO, 123rd Brigade Royal Field Artillery); 344 Sapper Edward Moore Carter, 1st Field Company, Engineers (wounded ANZAC 12 July 1915, died at Malta 23 July 1915) and Sister Ursula Mary Carter, AANS (2nd General Hospital).
retaining their state identity. ‘A’ Company was selected from the 8th Brigade and commanded by Captain Morrison. 27 ‘B’ Company was selected from the 14th Brigade, under command of Major Peters who had served on Gallipoli. ‘C’ Company was commanded by Captain Dwyer who had seen considerable service. ‘D’ Company was not in existence at the time of the battalion formation, but was formed later on 17 April 1916 from excess Victorian infantry reinforcements from the AIF Training Camp. It was commanded by Lieutenant ES Vidal, assisted by Lieutenants Hassall and Cunninghame.

After a period of other garrison and labour duties along the Suez Canal, the battalion embarked on 19 June 1916 aboard the SS Canada at Alexandria. A week later it had entrained at Marseilles, southern France, and was heading towards Steenbecque, southwest of Hazebrouck in northern France (the ‘Nursery Sector’).

On the Western Front, the 5th Pioneer Battalion rarely operated as a whole battalion. Rather, it was most often employed in company, platoon or section groups. The pioneers were adaptable and resourceful and quite often one company might not see or hear of the balance of the rest of the battalion for days or weeks at a time.

The usual view of the regular infantry battalion was that digging trenches was a task only performed to afford a certain modicum of instant cover and protection from rifle and machine-gun fire, snipers and shellfire. Pioneer units, however, were formed to fulfil this role and assist with the more permanent formation of the trench systems of the Western Front. According to 2667 Sergeant Frank Stevens, ‘D’ Company, and author of ‘The Story of the 5th Pioneer Battalion’, it was ‘naturally repugnant to the Australian temperament to endure enemy fire month after month ... without any recourse or chance for retaliation’.

However, these fatigue duties were a task that confronted the pioneers for much of the war. Unlike the ‘poor bloody infantry’ though, the bonus for the pioneers was that they could return to a relatively safe ‘home’ or billet after the completion of their essential work. The infantry called the trench home until relieved by another unit for a ‘spell’ in the rear area.

During the war, the 5th Pioneers were involved in most of the 5th Division’s engagements. However, ‘The Story of the 5th Pioneer Battalion’ reports that there were a number of achievements that the battalion was most proud of. First and foremost, was the repairing of the main east-west road through Villers-Bretonneux to a condition fit for traffic within three hours and 20 minutes after ‘zero hour’ (time allotted 4 hours) on the famous 8 August, 1918 – Germany’s ‘Black Day’.

Secondly, before and during the ill-fated attack at Fromelles in July 1916, the battalion was responsible for draining the River Laies in the sector, thus making the front-line trenches habitable during winter. The troops were thus able to stand on dry land during the wet weather instead of in a foot or two of water.

The Pioneer history indicates that with the draft of 53 reinforcements on 29 April 1917, it brought the battalion strength to 36 Officers and 1 140 other ranks. At no time after that date was the strength and general fitness of the unit greater, according to the commanding officer. However, it was their time laying light rail in the support line in the vicinity of Bullecourt in May 1917 that was to change this status and ‘take toll of the men’s vitality to a very marked degree’. One officer, a Gallipoli man, said in reference to his time at Bullecourt that ‘he was never more glad to get out of any place in his life’. Apparently this was a common expression of feeling by all men of the battalion.

After the pioneer’s experiences during the height of the main Somme battle, labouring on the Bullecourt front and suffering the subsequent harsh winter of 1917-18 in the vicinity of Flers, the pioneers must have relished the opportunity for green grass, open fields and trees in the area of their battalion camp at Aveluy, west of the main Somme battlefield. Their long spell out of the line commenced in mid 1917.

By 7 September the battalion had been training and resting for months, but things were about to change. Ordered into the Ottawa Camp, near Poperinghe in Belgium, the next few months would be gruelling, and the winter one of the toughest after the ease of the past few months. This would end the longest spell for the unit during the war.

27 Morrison had served in New Guinea and later joined the AIF as a company commander with the 30th Battalion.
The final action ranking in pride for the unit occurred during their time in Belgium. They were engaged in the construction of a series of strong posts and defence line in the neighbourhood of St Eloi. Whilst in the ‘Salient’, the battalion companies had supported the attacks at Polygon Wood, the Menin Road, Passchendaele Ridge and had wintered in Messines.

When rumours of a major German offensive began to trickle in, the battalion was ordered back to their familiar stomping ground of the Somme. They were encamped at Arques, a village 18 kilometres northwest of Albert, which lay in the beautiful French countryside, prolific in wildlife and fruit-bearing trees. The battalion was fortunate to enjoy the delights of the odd hare or two during their stay. Most time within the camp was set towards drill and training, with regular route marches. Picquets were also set regularly, which was fortunate on one occasion when an escaped German prisoner entered the camp and was promptly arrested.

