March 2013

Magazine of the Families and Friends of the First AIF Inc

Edited by Graeme Hosken

ISSN 1834-8963
This issue
Thanks to our contributors, and to the support of the committee, it has been possible to publish another 80 page issue. Enjoy this bonus ‘bumper’ issue packed with great stories of the First AIF.

New members
We welcome Frances Bluhdorn, Warren Chislett, Ronald Dures, Peter Nowlan, Lynette Sullivan, Tim Reynolds and Judith Wood to the FFFAIF.

The Harrower Collection
FFFAIF member David Harrower has been collecting medals, plaques and military memorabilia since 2001, with special focus on the 33rd, 34th, 35th and 36th Battalions (all NSW) which formed the 9th Brigade. David’s collection can be seen on display in the Swansea RSL Club. A YouTube video of David discussing his military history research and collection can be viewed at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nv3uFVabGpk. See also a tribute to the men of the 33rd Battalion at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1&v=CZBiK2V-HX4&feature=endscreen [has many Digger portraits]. David also has a web presence at: www.harrowercollection.com. Check out the excellent links from the menu page. It is obvious that David puts hundreds of hours into his military history passion.

Miranda War Memorial to be moved
Following a donation of $50 000 from the Sutherland Shire Council, $40 000 from the NSW Government and community contributions bringing the total funds raised to near $150 000, the Miranda War Memorial [see DIGGER 39, pp40-1] will be moved to a new site in mid 2013. This will relocate the memorial to Seymour Shaw Park, which will improve its access and amenity and safely accommodate the crowds of up to 5 000 people who attend the Anzac Day dawn service (the second largest in Sydney). Mr Bruce Grimley, Miranda RSL Sub-branch president stated: ‘The new location will allow services to be held in a safer and more dignified setting with disabled access … Families will be able to hold private ceremonies at the memorial in more private and comfortable surroundings.’ The FFFAIF donated $100 to the relocation appeal. [Source: ‘The St George & Sutherland Shire Leader’, 20 November 2012. Article by Jim Gainsford.]

Story behind cover photo
Andrew Macdonald only knew the soldier pictured on the front cover as ‘Col’ from a Pioneer battalion. Within 24 hours of placing the photo on the FFFAIF’s Facebook page, fellow member Tim Lycett had identified Col as being, in all likelihood, Private 2758 Colin Maxwell Harkins, 2nd Pioneers. Tim used the 2nd Pioneer embarkation roll to find the possible ‘Cols’ and then found a 1925 photograph of Harkins for comparison. The evidence certainly indicates that Andrew’s ‘unknown soldier’ has been identified.

Facebook update
Our Facebook group now has 55 members. A successful search for information was achieved for Amanda Capes-Davis who wished to find a photograph of Lieutenants HEB and RAW Smith of the 19th Bn (both brothers KIA). Within minutes, Kim Phillips was able to supply Amanda with photos of the two men. Bill Frost has put up some interesting ‘then and now’ photos from Peronne, while Jacqui Ann posted some photos of a most unusual honour roll from Bungawalin. To join the group and interact with fellow members from Australia and overseas, contact the Editor (or revisit the note sent with DIGGER 41.)
‘Home away from home’: The Clarke family of the Isle of Man

Pamela Goesch, Chatswood.

After the disastrous battle of Fromelles on 19-20 July 1916, the 55th Battalion continued onto the Somme, marching for hours in pouring rain, sometimes with little food, often trudging through mud, often under continuous bombardment. For the first time in his 19 years, my father, 3762 Private Walter Herbert (‘Bert’) Bishop, fell ill in November 1916 and was sent back to a British hospital near Rouen with suspected pneumonia. He was visited by an older cousin, 2nd Lieutenant 197 Harold McKay Bishop of the 3rd Battalion. Harold was the elder brother of 3761 Private Raymond Charles Bishop of the 55th Battalion [right], who had enlisted with Bert in Sydney, but had been posted as ‘missing’ after Fromelles. (Ray was one of those soldiers identified in 2010 at Pheasant Wood, and is now buried in the new cemetery there. Ray’s pocket knife was also found at the burial site, and is to be placed in the Moruya Museum on loan from the Bishop family.)

Harold had earlier told Bert about the friends he had made on the Isle of Man, and suggested Bert get in touch with them. Bert had written to them, and letters and parcels had come for both him and Ray from ‘Aunt Pollie’ (Miss Eliza Mary Clarke, of ‘Brynwood’, Woodbourne Road, Douglas, Isle of Man [below]).

When Ray was missing after Fromelles, Bert had written to his cousin, Harold, to tell him of Ray’s disappearance. Harold then copied out Bert’s letter and sent it to Miss Clarke, who began enquiries about Ray from the British Red Cross Society in London in a letter dated 22nd August 1916. These letters are now in the Australian Red Cross Wounded and Missing Enquiry Bureau Files, 1914-18 War, at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra [1DRL/0428].

Bert was sent across to England on the hospital ship Asturias and on to the Kitchener Hospital in Brighton. From there he wrote to Miss Clarke, asking if she could possibly send him some stamps. Not only did the stamps arrive, but they were accompanied by two new ten-shilling notes – Aunt Pollie had realised immediately that Bert literally had no money, as he had been evacuated directly from the trenches. On 18 April 1917, in a letter home to his family from Dartford Hospital, Bert had written: In a letter a day or so ago, Miss Clarke said she’d had a letter from you [Bert’s mother]. I’m glad you wrote to her, she’s great, always wanting to know if I want money, or if there is anything at all she can do for me.

When Bert became well again (after suspected heart problems), he was given leave on 30 April 1917, and a transport pass, and set off for the Isle of Man, which was reached by boat from Liverpool. The Clarke family met him at the wharf and took him to their home.

The family consisted of three siblings, who had not married, and who lived together in a big house called ‘Brynwood’. They were three of the five children of William Clarke and his wife, Sarah Harriet, née Hattersley. John Hattersley Clarke was the Isle of Man agent for the Norwich Insurance Company and was very involved in local church and philanthropic work. At the outbreak of the war, John Clarke would have been aged 46. He had two sisters, Eliza Mary (‘Aunt Pollie’), who was aged 42 in 1914, and helped her brother in his office, and Sarah, aged 51, who looked after the household. As Bert wrote to his family on 17 May, 1917:

They have a lovely house just outside Douglas, just the three of them, Auntie, & her sister and brother. They’re fine people & made me quite at home at once. On Thursday, Auntie’s sister took me down over the southern part of the island. We had a grand day & the scenery was fine. The railways are all miniature, but they are comfortable & fast. On Saturday Auntie went with me round the northern end of the island. The scenery up that part is truly magnificent. The first part of the run was in an electric tram along the tops of the cliffs to Ramsay, & the views were grand. Then we went across to the Irish side of the island. On a clear day the coast of Ireland can be seen, but this day was too misty. We reached home about 7 p.m. after a ripping day. I left for England again on Monday morning, having had a most enjoyable time there. The island is only 30 miles long by 12 across & I saw almost every inch of it. There are thirty thousand German prisoners over there,
working all over the place. Auntie & the others are grand people; it did one good to be with them for a while.

Early in the war, the family had decided that they could best help the war effort by providing a ‘home from home’ for soldiers from the Empire countries who had no relatives to visit when on leave in England. They were a very hospitable, kindly family and many, like Bert Bishop, visited there during the war years. It was a very safe place during the war as shipping to the Isle was not attacked by submarines because the German prisoners were being transported across to the island.

[Left: Sarah (left), John and Eliza Mary Clarke.]

Not only were the visiting servicemen treated as family, but Aunt Pollie became a postal forwarding agency for them, wrote to their families back home, sent them parcels and letters, and kept up correspondence with the authorities trying to find out information about those missing in action. In one letter to London, dated 18 October 1916, she wrote:

I am in touch with a lot of Australians at the front ... friends of my cousins who live in Australia, and they have told their pals, and so my list goes on increasing, but we are glad of it, anything to help, as we are all too old for the firing line ... you will understand if I ask for your help from time to time, I have so far only lost three killed ...

In the same letter, Aunt Pollie asked if there was any news about Private Ray Bishop, or about Private George Clapperton, ‘B’ Company, 54th Battalion. [Private 4166A Clapperton was also later listed as killed at Fromelles.]

There is a reply from London to this letter of 18 October 1916:

We were interested to hear of your work for the Australians. It is very kind of you and we are sure they must greatly appreciate such kind attention when they are so far from home ...

On 22 August 1916, Aunt Pollie had written to the British Red Cross in London enquiring about Ray Bishop:

If I am not applying to the right source might I trouble you to get it there for me – if there is any expense in the matter I will willingly pay it. Lieut. Bishop is a dear friend of mine & he is heartbroken on his mother’s account & I want to do all in my power to help them.

On 8 December 1916, Aunt Pollie wrote to the Secretary of the Wounded and Missing Bureau, Australian Branch of the British Red Cross Society, concerning Ray Bishop’s probable death:

I wrote his mother, holding out no hope ... , & now I don’t know how to face writing to tell her her other son [2nd Lieutenant Harold Bishop] is gone. It is not many weeks since he was spending his furlough with us & as his OC, Lieut.-Col. [Owen] Howell-Price has gone too, I have no information of either of them as they were the only two men I had in the 3rd Inf. [Battalion], 1st Division. [Lieutenant Colonel Owen Glendower Howell-Price was one of the six sons of the Rev. John Howell-Price, Vicar of St Silas’ Church Waterloo, Sydney. Five enlisted; three of them were killed in the war.]

And now I am going to trespass further upon your kindness. About the 22nd November, Privates EJ King 847 & JD Grubb 817, of the Lewis Gun Section, 29th Battalion, were both wounded. Pte Grubb shot through the arms & arms broken, & Pte King shell injuries to back. QMS Grubb, 1st Anzac Cyclists, who is Pte Grubb’s brother & Pte King’s cousin wrote me this particularly & asked me to find out where they were. I expected they would write me as they do so regularly, but no letter has come. Can you help me at all, I shall be so grateful. [Private Edward James King, born in Traralgon, Victoria, had been wounded in action with shell wounds to his back and legs. He had become dangerously ill in hospital at Rouen and died on 29 November 1916. He was buried at St Sever Cemetery Extension in Rouen. Private 817 John Duncan Grubb must have recovered and was to enlist again in WWII. His brother, Company Quarter Master Sergeant Frederick Liddington Grubb, of the 1st Anzac Cyclists, also survived the war.]

Then Pte H Stebbing 1579, 6th Machine Gun Co, 24th Battalion, wrote telling me his brother Signaller A Stebbing 2446, same coy. & battalion, had been taken away he thought sick on the 15th
November. I have had no word of him, could you do anything for me in his case? Forgive me troubling you so much but the lads look to me to help them just as they would their own & their people do to [too]. [The Stebbing brothers were from Melbourne. Signaller 2446 Alexander Stebbing was ill with severe appendicitis on 14 November 1916 and sent to hospital in England. He survived the war, returning to Australia in September 1919. His brother, 1579 Harry Stebbing, died of pneumonia in France on 16 January 1917, and was buried at Helly Station Cemetery near Corbie.]

On 25 June 1917, from France, Bert Bishop [left] wrote home:
My last [letters from home] were dated about the middle of March, over three months ago, they take a terribly long time getting to us. I want you to address my letters to Miss Clarke please. Just put ‘Pte WH Bishop, c/o Miss EM Clarke, Brynwood, Douglas, Isle of Man, England.’ Auntie always knows where I am, & the letters will get to me much quicker by going straight to her than being fooled about at our headquarters. Auntie is only too glad to do it for me, she is always wanting to know if there is anything at all she can do, I’m lucky to have got in touch with her at all. Don’t send the parcels & papers to her though, they’d be too much trouble, keep to the old address with them.

On 21 August 1917, Bert wrote from France:
I hear from Miss Clarke every few days, she has sent me several parcels since I came back to France, but not one of them reached me. In a letter yesterday she said she was sending one of chocolates & cakes so I hope it reaches me. I spend nearly all my pay on chocolates, but by jingo, they’re dear.

On November 16th, Bert wrote home from near Ypres:
The first letters you sent through Miss Clarke arrived this week, they didn’t reach me any earlier than those that came through our own headquarters, but it will be much better for her to be getting them in case I go away from the battalion again as she always knows where I am. No parcels have yet arrived, but am hoping they’ll turn up, especially the one from you all, & am looking forward to a great feed of cake.

Obviously, Aunt Pollie was very involved with the young servicemen who came to ‘Brynwood’. The family must have had a strong effect on the young soldiers so far from home. On his first visit, Bert mentioned there were six others there. The family’s hospitality was remembered by the guests and by their families. Aunt Pollie wrote to each of them, and to their families, and did everything she could to help them – sending on their mail, lending money, collecting photographs for them, sending food parcels and socks. In a letter home to his family from Douglas on March 13, 1918, Bert wrote:
I have enjoyed the stay here very much, it is like a second home to me, I don’t know what I’d have done if I hadn’t been lucky enough to get in touch with Auntie.

In a letter home from France on July 8, 1918, Bert mentioned receiving a letter from Aunt Pollie in which she had told him her brother, John, was being called up. It’s a shame, Bert wrote, he must be all out fifty, & has hardly a hair on his head. I can’t picture him at this game at all. [Bert was correct – John Clarke was indeed fifty at the time.] On 9 May 1919, when Bert Bishop finally sailed from Devonport in Quota 34 on the Devanha, Aunt Pollie sent a cable to his parents to tell them Bert was on his way home.

In 1925 Bert Bishop wrote to Aunt Pollie telling her that he was getting married and buying a house to be named ‘Brynwood’. Aunt Pollie replied to wish him well and thank him for the tribute, but said she had to admit that she had heard of another 28 houses being called ‘Brynwood’! In his early writings on WWI, Bert used the pseudonym, ‘Bryn Wood’ or ‘Snaefell’ (the highest mountain on the Isle of Man).
Some thirty-five years after the war, in 1953, Bert Bishop’s daughters visited the Isle of Man, found the house, ‘Brynwood’ [right], and visited the Clarke family graves in the old churchyard at Kirk Braddan on the outskirts of Douglas.

The Australian connection had begun with the Clarke’s cousins in Victoria. After John Clarke died, there was a Death Notice for him in ‘The Argus’, Melbourne, 12 June 1920:

**CLARKE, - On the 24th April, 1920, at ‘Brynwood’, Douglas, Isle of Man, John Clarke, beloved brother of the Misses S and EM Clarke, and cousin of Mrs C Temby, of Traralgon, Mrs F Hebbard, Moorookna, and Mrs JA Osborne, Ascotvale. The Aussie Soldier’s Friend. Deeply regretted.**

Mrs C Temby, Mrs F Hebbard and Mrs JA Osborne were daughters of Alexander and Rebecca Hattersley who had emigrated to Victoria in 1869 on the *Corona*. Alexander Hattersley must have been a brother of Sarah Harriet Clarke, née Hattersley. The sons of these cousins were probably the first Australians to make contact with the Clarke family.

There were also tributes to John Clarke in ‘The Manx Quarterly’ in October 1920, and in the ‘Isle of Man Examiner Annual, 1921’, which noted among his many philanthropic activities: *During the war he interested himself in the Australian Forces*.

Several of Bert’s friends also stayed with the Clarke family. Among them were 6501 Private (later) Sergeant Joseph Henry (‘Harry’) Duncan MM, of the 13th Battalion, born in Eurobodalla, NSW, who in 1922 married Madge Bishop, sister of Harold and Ray, who had been killed in action in France in 1916. Others were 2787 Private Oswald William Knapp Davis, 33rd Battalion, and 3774 Private Frederick Walter Ford Chin, both from Milton, NSW.

One Victorian whom Bert met on the Isle of Man was Hector Waller, then a young midshipman on HMS *Agincourt*. He later became Captain HML Waller DSO, captain of HMAS *Perth*, which was sunk in the Sunda Strait on the night of 28 February 1942. Captain Waller went down with his ship.

There are probably many other letters from Aunt Pollie in other files of the Wounded and Missing. Two letters she wrote to Harold Bishop have survived – forwarded back to Australia with Harold’s belongings after his death, and now treasured by his nephew, Bruce Bishop, of Murgon, Qld. Aunt Pollie was a very devout Christian. In a letter to Harold Bishop dated 14 October 1916, Aunt Pollie remarked: *These are days when we are all learning of the things that matter most.*

Many of the servicemen accompanied her to Sunday morning services in Douglas during their furlough. Bert remembered Aunt Pollie telling him of being escorted to church one morning by four Australian Light Horse servicemen in full uniform, each of them over six feet tall.

Scores of Australian servicemen must have stayed with the Clarke family during WWI and remembered John, Aunt Pollie and Sarah with affection and gratitude. The memory of this family has lived on for nearly one hundred years at this opposite end of the world.

[**Above:** The Editor believes that this is ‘Brynwood’ today. Image found using Google Maps streetview.]

**Endnotes:** (1) Bert Bishop’s letters to his family in Australia have been privately published as ‘*Dear All: Letters from World War I*’, by Bert Bishop, compiled and edited by Pamela Goesch (Sydney, Brynwood House, 2010). These letters and his diaries became the sources for Bert’s memoir: *‘The Hell, the Humour and the Heartbreak: a Private’s View of World War I’* [Kenthurst, NSW, Kangaroo Press, 1991]. Aunt Pollie’s letters to Bert have not survived. (2) The Editor recently visited the Benalla Museum in Victoria, which contains a display on **Hector Waller**, who came from the town (as did ‘Weary’ Dunlop).
Having worked at Rosebery on Tasmania’s rugged west coast for a period of time, one soon gets a sense of just how isolated and remote even the more populated places are – towns such as Queenstown, Zeehan and Strahan. The cold, ice and snow of winter all add another layer to its remoteness, particularly with snow covering the hills that loom on every horizon. Add to this the fact that from time to time the roads are closed due to snow, or the journey made treacherous due to black ice that sits there all day in the many sheltered bends.

While these places are easily accessed by car today, in 1914 it was a very different story. Access then was usually via the steamer service out of Strahan or the train service to and from Burnie, situated several hours away on the north-west coast. The people who live and work on the west coast of Tasmania are tough; they know they need to be to live there, but they are also very proud of their heritage, including the men who went off to fight for Australia beginning with the First AIF.

Mining was and still remains today very much a part of the lifeblood of the west coast. The health or otherwise of the mining industry and the wealth that it produced is reflected in the townships themselves. The fact that a number of communities have been consigned to the history books, while places such as Gormanston, Dundas and Linda are ghost towns, is an indication of this. Queenstown in 1911 boasted a population of 3 827 people with just over fifty-six per cent, being male. Other industries at the time included timber-getting and fishing.