However, the serenity of the setting at the pioneer camp was suddenly cut short at noon on 2 April 1918. Three shots were heard in the ‘A’ Company Officer’s Mess and Lieutenant Reginald Wallis Palmer (service number 2641) was dead. Palmer became the third 5th Pioneer officer to die during the war.28

A joiner by trade, Palmer was a fresh-faced, dark-haired Victorian of moderate stature, being 5’4½” tall and only weighing 9 stone 6 pounds on enlistment. Still serving in the Militia, he had enlisted on 12 June 1915 at 21 years of age, and sailed from Melbourne, Victoria, on board HMAT A68 Anchises on 26 August 1915. He suffered a setback on arrival in Egypt, being treated for appendicitis in Ras el-Tin Hospital, Alexandria. Following his recovery, he was discharged to Australian Base, Cairo, and then transferred to the 59th Battalion and promoted to corporal on 27 February 1916.

Palmer was transferred to the 5th Pioneer Battalion from the 59th Battalion on 8 March 1916 at Tel-el-Kebir and sailed with the unit on 19 June 1916, by which time his strengths had been recognised and he was promoted to company sergeant major (warrant officer class II). Disembarking at Marseilles, Palmer was wounded within a month of arrival, being slightly grazed by glass from a window following the bursting of a shell. He was treated at the 8th Field Ambulance and returned to the unit that day.

On 29 January 1917, Palmer received his commission and was promoted to second lieutenant, taking up duty in ‘A’ Company. His increase in rank required further training and he was detached to a Pioneer Training Battalion in England in March, before returning to the 5th Pioneers in June 1917. He was then promoted to full lieutenant in July of that year.

During the unit’s time in the Ypres Salient, Lieutenant Palmer was recommended for a ‘Mention in Corps Routine Orders’ for his work during the Battle of Menin Road on 31 October 1917. The recommendation stated that:

North of Bellewaarde Lake, east of Ypres, before daylight on the morning of the 19th October 1917, Lieutenant Palmer was in charge of a party of 30 men with 9 ‘General Service’ wagons carrying beech slabs to an important work in the forward area. The plank road had been, and was still being shelled throughout its length from Birr Cross Roads to Westhoek; many direct hits being obtained, which rendered the road impassable. Realising the loss of work and time consequent on the non-delivery of the material, Lieutenant Palmer distributed his party as he went forward to repair the breaks on the road, until near Westhoek, he had only one man left and a large break to repair. This, with the man’s assistance, he personally carried out. Lieutenant Palmer then piloted his wagons to their destination, in spite of casualties to both men and animals, and delivered his materials. He showed throughout the greatest determination, courage and initiative.

The recommendation was received from Lieutenant Colonel Carter, the unit’s CO and endorsed by none other than Major General Joseph Talbot Hobbs, General Officer Commanding, 5th Division Australian Imperial Force, on the Western Front. Palmer’s strengths and ability were obviously recognised and one must theorise as to where his military career might have taken him, had he not been killed.

For a unit with very ‘blue-collar’ beginnings, non-commissioned officers played a prominent foreman-like role within the battalion. Taken from tradesmen from the cities and the bush, the battalion composition stemmed from a wide variety of civil occupations. Men with skills, such as Lieutenant Palmer, were immediately moved into positions of section commander and platoon sergeants. The unique element of the unit was that most enlisted individuals were men of some years experience and carried out instructions with little need for supervision: a trait heavily relied upon for small group tasks such as required by the pioneers.

28 Lieutenant Charles Horace Turner, 931, died of wounds 11 April 1917 during the First Battle of Bullecourt. He is commemorated in Vaulx Hill Cemetery, France. Enlisted 9th December 1914. The second 5th Pioneer’s officer killed was Lieutenant Maurice Wilson, killed in action 8 October 1917. He was killed by a high explosive shell that struck a dugout in which he was treating a wounded man. Commemorated on Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial, Belgium.
Junior commissioned officers were also required and men with particular skills were taken from the ranks and transferred to the pioneers from units elsewhere in the 5th Division. Men of note within the battalion were Lieutenants Campbell, Cunningham, Davidson, Duke, England, Gill, Hassall, Pattinson, Perkins, Tidswell, Wardrop and Whitfield. All had served with the 1st Australian Division on Gallipoli.

Many of the senior NCOs were later given commissions, such as Reginald Palmer, but from the beginning of 1917 the promotions became fewer. Officer casualties were not replaced through promotion of good NCOs, but rather from officers from various reinforcements arriving at the battalion. As a result, many good and worthy senior NCOs carried on without promotion. The question could be asked as to whether the new commissioned officers from the reinforcements were as prepared for war as those who had experienced all that the battalion had been through thus far.

One of those less-experienced reinforcements was Lieutenant Arnold Warren Frazer, No. 981, of Brookvale, Sydney (born in Peak Hill, NSW). He enlisted on 27 January 1915, embarking from Newcastle, NSW, on board HMAT A58 Kabinga on 21 May 1915. He was taken on strength from the 5th Reinforcements and assigned to the 7th Australian Light Horse at Gallipoli in October 1915.