In October 1912 the close-knit community of Queenstown was hard hit by a fire at North Lyell in which 42 men perished. A number of bodies were retrieved but with the fire still burning days later, the remains of the last 18 men were not recovered for several months. In the meantime the mine was sealed, putting men out of work. This whole episode had a devastating impact on the tight community.

No sooner had they recovered from this disaster when hostilities in Europe threatened their livelihoods once more. Germany was the chief buyer of Australian copper at the time. Until a new buyer was found, rumours abounded that the mine would close, leaving many out of work at a time when the state was already suffering a downturn in its economy. The British Munitions Department eventually purchased the company’s copper and the mine continued to operate throughout the war, despite some 360 men enlisting in the Australian Imperial Force.

Soon after war was declared in August 1914, around sixty men from Queenstown made their way to Hobart or to the Pontville army camp, intent on enlisting in the hope of a job with a regular pay packet attached to it, even if only for a short while. This compares favourably with the number of enlistments from Zeehan, a much larger town, with about fifteen men numbered among the First Contingent. The fact that the vast majority would join the ranks of the ‘pongos’ or infantry, didn’t seem to be a deterrent at all. Only a small number joined either the Field Artillery Brigade or the Field Ambulance.

Among the men leaving Queenstown was Alfred John Hearps, a nineteen year old clerk. Another was Harry Edward Moncrieff Massey [right: AWM H15810], a twenty-two year old draftsman’s assistant. Hearps and Massey were friends, having met during their time with the Senior Cadets at Queenstown where they were both subalterns. Both came from vastly different backgrounds and it is likely that the Senior Cadets was the only thing they had in common. Hearps was a farmer’s son from Forth, located on the north-west coast, while Massey was a doctor’s son. Massey enlisted as a 2nd lieutenant in the 12th Battalion, was wounded in the face at Gallipoli and later transferred to the 52nd Battalion on its formation, before being killed in action at Mouquet Farm on 3 September 1916.

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1 Statistics of Tasmania 1913-1914, p69.
4 National Archives of Australia B2455, service record for Alfred John Hearps.
5 Dr H. M. Massey had been the doctor at Queenstown before he died suddenly in February 1915 whilst attending a patient. Zeehan and Dundas Herald 29 September 1916, p4.
6 National Archives of Australia B2455, service record for Harry Edward Moncrieff Massey.
By late July 1914 talk of hostilities had been going on for weeks. Each edition of the local newspapers brought out another story of political manoeuvring or similar. So it was no real surprise to many when war was finally declared. Such important news as this spread rapidly, even to the more remote areas of the state. Within days of war being declared, Alfred had handed in his resignation, packed as many of his belongings as he could carry and made his way to the Pontville Army Camp. Whether Alfred caught the Saturday steamer or the Emu Bay Railway as far as Burnie and then a train to Hobart, stopping at Brighton on its way, history does not recall. But according to information later provided by his mother, Alfred wasted little time between war being declared and getting to Pontville to enlist. Was he anxious to be part of some big adventure that was in the offing, or simply being patriotic and fulfilling a sense of duty that he would have learnt first at school and later in the cadet system?

Alfred was the second son, born on 6 March 1895 at Forth, to Alfred Hearps and his wife Eva Alice, formerly Russell. He was to be the only surviving son: his older brother Clarence having died on 25 November 1893, aged three months from inanition. It would be many years before another child would arrive to join the family – Jane (Jean) Isobel Leitha being born in 1910. By now, Alfred was aged sixteen, had left school and was making his own way in the world. At the time of Alfred’s birth, Alfred Snr gave his occupation as that of a farmer, working the rich red alluvial soils of the Forth and Kindred districts in the state’s north west.

Just when Alfred Senior decided that there was no future in farming and took up mining instead is unclear. For several years the family lived in Queenstown with its high foreboding mountains, a far cry from the open expanses of the Forth River valley. But if Alfred Snr thought he could better provide for his family through mining on Tasmania’s west coast then he was doomed to disappointment. Brighter prospects seemed to have been on offer as Queensland’s mining industry expanded, drawing men with experience from other states. Alfred Snr was also attracted by this and moved his wife and young daughter to Mount Morgan, further still away from family and friends. Young Alfred, it appears, remained in Queenstown; no doubt a steady job and being among friends helped smooth the break. Just how Eva managed to cope leaving her only son behind is not hard to imagine, given just how distraught she became when informed that he was missing in action.

Eva had found the move to Queenstown hard enough, away from her close-knit family. According to family history, Eva spent several months each year staying at Kindred. Whilst visiting family, Alfred attended the local state school, with the remainder of the year at Queenstown, where his father was living and working. A good education was important and time off from school while visiting family was not an option Eva was prepared to entertain. So along with cousins and various other family and friends, Alfred attended the local school.

Alfred had a taste of being in the military prior to enlisting in the AIF through his involvement in the local militia’s 90th Battalion, serving with the Senior Cadets as a lieutenant. Obviously, he enjoyed this part of his life, which was in stark contrast to his work as a clerk, and when the opportunity arose decided to join a bigger venture. As the storm clouds gathered over Europe and war seemed inevitable, militiamen all over the country were being encouraged to be ready to take the next step in order to be part of whatever transpired. Members of the senior cadets’ 90th Battalion were no exception.

The night after war was declared, the commanding officer of the 16th Battery in Hobart asked all those present at a parade who would be prepared to enlist in an Expeditionary Force and help the Mother...
Country. According to an eyewitness, ‘the whole battery, to a man, stepped forward’, even those who were unlikely to be accepted due to their age. It is quite possible then that this same scene was repeated in many other batteries and militia around the state, if not around Australia, as it geared towards hostilities.

While Britain, and effectively Australia, might have been at war with Germany since 4 August, it took a couple of weeks before Tasmanian recruitment offices were opened, an army camp established and all the necessary procedures put in place. The Pontville Army Camp was opened on 15 August 1914 on a large piece of open and often windswept ground bordering the main road between Hobart and Launceston and adjacent to the picturesque village of Pontville. The site had few, if any, amenities, with the men living under canvas in what were fairly bleak late winter conditions. Water was pumped to the site, but electricity was non-existent. It did offer an excellent area for drilling and was large enough for all the branches of the army to have plenty of space for their own movements and camp.

None seemed to complain though, fuelled by excitement, the companionship and the possibility of the forthcoming adventure, whatever that might entail. Those arriving early were briefly interrogated before being sent off to the orderly sergeant, Sergeant Frank Wilson, who took down ‘such regimental particulars as were necessary’ at that stage. Each man was then issued with a palliasse and showed a heap of straw with which to fill it, as well as three blankets. Alfred was allotted to a tent where he was told to deposit what gear he had brought with him. Sergeant Wilson soon had him and the other men going about the various duties required as the men acquainted themselves with military etiquette and routines.

Alfred went before Major Harry Nairn Butler for a medical examination on Monday 24 August. Dr Butler described Alfred as being 19 years and 5 months of age, 5 feet and 8½ inches in height and weighing 10 stone 4 pounds. He was of a dark complexion with brown eyes and black hair. A scar on the right side neck was noted along with another mark. Alfred passed the height requirement and being passed as fit to enlist was allotted by Lieutenant Colonel LF Clarke, the commanding officer, to ‘D’ Company, along with a number of other men from the many different mining communities that were dotted along Tasmania’s west coast.

As with any new battalion, senior personnel needed to be appointed. Initially, headquarters and staff for four companies were appointed to the 12th Battalion, with others added later from South Australia and Western Australia. Members of the four original Tasmanian companies were drawn from a particular area within the state: ‘A’ Company from Hobart and the south of the island; ‘B’ Company from Launceston and north east coast; ‘C’ Company from the north west coast and ‘D’ Company from the west coast. A company commander with the rank of captain, two subalterns with the rank of 2nd lieutenant, a colour sergeant and four sergeants were appointed to each company. Among the four company sergeants appointed to ‘D’ Company was Alfred Hearps.

Despite being only 19 years of age and with many older men to choose from, Alfred managed to impress Lieutenant Colonel Clarke and others sufficiently with his leadership abilities. His appointment was dated from 25 August 1914. Alfred’s friend, Harry Massey, was appointed as one of two subalterns to ‘D’ Company.

Over the next few weeks the four companies trained in various aspects of military life, including squad and section drill as well as company movements. With a fairly high percentage of men who had some previous experience in the militia, progress was fairly rapid. Soon the men were tramping all over the surrounding country as advance guards, ‘fighting rear-guard actions, taking up outposts and attacking imaginary enemies at every point of the compass’.

Musketry training was held at the Sandy Bay Rifle Range, a train journey away. But life in the camp

Above: Officers and NCOs of ‘D’ Company, 1 October 1914.

14 The Mercury 22 August 1914, p6.
Pontville Army Camp in late 1914, 30-4278C TAHO] was not all hard graft, with ‘church parades, camp fire concerts at night, leave parties into Hobart and evenings spent in Pontville itself (cut short by the entrance of the piquet), forty-eight hours final leave … shifting the camp on to the high ground’, among other entertainments provided by men and their families.\textsuperscript{17}

There was great excitement on the afternoon of 7 October when one of the local businesses caught fire. A number of the soldiers turned out to assist the fire brigade. Very little could be saved from the building, which was quickly consumed by the fire. The soldiers, according to the newspaper, helped to rescue what they could, but were soon beaten back by the flames.\textsuperscript{18}

In late September the four Tasmanian companies were joined by two from South Australia. Kit inspections soon became the order of the day as preparations for departure were stepped up. On 5 October the Tasmanian contingent were given the opportunity of being farewelled and of farewellding the citizens of Hobart with an official march through the town, commencing at the junction of Augusta Road and Elizabeth Street. The weather was unseasonably hot and windy which made for very trying conditions for the soldiers and their families and friends. According to the battalion historian, Leslie Morris Newton, a lack of enthusiasm was noted among the large crowd that lined the streets. Much of this he felt could be put down to the seriousness of the occasion.\textsuperscript{19} The newspaper report gives a rather more festive picture of proceedings noting that ‘every bit of bunting and every flag that could be pressed into service … hung out’ to provide local colour to the festivities.\textsuperscript{20}

It would be another two weeks before the men left their camp at Pontville one last time, having rolled and stacked their blankets, struck their tents and left the campsite generally tidy. The rail system would convey them directly to Ocean Pier and their home for the next few weeks on their way, hopefully, to England. For many soldiers, England was still referred to or seen as ‘home’. By 1911 just over seven per cent of the state’s population said that they had been born in the United Kingdom. It is likely that a much larger percentage of the population still held connections there though, given the island’s history.\textsuperscript{21}

[\textbf{Left: A last farewell before the departure of the A2 Geelong. Source: Private collection.}]

By mid October, the Geelong, the vessel that had brought the men from South Australia, was now ready to receive the First Contingent of the newly formed Australian Imperial Force to leave Tasmania’s shores. Another vessel, the Katuna, was also alongside at Ocean Pier, ready to take on the horses and all their gear. Despite a newspaper blackout on their departure, word soon got around and a large crowd filled every available space on the pier as the boats were readied. Amid the flag waving, cheers and tears as the boats moved away late in the afternoon, a band played ‘Rule Britannia’ and ‘The Girl I left Behind Me’ to add to the poignancy of the occasion. Many families were saying goodbye for the last time as the ships slipped out of sight.

Life on the high seas soon lost some of its gloss as the men settled into the tedium of weeks at sea without stopping to go ashore. The initial euphoria of a trip to the ‘mother country’ faded when the men left Colombo and learnt that their final stop would be Egypt. While trips to the Pyramids and the Citadel were popular among the Australian soldiers, less so were the unending hours of training in the heat and sand as the men prepared to take on the Turks.

[\textbf{Left: Men of ‘D’ Company, 12\textsuperscript{th} Battalion, relaxing in Egypt. AWM P01987.001.}]

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{17} Newton, \textit{The Story of the Twelfth}, p20.
\item\textsuperscript{18} \textit{The Mercury} 8 October 1914, p4, col 7.
\item\textsuperscript{19} Newton, \textit{The Story of the Twelfth}, p21.
\item\textsuperscript{20} \textit{The Mercury} 6\textsuperscript{th} October 1914, p5.
\item\textsuperscript{21} Statistics of Tasmania 1913-1914, p67 & p81 TAHO.
\end{itemize}
Sergeant Alfred Hearps went ashore at Anzac Cove with the 12th Battalion in the early hours of 25 April 1915. Within hours of landing, Hearps and several others from the battalion found themselves in a position where they may have been able to miss the shrapnel fire but not ‘the machine-gun bullets that were whizzing close over their heads, cutting off the leaves and twigs of the bushes like a sharp knife’.22

Sergeant Hearps managed to survive his time on Gallipoli without sustaining any wounds or contracting any illnesses, but this does not mean that he came away unscathed; nor does it mean that his time there was not without a few close shaves.

In late July, Alfred was evacuated and hospitalised in Alexandria with debility, which was later referred to as a case of ‘hysteria’. It was probably more a case of shell shock and general debility caused by the terrible living conditions than any weakness of character or inability to stand up to the terrible conditions there, as suggested by Scott Bennett in his book ‘Pozieres’.23

After several months of the campaign at the Dardanelles, conditions were particularly tough, with drinking water being rationed and water for personal hygiene being reduced to about an egg-cup full a day. The food was relentlessly monotonous – tinned bully beef, hard-tack biscuits and tea, with mouldy cheese to accompany it, which many refused to eat.

Accompanying the food and water on its way to the mouth were the flies that swarmmed over everything in huge numbers. The disposal of human and animal waste was always a problem on the Peninsula, as was the disposal of garbage. The unburied bodies and the rubbish that piled up on the beach and elsewhere provided a breeding ground for flies. Along with the flies came the lice that caused many a soldier to scratch to the point of creating sores that became infected. Given the conditions it was little wonder that illness became rife among the men. Dysentery spread as men chose to remain in the trenches rather than seek medical aid until too weak to remain at their posts, thereby spreading infection to others. In one week in late July, men were being evacuated at a rate of about 170 per day. Keith Murdoch on reaching the Gallipoli Peninsula was shocked by the sight of hundreds of sick, exhausted and disillusioned men.24

Alfred Hearps was evacuated by the Hospital Ship Itonus, having been first seen at the No. 1 Casualty Clearing Station. Here it was decided that he was in no fit condition to continue in the front line and was in need of hospital treatment. On 1 August he was admitted to the No. 1 Australian General Hospital at Heliopolis. After an initial period of treatment there he was transferred to the Convalescent Hospital at Helouan eleven days later. After a further period there he was discharged to Base Details at Zeitoun before being embarked onto the Kingstonian on 11 September for the return journey to Gallipoli. On disembarkation he rejoined the battalion, remaining on the Peninsula until the battalion was given leave on 25 November, seven months to the date since their arrival.

In March 1916, on the reorganisation of the battalions in order to expand the existing divisions, Alfred Hearps was promoted to the rank of company quartermaster sergeant, which could effectively keep him out of the front line the next time the battalion went into action. Bennett uses this as evidence to suggest that Alfred had lost his nerve rather than been simply shell-shocked. Perhaps Alfred simply needed more time to recover from his many close shaves at Gallipoli or that the battalion needed someone with good clerical skills in the store room. Whatever the reason, Alfred fitted the bill admirably. To suggest that he ‘had no stomach for war’ seems to be without any real evidence.25

The 12th Battalion suffered terrible losses in the battle at Pozieres. In order to bring the battalion up to strength, the commanders needed to appoint ten new lieutenants from amongst the ranks, but after careful consideration only nine men were promoted. Among the names put forward was Quartermaster Sergeant Alfred Hearps; his appointment effective from 5 August 1916. Once more, Alfred was back in the front line and leading the troops, this time as an officer rather than as an NCO.

The next action that the 12th Battalion was involved in was the ongoing battle to wrestle Mouquet Farm out of the hands of the Germans. The attack upon the Fabec Graben was still to be undertaken. With the 1st Brigade exhausted, it was decided to use the 3rd Brigade which included the 12th Battalion. The brigade went in on 19 August, with the 9th Battalion on the left, the 12th in the centre and 10th on the right. The 11th Battalion was to be in reserve. Lieutenants Alfred Hearps and Osmund Roper, a 24 year old clerk of Battery Point, were detailed to take forward the left section of the line.26 Meeting little opposition, they crossed the crater field behind a section of bombers under the direction of Lance Corporal 84 Hector Lord...
of New Town, ‘pushing northwards from Point 55 through the trench beside the Mouquet Farm-Pozieres road, bombed several dugouts’ before they reached the rubble heaps that had once been the farm buildings. Here they threw bombs into its gaping cellars. Whether the two officers realised it or not, they had overshot their assigned objective by some fifty yards or so, possibly due to the fact that it had been obliterated by shellfire.

According to Private 119 William J Winters, the 12th Battalion was ‘forced to retire back to the other battalion which should have reinforced on their left’. In a conversation with Corporal William Young, he learnt that during the retirement, Lieutenant Hearps had fallen, mortally wounded in the neck. Young was unable to ‘stop to render assistance as he had to go on in the retirement’.28

Lieutenant Hearps was seriously wounded, being hit in the neck by a piece of shell. Bleeding badly, quite likely paralysed from the severity of his injury and possibly barely conscious, he implored his batman to go for help. Private Arthur Bean, Hearps’s 26 year old batman from Western Australia, remained with his officer for half an hour, rendering what little assistance he could, before reluctantly leaving him to go for help and possibly in order to save his own skin. Unable to return, Lieutenant Hearps and another soldier were left where they fell. Bean finally made his way back to the Australian lines, but despite pleading with Lieutenant Roper to send some men out to rescue Hearps, such a request was futile given the circumstances. According to the brigade diary, ‘the enemy shelled all our positions … all night 20/21st … being especially violent from 5 pm onwards’.29 Any ground captured by the Australians was quickly retaken by the Germans as they counter-attacked.

At the next roll call, 2nd Lieutenant Alfred Hearps was marked as ‘missing’. In mid September his identity discs were handed in by a member of another battalion. In the heat of battle things can become very confusing. Men under terrible stress often became confused when later asked for details by the Red Cross Wounded and Missing Bureau. At least nine or ten men thought sufficiently of Alfred Hearps to bother to contact the Red Cross with information about his demise. One report suggested that he was a prisoner of war but most reports were consistent with the fact that he had been ‘shot’ in the neck, which was fatal, that he had been left on the battlefield as the company retired and that his identity disc was handed in later.

While CEW Bean suggests that Hearps was in fact captured by the Germans and died shortly afterward, it appears more likely that he died of his wounds soon after his batman left his side.31 Further information provided by Chaplain WK Douglas seems to indicate that Hearps was finally buried by another battalion in the vicinity of where he fell. Chaplain Douglas passed the same information onto Eva Russell when he later wrote to her. The remains of 2nd Lieutenant Alfred John Hearps along with 200 other men from the 3rd Brigade were never found, deemed to have disappeared under the heavy shelling that the site sustained over the coming weeks.

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27 National Archives of Australia B2455 service record of Hector Edward Lord, a 20 year old labourer of New Town.
28 National Archives of Australia B2455 service record of Alfred John Hearps. William John Winters was a 19 year old saw mill hand from Tasmania. William Thomas Young was a 27 year old railway employee of Western Australia who went on to win the Distinguished Conduct Medal and Military Medal.
30 Australian Red Cross Society Wounded and Missing Enquiry Bureau Files, 1914-18 War 1DRL/0428 Australian War Memorial – 2nd Lieutenant Alfred John Hearps 12th Battalion 1310105B.
31 Bean, C.E.W. The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918: The AIF In France Volume III (Sydney, 1921).

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Above left and right: Two views of Mouquet Farm taken by the author in May 2012, near where Lieutenant Alfred Hearps was killed in action.

Alfred’s name is among those of the 12th Battalion proudly etched on the wall of the Australian National Memorial at Villers-Bretonneux.

On the surface it would appear that 2nd Lieutenant Alfred Hearps was simply another young man among hundreds from around Tasmania who answered the call to arms in August/September 1914, who fell on the battlefields of France leaving a grieving mother to mourn the loss of her much loved son. But there is more to this story than at first glance, one that the history of the First AIF does not record, for Alfred was of aboriginal heritage, being a direct descendant of Mannalargenna, one of Tasmania’s great native warriors and leaders.

Alfred was not alone in this, with at least sixty-five Tasmanian men of aboriginal heritage enlisting in the First AIF. While Alfred was the first to enlist, he was soon followed by others over the next eighteen months or so. Nearly all enlisted well before May 1917 when half-castes were legally allowed to enlist.

Unlike some from the Furneaux Island group, Alfred and his cousins were substantially of European origin and quite likely would not have been disbarred based on the colour of their skin or their facial features.32

While Reg Saunders [Captain Reginald Walter Saunders MBE, 2/7th & 3rd RAR] is considered by many to be the first aboriginal soldier to be commissioned as an officer, the case of 2nd Lieutenant Alfred Hearps needs to be reconsidered in the light of existing evidence. Alfred was probably aware of his aboriginal heritage, as it was common knowledge in the district where he was born and grew up that the family were descendants of Dalrymple ‘Dolly’ Mountgarret Briggs, a daughter of Mannalargenna; yet it is doubtful that Alfred Hearps saw himself as aboriginal. To identify himself as an aboriginal would have denied him access to the cadet system and quite possibly into the AIF. If the standard definition as laid down by the Federal Government of aboriginality is applied, then 2nd Lieutenant Alfred Hearps was Australia’s first aboriginal officer and should be recognised as such. Under the Aboriginal Land Rights Act of 1983 the definition of an Aboriginal person is a person who is of Aboriginal descent.33 So far, recognition of any sort for 2nd Lieutenant Alfred John Hearps has been conspicuous by its absence but it is hoped that this situation will change in the near future.34

For Eva Hearps, back home in Queenstown, the ‘anxiety and suspense’ was seemingly more than she could bear at times, as she waited for any news about her much loved son, as to exactly what had happened to him and where he was buried. To add to her pain in the years to come was the fact that her marriage to Alfred Hearps Snr had failed and she was forced to fight for her share of young Alfred’s possessions. In the end, Eva was sent his Victory Medal and Memorial Scroll to be among her treasured possessions. Eva also had to come to terms with the fact that Alfred’s remains couldn’t be found and that there would be no picture of his grave bearing the inscription that she had lovingly prepared for it.

In the opinion of Leslie Newton, official historian and an original member of the 12th Battalion, Alfred Hearps had an excellent record as an NCO on Gallipoli and it was most unfortunate that he was killed so soon after being given his commission.35 Clearly, Alfred had shown his potential, and like so many young

32 The Commonwealth Defence Act of 1903. See 1909 Amendment to Section 61 (h). Also Universal Training Regulations 1913.
34 Contact has been made with staff at the Australian War Memorial, who have displayed an interest in Alfred Hearps.
35 Newton, The Story of the Twelfth, p106.
officers who fell in the line of duty, his potential would never be fully achieved. He was one of Tasmania’s lost generation of bright young men.

Also serving with the 12th Battalion, and there at the landing at Gallipoli on 25 April, was **1227 John William Miller**, a private in ‘A’ Company. John Miller was the grandson of Fanny Cochrane Smith, whose mother was Ploorernelle. Fanny saw it as her role as one of the last half-caste Tasmanian Aborigines to bridge the white world that she lived in with that of her ancestors. All her children and grandchildren were taught how to hunt in the traditional way, and learnt the stories and ways of their Aboriginal ancestors.

John Miller was a 25 year old married man with three young sons when he enlisted in October 1914. His only daughter was born after he left Australia. Prior to enlisting John had been a member of the Derwent Regiment in Hobart for two years. On enlistment he was allotted to the 12th Battalion, embarking with the first reinforcements.


Private John Miller was described as being of a dark complexion with brown eyes and light brown hair. After an initial period of training at Broadmeadows, the reinforcements left Australia to join their various battalions in Egypt. Here the men were allotted to their various companies and settled down to training in preparation for having a go at the enemy.

Private Miller failed to answer his name on the first roll call held after the Landing. Initially, it was thought that he was wounded in action and missing. This information was conveyed to his family, who for some months lived in the hope that he would be found after getting a letter from him written in the days prior to the Landing. An inquiry held on 5 June 1916 put an end to their waiting, determining that Private John Miller had been killed in action on 25 April 1915. Whether he was killed as he landed at Anzac Cove or had made his way inland before being killed is not known. His remains were later buried in Baby 700 Cemetery. 36

Also on the Gallipoli Peninsula was **Cyril Charles Hearps**, a cousin of Alfred. The son of Thomas Hearps and his wife Eliza Morgan, Cyril also came from the state’s north-west coast where he lived with his wife and five children. 37 In August 1916, while serving with the 26th Battalion [Pte 900], he was wounded in action, receiving a shell splinter wound to one of his ankles which required evacuation to England for treatment. Cyril eventually returned to Australia in April 1917 due to asthma. He didn’t remain in the state long, moving to Euroa in northern Victoria. 38

**Cyril Allen Johnson** was also a cousin of Cyril and Alfred Hearps. He enlisted just prior to Christmas 1914 and was allotted to the 15th Battalion. While the battalion was raised in Queensland, it also comprised two companies from Tasmania, made up of men who had just missed out on joining the First Contingent. Cyril was also of Aboriginal descent, like Alfred Hearps and John Miller, and had spent three years with the Tasmanian Rangers. On enlistment he was described as being 5 feet 7 inches in height with a dark complexion, brown eyes and brown hair. 39

On 13 July 1915 he was at Reserve Gully undergoing machine-gun training when he was seriously injured in an accident, sustaining a wound to the thorax. Despite being evacuated, Cyril died of his wound the following day and was buried at sea between Gallipoli and Alexandria. His name is inscribed on the memorial at Lone Pine.

Cyril’s brother, **Vernon Johnson**, who was living in Sydney at the time, enlisted on 14 April 1915. He too had served with the Tasmanian Rangers but had resigned after moving state to take up a position as a machinist in Sydney. Private Vernon Johnson was taken on strength on 6 August 1915. At the beginning of 1916 he joined the Ordnance Depot as an armoury sergeant. After several periods of illness, Vernon finally

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36 National Archives of Australia B2455 service record of John William Miller.
37 Hearps’ genealogy compiled by the author as part of a study of Tasmanian Aboriginal soldiers who served in World War I.
38 National Archives of Australia B2455 service record of Cyril Charles Hearps as well as information provided to the author by Mr and Mrs Bill Hearps of Ulverstone.
39 National Archives of Australia B2455 service record of Cyril Allen Johnson.
succeeded to jaundice in December 1918 and was evacuated to England for treatment before being sent home shortly after on the *Norvado*.40

Another Aboriginal descendant was Edward Lewis Maynard from Flinders Island. He was among a group of forty-nine men from the Furneaux Group of islands to volunteer to enlist. Around half of the men were of Aboriginal descent, being the descendants of the early sealers and their native wives; many of whom were taken from their tribes on mainland Tasmania to the Bass Strait islands. Edward enlisted on 21 May 1915 and was allotted to the 15th Battalion along with Cyril Hearps. At the time of his enlistment he was 28 years of age and working as a farmer. On examination he was described as being five feet eight inches in height with a dark complexion, blue eyes and dark hair. He was taken on strength in the field at Gallipoli in time to take part in the action to take Hill 971 in early August 1915. The 4th Brigade suffered substantial losses, which included Private Edward Maynard. His name also appears on the memorial at Lone Pine along with that of Cyril Johnson.41

While Edward Maynard was allotted to the 15th Battalion, his cousin Frank Maynard, also from Flinders Island, was allotted to the 26th Battalion, another battalion with close links to the state. The 26th Battalion was raised in Enoggera, Queensland, in April 1915 with a mixture of Queensland and Tasmanian companies. The battalion landed at Gallipoli on 12 September and played a purely defensive role while there. At various times the battalion was responsible for the defence of Courtney’s and Steele’s Posts, and Russell’s Top. It withdrew from the Peninsula on 12 December.

Frank Maynard was a 34 year old single farmer whose only previous military service involved guarding the wireless station at Flinders Island. Keen to be part of the real deal he enlisted on 5 May 1915. A fraction taller than his cousin at five feet eight and three quarter inches in height, he had a dark complexion, brown eyes and dark hair. He also sported a number of tattoos which were graphically reproduced on his attestation form. Frank survived Gallipoli unscathed only to be killed in action on 30 August 1916 in the battle for Pozieres.42

Clearly, Alfred Hearps was not the only Tasmanian soldier of Aboriginal descent to serve at Gallipoli, with at least seven others; three of whom were his cousins and all the descendants of Mannalargenna and Tanleeboneyer through their granddaughter, Dalrymple ‘Dolly’ Mountgarret Briggs. Edward and Frank Maynard were the descendants of Wyerlooberer and of Wottecowwidyer. John Miller’s great grandmother was Ploorernelle or Tingnooterer.43 Despite the supposed stringent application of the selection criteria for those volunteering to join the First Australian Imperial Force in 1914 and 1915, not every recruiting officer applied them equally.

A number of questions remain to be answered. These include questions about the men’s motive/s for enlisting and what they hoped would be achieved by enlisting. It is hoped that through the writing of this article that Alfred Hearps will gain some of the recognition that he rightfully deserves as Australia’s first army officer of Aboriginal heritage. It is not intended to deny Reg Saunders his place in our military history or to demean his achievements, but simply to set the record straight.

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### Book on 1st Division AIF released

Divisional histories are not that common in AIF writing, with Captain AD Ellis’ ‘Story of the Fifth Australian Division’ being the most well-known and used by researchers. Writing a divisional history is a major undertaking, as it requires synthesising information on 12 infantry battalions, multiple HQs and many attached units, such as artillery, DACs, engineers, pioneers, field ambulances, signallers, chaplains, etc. Robert Stevenson of UNSW/ADFA has bitten the bullet and penned ‘To Win the Battle: the 1st Australian Division in the Great War, 1914-1918’. His book is part of the Australian Army History series and has been published by Cambridge University Press [ISBN 978-1-107-02868-5].

Robert has written on the formation of the 1st Division at the outbreak of the war, its structure and leadership, before providing accounts of the fighting achievements of the division. Maps and photographs are used to supplement the text. This book would be a worthwhile purchase for those who wish to gain a better understanding of the 1st Division, and will especially appeal to those who had an ancestor serve within a unit of the division. Available at all good military book shops.

40 National Archives of Australia B2455 service record of Vernon Phillip Johnson/Johnston.
41 National Archives of Australia B2455 service record of Cyril Hearps.
42 National Archives of Australia B2455 service record of Frank Maynard.
43 Mollison, B and Everitt, C *The Tasmanian Aborigines and Their Descendants (Chronology, Genealogies and Social Data)* Part 2 (Hobart, 1976).
This is about the issue of inscribing ‘Fromelles’ within the existing niche of the ANZAC Memorial in Hyde Park, Sydney. The survivors of the Great War decided what they wanted to do to remember their service and sacrifice. Later generations have no ownership of that heritage, or any reason to meddle with veterans’ decisions. Associated with this, the six other points below, have all been used as part of the argument for inscription.

To reiterate those seven points, the argument for inscription, was about:
1. taking part in a campaign to have FROMELLES inscribed within the existing niche for France and Belgium,
2. ignoring the official position that FROMELLES is commemorated under ‘Somme 1916’,
3. believing that it was a ‘stand-alone battle’ not related to the Somme 1916,
4. not believing it was a planned diversionary attack,
5. believing it should have received ‘Battle Honours’,
6. believing there was an official ‘cover-up’ that persisted into the 1930s, and,
7. believing that the First AIF, those men who were there and experienced all the horrors, after extensive consultation, got their official commemoration within the ANZAC Memorial, and in particular the niche commemorating France and Belgium, wrong.

Points 1 and 7 above are the pivotal points on which this issue turns.

Points 2 through to 6 are ‘furphies’ and easily disclaimed by reading Bean’s ‘Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918’, Volume III.

This issue is based on getting the facts correct, as pointed out above, and gaining knowledge with proper research.

The sketchy look earlier at the historical facts has resulted in a gross misconstruing and presentation of them.

To clarify why the first point is so out of order is that existing memorials cannot be tampered with. They are dedicated, sacrosanct, and to touch them is desecration. If change is wanted, then it has to be a new memorial of some description.

What really happened in the lead up to 19 July 1916?

These unchallengeable facts of history are to be found in the ‘Official History’ and in the papers of the Commanders-in-Chief as well as those of the generals charged with carrying out the orders.

One does not fight a war without a plan. A plan is developed through strategies. Strategies are developed by the High Command in consultation with generals who disseminate the information down the line. They also use maps of the areas under speculation so they know in minute detail how their various sections will dovetail together. They also note the terrain, the distances and weather patterns and the strength of the enemy.

Planning of the Allied Strategy for 1916 began in December 1915. All the Commanders-in-Chief and representatives of all Allied powers and Russia and Italy planned a massive joint offensive astride the River Somme and another on the Eastern Front. Joffre, the French C-in-C and overall leader at that time, proposed the Western Front part of the 1916 offensives should occur on a sixty-mile front in both directions, astride the Somme.

He also proposed a series of attacks along parts of the Front before the main thrust. Haig declined the latter but, as early as January 1916, he did order his generals to plan diversionary operations for after the main thrust of 1 July, to keep the Germans occupied. Provisional plans were presented for these diversions to occur at Ypres, Messines, or Fleurbaix and the army commanders were told to prepare.

The German attack on Verdun disrupted these Allied plans. French resources were redistributed to Verdun, leaving Haig and the British Army, almost without French support, to fight the planned Battles of the Somme.

With the weakened numbers, the generals had to re-assess their strategies. Of major importance was preventing Germany transferring troops from the north to the south where the main thrust would be, on the Somme.

The Somme main thrust began on 1 July 1916 and Bean delineates the battles as follows.

It all began with the Battle of Albert, 1-13 July. The second offensive was the Battle of Bazentin Ridge and Delville Wood, 14-17 July, and temporarily paused until 18 July when a ‘piecemeal offensive’, again against Delville Wood, with Pozieres Ridge, Guillemont and Ginchy added, commenced.
All these places, including Aubers Ridge, were linked and were part of the Bazentin Ridge, often known as Thiepval Ridge or Ginchy. These battles continued from 14 July to 14 September and the one that began on 23 July became known as the Battle of Pozieres.

All these battles continued concurrently or one following on from the other and formed the campaign known as the Battles of the Somme. The history of World War I for the British forces on the Western Front in 1916 was totally concentrated on one big offensive known now as the Battles of the Somme.

The Fleurbaix/Fromelles diversionary operation was ordered for 16 July to prevent German withdrawal to the south. Weather conditions made this impossible and it was postponed until 19 July. If all had gone as planned, it would have occurred at the same time as the Bazentin Ridge battle was being waged.

The number 5 533 is always quoted as the devastating casualty figure at Fromelles. The dead numbered 1 917 which is less than those who died at Pozieres (23 July-7 August). The number who died in the battles round Ieper (Ypres), e.g. Passchendaele and Polygon Wood, as well as Bullecourt, were far more.

The ‘Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-18’, Vol III, *The AIF in France 1916* by CEW Bean is worth a read. Start from Chapter 7 commencing on page 188 and continue till the end of Chapter 12 on page 447. This gives a clear description of the Attack at Fromelles and its relationship to the Somme Offensives of 1916. After reading that, it will be understood Fromelles was not a ‘knee-jerk, stand-alone action’. It was part of the tactics important to the whole Somme Offensive.

AH Farrer-Hockley’s book ‘The Somme’ [Pan Books, London, 1966] has direct quotes from Haig’s ‘Instructions as to preparations for the Battle’, pages 72 to 74. On page 77 the order that launched the Somme Offensive can also be read. Following are partial but clear excerpts from Haig’s Battle Orders dated 16 June 1916:

> The First and Second Armies, and the Third Army ... will operate at the same time, with a view to misleading and wearing out the enemy and preventing him from sending reinforcements to the scene of the main operations ... after gaining our first objective as described (i.e. a good position between the River Ancre and Serre), further local offensives will probably be necessary in order to continue the battle, to compel the enemy to use up all his reserves, and to prevent him from withdrawing them elsewhere. Such local offensives might take the form of attack on hostile strong points ...

All this information is enough to know that Fromelles was not a stand-alone battle but a diversionary attack which was part of the Battles of the Somme 1916. It was never ‘covered-up’ because, apart from the German news releases of the battle, fund-raising for the ANZAC Memorial began in 1916. Battle Honours are never given to failed battles and Fromelles was a disaster of mammoth proportions, achieving nothing. If more facts are needed, check the website and the Minutes of the AGM 2011 Appendix and the draft Minutes of the AGM 2012 for both the articles presented on this topic. They are historically accurate.

A policy to have the France and Belgium Niche at the ANZAC Memorial, Hyde Park, Sydney re-inscribed is not what Digger Heritage is about, nor would it reflect the veterans’ decisions. History may repeat itself but no-one can change it.

Far left: Photograph of the ANZAC Memorial in Hyde Park, Sydney.
Left: Rayner Hoff’s bronze sculpture of a deceased youth, symbolising a soldier, held aloft on a shield by three women representing his mother, sister and wife.
Gold medal winning soldier, Cecil Healy, commemorated on Tour

Chris Munro, Oatley.

The final day of the 2012 FFFAIF Commemorative Tour coincided with the opening ceremony of the 2012 Olympics in London. Therefore it was fitting that one of the last soldiers to be commemorated by FFFAIF members was an Olympian.