After the evacuation from Gallipoli, Frazer found himself in France with the bulk of the AIF. Although a civilian postal worker, Frazer possessed signals skills that would be invaluable to the 5th Pioneers. He was transferred to the unit in June 1916 and remained an NCO until August 1917 when he joined the No. 6 Officers’ Cadet Battalion, based at Balliol College, Oxford University, England. He was finally commissioned on return to ‘A’ Company, 5th Australian Pioneers, in February 1918.

On 2 April 1918, Frazer was in attendance in the ‘A’ Company Officers’ Mess. He had joined Lieutenant Palmer, along with Captain Thomas John Pattinson and Lieutenant John England MC, Lieutenant John Harold Davidson, Lieutenant Henry Edward Pierce and Lieutenant Ralph John Dart, who was the battalion’s Lewis gun officer. Frazer was amongst experienced and tested officers. In regards to experience, he would have been the junior and had been with the battalion for less than two months. All the other men had seen considerable action and had received a variety of awards and decorations, ranging from Mentions in Despatches to a battlefield Military Cross.

At approximately 11.40am, Lieutenants Davidson and Pierce were playing cards. Captain Pattinson was attending to work and Lieutenant Palmer was having a shave, standing between the door and a Lewis gun. Lieutenant England was possibly occupied with relaxing endeavours such as the newspaper or letters from home. Lieutenant Frazer had shown considerable interest in the Lewis gun that was placed on a table within the Mess. He had expressed a desire to learn more about the weapon and had imposed on Lieutenant Dart as Lewis gun officer for some impromptu instruction. According to Captain Pattinson, Frazer had stripped or disassembled the gun and was proceeding to reassemble it.

Following approximately five minutes instruction, during which Frazer asked for Dart’s opinion on several things, Lieutenant Dart apparently withdrew from Frazer and went over to a table to play cards (patience). Shortly after, a burst of three gun shots was heard and Lieutenant Dart saw Lieutenant Palmer falling. The commotion caused Pattinson to jump from his work and he witnessed Palmer on the floor, shot through the head. According to witness statements, he shouted, ‘Frazer, what have you done?’ Lieutenant England recalled hearing a succession of explosions behind him and on turning he saw Lieutenant Palmer on the floor. He indicated that Palmer was beyond aid. Lieutenant Davidson apparently also heard three shots of Lewis gun fire and saw Palmer lying on the floor with blood coming from his head.

With Lieutenant Palmer dead, the medical officer, Captain NJ McKay was called and the ensuing proceedings were presided over by Major King of the battalion. Palmer’s body was wrapped in a blanket and moved out of the Mess. Lieutenant Davidson then left the room with Lieutenant Frazer, who was extremely upset despite efforts to console him.

Due to the serious nature of the incident, a Battalion Court of Inquiry was convened In the Field by 2pm with the assigned purpose of taking evidence into the circumstances surrounding the death. Presiding over the military court were three of the most experienced and respected 5th Pioneer Battalion identities. Captain WT Wilkinson MC was given the task of President of the Court. Wilkinson was the first adjutant of the battalion and was a veteran of the Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force in New Guinea in 1914. In support were Captain Eric Sydney Walpole Sealy Vidal, the first commander of the battalion’s ‘D’ Company in 1916, and Lieutenant Charles Robert Duke, battalion adjutant.

The Court called seven witnesses to present their version of events and offer expert detail. Captain Pattinson was called first and when asked he confirmed that the Lewis gun was indeed kept in the Mess for instructional work. He was asked if he was aware as to whether the magazines with the gun were loaded. He replied that he was aware that one was loaded. He informed the court that there was adequate vision within...
the Mess for instruction, although he implied that Lieutenant Frazer was still a novice in relation to the Lewis gun.

Lieutenant England was the next to the stand, indicating that Frazer was the individual closest to the gun at the time of the accident, although he could not accurately identify whether Frazer was holding the weapon at the time of discharge. England confirmed the instructional value of the gun in the Mess, but indicated that there were usually two magazines available: one empty and one loaded. He clarified that usually only the empty one was present. England confirmed Dart’s story that he was about six feet away from the gun at the time of the accident, perhaps playing patience as he stated.

Although he did not see the incident, Lieutenant Davidson, the court’s third witness, confirmed that Dart had been at the gun instructing Frazer about five minutes prior to the discharge, but had moved away. Lieutenant Pierce was similarly vague in his statement, not having seen the actual weapon discharge.

The fifth witness called was Lieutenant Dart, as Lewis gun officer. Dart informed the court that Frazer had received little previous instruction on the gun, specifying only a few minutes the previous day. The full magazine that had been reported was a remnant of a previous parade on instruction of magazine filling. Following confirmation that a loaded magazine would not be placed on the gun’s post unless on the firing range, Dart informed the court that on inspection of the gun after the burst of fire, the magazine was not in the gun. However, he found one live round under the cartridge guide spring. When asked if it were possible for the gun to be fired without the magazine, Lieutenant Dart explained that it could not.

During Dart’s time on the stand, Frazer questioned him in relation to the instruction afforded to him regarding the strengthening and weakening of the tension on the return spring of the gun. Dart replied that he had explained to Frazer how to take off and put on the tension of the return spring. He also explained that he informed Frazer that the gun should never be left with very much tension on it. About four or five pounds was the recommended tension and Dart explained that when he left the gun, there was no more than five pounds on the spring, hardly enough to allow for the bolt to move forward. After examining the gun after the incident, there was no more than seven pounds.