Upon leaving the motel in the bright sunshine of a French summer’s day, the coach took a short journey down the country lanes which led to the Assevillers New British Cemetery. This small cemetery is the final resting place [right] of Australian swimming champion, Cecil Healy. Cecil Healy won a Gold Medal in the 200m freestyle relay and a Silver Medal in the 100m freestyle at the Stockholm Olympics in 1912.

In September 1915, Cecil Healy enlisted in the AIF and served with the Army Service Corps in Egypt as a quartermaster sergeant before being transferred to officer training school in England, where he swam, rowed, boxed and played rugby. The poster, below left, featuring Warrant Officer Cecil Healy was used in the Sportsmen’s Battalion recruiting campaign in Australia in 1917.

In June 1918, Cecil Healy was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the 19th (Sportsmen’s) Battalion and was killed in his first action on 29 August 1918.

[Right: A postcard of Cecil Healy. AWM P04366.007. Below left: The battlefield grave of 2nd Lieutenant Cecil Healy, the Australian Champion swimmer; 6523 Private CF Bentin; 3732 Pte C Cravino, and 1669 Pte W Vaughan, all members of the 19th Battalion, who fell in the fighting near Peronne on 29 August 1918. Mont St Quentin can be seen at top left corner. AWM E03362.]

Michele’s second book released

A number of members have no doubt by now purchased and read Michele Bonford’s book, ‘Beaten Down by Blood’, and found it an excellent history of the Mont St Quentin and Peronne battles. Michele was honoured when, having spent several years researching and writing her book, she was invited by the Army History Unit to write an abridged version for the Army Campaign Series. The AHU, via Big Sky Publishing, has now released Michele’s ‘The Battle of Mont St Quentin-Peronne 1918’ [ISBN 9781921941962]. The book (RRP $19.99) contains many colour maps, photographs and illustrations, biographies of commanders and the VC winners, descriptions of the weapons used by both sides and has a very interesting epilogue on the Australian Remembrance Trail. The layout is a credit to the publisher and the book is a great addition to your collection, even if you already have ‘Beaten Down by Blood’. [Vale: It is with much sadness that members are advised of the death of Michele’s husband, Stephen, a fellow teacher, historian and member of the FFFAIF. Stephen will be sadly missed by all who knew him.]
Private 289 Sydney William Strike, 30th Battalion:
The 1917 diary
Graeme Hosken and Helen Barber, Dubbo.

Readers first met Sydney Strike in DIGGER 35 when extracts from his 1916 diary took us through his experiences in Egypt and at Fromelles, convalescence in England from septic hands caused by barbed wire, his return to France and then back to England with trench feet. Thanks to Helen’s possession of Sydney’s 1917 diary, we can now continue his story using selected edited extracts from his second year in the AIF.

Treatment and leave in the UK

Mon, Jan 1: Usual routine this morning. Nothing doing and very quiet day all round. Wrote to Mum.

Tue, Jan 2: Went before Doctor and was marked out for Friday. Stripped the ward of decorations.

Wed, Jan 3: Put both boots on for first time for six weeks. Don’t feel too good in them. Went to concert in Garrison Theatre, which was rather good.

Fri, Jan 5: Did not leave today owing to there being no room at Dartford for us. Don’t know when we will go now.

Sun, Jan 7: Had special tea in the ward, with prize money won for ward, and all hands quite enjoyed themselves.

Tues, Jan 9: Up 6.30 and drew kit, packed things for returning. Left Netley at 10am for London, where we arrived at 1.30pm after fair trip. Caught 2.15pm train from London Bridge for Dartford, arriving at 3pm. Went by motor to 3rd Aust. Aux. Hosp. where we were soon fixed up and made comfortable. Place seems fairly good. Rather colder here than Netley, feet NTG [‘not too good’ – Ed.]

Tue, Jan 11: Had fall of snow last night. Doctor round this morning and was marked for treatment.

Wed, Jan 17: Had great surprise when Stan walked in, being over on leave. We went to Dartford and the pictures and had general walk round. He returned to town by 7.50pm train. [164 Stanley Howells Fisk. Stan joined with Sydney and had also been in the AN&MEF where he served as a petty officer in the navy. He was a 25 year old clerk when he enlisted and still serving in the Naval Reserve. Stan rose to the rank of warrant officer then 2nd lieutenant with the 30th Battalion.]

Thu, Jan 18: Stan up again and got me out for four days sick leave. Went to London by 4.15pm train and hence to Peel House for tea. Went to see ‘High Jinks’ which we enjoyed immensely. Back just on midnight and had supper.

Fri, Jan 19: Booked seats for pantomime. Had tea at Peel House. Went to ‘Puss in New Boots’ at Drury Lane. Scenery splendid, otherwise only middling. Big explosion at Silvertown, which caused quite a stir in city.

Fri, Jan 26: Received a wire from Stan who returns to France today, much better. [Stan had fallen sick while on leave – Ed.]

Mon, Jan 29: Up early this morning and ready to go on furlough at 8.30am, when we fell in. Band marched us to station, where we caught train for London. Then to our HQrs where we were fixed up with passes & pay (£15), ready for furlough.

Tue, Jan 30: Joass & I went to Euston Station, but I had to come home owing to bad head. [2074 Private Charles Percy Joass, a 21 year old labourer from Five Dock when he enlisted in the 30th Bn.]

Thu, Feb 1: Met Cather at breakfast. We went to the zoo at Regents Park, had good look around and was well pleased with all seen. Went to tea and concert given by General Sir Ian Hamilton, where all hands were made at home and thoroughly enjoyed themselves. Met Cather & O’Connor when we went to see ‘Razzle Dazzle’, which was rotten. [Pte 128 Robert Joseph Cather, 21 year old pastry cook, and stoker with Naval Reserve, from Paddington, enlisted with Sydney 20/7/15. Transferred to 8th MG Battalion from 30th Bn. Pte 253 Charles Herbert O’Connor, 30th Bn, 20 year old painter and naval reservist from Coogee, enlisted 12/7/15.]

Between February 2nd and 7th, Sydney’s busy leave was taken up with visits to places such as The Coliseum, the King’s Stables, Buckingham Palace, Victoria Memorial, Westminster Abbey, the Changing of the Guard, St Paul’s Cathedral and the Tower of London. He also attended a number of theatrical shows and reviews. Like many Australians on leave, he then bought a train ticket to Edinburgh in Scotland – Ed.

Thu, Feb 8: Arrived at Edinburgh at 10am, two hours late. Went out & seen the Forth Bridge and went across it. It was fine and a great eye-opener. Edinburgh seems most interesting city and rather more homely than London. Should have good time here.
Fri, Feb 9: Up at 9am and had breakfast. Went to Edinburgh Castle and St Giles Cathedral before dinner and both places were full of interest. Sent home Book of Views to mother and Barbara.

Sat, Feb 10: Caught 10am express for Glasgow [sic]. Put the day in sightseeing, mostly on trains. Went through the Art Gallery which was fine. This is a busy city and much like London in that respect. Caught 5pm train to Edinburgh. Went to pictures to cut out time. Caught 10pm express to London. Quite enjoyed our stay in Edinburgh.

Tue, Feb 13: Arrived at Perham Downs about 3.30pm. Handed in pay books & passes, thence to huts.

Wed, Feb 14: Classified by Dr. at 9.30am. Not sure what I was marked but I know I was put down for dental treatment. Things very quiet here and time passes very slow.

Thu, Feb 15: Missed Wareham draft this morning … expect to leave here in the morning.

Fri, Feb 16: Fell in at 9am, received new pay book and after usual delay, moved off at 11am for Tidworth. Arrived at the camp 6.15pm and soon made comfortable. Met Casson and Walter Smith. [132 Pte Robert Owen Casson, 30th Bn, enlisted 19/7/15, a 21 year old pastry cook and naval reservist from Mosman. Was given 168 days detention on 14 March 1917 but was sent to France two months later. Walter Smith does not appear to have been from the 30th Bn so is unidentified.]

Sat, Feb 17: Short arm and dental inspection this morning. Moved to ‘A’ huts after dinner. Casson and I went into town after tea. Had rather good time.

Mon, Feb 19: Fell in 8am and went for route march, about five miles. Had another attack of malaria this afternoon and had to turn in. Was classified at 2pm, getting B1A2. [Sydney was serving in the Royal Australian Naval Reserve when he enlisted, and it is in this capacity that he sailed for New Guinea with the AN&MEF, where he contracted malaria – Ed.]

Tue, Feb 20: Went on sick parade & got medicine. I was put on isolation guard and done 7-9pm. Malaria much better today.

Thu, Feb 22: About noon there was an attack made on the Military Police, but there was nothing serious at the time … Mob ran wild after tea and destroyed and looted canteens, MP offices and others. Am afraid this trouble will end seriously.

Fri, Feb 23: Muster parade this morning when colonel gave lecture. Fell in again after lunch when we were inspected by General Maclagan. Mob again ran mad and I volunteered for picquet. Got eight of the ringleaders after quick raid on Sergeants’ Mess.

Sat, Mar 3: Another muster parade & presentation of medals by Sir Newtown More. Missed some jobs as Bob, Hogan & I went into town, which visit ended rather disastrously for me, being brought home absolutely useless. After about 2.30pm everything was a blank. [4044 Sgt Reginald Clyde Hogan, 30th Bn, a 21 year old clerk from Chatswood.]

Sat, Mar 10: After breakfast drew more clothing preparatory to making another move. Still at the same old job [mess orderly]. Rumour here of forming a new Division, but don’t know how things are going to turn out.

Sun, Mar 11: Rob & I went to Bournemouth per motor, had good afternoon. Met two girls after tea, had another good time, finishing up by nearly missing last car, which got us home at 2am. Raining all day somewhat marred our day; still we had a good one. (This was entered up on Monday.)

Mon, Mar 12: Don’t feel too good. Think I am getting mumps.

Tue, Mar 13: Fell in at 8.30, messed around until after 10 o’clock as usual. Left Wareham by train at 11.00am & arrived at Hurdcott, near Salisbury, at 2pm. Don’t know how this place will go, as it is so far from any town. Feel worse today, think will report sick in the morning.

Wed, Mar 14: Went on sick parade, was marked hospital with mumps. Left at 1pm per car for Parkhouse Hospital. Fixed up by tea time. Don’t think this is much of a home somehow.

Sat, Mar 17: Still in bed. News through re revolution in Russia which would do the country good.

Sun, Mar 18: Word through that Bapaume had fallen.


Thu, Mar 29: Had cabbage for lunch, which the lads [had] pinched. It was tres bon.

Sat, Mar 31: Left No. 33 Hut this afternoon for No. 5, preparatory to being discharged.

Sun, Apr 1: Left Parkhouse at 1pm for Wilton, via Salisbury, arriving there at 3pm. Walked to the camp at Hurdcott & was then fixed up at No. 6 Hut, No. 5 Camp.

Mon, Apr 2: Up for another classification this morning, was marked B1A2 again. Was also inoculated again and given two days no duty. Met Joe and went to the pictures.

Tue, Apr 3: My arm rather sore and aching today.

Fri, Apr 6: Had lecture this afternoon on the old subject of ‘Women’.

Mon, Apr 9: Gardner & I went to the pictures, where we came ‘gutsers’, having seen them at Fovant.
Sun, Apr 22: Up again for classification this morning. Think I got B1A3 again.

Tue, Apr 24: Was marked B1A4 & for the new Division. Our hut isolated today owing to mumps case in hut. Joe left for France with a draft.


Thu, Apr 26: Paid this morning. 30/- Edgar & I went as far as Barford for a walk.

Tue, May 15: Mother’s birthday.

Sat, May 19: Brown and self worked all afternoon to get things ready for ‘best hut Comp’.

Sun, May 20: Worked hard all the morning at the hut, but only came second on Consolation Prize.

Mon, May 28: Up early and had a shower and medical inspection at 9am preparatory for going on leave. Caught 1pm train for Exeter and then 7pm for Tavistock. Got there 8pm. Very surprised to see me. Only Uncle, Aunty and Clara at home.

Thu, May 31: Out on dental parade all the morning. Only had two out and have to get two filled.

Tue, Jun 5: To the dentist again to get an impression taken for top and bottom sets.

Fri, Jun 8: Went on dental parade again this morning and received my teeth. They are not too bad, but seem very awkward.

Wed, Jun 13: Up early for bath and getting ready for moving ... we eventually arrived at No. 5 Camp Perham Downs at 7pm. Met several of the old boys here during the evening.

Thu, Jun 14: Was marked A class. This afternoon was put into the draft Coy. and volunteered in draft for France, going tomorrow.

Back to France

Fri, Jun 15: Fell in 8.30 and had sort of ceremonial parade for a while. Left at 2pm for Tidworth, thence per train to Southampton. Straight aboard the ‘Viper’, casting off at 6pm. Laid off Portsmouth until 9pm. Due at Le Havre in morning.

Sat, Jun 16: Arrived Le Havre at 4am. Landed at 7.30am and left wharf at 9am. After march of about seven miles, punctuated with several spells, we arrived at the camp, found our room.

Mon, Jun 18: Fell in at 1pm and went to the ‘Bull Ring’ for testing on box respirators. Would have been home early, but as usual lost ourselves going up.

Tue, Jun 19: Went to Bull Ring where we had lectures and drill all day. It was interesting and easy.

Wed, Jun 20: In the Bull Ring again and had bombing practice and lectures before lunch, and skirmishing, snap-shooting and fire control after lunch.

Tue, Jun 21: Rained all the morning so we had bayonet lecture in tents.

Sun, Jun 24: Church parade at No. 2 Div. Camp. Bishop Wren opened and dedicated New Church hut there. Was not much impressed by his address.

Fri, Jun 29: Reveille 5.00. Breakfast 6am. Struck tents and gave lines general clean up for inspection. Done nothing for rest of day, only mess around. Fell in 7.15pm and went to Bull Ring trenches for ‘punishment’. We were the enemy.

Sat, Jun 30: Had rotten night last night. Continual gas alarms and stand-tos, very cold and damp. Had easy time after breakfast and were relieved by Tommies.

Mon, Jul 2: Went to the Bull Ring again today and had musketry all the morning and bayonet assault all the afternoon.

Tue, Jul 3: Medical inspection, issued with ammunition and spare gear, in preparation for moving off to the line. Passed ammunition in again this afternoon, the draft standing by indefinitely.

Wed, Jul 4: Fell in for Bull Ring but were dismissed and cleaned up the lines. Re-issued with ammunition after lunch and packed up ready for leaving. Left at 6pm for Le Havre, arriving there at 8pm.

Thu, Jul 5: Left Le Havre 2am, arriving Rouen at 6am. Detrained and marched to Rest Camp. Spent the day sleeping and running things easy. Went for route march through Rouen and quite enjoyed the outing. Fell in and entrained at 10pm, moving from station at 11pm.

Fri, July 6: Not much rest in the ‘sheep van’ owing to over-crowding. Arrived at Albert at 9am. Marched to Rest Camp, had breakfast, then to the Divisional Camp at Recourt, arriving about 11.30am. Made ourselves comfortable. Had a game of pontoon but no luck.

Sat, Jul 7: Examination of gas helmets again. On fatigues, Rob and I went into Albert for rations and walked home. It was a soft job. 1st Division Artillery moved next to us today.

Mon, Jul 9: Fell in for fatigues after breakfast and went filling in trenches in a Frenchman’s field all day. It was not a bad job, although it was showery most of the morning.

Tue, Jul 10: Went to the range this afternoon and fired fifteen rounds rapid. Did not do as good as I might have done.
Thu, Jul 12: Fell in at 9am and went to Henincourt for our inspection and sports meeting by the King. The second anniversary of our enlisting. [Note: Sydney’s service record shows him as being medically examined on 19 July and being attested on 20 July – Ed.]

Fri, Jul 13: Went for bomb throwing practice. It was a very easy morning.

Sat, Jul 14: No. 3 Platoon played No. 2 Platoon. Scores being 23-70. Rather a bad licking.

Tues, Jul 17: Moved off 7.30am for Corbie, then went about a mile further on to lift a couple of pontoon bridges for the engineers.

Sat, Jul 21: Very heavy bombardment during the night, around Arras front.

Mon, Jul 23: Fall in 8am and all hands who were in the Fromelles stunt were paraded for enquiries re the missing. ‘A’ Company played 8th Field Ambulance league and drew with them 3 all.

Thu, Jul 26: On Town Major’s fatigue all day, filling in trenches near the parade ground. It was far from hard and we did not grouse.

Sat, Jul 28: Had a go at the rifle grenades but only got a bang in the leg out of it. Spent the afternoon sleeping and playing cards.

Tues, Jul 31: In the train all last night. Arrived at St Omer at 7am after rather fast though uncomfortable trip. Detrained, had breakfast, and left at 9am for Blaringhem, where we arrived at 8.30pm, all more or less dead tired after a march of 12 miles. Billets here hardly as good as the last.

Thu, Aug 2: Went to the estaminet after tea with the lads.

Fri, Aug 3: Put the morning in with ‘jerks’, bayonet work and gas drill, and lectures. Fell very dopey this morning.

Sat, Aug 4: I left with Stan at noon via Ebblinghem and intermediate station for Etaples, then to Lewis gun school at Le Havre where we arrived at 10pm after most dreary trip. There is no reason why the coming week here should not be a good one.

Sun, Aug 5: Told off for Sergeants’ Mess fatigue while here, which is rather easy and gives me any amount of time to spare.

Wed, Aug 8: Received a pass and went into Paris Plage [Le Touquet] after tea. It is indeed a fine place, and well worth a visit, but mine was spoilt owing to the rain.

Sat, Aug 11: Packed up after dinner, ready to move off … at 5pm for Etaples, arriving there at 6.30 where we are to stay for the night.

Tue, Aug 14: Fell in 7.30am and went for brigade route march of about twelve miles, finishing up about 12.30pm, rather tired. Snow and I went to the usual place and had feed of eggs, etc.

Thu, Aug 16: Reveille 6am. Fell in 7.45am and had physics, bayonet and rifle control, and company drill. We had baked rabbit and potatoes for tea. Great day today. Third anniversary of Stan’s and mine enlisting.

Sat, Aug 18: Fell in at 6.15am and went for Brigade route march of thirteen miles around the country, arriving back at 1pm, pretty well more or less tired. Half holiday again. Went into town to the estaminet.

Sun, Aug 19: The third anniversary of our leaving Sydney for New Guinea.

Mon, Aug 20: Fell in 7.45am and put the morning in at bomb-throwing, questions, and rifle grenade shooting, part of a test for bombing badges. I failed in the first but passed the other two.

Wed, Sep 12: Issued with good conduct stripe, which caused a moan amongst the lads.

Sun, Sep 16: Finished section of cable trench about 2am. Left about 2.30am, getting home about 5.30am, pretty well worn out. Slept till dinner time. Fell in at 4pm and walked up to the front line, arriving there and starting work about 10pm. We were rather lucky going in, no-one hit. Usual heavy bombardment.

Mon, Sep 17: Worked all night, leaving about 2.30am, having to walk home, getting back about 4.30am. Fell in at 5pm and went per motor to the line again. Fritz made things very exciting around Hell Fire Road, but we got in safely. Still in the old cable-laying dodge.

Thu, Sep 20: Peachy and I went to Poperinghe for an outing. Arrived back at midnight.

Wed, Sep 26: Reveille 7.30am. Fell-in in battle order, marched out at 10am for the Reserve line at ‘Halfway House’ trench. We were to move to front line for ‘hop over’ at dark, but I left, rather foolishly perhaps, but it could not be helped, I had to do it. Our Division hopped over this morning and were successful. [This is a rather ambiguous entry. Sydney had not been well for a few days so was he told to stay out of the battle, or did he ‘funk it’ and sneak off to avoid the hop over? His entry of October 12 may shed a clue. However, if he did temporarily desert his unit, would he have put this entry in his diary? – Ed.]

Thu, Sep 27: Put last night in a dugout. Rejoined the lads about 8am and put the day in at the Reserve line, until about 7pm when we moved off to the Support line, arriving* about midnight after the usual good luck. Artillery and aeroplanes very busy all day. We put over some heavy barrages early in the morning. Another great day. * Polygon Wood.
Fri, Sep 28: Digging in most of the night, with little chance of sleep. A fair number of the enemy came in this morning and surrendered. More heavy artillery work during the night. Our platoon on wiring fatigue tonight. Not feeling well I was not with them.

Sat, Sep 29: Had to stand to last night, but the attack did not come off. Fritz pretty active with his artillery and planes all day. He made a counter-attack on our left at 7pm which was repulsed with very heavy result to himself.

Sun, Sep 30: Had to stand to practically all last night. Another counter-attack launched at 4.30am with usual result. Very heavy fog this morning, which was not to our advantage. Had a short strafe after breakfast, and usual artillery fire during the day but no further losses. Were relieved about 7pm by the Tommies and luckily for us we got out without Fritz knowing. All back dead beat, with a long walk ahead of us.

Mon, Oct 1: Arrived at Dickebusch about 1.30am last night all dead beat. Very heavy artillery bombardment early this morning and continued all day. Must be another Push. Left Dickebusch for ‘The Old Camp’ at … where we arrived at 5pm all dead beat. Feet very sore. Another great day, though warm marching. Went to estaminet for the evening.

Tue, Oct 2: Had a rough night last night waiting for our pack and blankets. On a digging fatigue before dinner. Went to the estaminet and missed our lunch. Went on bathing parade after lunch but baths being engaged, were unable to get one. Went to estaminet again after tea.

Thu, Oct 4: Took on batman for Mr Harrison [Lieut Frederick William Harrison, 30th Bn]. Another big push this morning, which was successful I think. [Battle of Broodseinde – Ed.]

Sat, Oct 6: Usual duties for Mr H. He went to the hospital sick just before lunch. Very cold, wet day and think the wet winter weather has set in. My feet are not feeling too good again.

Sun, Oct 7: Reveille 7.30am. We put the clock back an hour last night, so had an extra hour in bed. Rob & I went to Marie’s place again and had the usual feed of eggs. All parades cancelled owing to the rain. Very wet, cold and windy day.

Mon, Oct 8: Packed up and moved off at 7.30am, meeting motors at 9am when we went back to ‘Café Belge’ and made ourselves comfortable. Batman for Mr Brewster while he is in ‘A’ Coy. [Lieut David Taylor Brewster, 30th Bn.]

Tue, Oct 9: Several officers, NCOs and men went up to the line to see our position. We’re going up this evening. Left our camp at 3.30pm for the front line, where after a prolonged, tiring journey, being lost twice, we arrived in position at 11pm. Am not sure of the name of the position. Heavy rain all last night. Better conditions today, yet cool and cloudy.

Wed, Oct 10: In the front line and taking things as easy as Fritz will allow us. A chance shot got twelve of our men (No. 2), killing three, otherwise things fairly quiet. Very cold in the mud and feet starting to pain.

Thu, Oct 11: More rain last night, making things rather uncomfortable. Stan [Fisk] was killed during the day and on his birthday too. No need for me to pass comment on his death. Were relieved at 9pm and went back to the reserves. [Eye-witness accounts agree that 2/Lieut Fisk was in a trench near Passchendaele Ridge when a shell exploded, wounding and burying men and killing Fisk with head and body injuries. He was buried in a shell hole to the rear of the trench. One account states that Fisk, who was leader of 2nd Platoon, was invited to swap to the 1st Platoon position which was drier and at the time Fisk was in a wet uniform. This generosity resulted in Fisk’s death. Stanley’s mother stated her son’s age at death as ‘28 exactly’, confirming that he was killed on his birthday. She also advised that ‘Mr S Strike’ could be contacted by the historian for further details. Stan Fisk is buried in Dochy Farm New British Cemetery, Be.]

Fri, Oct 12: Up about 9pm and had breakfast and the morning off. Went on ration fatigue at 1.30pm and again got a touch of nerves and had to retire. More rain and has every appearance of continuing. Heavy artillery work this morning and I believe another hop over.

Sat, Oct 13: Done nothing all day, only got ready to be relieved by the 60th.

Mon, Oct 15: Busy cleaning up own and skipper’s gear all morning. Wrote letter of sympathy to Mrs Fisk and family.

Wed, Oct 17: Moved off 1pm for Half Way House, we are in reserves doing fatigues. Had great home in a deep German dug out here. Fritz plane brought down near our camp at lunch time, which pleased the lads a lot.

Thu, Oct 18: Usual duties all day, the lads on fatigues carrying duckboards.

Fri, Oct 19: The lads were out on fatigue and copped it pretty hot, but no casualties. Fritz sent over pretty stiff barrage all the afternoon and well into the night, which made our position rather uncomfortable.

Sun, Oct 21: Moved off at 2pm for the Support line at Anzac Ridge, where we arrived at 3.30pm, being shelled most of the time, though we had no-one hit. Made ourselves as comfortable as possible, although it looks like a hot position.
Thu, Oct 25: Cabby got tight again and I had the job of my life getting him as far as Ypres where I left him at the ADS. Got back with the boys at 5pm, dead beat after a strenuous day.

Fri, Oct 26: Lots of the old boys came back today, most of whom were in the 6th Division.

Thu, Nov 1: Kept running about for awhile after tea, getting ready for going to the school in the morning.

Fri, Nov 2: Up at 5am and kept busy packing up, getting away for ‘Pop’ at 7am where we had to wait until 9.30am for the train. All day in the train and still going at 10pm, having stopped at several places en route, the last being Etaples.

Sat, Nov 3: Arrived at Romescamps at 4.30am, having been over-carried, where we stayed all day, leaving again at 7.20pm for Albert. Had unique experience of being arrested, put in the guard tent and dismissed with no charge against us (two mates of mobile artillery).

Sun, Nov 4: Arrived at Albert at 11.30 last night and slept in the Church Army Hut. Left the latter at 11am this morning for the school at Aveluy, where we arrived in time for dinner.

Mon, Nov 5: Usual duties until 9.30 when we fell in and were put on fatigues carrying duckboards, doing three trips for the morning. After lunch we were put in a class for lessons for a Runner and a lecture and flag drill until 4.30pm.

Tue, Nov 6: More lectures on map reading and semaphore for the afternoon.


Mon, Nov 12: Usual lectures on map reading and our examination with semaphore. I had good result.

Thu, Dec 13: Still the same old job, and at 9.30am went on fatigue for the Engineers. More station work with the students and a semaphore list of one message for the afternoon. Cass, Jock and I went to ‘lantern’ lecture on New Guinea, which was not too bad.

Sat, Dec 15: Reveille 6.30am and there was no sleeping in either. Busy all the morning packing up for moving out. Moved off at noon for Varennes where we arrived at 2.15pm after a fairly stiff march. Left per train again at 4.30, going as far as Abbeville where we are to stay the night in the train. My feet very sore after the march.

Sun, Dec 16: Had rough and tumble night on the whole. Left Abbeville at 10.30am and arrived at Etaples at 12.30pm and soon settled down at the rest camp. Put the afternoon in at the Army Hut and the night in the tent, turning in early. Started to snow at 3pm and still doing so at bed-time. Rather cool here. There is no doubt this is a rotten hole.

Mon, Dec 17: After a cold run, also a slow one, we arrived at Caestre at 6pm where we detrained, had a feed and got our gear to the rest camp.

Tue, Dec 18: Up and left Caestre at 10.30am for Boulogne, where we arrived at 4.45pm. General leave for all hands into the city after tea.

Wed, Dec 19: Caught a train for Desvres where we arrived after midnight.

Thu, Dec 20: Found the mob after breakfast, meeting a lot of the old boys just back from Blighty. Mr Brewster went to ‘D’ Coy and went with him, leaving the old Coy after 2½ years in it.

Sat, Dec 22: Out again with the lads at ‘our’ estaminet and had another good time.

Sun, Dec 23: Went and seen ‘A’ Coy v ‘D’ Coy Soccer, 1-2 & ‘A’ Coy v ‘D’ Coy Rugger, 3-0, this afternoon. It was not bad football on the whole. Spent another night at our estaminet with the lads and had a good time.

Mon, Dec 24: The usual cleaning up continued for the morning. Went to see more football between HQrs’ Sigs v ‘B’ Coy Soccer, 3-1 & ‘A’ Coy v ‘B’ Coy Rugger, 2-0. Both very good, the latter extra good. Duncan, McKenzie, Casson, Lewis, Foley & self had a great feed and drink night at our estaminet, the best since being in France. All boozers open until 9pm.

Wed, Dec 26: Up at 8.30am for a change. Another holiday for the troops. Very heavy fall of snow last night. Everything looked very pretty, and it was far from cold. All sports postponed indefinitely.

Sat, Dec 29: Spent the afternoon at the [Cement] works around the fire, trying to keep warm. Wrote to Mrs Todd.

Sun, Dec 30: After lunch went and seen the Knock-out Comp. for the battalion in Rugby. ‘A’ beating ‘B’ 6-3 and a great game too. ‘C’ beating ‘D’, 3-2, another good game.

Mon, Dec 31: Up at 7.30am. Had the usual morning duties before lunch. After lunch went and seen Soccer matches between ‘A’ & ‘B’ 2-0, and ‘C’ and ‘D’, 1 goal all. They were not bad matches. After, we, ‘the
Postscript from ‘The Purple and Gold: A History of the 30th Battalion’ by Lieutenant Colonel H Sloan:
‘The 30th Battalion was born at Liverpool (NSW) on the 5th of August, 1915, about one-fourth of its members consisting of ex-naval ratings of whom the majority came from Victoria.’ [p.3]. This explains the number of naval reservists, including Sydney, mentioned in this extract. (Sydney’s naval mates though were all from NSW.) The ex-naval men were placed in ‘A’ Company and here Sloan describes the arrival of the Victorians on August 28th: ‘Clad in their blue uniforms and marching with that peculiar rolling gait which marks the seaman, they made a picturesque entry into the camp between long lines of cheering onlookers, the band meanwhile playing “Sons of the Sea”. Long after they had shed their navy blue for khaki they remained a separate entity in the battalion, never completely submerged, and always expressing their own breezy, but nevertheless, strong personality.’ [p.8]

Extracts from ‘The Old Digger’s War’ (Jim Hunter)
Contributed by Colin Sutcliffe, Birkdale.

‘Some of us were training as raiders,’ said the Old Digger. ‘Our aim was to get fit enough to hop over onto the enemy lines, kill a few and bring back some prisoners. We received word one evening that the Fritz were attempting to break through to the Channel Ports. Two hundred and fifty of us set out with full packs to march twenty-five miles to where the action was.

‘Our objective was to fill up a bottle neck to prevent the enemy from breaking through and seizing ports along the coast. We were in position at midnight – just in time for the first German attack. They came through in seven waves that night – the last with full packs (they were coming to stay). Our numbers were being gradually whittled down but the Germans were suffering horrific losses. I was hit in the right hand by a piece of shrapnel. An officer said to me: “You can’t use a rifle with that. Out you go.”

‘Some of the wounded were being sent back to the rear and being taken out. As I walked back one of my cobbers said: “I’ll give you five pounds for it.” Said another: “I’ll give you ten pounds.” Another cried: “I’ll give you my bloody farm.”

‘In the morning, when relief arrived, there were only forty-two men still holding out in the trenches. About half the original two hundred and fifty had been killed and the remainder wounded.’

‘After I was wounded in the hand by shrapnel,’ said the Old Digger, ‘I was transported to a hospital in France. After about a week or so some doctors arrived there to assess the condition of the patients, to ascertain which were fit to go back into the front line, and which were needing more time to recuperate.

‘The fellow in the bed next to mine was pretty confident of getting to “Blighty.” He said he didn’t think I had much chance. I gave myself no chance at all. I was reading a book and, between times, massaging my hand to try to get the strength back into my fingers when the doctors arrived. There was a lot of bustling around and some of the doctors were getting a bit short-tempered. I think the matron purposely left me till last. As the doctor was about to leave she said to him (knowing he’d be in a hurry): “What about this man here?” “Oh! Matron!” he said shortly, “you know I’m running late.” He jotted something down on a piece of paper and left.

‘A few minutes later there was an anguished groan from the man in the bed next to mine: “A bloody-one,” he cried. “Back to the bloody front line.” I was resolved to the fact that I would be A-one too.

‘An hour or so later an orderly passed by the end of my bed. “Lucky bugger! You’re for Blighty,” he cried. I couldn’t believe my ears. We sailed across to England and were sent to a convalescent home that was run and provided for by an English philanthropist who had made a fortune in Australia. He asked me what line I was in and I told him “cattle.” “Sheep are better,” he said. “You get three cheques a year from sheep.”

[Later in the war] ‘My tear ducts were burned out and it was three months before I could see again. I spent the next twelve months with tears streaming down my face. I left the hospital with my sight restored. There was a little boy there whose eyes had been bandaged for some time. He was a happy little fellow who was always singing little songs and cheering up the patients. He was due to have the bandages on his eyes removed on the day after I left. He was looking forward to and talking about being able to see again. The matron told me that he was permanently blind and would never regain his eyesight.’

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Seeking Private Henry Bell, 29th Battalion

Chris Munro, Oatley.

The Australian Red Cross office in Melbourne received the first of many letters, dated 17 September 1916, from the Bell family seeking information about Private 191 Henry Bell. In this letter written from his brother, John Bell, it states his wife and all of us are exceedingly anxious concerning him. Though we hope & pray for the best.

Mrs Dorothy Bell had previously received an official cable, dated 21 August, notifying her that her husband was reported ‘Missing in Action’. John Bell’s letter also states that they hope Private Bell is amongst the prisoners taken during the battle:

We know only what the Def. Dpt told us that he was missing on 19th-20th July. I understand the Dpt thinks that many of the missing men are prisoners of war. Is there any way in which we could find out?

Private Bell had been a member of the 29th Battalion during the ill-fated Battle of Fromelles on 19 July 1916.

Henry Bell was a 39 year old insurance agent when he enlisted in the AIF on 8 July 1915 at Bendigo, in country Victoria. Henry Bell was a prominent member of the Bendigo community, having been the Secretary of the Bendigo Rose Society and a member of the organising committee for the Bendigo Egg Laying Competitions. Henry and Dorothy Bell were married shortly before his enlistment and embarkation aboard HMAT Ascanius from Melbourne in November 1915.

The Australian War Memorial website notes:

The 29th Battalion was raised as part of the 8th Brigade at Broadmeadows Camp in Victoria on 10 August 1915. Having enlisted as part of the recruitment drive that followed the landing at Gallipoli, and having seen the casualty lists, these were men who had offered themselves in full knowledge of their potential fate.

The 29th, 30th, 31st and 32nd Battalions formed the 8th Brigade which was part of the newly raised 5th Division of the AIF in training camp in Egypt. The 29th Battalion fought its first major battle at Fromelles on 19 July 1916. The nature of this battle was summed up by one 29th soldier: ‘the novelty of being a soldier wore off in about five seconds ... it was like a bloody butcher’s shop.’ Although it still spent periods in the front line, the 29th played no major offensive role for the rest of the year.

Mrs Dorothy Bell remained hopeful that her husband was a prisoner of war and began a written campaign to try and contact ‘Harry’. She first wrote to Vera Deakin, daughter of former Australian Prime Minister Alfred Deakin, who headed the Australian Branch of the Wounded and Missing Enquiry Bureau in London.

Four letters to Miss Deakin appear in Private Bell’s Red Cross Wounded and Missing Enquiry Bureau File. The first, dated in November, and the following three, although undated, appear to be written by the end of 1916.
Miss Deakin
Dear Madam

Hearing that you are interesting yourself for the missing soldiers I am writing to know if you could possibly get any news of my husband No. 191 Private Harry Bell, ‘A’ Company, 29th Battalion, 8th Inf. Brigade A.I.F. reported missing since the 19-20 of July in France. I had a letter from the Chaplain of his Brigade, saying he went into the German trenches & that he thought he was a prisoner of war but we have had nothing definite. When hearing of you I thought perhaps you could help us for which we would be very thankful if you could.

Gratefully yours
Dorothy I. Bell

The second letter indicated that Dorothy and Harry’s family were still hopeful of good news:

Miss Deakin
Dear Madam

Some time ago I wrote you asking if you could find any trace of my husband (No.191 Private Harry Bell, ‘A’ Company, 29th Battalion, 8th Inf. Brigade, missing since July 19-20, 1916) I am enclosing a letter for him, in case you do hear something as it takes such a long time for a letter to go from here. I thought if you had one, you could send it to him as soon as you got word. Hoping and trusting you will be able to help me.

I am your truly
Dorothy I. Bell

My husband is a brother of Mrs Oliphant, Bendigo. Mrs Oliphant is also writing you about him.

Dorothy wrote twice more to Miss Deakin, each time enclosing a letter for her husband. By the last of these letters she is sounding increasingly troubled and dismayed. She says: I hope I am not troubling you too much but I feel I must do something. Hoping you will be able to help me.

At the same time, Mrs Bell also wrote to the Australian Red Cross in Melbourne on five different occasions, with similar requests and enclosing five more letters to be forwarded to her husband when news is received of his whereabouts. Sadly her efforts were not rewarded as she received the following letter, dated 12th December 1916:

Dear Mrs Bell,
In reply to yours of the 29th Inst., I extremely regret to inform you that your husband’s name appears on the German death list which means that they have procured some of his belongings, including his identity disc, indicating that he was killed on their side of the trenches, which leaves, I regret to say, very little hope that he is a prisoner.
Please accept my heartfelt sympathy in your sad bereavement and while I know too well at the present time the loss of your husband seems irreconcilable [sic] with everything, yet in the near future knowledge that he died fighting bravely for the Empire will be some compensation to you in your great loss.
Yours very sincerely
Commissioner

On 26 March 1917, an official entry was made in Private Bell’s service record stating that he was ‘Killed in Action’, 19 July 1916. His name had been recorded on ‘German Death Vouchers’ completed by the German Army as they buried the Allied soldiers removed from their trenches after the battle.