Exhibit ‘A’ presented to the court was that of five live bullet shells found beside the gun by Lieutenant Dart. All showed signs of their striker plate being struck. Dart informed the court that these were defective shells and the marks on the plates were probably caused by low tension on the return spring or the act of working the cocking handle backwards and forwards.

The final witness, following the regimental medical officer, was Lieutenant Frazer in his defence. Frazer’s statement began:

*At about 11.45am this morning 2nd April 1918 I returned from my Platoon Parade Ground to “A” Coy’s Mess. And placing a Lewis Gun, which was there on a small table, I proceeded to strip the parts, with a view to improving my working knowledge of the gun. Whilst doing this Lieutenant Dart, the Lewis Gun Officer entered the mess and I requested him to explain various points concerning the different parts of the gun.*

Frazer further explained that he enquired with Dart as to adjustment of the tension on the weapon. He confirmed that Dart explained that normal tension was four to five pounds, but concluded by stating that:

*Before leaving the gun Lieutenant Dart did – I think – weaken the spring to a low tension.*

Amazingly, Frazer then indicated that he walked to the mantelpiece and on seeing a full magazine carried it to the gun and placed it on the post. He apparently wanted to see if he understood the way it should be put on the weapon.

Frazer then stated:

*Then my mind being preoccupied with the interest I was taking in the mechanism, I pushed the cocking handle forward and watched the action of the bolt on the 1st round. Evidently the striker made an indentation on the cap of this round but no explosion occurred. I pulled the cocking handle back and noticed that the round was not ejected from the bolt way. I lifted the gun and tilted it until the round in question fell out on the table. I was so absorbed in what I was doing that I did not realize the fact that I was using live ammunition and consequently endangering anyone’s life. I repeated the action of pushing forward and backward the cocking handle and found that the next three or four cartridges were not easily ejected. It then occurred to me (not taking into account the fact that the piston rod was not at all being actuated by any gasses from explosion) that there was not sufficient tension on the return spring. Accordingly I, applying the knowledge Lieutenant Dart had just imparted to me, increased the tension perhaps 2 or 3 pounds.*

In concluding his witness statement, Frazer explained the following:
I then apparently inadvertently pulled the trigger and along with other officers in the Mess Room found that the shots fired had killed Lieutenant Palmer. I have never actually handled a Lewis Gun in the field, and have had perhaps only an hour’s training all told.

In the opinion of the court, it found that the death of Lieutenant RW Palmer of ‘A’ Company, 5th Pioneer Battalion, was purely accidental and that the Lewis gun was fired due to Lieutenant Frazer not having sufficient knowledge of the mechanism and his keenness in trying to master same made him overlook the danger to which he was exposing his comrades by placing a full magazine on the post on the Lewis gun.

Frazer was heavily censured in relation to the death of Lieutenant Palmer. However, although not documented, one could predict the fact that the findings of the court would not have assuaged the anguish that Frazer felt as a result of his experience.

Following the unfortunate incident, the battalion apparently returned to normal duties. The battalion medical officer did not mention the death of Lieutenant Palmer within the monthly medical report. The unit war diary made only brief mention, without providing any specific details. Was there a cover up or was it simply a requirement of war that the unit be mobile and ready to move upon receipt of the next orders? The attack on Dernancourt village, under the German offensive codenamed ‘Michael’, took place two days after the unfortunate death of Palmer. There was no time for lengthy reflection.

Lieutenant Reginald Wallis Palmer was buried in the communal cemetery at Toutencourt, France, with 23 British war dead whose burials were made sporadically between October 1915 and August 1918. He is located at grave reference Plot II, Row A, Grave No. 13 [below left, photo courtesy of Matt’s website: www.australianwargraves.org].

Lieutenant Frazer was wounded by a gunshot to the thigh in the Heilly area of the Somme on 22 June 1918, but remained on duty. He was forced to attend hospital the following day and was sent to England for treatment. Frazer returned to the battalion towards the end of the war.

In 1919, he attended the Regent Street Polytechnic, London, to study architecture and building construction under the Department of Repatriation and Demobilisation program of Non-Military Employment. He returned to Australia on 1 August 1919. In March 1967, Frazer applied for the ANZAC Medallion. He was living in Wollstonecraft, Sydney, at the time.

Was Lieutenant Palmer’s death in vain or did it promulgate some greater cause? For a battalion which traditionally prided itself on good order, efficient and regular training, how could an accident such as the one that caused Palmer’s death occur? Did the culture of non-promotion of experienced NCOs due to the nature of the work of the pioneers, allow for inexperience to creep into the officer ranks due to the receipt of untried reinforcements? Was Palmer’s death purely one of collateral damage in a war that had seen thousands of deaths? Although distressing for witnesses and Lieutenant Frazer in particular, was Palmer’s death an unfortunate fact of war?

The 5th Pioneer Battalion War Diary for February 1918 shows little evidence of Lewis gun training or instruction. However, the April diary post-Palmer’s death, shows an increase in training and expansion towards anti-aircraft use. Perhaps Palmer didn’t die in vain after all.

Reginald Palmer’s Last Will and Testament stated: In the event of my death, I bequeath the whole of my property and personal effects to my father, Henry Robert Palmer, Auctioneer, Warragul, Victoria, Australia. With his death, his parents, of 3 Taylor Street, Moonee Ponds, Victoria, essentially lost their second son to the war. Reginald’s brother, 922 Charles Francis Palmer, had enlisted on 18 August 1914, aged 19 years and five months, and had been severely wounded at Gallipoli on 27 April 1915. He suffered a severe wound to the left arm and lost sight in both eyes. After some time recovering in hospital in England, he returned to Australia to be cared for by his parents.

---

29 Toutencourt Communal Cemetery, Somme, France - GPS 50.03886,2.45107.
On 4 May 1918, the Palmer family placed a small piece in ‘The Argus’, Melbourne, that indicates the magnitude of their loss, but exhibits a pride for both their sons’ service. It read:

PALMER – Officially reported killed, somewhere in France, on active service, 2nd April 1918. Lieutenant Reginald Palmer, 5th Pioneer Battalion, beloved second son of Mr. and Mrs. H.R. Palmer, of Warragul; loving brother of Lily, Beatrice, Daphne, Ivy, and Marjorie, Victor and Charles (returned), aged 24 years.

Our brave Reg, sadly missed
He has sailed on his last commission
In a beautiful ship called Rest
And his head is safely pillowed
On his great commander’s breast.

(Inserted by his loving father, mother, sisters and brothers)

Two brothers remembered at Russell Reserve, Rouse Hill
Chris Munro, Oatley.

On a sunny Saturday afternoon in June 2012 a crowd of over 60 people gathered at Second Ponds Reserve at Rouse Hill [right] for the renaming of the reserve in memory of two young Kellyville brothers who made the ultimate sacrifice during the Great War.


On arrival in Egypt the brothers were transferred to the 54th Battalion. In June 1916 the Russells embarked for the Western Front with the battalion which was part of the 14th Brigade destined to take part in the ill-fated Battle of Fromelles. William received a gunshot wound to the arm during the battle and was evacuated to England for treatment. After the battle, Arthur Russell was reported ‘missing in action’. In March 1917, Arthur was officially listed as ‘killed in action’ on 19-20 July 1916.

After recovering from his wounds, William rejoined the 54th Battalion in France in November 1916. William was promoted to sergeant and saw action with the battalion in the Somme, at Bullecourt and Ypres. On the eve of the Battle of Polygon Wood, Sergeant William Russell was killed in action on 25 September 1917.

Neither Private Arthur Russell nor Sergeant William Russell had a known grave. William is remembered on the Menin Gate in Ieper and Arthur’s sacrifice was honoured on the memorial wall at VC Corner Cemetery.

In April 2011, Arthur’s remains were identified as being amongst those whose bodies were recovered from the mass graves at Pheasant Wood, Fromelles. His identification was possible through DNA matching with samples from his niece, Davinia, and nephew, Adrian. Both Davinia and Adrian Russell [left] were present at the dedication of the grave of Private Arthur Russell in July 2011.

As a result of the archaeological finds recovered with the bodies from the German burial pits, a signet ring [right] belonging to Arthur was returned to the family by the Australian Army. The ring arrived in the mail just in time to be on show at the dedication of Russell Reserve. Originally thought to be an example of trench art as described in the CWGC publication, ‘Remembering Fromelles: A new cemetery for a new century’, further investigation has revealed that the ring is made of silver and originated in Egypt. It was probably a souvenir bought by Arthur when he was in Egypt before his ill-fated journey to France.

Endnote: Photograph of the ring taken from the CWGC publication, ‘Remembering Fromelles: A new cemetery for a new century’.

---

2012 commemorates the centenary of the establishment of the Australian Inland Mission (AIM) by the Reverend John Flynn. Flynn was made the first superintendent of the AIM and as well as tending to matters spiritual, he quickly established the need for medical care for residents of the vast Australian outback and established a number of bush hospitals. This was the beginnings of his vision for a ‘mantle of safety’ over inland Australia that continues today as Remote Area Family Services and the Royal Australian Flying Doctor Service. On the 2012 FFFAIF Western Front Tour it was, therefore, appropriate to commemorate an Australian pilot, Clifford Peel, who had heard of Flynn’s speculations and outlined in a letter to him the capabilities and costs of then-available planes.

Clifford Peel (known as Clifford) was born on 17 April 1894 in the family home, ‘Tower Hill’, at Inverleigh, Victoria. He was the first of nine children born to Charles Herbert and Susan Peel, nee Everett. His education was at Inverleigh State School and subsequently at Geelong High School and Ormond College. He gave his occupation as medical student on his attestation papers. During his studies at Melbourne University, he became interested in the army and joined the University Rifles Advanced Guard and attained the rank of sergeant major.