The Red Cross Wounded and Missing Enquiry Bureau Files provided give an insight into the circumstances surrounding the death of Henry Bell. Information recorded from fellow members of the 29th
Battalion reveal that Private Bell died in the German trenches, held for a short time by the battalion. **Private 223 HF Downer** stated: *I saw casualty killed in the second line of German trenches at Fleurbaix on the 20th July. Casualty was in the trench which we just occupied when he was destroyed by H.E. shell. The body was not buried.*

**Private 317 O'Shannassy** stated: *I saw him killed by a shell ... in German trench at Fromelles as we were coming back to first line.*

Mrs Dorothy Bell acted promptly in writing to The Officer in Charge, Base Records Office, Melbourne, requesting her husband’s personal belongings be forwarded to her as soon as possible. The only thing that appears to have been returned to his widow was his identity disc.

Sadly, Private Henry Bell still has no known grave but he is likely to be amongst those unidentified Diggers who now lie in the Fromelles (Pheasant Wood) Cemetery.

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

*Contributed by Colin Sutcliffe, Birkdale.*

Some of the English people invited convalescing soldiers out for the day to various amusements, and sometimes to their homes. I was taken out by an old English gentleman for a day of bowls. We hadn’t been there very long when he came up to me after he had been engaged in a game. ‘Come and have a drink. I just won twenty pounds.’ Later on the same thing occurred. This time it was ten pounds. The old fellow was winning all day. He must have been a champion bowler. Each time he was successful, of course, we had to toast his win.

I delivered the old bloke home (in a slightly befuddled state) and word came back via the grapevine that from then on the old gentleman’s wife forbid him to go out with Australians. Another Australian soldier told me he had a similar experience. In his case, when he delivered the English gentleman home, slightly under the weather, he knocked on the door and all he saw was an arm reach out. The man was dragged in and the door was slammed.

There was a story going around which may or may not have been true of an Australian soldier who spent a week with some of these generous people. The family this Digger stayed with were deeply religious, and the first question they asked him on his arrival was what sort of books he liked to read. He told the them ‘detective yarns’.

‘Oh!’ the lady of the house replied, frostily: ‘we always read the Bible.’ The Digger did not have a very good time with his strait-laced, religious hosts. On his return to barracks he learned that a mate was due to go for a week to the house where he had been staying. He sought out the man and told him of the cool reception he had received when his hosts learned of the books it was his wont to read. He told his cobber that the couple never read anything but the Bible and were very religious. He advised his friend to study a chapter in the Bible so he would be better able to converse with his hosts and have a more enjoyable stay with them.

The man chose as the chapter to study the story of Samson, who was said to have killed ten thousand Philistines with the jawbone of an ass. When the man arrived at the hosts’ house he felt himself well-prepared to answer any questions on the subject he had selected. As his mate had foreseen, the first question put to him by his lady host was: ‘what books do you read?’

‘Oh! The Bible,’ he replied. ‘I always read the Bible.’

A wide smile spread over the lady’s face.

‘And what is your favourite passage in the Bible?’

‘I like the story about Mr Simpson,’ the man replied.

A puzzled frown marred the lady’s features.

‘I cannot recall anyone of that name in the Bible.’

‘Oh! You must have heard of him,’ said the soldier. ‘You remember the big, strong fellow who killed ten thousand Philadelphians with the arse-bone of a Jew.’

Needless to say, that soldier had a worse time than his predecessor.

**Above right:** Nurses, soldiers and a male civilian standing on the steps of the YMCA, prior to leaving on an excursion to Windsor, UK, circa 1918. AWM Negative Number A03379.
Experiences of an Indian in the AIF: Private Cass Mahomet, 10th Bn
Contributed by Sandra Playle, Pinjarra.

Though anxious to enlist early in the war, I had to think long and hard, because, being a full-blooded Mahommedan Indian, I would have to fight against men of my own faith – the TRK [Turks]. Being under the age of 21 years, I wrote to my dad for permission to enlist, but he would not think of it. However, I was anxious to do my bit for the country that was giving me my bread and butter, so I decided to join up without letting my parents know. At the recruiting depot at Port Pirie (SA), the NCO in charge said to me in a gruff voice, ‘We can’t accept you’. ‘Why?’ I asked. ‘Well we are already having trouble with the Aborigines’ Protection Board over you fellows.’

His ignorance in guessing my nationality nearly caused a stink; not because he took me to be an aborigine, as some of my best mates were aborigines, but because they would not accept me, thinking I was an aborigine.

In the end I walked out, disgusted.

Some time later I went to Currie Street (Adelaide) recruiting depot, and everything was going fine until it came to my name. The official in charge exclaimed, ‘Mahomet, you’re an enemy subject’. I retorted, ‘And you are a -----.’ Another stink and I hopped it again; I guess he took me for a Turk.

Time went on. I gave up my profession as an acrobat and left the circus I was with, going to work in the ironstone quarries at ‘Iron Knob’. I started an amateur concert party, proceeds of which went to the All-British League – the sponsors of a fund farewelling soldiers. Each week I farewelled a mate or two who had enlisted, so I wrote a pleading letter to Currie Street recruiting depot, which sent back a telegram, “Come and enlist.” So that weekend I set out for Adelaide, but broke my journey in Snowtown, where, at the showground, there was a huge crowd in front of the circus. Not one among them would accept the challenge to ride the outlaw, ‘Moonlight’. Playing the part of a stranger to the circus, I accepted the saddle and went in. Result: a packed house. ‘Moonlight’ gave me a total eclipse. I arose with a broken hand, and a kindly old doctor there set it buckshee.

At Adelaide I was outed for six weeks. When the hand was right I presented myself again at Currie Street. Many of the officials were anxious to see the fellow who was once taken for an aborigine then a Turk. During the examination the MO said, “Hop up there on your left leg and back on your right.” I hopped up on my left leg, then did a round of flip flaps and a back somersault, landing about two feet from the MO’s table. He said, “Why didn’t you do that at first? It would have saved a lot of trouble.”

Then into camp … my first day on guard I’ll never forget. I was on the main gate at the Exhibition, jabbing at the post with the bayonet when it became jammed in the post. Before I could dislodge it half-a-dozen of the heads passed through the gate. All I could do was to stand at the salute. One of the ‘brass hats’ was about to tell me off when he sighted the rifle and bayonet stuck in the post. He laughed like Hell: so did the others. Good sports they were.

Before I had my first meal in camp I explained to the cooks that I was Mahommedan and did not eat pig. So that was all right, as I always managed to get something else. On the Berrima for breakfast the first day out was bacon; for dinner, stew with the remnants of the breakfast bacon thrown in. For the first three days all the dishes had some part of pig in them. I kept alive by eating ginger biscuits brought from the canteen, though I eventually became as weak as French beer.

I couldn’t stand it any longer, so I sought the intervention of the padres of the different religions. Their advice was ‘Well, it’s war. There is nothing else to do but eat what is given to you.’ I thanked them and went to the mess table, just in time to see an officer handing out a bottle of beer to every man. I drank a whole bottle of beer on an empty stomach and then tore into the pork.

At Durban I was made a corporal of the guard for duty on the rotunda at Durban Park. The natives abused and spat at me saying, ‘Blackfellow, blackfellow, you tink yourself white man’ – this from men and women my own colour. They could not make out a man of colour being in the Australian forces. Their abuse ended suddenly when I thumped one of my tormentors under the ear.

At Sierra Leone, being motherless broke, I was sad at heart, as the native crafts came over to our ship’s side with fruit etc. One of the natives in the boat caught sight of me and shouted ‘Hello brother, you be my agent’. I hauled up the fruit for the lads and sent the money down in the basket. I finished the day with my kit bag full of fruit. Every time the native sent up a dozen of fruit, he would add four – ‘two for me and two for King George’.

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Church leave
On arrival in England we were sent to Lark Hill Camp, Salisbury Plain. The first Sunday on church parade all the Diggers sorted themselves out according to their denominations. I stood stock still. All eyes were on me as the RSM came over to me and said: ‘What’s up with you?’ I replied: ‘I’m a Mohommedan, and I don’t wish to go to any other church but my own. There is a mosque at Woking. So I will need two days leave to attend there.’ ‘Won’t you go to any other church?’ I was again asked. ‘No,’ I repeated. So I was given a pick and a shovel and told to dig a hole 8 foot long, 2 foot wide and 8 foot deep. I was still digging when the mob returned from the parade. They sang out to me: ‘Go on dig away; you’ll be on church parade next Sunday’.

And so I was, stepping out causing laughter that could have been heard for miles. All the heads joined in too. After that I seldom missed a church parade. I was out with one denomination or other every Sunday.

A few weeks in Blighty and then came France. The evening of my arrival in Etaples, an entertainment was held. I gave a few items – ballads, ragtime and comic songs; and acrobatics. Then my coppers kidded me to put gloves on. Three chaps were pointed out as willing to put the gloves on with me, so I picked the smallest cove. The programme was such a long one however, that three of the boxing bouts were cancelled, including the one I was to take part in. Just as well, for the adversary whom I selected was Johnny Summers, crack English fighter.

I joined the 10th Battalion after it came out of Bullecourt. We ‘rainbows’ were lined up, and the RSM picked out two aborigines and myself. I thought Fritz had drawn the colour line and that we were to be sent back to Aussie. But the shock was to come – we were detailed to become snipers. I said to the instructing corporal, ‘Why pick on me for a sniper?’ He replied, ‘All you aborigine boys have a great sense of seeing, hearing and smelling’. Well, this is the limit. I pondered. First they knock a man back because they reckon he is a native; and when he gets in they shove him out in front of all the others. The thought of being a sniper didn’t appeal to me, I was out for promotion, so I joined the rifle grenadiers.

The first night in the line I fell for ‘listening post’ duty. I had the possie to myself. I heard a rustle in the crops in front of me and before I could collect my wits something rustled past me. I was relieved to find it was a big white pig. A few minutes later, back near the front line, the pig was shot, put on a stretcher, and carted back to the cooks. Next day there was nothing to eat but pork, pork, pork!

At Strazeele I was made escort for two prisoners. On the way one of them started to cry, while the other had the wind up properly. They thought that I, being a black among a lot of whites, was to be their executioner. I was too insulted to act further as escort so let them find their own way back to our cage.

Concert parties
I got on very well with the French and Belgians, probably because I used to tell them all kinds of sad stories, one of which was that I had come 14 000 miles to fight for their particular village and intended to carry on till we won the war.

Arriving in England after the Armistice, I accepted an offer to organise a concert party for headquarters and stayed for seven months on this job. I formed the last soldiers’ concert party: ‘The Gum Leaves’. We appeared at regular intervals in the provinces, and in camps. One of the last performances was given on the estate of the Duke and Duchess of Somerset.

Our transport, the Konigin Luise, on the way back to Aussie, called at Port Said. No leave was granted, so I was one of the hundred who took French leave. My homecoming was sad. My mother had died and my father was killed in an accident, and before I returned the home had vanished.

Still, I will always remember my experiences with the AIF – the finest chaps on God’s earth. Colour or creed made no difference in the AIF. During my theatrical activities in France, Belgium, England, Wales, China, Egypt, Philippine Islands, Borneo, Straits Settlements, Java, Africa and British West Indies, I have given my initial performance in my uniform with my battalion colours up. At all times I have proudly worn my Australian Soldier’s badge. Yes: I’ve got a soft spot in my heart for the good old AIF. And if it goes la guerring again, you can count on the Indian Digger, Private Cass Mahomet, 10th Battalion, AIF (though I hate the thought of war).

Source of article: ‘Reveille’ [date unknown].
Endnote: Cassim Mahomet enlisted in Adelaide on 27 October 1916 giving his age as 21 years and 3 months, having been born in Wee Waa, NSW. He stated that his occupation was a vaudeville artist and named his next of kin as his mother, Harsharby Mahomet, 11 Junction Street, East Sydney, NSW. On enlistment, Cassim stood 5'6½" tall with a dark complexion, brown eyes and black hair. He was allocated the service number 7036, given the rank of private and formed part of the 10th Battalion (SA and Broken Hill, NSW). On 18 December 1919, Cassim returned to Australia aboard the Konigin Luise and was discharged in Sydney where he died 16 November 1955. It would appear from a letter written 21 January 1942 from 36A Wharf Road, Gladesville, that Cassim was intending to serve as a munitions worker during WWII. A number of pictures of Cass related to his theatrical career can be found on the Internet by ‘googling’ his name.


Private 5913 Peter Barloge, 18th Battalion

Yves Fohlen, Quessy, France.

The battle of Mont St Quentin was fought over 31 August to 5 September 1918. We know today that it was one of the most significant feats of arms and a victory for the Diggers in France which lead to the Armistice. The 2nd Division’s ‘Digger’ memorial standing astride the plinth on Mont St Quentin is forever the symbol of the Diggers’ deeds.

But the human cost was heavy amongst the already depleted Australian units of the 2nd, 3rd and 5th Infantry Divisions.

More than 3,100 Diggers were killed or wounded in action. Among these casualties was 5913 Private Peter Barloge, 18th Battalion AIF.

On 6 March 1916, Peter Barloge joined the 1st AIF. Aged 21 years and seven months he was a farmer by trade, born in Cecil Park, Liverpool, NSW. As a member of the 16th Reinforcements for the 18th Battalion, he embarked from Sydney on board HMAT A40 Ceramic on 7 October 1916. On 19 March 1917, Peter joined the 18th Infantry Battalion in France. On 3 May 1917 he was wounded in action at the Second Battle of Bullecourt.

Evacuated to England with a gun shot wound to the back, he spent nine months in hospital then returned to this unit on 1 January 1918. Barloge fought and survived for another eight months until he was killed in action on 31 August 1918 at Mont St Quentin. There is no enquiry to be found in the Red Cross files about the circumstances of his death. It is just noted in his military file that he was buried in an isolated grave between the broad gauge railway and ruined houses half a mile from Peronne.

Later, his body was reinterred in the Peronne Communal Cemetery Extension. Peter Barloge was 23 years old. He was single and left behind a brother and his mother, Elizabeth, who was a widow.

Today the visitor can read on Peter’s headstone the following poignant epitaph:

I NEED THEE
OH I NEED THEE
EVERY HOUR I NEED THEE.

Perth to Sydney

A one-legged Digger, of Perth, who had planned to walk to Sydney, applied to the Westralian executive of the League for a letter, as proof of his bona fides, but naturally the request was refused, in view of the disinclination of the League to associate itself with such a hazardous undertaking.

Source: ‘Reveille’, date unknown; contributed by Sandra Playle, Pinjarra.
Frog Farms

Taking a shortcut through a meadow in Northern France one bright spring day, I came across a lonely poilu, or French Soldier of the Line. The word means ‘Hairy One’ in French slang. When they are campaigning they generally let their whiskers grow, so that the name is apt. The poor French soldiers drew very little pay and the term is really one of affection.

Watching my poilu for a few moments, I thought what a pitiful sight he was. A fine big chap, dressed in the regulation rough brown pants and the badly cut blue coat, with the soldiers’ kepi on the back of his head, and a big pipe in his mouth, he was evidently a shell-shock case, for he was making funny noises and casting a piece of string, tied to a long stick, into a pond near some willows. As I drew nearer I could see he was making quite a business of it, and yet his cheery “B’jour m’sieur” did not seem at all mad, and I became interested.

Thus I was introduced to the noble art of frog fishing, for that was what the French soldier was doing with his stick and string and funny noises. Having seen several of the lively little chaps brought ashore and put in a bag with a draw-string at the top, at the Poilu’s invitation I tried my luck, and found it rather sport, although I lost my first frog and drew a perfect hail of unintelligible French on my shamed head.

This is the way to catch frogs in the French style – try it in a waterhole and see what fun you can get out of it:

Take a long light stick – or, better still, a fishing rod – and use a piece of line about twelve to fifteen feet in length, with a three-inch square of red cloth tied on the end. Red bunting – the stuff from which flags are made – is the best for it floats well. Then you want a fine-meshed landing-net about the size and shape of a butterfly-net, on a fairly long handle. The rest of the gear you provide yourself, but you have to practise hard to get it working properly. Fill one cheek with air, and then expel it, opening your lips by tightening your cheek muscles, but without opening your teeth. This makes the ‘frog noise’; it is quite easy – the poilus do it and smoke a pipe at the same time!

When you find a suitable pond, stand on the side farthest from the sun, so as not to throw a shadow on the water. Sink the landing-net in the pond near the bank with the handle close enough for you to grab easily. Be sure the net is not too deep, and right side up, for friend frog is remarkably quick in the water, and everything must be ready to pick him up.

Now make a cast with the red rag well out into the pond, at the same time starting the frog noises. If you notice a little bubble, and then a ring that grows bigger and bigger, you have interested a frog. Here’s where you have to be very cautious, for the game is to get the slippery fellow to chase that red spot until you have him over the landing-net, and can bag him.

Remember that all this must be done very quietly if you want to catch more than one frog, for they are terribly shy, and – as you can gather from the fact that with a small noise from the bank you can make them rise – they have a peculiar faculty for hearing under water. Any loud talking or breaking of branches, and you will go home empty-handed.

There are lots of things to learn in this sport, and these you will pick up as you go along. For instance, if two frogs rise at the bait, remember to keep your eye on one only, or you will lose them both.

When the French soldiers catch enough frogs for a dish, the hind-legs are removed, and either boiled in milk or fried in butter, and then eaten with pepper and salt, just as we eat oysters or prawns.
The edible frog is the fat green chap, sometimes found with brown spots on his back. His well-developed hind-legs are covered with fine, white flesh rather like very tender chicken. It is a tasty dish, much enjoyed by French people, and the soldiers on leave at the right season spent a lot of their time frog-fishing, although it is hard work to catch a dishful.

I wonder what those rough peasant soldiers would say to a shower of frogs? In 1928 I saw it rain frogs for a minute or two on the coast near Maryborough in Queensland. The result was quite simply indescribable, for the little beggars ranged from the size of a bee’s knee to chaps having bodies three-quarters of an inch long, and they crawled everywhere in the houses. They climbed the stairs step by step, and when they had finished hunting for flies and cockroaches, of which latter there are countless thousands in that part of the world, they just came down again and went outside.