With the development of the Australian Flying Corps and the search by the AIF for members, Peel applied, and was selected, for flying training at the Central Flying School at Laverton in Victoria. The aircraft used for training was the Maurice Farman Shorthorns [below], or as Peel referred to them in his letters home, ‘The Bluebird’ or ‘The Bus’. Whilst at Laverton, Peel wrote to Reverend John Flynn who was developing the Australian Inland Mission with its medical centres to put a mantle of safety over inland Australia. Peel suggested to Flynn that he thought aeroplanes would be able to play a significant part in Flynn’s work and he invited Flynn to let him know if he wanted more details of his idea. Flynn subsequently sought more details.

On 20 November 1917, Peel embarked from Melbourne bound for the United Kingdom aboard HMAT Nestor. The trip gave him plenty of dreaming and thinking time and no doubt a chance to discuss his ideas for the use of aeroplanes in the Inland with his AFC colleagues. His reply letter to Flynn indicated that:

... Aviation is still new, but it has set some of us thinking, and thinking hard. Perhaps others want to be thinking too. Hence these few notes.

Safety ... The first question to be asked is sure to be, “Is it safe?” To the Australian lay mind the thought of flying is accompanied by many weird ideas of its danger. True there are dangers, which in the Inland will be accompanied by the possibilities of being stranded in the desert without food and water. Yet even with this disadvantage, the only reply to such a query is a decided affirmative. Practically all the flying for the last three years has been military flying, and men have taken, and are taking, risks that will be quite needless in commercial or private aviation in the future; and if we study the records available, and deduct accidents that occurred while the pilot was stunting over enemy territory, we will find that the number of miles flown per misadventure is very large, while the number of accidents per aerodrome per annum is very small.

The letter was several pages in length and also shared his thoughts on the difficulties and advantages of his plan. Peel went on to outline a scheme of airplanes based at key towns for east of the Western Australian boundary. In this large tract of land, consisting of one-third of the Australian continent, I am assuming that the bases are situated at Oodnadatta in South Australia, Cloncurry in Queensland and Katherine in the
He gave further details of distances and flying times to towns and properties from these bases, as well as costs. His concluding argument suggested in the not very distant future, if our church folk only realise the need, I can see a missionary doctor administering to the needs of men and women between Wyndham and Cloncurry, Darwin and Hergott. If the nation can do so much in the days of war surely it will do its “bit” in the coming days of peace – and here is its chance ...

J CLIFFORD PEEL, LIEUT.
Australian Flying Corps, A.I.F. At Sea

Upon arrival in the UK, Peel underwent further training for several months to gain experience in a variety of aircraft before gaining his wings and travelling to France. Once there, he proceeded to the 2nd Aeroplane Supply Depot on 31 August, before being posted to 3 Squadron, AFC, on 2 September 1918. He was a pilot of one of the Squadron’s RE8s [below], affectionately known as ‘Harry Tates’.

The particular task of the RE8s of the 3rd Squadron was to assist ground forces to capture Mont St Quentin by carrying out both contact and reconnaissance patrols. The actual task of reconnaissance was shared by the two-man crew, with the pilot flying the machine and firing the forward machine gun when necessary and the observer sitting in the cockpit behind him to photograph target areas and shoot the rear machine gun when attacked by enemy aircraft.

On 18 September 1918, Lieutenant Peel and his observer, Lieutenant John Patrick Jeffers, flew a patrol dropping smoke bombs east of Malakoff Farm and north-west of Bellicourt. Early on the next day, Lieut Peel and Lieut Jeffers were ordered out on a reconnaissance patrol to photograph the line of the St Quentin Canal from south of Bellenglise to Bellicourt. By early afternoon, they had failed to return ... and nothing whatsoever, to this very day, has been heard concerning their fate.

Amidst the Red Cross records, the entry by Lieutenant Lloyd Patteson Chase provides the best indication of events. He stated: Peel, Pilot and Jeffers, Observer left the aerodrome at Proyart with camera attached with the intention of photographing the Hindenburg Line, E and SE of Bellicourt ... with an escort of British Scouts (Camels) ... out of sight in the unending cloud ... not reported again as seen by anyone at all nor was any machine reported or found to be crashed on our side. Chase conjectured that they lost direction in the clouds and flew into Hunland.

Whilst no trace was found of Peel, his name has been immortalised because he had the foresight to develop and share his dream – the dream that today is recognised as the Royal Flying Doctor Service. Clifford Peel willed 40% of his estate to various church charities, including the Australian Inland Mission. His name appears alongside Flynn’s on a plaque within a Presbyterian Church at Geelong [left].

Peel’s name, along with Jeffers’ name, is listed on the wall at Villers-Bretonneux within the section for the Flying Corps [below left] and on the Arras Memorial [below right], which commemorates nearly 1 000 airmen who were killed on the Western Front and have no known grave.
ETCHED IN STONE

(Edited by Russell Curley with additional detail sourced from CWGC by Jim Corkery.)

This is the fortieth in a series of extracts, from John Laffin’s ‘We Will Remember Them - AIF Epitaphs of World War I’, which will appear in successive issues of ‘DIGGER’.

The fourth episode on the theme “Brief and Beautiful”

Place names in bold type are cemetery names

A SON A SOLDIER A MAN

So reads the inscription on the headstone of CSM Gilbert Brodie DCM, Australian Engineers who was killed aged 25, on 26 August 1918. He is buried at Chipilly Communal Cemetery Extension, France. CSM Brodie from Fairfield, Brisbane, a fine experienced soldier was awarded the DCM for splendid work in the attack on the Passchendaele-Broodseinde Ridge on 4 October 1917. He was in charge of a party of sappers attached to infantry and detailed to construct a strong point, immediately beyond the furthest objective. This was dangerous work and Brodie showed conspicuous skill and gallantry in leading his party through the enemy’s barrage, in organising the work and carrying it through to a successful conclusion. His citation states: ‘The CSM’s conduct throughout was a splendid example and encouragement to his men’. (JL)

MUCH MORE THE HEART CAN FEEL
THAN A PEN CAN WRITE
OR THE LIPS REVEAL

Pte T. Cameron, 23rd Bn, 3-10-17 (25)
Lijssenthoek, Belgium

FROM MEMORY’S PAGE WE NEVER BLOT
THREE LITTLE WORDS
FORGET HIM NOT

Pte W. C. Shannon, 4th Bn, 5-5-16 (20)
Rue Petillon, France

THERE IS A LINK
DEATH CANNOT SEVER

Capt J. Davie, AMC, 6-10-17 (31)
Lijssenthoek, Belgium

EVERY RESTLESS TOSSING PASSED
SAFELY HOME IN HEAVEN AT LAST

Cpl B. Begg, M-G Corps, 4-10-17 (32)
Lijssenthoek, Belgium

LEAVES OF REMEMBRANCE
WEAVE SWEETER MEMORIES

L/Cpl J. Murdoch MM, 9th Bn, 5-10-17
Lijssenthoek, Belgium

A BRAVE MAN
AND A GALLANT SOLDIER

Brig Gen D. J. Glasfurd, 12th Inf Bde, 12-11-16 (43)
Heilly Station, France

HE GAVE HIS LIFE FOR ANOTHER
A BRAVE STRETCHER BEARER

Pte H. L. Lander, 56th Bn, 5-12-16 (22)
Heilly Station, France

ONE OF THE DEATHLESS ARMY

Pte J. G. Trezise, 28th Bn, 1-1-18 CWGC has 1-6-18
Franvillers Communal Cemetery Extension, France

DEEPLY REGRETTED

Pte W. R. Jackway, 21st Bn, 15-6-18 (24)
Méricourt l’Abbé Communal Cemetery Extn, France

NOT DEAD. PROMOTED.
MERELY CHANGED HIS REGIMENT.
HIS DUTY NOBLY DONE

Cpl W. H. Roberts, 9th Bn, 19-7-18 (33)
Borre British Cemetery, France

SLEEP ON BRAVE HEART

Pte W. A. Smith, 13th Bn, 7-8-18 (24)
Crouy British Cemetery, France

WE CLEAVE TO HIM WITH LOVE

Capt G. R. Porter, 44th Bn, 10-12-17 (28)
Maple Leaf, Belgium

OUR CROSS. HIS CROWN

L/Cpl H. W. Birt, 48th Bn, 6-8-16 (28)
Serre Road No 2, France
Kandahar Farm Cemetery: then and now
Graeme Hosken and Matt Smith.

The profile of Private 838 Herbert May, 3rd Pioneers, in DIGGER 40 featured the photograph [below left] of a line of Australian graves, one of which was Herb’s final resting place [AWM P09534.017]. While on the 2012 FFFAIF Battlefield Tour, Matt Smith kindly photographed the individual graves and tried, from memory, to capture a similar perspective to the AWM photo from 1919. Herb’s grave is the sixth from the right, second row from the camera, in the 2012 photo.

2012 Annual General Meeting
Russell Curley, Blakehurst.

Thirty-one members and three guests attended the association’s tenth AGM held at the Garden City Motel, Narrabundah, ACT, on 15 September. Thirty-four apologies were received. The proceedings and Questions on Notice, with answers, are in the unconfirmed AGM minutes at www.fffaif.org.au (Members’ Area).

The 2012-13 Committee of Management was re-elected unopposed. President: Russell Curley; Vice-President: Jim Munro; Treasurer: Robyn Ward; Secretary: Chris Munro; Committee Members: Graeme Hosken; Maurice Campbell; Andrew Willetts; Margaret Snodgrass and Lorraine Curley. The committee, once again, thanks the members for their strong commendation and endorsement of its policies, and the trust and confidence they have placed in it to manage the association. It will continue to pursue FFFAIF Objectives and act in the association’s best interests in accordance with the known wishes of the majority.

Garden City Motel rooms were very satisfactory and the Banksia room venue for the AGM was first class. Dinner was enjoyed by all 28 members and guests in a most welcome convivial atmosphere. A surprise 90th birthday cake was arranged for Neville Kidd by his family and we all shared a slice with coffee.

Due to a ‘no bookings’ policy and a very long queue for entry into the AWM’s Treloar Annex at Mitchell on Sunday, most members who had planned to attend the ‘Big Things in Store’ did not do so.