The scientific explanation of such a shower is that a big whirlwind on the western plains had sucked up a shallow lagoon and given the frogs an aeroplane trip over the mountains to the coast. This is borne out by the aboriginals, who state that the old people have told them that it was a much more common occurrence in their young days.

But what has this got to do with the soldiers’ pets? Well, the Diggers once started a frog farm, and tried to fatten a pen for a big dish. They belonged to an Australian battery, whose guns were in an area surrounded by ponds. Seeing the *poilus* industriously fishing for frogs for their supper, the Diggers decided to collect some of the noisy little chaps and try this strange meal out properly. In view of the length of time that must elapse before a meal for twenty-five hungry gunners could be caught, they gathered up a close-meshed wire chicken-coop, with a bottom of stout wood and a small trap-door on the top. This they sank up to the opening in a nearby pond, and each fisherman as he came home emptied his catch, all alive-oh, into the frog farm.

None of the Diggers knew exactly what a frog lived on, so these poor creatures were fed on everything that came handy, just in case some of it might appeal to froggish appetites.

Catching the elusive frog in quantities soon palls, especially if you divide the total day’s catch by twenty for dinner. Before they could get enough, the gunners were relieved by another unit. The newcomers were promptly initiated into the mysteries of frog farming, and the Diggers said that, to save possible loss of the stock on the road, they would sell the whole outfit cheap for a few pounds of sugar. The deal was completed, and as a parting gift they left the incoming unit all their rods with red rags complete.

On the following Sunday the whole battery had a really good boiled pudding, thanks to the extra sugar supply. The Diggers thought frog farming was worthwhile, after all.

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

_Contributed by Colin Sutcliffe, Birkdale._

‘The creeping barrage started at daybreak,’ said the Old Digger, ‘Captain Jacka, from the Fourteenth, was running the show. We heard the signal gun and the barrage on Zonnebeke had begun. We strolled along behind and the ground we were walking over looked like a ploughed field. Some of the boys reckoned it was not much different from going to a football match. As we neared the enemy trenches we were met by German soldiers surrendering — most of them in a state of shock, some offering us lumps of black bread. A machine gunner was chained to his weapon. The top of his head was missing. You could look down and see his brains. One fellow was burrowed into a hole in a bank. I waved him out with my bayonet and saw he had one leg half blown off, so I waved him back again. I struck one big bloke, wearing all the regalia, who gave me a bit of trouble. I threatened him with the bayonet when an officer must have thought I was fair dinkum. “Don’t stick him, Corporal,” he yelled. “We want him for questioning.”’

Captain Jacka was in the habit of making a sortie, alone, behind enemy lines. He would kill a few and, most times, bring back a prisoner. One of his own men, who should have known better, made the mistake of trying to rob him when he was asleep one night. He was going through Jacka’s pockets when he woke up. Jacka always slept with a revolver under his pillow. He chased the would-be thief and fired a few shots after him. The man surrendered.
Private 1374 Roy Stanley Lenholm, 19th Battalion

Harry Willey, Scone.

Roy Stanley Lenholm was the son of Swedish-born Carl Frederick Lenholm and Moonan Flat-born Susannah Elizabeth nee Dixon, who had married at Moonan Brook on 26 December 1889. The fourth of their ten children, Roy was born at Moonan Brook in April 1894.

The family moved to Newcastle before Roy’s ten year old brother, Henry, died in 1909. Three more of his siblings would soon pass away: two sisters, three year old Annie, and Maisie, an infant, died in 1912. His 14 year old brother Frank died in 1913. His father Carl died in 1915.

One can only imagine the feeling of his mother when Roy, a joinery apprentice, enlisted a month after his 21st birthday on 15 May, 1915. Roy had served four years and seven months of his apprenticeship with Andrew Coote Ltd, and in compliance with the Defence Act he had trained for two and a half years with the 16th Infantry Militia Regiment.

Roy was assigned as a private to ‘D’ Company of the 19th Battalion, which had been formed at Liverpool two months earlier as part of the 5th Brigade. He embarked in Sydney on 25 June and upon arrival in Egypt trained there for a short time until 16 August, when he embarked for the voyage to Gallipoli.

Roy landed on Gallipoli on 21 August and participated in the attack on Hill 60, the last offensive action by the Australians on Gallipoli. The 19th Battalion, from mid-September till it left on the 19 December, was stationed at Pope’s Hill, the place where, in August, Billy Pinkerton [Trooper 149, 1st LHR] and Ed Kiley [Trooper 143, 1st LHR] from Moonan had lost their lives.

On 8 November, Roy was given 10 days field punishment for failing to comply with an order and was found guilty of the careless handling of a rifle.

Disembarking on 7 January at Alexandria, Roy trained in Egypt till he left for Marseilles on 18 March 1916. The 19th Battalion entered the fighting around Pozieres late in July and were there until relieved at the end of August and moved to Belgium.

They returned to France in October 1916 to fight in the worst conditions ever encountered by the AIF, according to Charles Bean, the official Australian war correspondent who accompanied them.

Between 14 and 16 November, the 19th with two English battalions, the 5th and 7th, attacked the enemy-occupied Gird Trenches. On taking the support trench they discovered it was waterlogged, so withdrew to Gird Trench, only to find themselves in mud that reached above their knees.

Roy was wounded on 14 November, receiving a gunshot wound that fractured his right knee, and was invalided to England on the 18th.

While convalescing in England he was hospitalised between 15 February and 2 March 1917 with mumps. On 19 March he was sent to No. 4 Convalescent Depot at Hurdcott. Three days later he was found guilty of being AWOL for one hour and fined three days pay. Roy was re-classified fit for overseas service on 15 April. He was sent to the drafting depot at Perham Downs on 2 June and returned to France on 28 June.

Rejoining the 19th Battalion on 18 July, Roy took part in the Battle for Menin Road between 20-22 September, then on 9 October entered the fighting at Poelcappelle, the first battle for the village of Passchendaele. From this moment his fate was a bit uncertain: he was in turn listed as ‘wounded in action’, ‘missing’, then ‘killed in action’.

Enquiries by the Red Cross indicated that he had entered the fighting at 4.00am on the 9th, and been wounded in the back and arm when hit by shrapnel. His wounds were dressed by British soldiers from the Lancashire Fusiliers, before Roy was covered with a ground sheet to protect him from the inclement weather by 4452 Lance Corporal Johnson of the 19th Battalion. Later, the next morning, Roy was again wounded when hit in the right arm (nearly severing it) and hip by more shrapnel. This wound caused his death about an hour later.

Roy Lenholm’s file reveals that he was buried on 15 February 1918 but apparently the location was not recorded or his grave was lost, as his name appears on Panel 23 of the Menin Gate Memorial. He is one of the 6 178 Australians who died in Belgium who have no known grave. His name also appears on Panel 89 at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, and on the Roll of Honour at the Moonan Flat RSL Hall.

Endnote: Roy’s nephew, 23 year old Albert Vincent Lenholm [NX4552, 2/3rd Bn], was killed in action on 19 April 1941 in Greece.

Research hint: When researching a member of the AIF, place their name into the search box at trove.nla.gov.au. You may get lucky and find a letter, marriage or death notice, photograph, etc. – Ed.

DIGGER 34 Issue 42
‘You never know what you will find …’
Graeme Hosken, Dubbo.

When on a driving holiday, I will often stop and photograph a town’s war memorial or honour roll, and if time permits may wander through a cemetery looking for the graves of WWI Diggers (and hence possible stories for DIGGER). On a recent trip through southern NSW and central Victoria, I didn’t expect to find on a quiet back road a link to one of the more eventful incidents of 1915 – the torpedoing of the troopship, the Southland.

Heather (Frev) Ford told the story in DIGGER 27 of the Southland, which was en route to Gallipoli, mainly with members of the 21st and 23rd Battalions, when it was targeted by the German submarine UB14. Though the ship was abandoned, it did not sink, and a volunteer crew (mostly of Australian soldiers) saw the ship safely into Mudros Harbour where it was beached. Frev’s research led her to identify 28 Australians who lost their lives. It was one of those men who is honoured in an unusual memorial in the fertile farmland near Temora, NSW.

Deciding to take a different route to normal, Helen and I found ourselves travelling between Temora and Coolamon on a narrow rural road that runs through the interestingly named Bagdad-Sebastopol area of crop and livestock farms which, in October 2012, was a beautiful patchwork landscape of green wheat and yellow canola paddocks. Helen is always on the lookout for landscapes that her Textiles students can turn into ‘textiles art’. When we rounded a bend and came across a church ‘in the middle of nowhere’, she suggested it would make a good subject. Quite often my reaction is to say, ‘next time’, but something made me slow down, perform a U-turn and pull into the church driveway.

The Anglican church [below] was in good condition but, as I discovered later, is no longer used by the local community.

On the wall facing the road was the church’s foundation stone [below], which I wandered over to read to see when the church was built. And that’s where it was proved to me again, that you never know where you will find a connection to the AIF, for on the marble stone were the words: 1921, St Stephen’s, Erected by WJ Cartwright, To the Glory of God and In Memory of Rev R Cartwright, 1st Incumbent Liverpool, NSW, and Driver BR Cartwright AIF, Died on Service, 2nd Sept 1915.

My first thought was that Driver Cartwright must have been killed on Gallipoli, but a nearby information panel detailing the history of the church revealed that: The current building was entirely paid for by Mr & Mrs WJ Cartwright as a memorial to their son, Driver Bernard Cartwright, who was drowned off Gallipoli when the ship ‘Southland’ was torpedoed on September 2, 1915, and to the memory of Mr Cartwright’s grandfather, the pioneer Anglican minister, the Rev’d Robert Cartwright.

Driver 538 Bernard Ray Cartwright was born on the family property, ‘Boundary Villa’, and was educated at Temora and at a high school in Sydney, where he was a member of the cadets for twelve months. He enlisted in the AIF on 24 August 1914 and was allocated to the 1st Field Artillery Brigade Ammunition Column, where his skills as a farmer suited him to the role of driver (in fact, Bernard mentioned that he was a ‘good horseman’ and ‘good shot’ on his application for enlistment). Bernard was aged 20 years and three months when he joined up, stood 5’ 7” tall and weighed 9st 4lb. He embarked for overseas service from Sydney on the Argyllshire on 18 October 1914.

On 6 November 1915, Bernard’s father sent a telegram from Temora to the Minister of Defence in Melbourne, which read: Reported Driver BR Cartwright number five three eight the brigade ammunition
column first field artillery brigade first Australian division egypt by letter from his mate drowned is this correct reply [sic]. Base Records replied that no official report has been received concerning 538 Driver BR Cartwright ... but if you forward me the letter you received stating that he was drowned, I will, upon receipt of same, if such action is warranted, cause investigation to be instituted and the reply communicated to you.

The Army’s inquiries discovered that Driver Cartwright had been declared a deserter by a Court of Inquiry in Egypt held on 21 September – nineteen days after his death. The explanation for this strange state of affairs is revealed on page 13 of Bernard’s service record, where Driver 533 Thomas Evan Whitton is recorded as stating that he & 538 Cartwright stowaway [sic] Egypt to Gallipoli, later drowned, apparently ‘Southland’, not reported.

It was a letter written by Whitten’s sister to the Cartwrights that first alerted Mr William James Cartwright to his son’s fate and led to the telegram being sent on 6 November. This letter is reproduced below:

‘Leoma’
Bailey Street
Gulgong
2/11/15

Dear Mr and Mrs Cartwright,

I am writing on behalf of my brother who is at present in the fighting at Gallipoli. He wrote yesterday asking me to send his deepest sympathy to you in your hour of trouble.

He and your son chummed up in Sydney before sailing and have been together ever since, until death parted them.

He writes, ‘I have lost one of my best and dearest pals, when I sailed from [sic] Gallipoli my friend was on picket so he could not leave with me, he said that he would follow on by the next boat, which the poor boy did, they were torpedoed 35 miles from Lemnos and my friend was put in a small boat, but not for long, they soon sank her, and the poor boy was drowned, another friend was in the water for 4 hours, but was saved’, so I suppose my brother got the news from him.

He feels the parting very much but asked me to say he died for his King & Country. I am sure you could not wish for a more glorious death for your dear boy.

Be brave in your trouble. One comfort you know he is beyond all cares and troubles now.

Now my dear friends I must conclude with heartfelt sympathy from all, our boy’s family.

My brother’s letter was dated 12/9/15 from Gallipoli.

I remain,
Yours sincerely
Aida Whitton.

P/S.

When Tommy sent his ports etc home last August he had a chum’s overcoat. We have not been able to find out whose it was until in his letter he told us it was your boy’s coat.

If you will let me know if this address is right I will forward it to you; we have had it away waiting.

In my brother’s photos is one of your boy’s taken in Egypt. If you did not receive one from there let me know and I will forward it on to you as I think the Egypt photos are much better than the ones taken before they left.

A. W.

On 12 November 1915, Mr AD Ness, Secretary of the Temora Pastoral, Agricultural, Horticultural and Industrial Association [the ‘Show Society’] sent a copy of the above letter to Base Records on behalf of Mr and Mrs Cartwright. It appears that he also wired Miss Aida Whitton for more information, as she wrote back to him:

Dear Mr Ness

I received your wire today. I was sorry I couldn’t wire you any information, having to look up old letters. Now I am afraid I won’t be able to tell you much. I cannot tell you the name of the boat, but the one my brother sailed on was the ‘Beltana’ which sailed on Friday and the one Mr Cartwright sailed on was the next boat which sailed on the following Monday. I understand by my brother’s letter the boys were tired of being in camp and thought it their duty to get to the front to help their comrades. They decided to stow away on the first boat that came; but when it came Mr Cartwright was on picket, so he could not get away so he told Tom he would follow by the first boat, which the poor boy did. I think it was the boat that was sunk the beginning of Sept[ember]. Tommy
said they were waiting for a banquet to be held on the Anniversary of their enlisting. Well, that was
held about Aug 20th and it was sometime after that, so I think we can safely say the beginning of
Sept.

Haven’t you heard anything about it? If not, perhaps it is because they were stowaways. I
suppose they really would not know what became of them as they would not know they got in the
boat, therefore couldn’t report about them. The two boys chummed up when they first went into
camp, and have kept together all the time.

My brother’s letter was awfully sad, losing his best pal. I really don’t think my brother’s
letter could have been examined [by the censors – Ed.] otherwise it would never have got through, as
they seem to be keeping the sinking of that ship very quiet. I am afraid I cannot give you any other
information, I only wish I could. I am very sorry if Mr Cartwright hadn’t any word before he
received my letter; had I known I would have sent it in some different way, as it must have been an
awful shock. Trusting you have received more information before this. Mr Bargwanna, whom I told,
was going to write today.

With deepest sympathy to Mr & Mrs Cartwright & family.

Yours sincerely.

Aida Whitton.

P.S. I do trust there has been no mistake on my brother’s account, but I am afraid it is quite right.

His letter was written on Sept. 5th. A.W.

It was not until 12 February 1916 that the records were
adjusted to show that Bernard Cartwright drowned from on
board HMA T ‘Southland’ while en route from Alexandria
to Mudros. Bernard’s decision to stowaway ‘to help his
comrades’ cost him his life.

On 9 August 1922, Base Records wrote to Mr
Cartwright advising him that his son’s memorial plaque
had been manufactured with the name ‘Bernard Roy
Cartwright’ and asking if you are prepared to accept same
in its present form. Mr Cartwright replied, stating that he
was willing to accept plaque and scroll as it is.

The year before, St Stephen’s Church, which he
had funded in honour of his son, had been opened – a much
grander and more unique memorial.

[Endnotes: (1) Thomas Evan Whitton was a 22 year old grocer when he enlisted on the same day as
Bernard Cartwright. He was also declared a deserter on 21/9/15 at a Court of Inquiry at Zaheriah, Egypt, but
by 4/10/15 he had been attached to the 3rd Battery on Gallipoli. For being AWL between 28-29/9/15 he was
awarded Field Punishment No. 2 on 30/10/15 and docked 14 days pay. Thomas was evacuated sick from
Gallipoli in November 1915 and rejoined his unit on 11/2/16. On 18/8/16 he was taken on strength of the 7th
Battery AFA but was severely wounded three days later with gunshot wounds to his legs, which led to both
limbs being amputated. He returned to Australia on 16/2/18 and was discharged on 15/8/18. (2) Photo of
Driver Bernard Ray Cartwright courtesy of Bernard Cartwright, Temora. Driver Cartwright is Bernard’s
grandfather’s stepbrother. The Cartwright family still own and farm ‘Boundary Villa’. (3) Bernard informed
me that the contents of the church (to the dismay of the local parishioners) have either been sold off, or
donated to the Temora Rural Museum (incidentally, one of the best museums in country Australia).
Temora is also home to the Temora Aviation Museum which is well-worth a visit. Not only does it have
regular flying weekends open to the public (it is the home of Australia’s only two flying Spitfires), it has an
excellent display on AFC aces of WWI. For information on the museum, its collection of ‘warbirds’ and
dates for flying weekends, go to www.aviationmuseum.com.au.

Travel tip: When visiting a town, dine out at the local RSL Club. Often they have a memorabilia display.
Driver ‘Sep’ Flint: A larrikin of the Light Horse Field Ambulance

Geoff Lewis, Raglan.

In the history of the First AIF, there are stories of men whom we can only describe as ‘larrikins’: those who paid scant regard for the formalities of military life. They have only a passing respect for stripes, pips and crowns. Off-duty, they keep the MPs on their toes. They are always ‘in trouble’ or being ‘reprimanded’ and punished by Field Punishment No. 2 and/or forfeiture of pay.

Such men were often invaluable at the front – in the trenches. Their laconic, dry humour and their ‘yarns’ and exploits were important in maintaining morale among their mates. All too frequently – and unexpectedly – many of them revealed a talent for leadership, albeit informal, that could not be taught. They were often capable of extreme acts of unselfish courage and personal sacrifice.

Driver 6051 Septimus David Flint of the Australian Light Horse (ALH) 1st Brigade Field Ambulance was one such man. ‘Sep’ – as he was universally known – was born in Cowra (NSW) on 14 October 1893, the seventh son of sixteen children born to Frank Stevens Flint and Mary Langfield Flint. His father, although born in Herefordshire (UK), twice enlisted in the Army of the Potomac during the American Civil War. He saw action at the Battle of Cedar Creek in October 1864. Frank migrated to Cowra via the UK ten years later, rising to become Cowra’s first Town Clerk in 1888.

Young Sep attended Cowra Public School, but left at the end of 4th Grade. He received only a basic education, and his attendance at school seems to have been irregular. He successfully sought employment as a farm labourer in the Cowra district until his enlistment on 19 February 1915.