DIGGER Quiz No. 41: ‘Campbell’s challenge’
1. What was the location of AIF Headquarters in London?
2. Who was the Australian lady in charge of the Red Cross Inquiry Bureau in the UK?
3. Where were the five AIF training bases situated on Salisbury Plain?
4. The more specialised units were at first situated with the British Army at training bases further afield. Where were they located?
5. Where were the four Command Depots located in the UK?
Within Australia, camps were established to house captured enemy servicemen, alien internees and civilian internees.
6. Where were these camps located?

Answers are on the back cover.
Answers to DIGGER Quiz No. 41
1. 130 Horseferry Road, Westminster, London.
2. Miss Vera Deakin (daughter of the former Australian Prime Minister, Sir Alfred Deakin).
3. Larkhill (3rd & 5th Divs), Perham Downs (1st Div), Rolleston (2nd & 4th Divs), Parkhouse (ASC, AMC, Eng & Sigs) and Tidworth (HQ & MGC).
4. Christchurch (Hants.), Brightlingsea (Essex), Shefford near Hitchin (Herts.), Belford Park near Grantham (Lincs.).
5. Perham Downs, Weymouth, Bovingdon (Wool), Worogret Hill (Wareham). Where men were sent was mainly determined by when they would be fit for return to the front or repatriation to Australia.
6. Canberra (Federal Territory, now the ACT); Berrima, Bourke, Holdsworth, Liverpool, Molonglo, Trial Bay (NSW); Brisbane, Enoggera (Qld); Fort Largs, Torrens Island (SA); Bruny Island, Claremont (Tas); Melbourne, Langwarrin, Point Cook (Vic); Rottnest Island (WA).

WA members hold get-together
At the instigation of member Paul Graham, four members of the FFFAIF (and two guests) living in and near Perth, Western Australia, met up on 18 November for a tour of the naval base at HMAS Stirling, Rockingham, followed by refreshments. Paul arranged the gathering so that FFFAIF members could meet each other, share common interests and discuss military history projects they are working on. After entering the base by the 4.5km long causeway, the group visited the Z Force Area (WWII), then the Clearance Diving Team to see some mines from WWII and the Gulf Wars. The party then inspected the naval ships and submarines in the wharf area and heard from a submariner about life in the navy. This was followed by tea, coffee and cold beer in the Senior Sailors’ Mess and inspection of relics from ships that have been paid off from the navy. Well done, Paul, on organising the day. Above left (l to r): Paul Graham, Andrew Pittaway, Sandra Playle, Alan Rayfield and Roley Rayfield.

South Australian member, David Wright, is interested in holding a similar gathering at the Walkerville RSL Club. If you live in SA and would be interested in attending, David can be contacted via the Editor.

DIGGER 41 contents

| Cover photo: Pte Bert Egan, 20th Bn, and mates | Spr Frederick Thornton, 3rd DSC | 44-50 |
| Trench Talk & membership details | FFFAIF donation towards Boer War Memorial | 50 |
| The genesis of ‘Digger’ | Pte Herbert Harley, 42nd Battalion | 51-56 |
| The War Medal of John Donaldson, 59th Bn | A tribute to Ron Austin | 56 |
| Sgt Christopher Sandilands, 16th Battalion | Pte John Sweeney, 54th Bn, and a famous photo | 57-60 |
| Men of the 8th Reinf/32nd Battalion (photo) | Narrative by Cpl Len Jones, 3rd Bn, Part 3 | 61-64 |
| The Anderson brothers (Ralph & Ernest) | ‘Beaten Down by Blood’ (M Bombford) released | 64 |
| Missing at Mouquet Farm: Pte O Abbott | The Chalmers family (James Chalmers, 2nd Bn) | 65-66 |
| Pte Ernest Waterhouse, 11th Battalion | Extract from ‘The Old Digger’s War’ | 66 |
| 96 years in the mud | Extract from ‘The Price of Valour’ (J Hamilton) | 67-68 |
| Tpr Walter Bonser, Camel Corps/11th LHR | Tragedy in the 5th Pioneer Battalion | 69-75 |
| 2nd Lt Frank McEvo, 9th LHR/British Army | Privates Arthur and William Russell honoured | 75 |
| Pte Bert Egan, 20th Battalion | Lieutenant John Peel, 3rd Sqn AFC | 76-77 |
| Beerburrum’s ‘Adopt-a-Digger’ project | Etched in Stone | 78 |
| Pte Stewart Ramsay, 18th Battalion | Kandahar Farm Cemetery: then & now (H May) | 79 |
| Pte Walter Vandenbergh, 3rd Bn (photos) | 2012 FFFAIF AGM Report | 79 |
| L/Cpl Edward Rees, 12th Battalion | DIGGER Quiz No. 41 | 79 |
| Pte Thomas Bennett MM, 31st Battalion | Answers to DIGGER Quiz No. 41 | 80 |
| George Thomas & George Thatcher, 43rd Bn | WA gathering of FFFAIF members | 80 |

Visit the association’s website at www.fffaif.org.au

DIGGER is printed in Dubbo by the Colour Copy Shop
For a top quality printing job at the right price, wherever you live, contact Aaron McMillan by e-mail: pc@dubsec.com.au or phone: 02 6884 5577 or visit the Colour Copy Shop website: www.dubsec.com.au

DIGGER 80 Issue 41