Four of Sep’s brothers also enlisted in the AIF: Private Percy Flint MID, 12th Reinforcements of 6th LH Regiment/1st LH Brigade Field Ambulance; Lance Corporal 65980 Thomas Langfield Flint, 4th Battalion; Private 50383 Gladstone Flint, 1st ALH Brigade Field Ambulance; and Private 7238 Charles Langfield Flint, 24th Reinforcements of 2nd Battalion/63rd Battalion/36th Battalion/3rd MG Battalion. [Right: The five Flint brothers’ names appear on the Cowra War Memorial in the order of their enlistment. ‘Flint C’ should be ‘Flint G’.]

Initially, the nuggety Private Sep Flint (five feet four inches in height and weighing 130 pounds), was allocated to the 8th Reinforcements of the 2nd Australian General Hospital. He embarked from Sydney on 28 July 1916, joining his unit in Egypt on 2 September. Later that year, on New Year’s Eve, he was transferred to the 1st Australian Light Horse Brigade Field Ambulance, then at Heliopolis. He remained in that unit until the end of the war. Obviously, his skills with heavy horses, learnt on the farm, were seen to be more valuable to the army. Many people who knew Sep confirm that he was ‘pretty good’ with draught horses.

At the time, his unit was part of the Anzac Mounted Division, commanded by Major General Harry Chauvel – and later by Major General Edward Chaytor. It was composed of three brigades: 1st Brigade (1st, 2nd and 3rd ALH Regiments); 2nd Brigade (5th, 6th and 7th ALH Regiments) and the New Zealand Mounted Rifles.

The purpose of the ALH Field Ambulance (FA) was to provide medical transport and aid to the wounded and sick of their brigade. The FA was usually divided into two sections: the Mobile Section and the Immobile Section. The former, to which Sep was allocated, was responsible, while travelling with the brigade and going into combat, for establishing a dressing station, retrieving the wounded from the field by horse, stretcher or ‘sand cart’ and transporting them to the dressing station. The latter section established and operated the receiving station. There, surgeons would operate on the wounded. From here the casualties would be evacuated to a clearing station and thence to a base hospital.

There were a few methods of transport used, which varied according to the physical environment in which the brigade fought. Basically, transport had to operate in hot, dry, dusty, sandy or rocky country. Initially, horses were used, but these animals would not work effectively due to Turkish gunfire. For relatively short distances, stretchers were used. For a brief time, even ‘bicycle stretchers’ were employed, but abandoned after the First Battle of Gaza. Probably the most effective transports were ‘sand carts’. These had wide steel rims on the wheels and were designed for travel over soft sand. These horse or mule drawn vehicles could carry three stretchers. Their efficiency was not as expected in the rocky terrain of Palestine and Syria and breakdowns were not unusual. Occasionally, a ‘sand sledge’ was used to transport a single
man. Light ambulance wagons drawn by four horses were the most common and are seen in photographs of the light horse in action. Finally, camel cacolets were used to carry the wounded over long distances. No matter what form of transport was employed; patients always recalled that they were very uncomfortable. [Left: A sand cart, which could carry three wounded. Note the wider rims on the wheels. Source: ‘The Great Ride’, H Bostok.]

Following his transfer to the 1st ALH Brigade Field Ambulance, Sep spent several weeks in hospital recuperating from the ‘usual’ illnesses that plagued all Anzacs in Egypt. Finally, on 1 April, he rejoined his unit at Heliopolis with the rank of driver. Therefore, he was to see his first action at Romani on 4-5 August 1917.

Romani was one of the most important outposts in the Sinai. It was to offer protection to the Suez Canal and, at the time, was manned by Chauvel’s Anzac Mounted Division. C-in-C of the British Forces in the Middle East from March 1916-June 1917, General Archibald Murray, quite correctly, believed that the Turks intended to attack and capture the Suez Canal. Part of the Turkish strategy was to attack in the area around Romani. Chauvel’s men had earlier been ordered to go to Romani to acclimatise themselves to the harsh desert conditions.

The Turks had been quiet for several months, but then the Turkish attack fell on the outposts of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Regiments of the ALH on 3 August 1916. After three hours of savage fighting, the LH were ordered to stage an ordered, but slow, withdrawal back towards the town. There were many casualties and the Field Ambulance was kept busy throughout the night bringing them back to the dressing stations.

Chauvel’s aim was to lure the Turks into following the retiring light horse, unaware that he had hidden the 2nd and 3rd Brigades in the sand dunes on the Turkish flanks. The NZ Mounted Rifles were forced from their defensive position of Wellington Ridge. The order went out to stop the withdrawal and the 1st Brigade was to link with the New Zealanders and form a line, which they were to hold. Again, massed attacks by the Turks on the dismounted horsemen, kept the ambulances busy. Supported by artillery, the division now counter-attacked from three sides, forcing the enemy to retreat. They had held Wellington Ridge, quite literally, to the last man; all together the Turks lost 5,000 men in the attack.

The 1st and 2nd Brigades, supported by British Infantry, followed up by taking Katia in a bayonet charge the next day. Although the town was not completely mopped up, the threat to Egypt had dissipated. On 9 August, the Turks abandoned Bir el Abd; and two days later fell back to Salanda. By 13 August, the Turks held a line running east from El Arish, an important port on the Mediterranean coast. By now, Sep and his mates had established a camp at Romani, from where they could repair damaged equipment and rest themselves and their horses and mules, as well as supporting their mates following the Turks across the waterless desert. The advance, however, could only be as fast as the construction of the railhead and water pipeline – both absolutely essential to survival and to success in the field.

On 20 December 1916, the 1st Brigade (minus the 2nd Regiment) reached the coast to the west of El Arish. Men and horses were both exhausted and thirsty, and so it was decided that an attack was to be launched against the town to secure, at least, the water supplies. The town had been held by the Turks since they first entered the war some two years before. It fell without a shot being fired by either side. For some reason, the Turks had left [Day, p45]. Intelligence reports indicated that the enemy had retreated towards Rafa.

For Sep and his mates in the field ambulance, this break, at a new camp established at Etmaler, was an opportunity to examine their performance under battle conditions in the desert. Of principal interest was the ways in which casualties were retrieved from the field and transported to help and safety. They had learnt many lessons. Following the fighting for Bin el Abd, it was thought that the camel cacolets were generally unsuitable, but could be used if absolutely necessary. The main change, however, was the invention of the horse or mule drawn ‘sand carts’. Although not perfect, they gave the field ambulance more flexibility in realising their raison d’etre, despite the fact that they could not be easily deployed right at the front line. Men still had to be brought from the line on horses or on stretchers.

Also noteworthy, was a ‘philosophical concern’ that doubtless occupied many hours discussion among the men. Daly asserts [p36] that ‘This ‘law’ about saving wounded men [left out in the desert] was dangerous and frowned upon by anonymous high command mandarins, but the men went into action knowing that if was humanly possible to be carried out, they would not be allowed to fall into Turkish hands, or left to the murderous Bedouins who prowled around the edges of the battlefields.” Australian mateship
The next year, 1917, was to be ‘interesting’ for Sep. On 28 April, he was admitted to hospital suffering from gonorrhoea contracted from a ‘native’ at Khan Yunus. He was treated and declared ‘ceased to have VD’ by 12 May. On 22 June he was back with the field ambulance, on leave at Moascar.

[Left: Driver Septimus Flint. Courtesy of Cowra Shire Council.]

Things did not improve for Sep. On 9 September he faced a charge of ‘Conduct to the prejudice of good order and military discipline in that he struck a native driver belonging to the Field Ambulance on 30 June 1917 at Marakets’. Such offences were dealt with at regimental level, according to Section 44 of Army Regulations. His defence was that the man ‘did not do as he was told’. In any case Sep was ‘Awarded 1 days FP [Field Punishment] No. 2 and forfeit 1 days pay, 6/-’.

Field Punishment No. 2 had been used in British Armies for a long period of time. Basically, the offender was placed in fetters and handcuffs for the time sentenced, but was not attached to a fixed object, such as a cannon. He was still able to march with his unit. In practice, this was usually modified to include only a couple of hours fettered and to cut out the remainder of the sentence in hard labour. This was not considered to be a ‘major’ offence at the time; indeed, some men almost wore it as a badge of honour. Many of those who knew Sep claim that such an assault was out of character, as he was considered to be a likeable person. It is, however, an example of Sep’s quickly rising and falling temper, a trait that others have alluded to in interview.

To some extent, he was also reflecting the widespread racism of Australians at that time. It is evident that relations between the light horse and the ‘local natives’ were becoming strained. From about the beginning of 1917 there were an increasing number of racially-based ‘incidents’ between the two, which also involved the Bedouin, and which was to culminate in the murder of a number of ‘Arabs’ at Surafend on 10 December 1918 [See DIGGER 31, pp54-58].

In the eyes of the army, Sep’s next offence was considered more ‘major’ than his first brush with authority. On 19 November 1917, he was charged under AA Section 40 ‘Conduct prejudicial to the good order and military discipline that he`d on 19/11/1917 at Ramleh hesitated to obey an order given by an NCO’. Given Sep’s earlier – and later – relationships with people who represented authority, this charge is not surprising. Not even the sentence of seven days FP No. 2 and two guineas forfeiture of pay would have upset him. As we will see, given the context of what had taken place earlier in November, the charge almost becomes a minor incident.

His final serious brush with Military Law took place on 27 November 1917. It seems to be the beginning of a period of mental and physical decline for Sep. He was charged on 27 May 1918, again under Section 40, ‘for conduct to the prejudice of good order and military discipline that he on 29/11/1917 on the Hebron Road was insubordinate to his superior officer’. A second charge heard that, on the same day ‘at Ayan Kara he was (A) insubordinate to an NCO and (B) negligent in the performance of his duty’. There is no record of his plea, his case or the details of the serious charges he faced. He was ‘awarded fourteen days FP No. 2 [and] forfeiture of four guineas pay’ [author’s emphasis].

These two incidents provide evidence that Sep had a difficulty in accepting authority figures. Stories about Sep, after he left the army, abound in Cowra, and his comments and actions are usually directed at those of higher social status and influence. He appears to have become quite depressed and resentful, spending much time in hospital. Further evidence for this will be seen in later discussion. To see the other side of his personality, we need to examine his award of the Military Medal, the result of his actions in the field at Tel el Khuweilfe.
Chauvel was now in a position to take the strategically important city of Gaza. Earlier, on 26 March 1917, defeat had been snatched from the jaws of victory when the Anzac Mounted Division and infantry had been ordered to retreat on the verge of Gaza being taken. A second attempt was tried on 19 April which resulted in a rare Turkish success. Chauvel and Lieutenant General Sir Phillip Chetwode – newly promoted to command XX Corps in the Desert, following a reorganisation – devised tactics based on their deceiving the enemy as to how they intended to attack Gaza for a third time. The attack was to be masked through a series of deceptions and feints through southern Palestine by striking Beersheba at the inland end of the Turkish railway. The aim was to give the false impression to the Turks that Gaza would again be the focus of an attack. The usual problem was the shortage of water; this could only be obtained near or in the town. However, all was not to go according to plan.

The story of the charge on Beersheba is well-known. General Frederick Kress von Kressenstein, commander of the Turkish Desert Forces believed that the way was now open for the ‘Desert Column’ to move directly north towards Jerusalem, essentially making Gaza a secondary objective. Consequently, he moved three divisions to at least slow down Allenby’s forces in the east. This is what Allenby wanted him to do, making the attack on Gaza more likely to succeed. The barrier where the Turks made a stand was Tel el Khuweilfe, a tel in the Negev Desert that was a ‘dominating, bare, flat topped hill flanked by ranges on either side, but open to the south up a wide valley. It commanded the Hebron Road and that had a good supply of precious water’ [Gullett, p416].

On 1 November, Brigadier Grenfell Ryrie’s 2nd Brigade, with the support of the 53rd Infantry Division, attacked the tel, hoping to open the Turkish left flank. [Right: Map of the attack. Gullett, ‘Official History’, Vol. VII, p438.] They pushed to within 300 metres of the defences but were pinned down by ferocious rifle and machine-gun fire, suffering many casualties. The attackers then had to introduce a system whereby men and horses at the front were rotated back at night 15 miles to Beersheba for water. Consequently, on the evening of 2 November, the 1st Brigade was brought into action, beginning with the 1st Regiment, and then the 2nd and 3rd Regiments were gradually brought into the attack.

As usual, the field ambulance was busy supporting the men on the front line. A collecting station was established and nine sand carts were sent out to bring in the wounded. The carts were ‘compelled to gallop across open ground, full of wounded – 4 horses were killed’. Heavy gunfire greeted the carts and it was considered ‘unsafe’ for horses and mules, and seven were brought in [War Diary 3/11/17]. One of the two carts that could not return was Sep Flint’s.

The citation for his award of a Military Medal clearly describes what occurred:

*During action at Tel Khuweilfe, Driver Flint with Driver Butler had to gallop with their sand cart containing wounded across an open stretch of some 500 yards under heavy shell and gun fire. After proceeding some 200 yards three of the horses were wounded and the cart could not proceed. Driver Flint with much difficulty was able to free his horses which were struggling. He then attached them to his sand car [sic] so the wounded would have less chance of being hit. He then unhitched a dead horse and periodically had to expose himself so as to see to the wounded as the cart was still under fire. Throughout the action he was compelled to remain [in the] dark. [LG 19/3, 1917, p3473]*

There is no doubt that Sep followed the promise made to the men by the field ambulance. Lieutenant Colonel Myles Cave AAMC, DSO & Bar, MID, a doctor who was Sep’s CO, recommended that Sep and Trooper 955 AJ Bennett and Driver 15506 E Holloway – who was wounded – be ‘commended for displaying great gallantry on November 3rd 1917’. No further mention was made of Butler, who was most likely Driver 8457 Arthur John Butler. On 22 November, Sep and Bennett were awarded the Military Medal. A week later, Holloway’s courage was similarly recognised. A week later, also on 29 November, Sep was once again before his senior regimental officers for ‘insubordination’. He was truly a man of contradictions and paradoxes.
Sep’s obituary, published in the ‘Cowra Guardian’ on 27 October 1968 is headlined that ‘Sep Knocked Back a Recommendation for a VC’. The obituary perpetrates the story that he rescued another Cowra man, Sergeant 443 Perc Treasure, 1st ALH Regiment, who was supposed to have been wounded in the stomach. There is no record of Treasure being wounded in the stomach at that time. He was, however, wounded at Gallipoli in the stomach. Likewise, there is no record of Sep being recommended for a VC for his actions at Khuweilfe, as was asserted in the obituary.

Tel el Khuweilfe was taken on 7 November, the same day as Gaza was captured, after a week’s fighting which Daly describes as ‘a piecemeal, reactive action’. It seemed small scale, unnecessary of paper plans and systematic reduction, yet the pinprick became a consuming canker that wore down and mauled three divisions for six days. The Khuweilfe operations dashed Allenby’s hope of an early breakthrough and pursuit, yet did much to draw the enemy away from Gaza.

An important incident at Khuweilfe should not be ignored, which is hinted at in Sep’s citation. The first time it is described is in Gullett’s ‘The Official History’, Volume VII. It is a clear description of what had occurred and of attitudes displayed by men on both sides: ‘As a rule the Turk scrupulously observed Red Cross rules; but on this day [3 November] all enemy arms fired very deliberately upon three ambulances and carts which had been sent up over the exposed ground for the wounded. The carts were clearly marked with the Red Cross, the visibility was good, and the Turks were shooting at close range’. Sep’s cart was one of those they shot at. Gullett then writes an explanation of the ‘gross offence … A Turkish doctor, taken prisoner … explained that the ambulance [sic] had been fired on at the urging of a German officer, who argued that the carts were probably carrying ammunition up to the Australians’. A grave accusation indeed!

However, the spirit and conventions established at Gallipoli appeared not to have been broken, as he later asserts that: ‘During the campaign there were other [similar] incidents … It is remarkable that in nearly every instance, the offenders were not the clean-fighting Turkish riflemen, but Austrian artillerymen or German machine gunners’ [Gullett, p417]. The rancour towards the Arabs and Bedouin that had clearly developed among the light horsemen, was not directed towards the Turks. The respect and generosity of spirit was alive and well and continues today.

During 1918, Sep’s mental and physical health appears to have deteriorated further. On 8 June, he injured his knee while chasing and restraining a runaway horse. He suffered the indignity of having this well-observed incident the subject of an inquiry, in which it was thought that the injury was self-inflicted. The inquiry found that it was an accident and that nobody was to blame. Already, Sep was in conflict with higher authority and would have brooded on this perceived indignity and this may have been the ‘last straw’. On 15 June he was admitted to hospital ‘sick’ in Moascar for treatment on his knee and for whitlow (severe inflammation of his finger joints), the result of long term use of his hands to work heavy horses. He was re-admitted on 24 August to 14th AGH with what was diagnosed as ‘mental stupor’ or shell shock. On 15 October he was sent to a rest camp where he remained until he boarded the Port Darwin at Suez bound for home. He arrived back in Sydney on 7 January 1919 and on 8 March was discharged as ‘medically unfit’.

However, he re-joined the ALH in a militia unit and remained in the army for 35 years. In World War II he served in a garrison unit and was given an honourable discharge in 1952 when he reached retiring age after 35 years of service.

What kind of man was Sep Flint? Stories of this colourful character are legendary around his home town. No one could recall his being a drinker or a smoker – unusual for the time. He made a living breeding and dealing in heavy draught horses, as well as contracting his horses and wagons to businesses, such as Edgell’s, around Cowra. [Right: ‘Sep Flint was in charge of novelty horse rides at the Pet and Doll Show.’ The ‘Cowra Guardian’, 18/4/67.]

Sep was also ‘famous’ as the driver of the local council’s ‘dunny cart’ and manure collector for the town’s gardens. Most of those spoken to in the course of this research described him as a ‘rough diamond’. His physical toughness is also remarked upon; as was his laconic and dry sense of humour. The two outstanding features of Sep that everyone remembers were his profane language and extremely
lend, somewhat high-pitched, voice that ‘could be heard for miles!’ Two printable stories can be repeated: his ‘dunny cart’ overturned one day in the main street of Cowra. A passer-by asked Sep if he had an accident; to which he replied: ‘No, just stock taking!’ Even the Mayor was not immune: driving down the road on his cart on one occasion, Sep passed His Worship, a man for whom he had scant respect, and invited him to come and sit on his manure wagon ‘to make it a full load!’

Sep married Olive Jane Carney of Brookvale in 1921 and they produced nine children. Sep passed away peacefully on 23 October 1968 and is buried in the Salvation Army section of Cowra Cemetery, along with some members of his family. Olive died on 18 August 1975. Although Sep always claimed he was Church of England, he is interred in the Salvation Army section, which possibly relates to a positive experience he had with the ‘Sallies’ during the war.

[Right: The plaque on Sep’s grave features the Rising Sun badge and says: ‘In loving memory of a husband and father, forever in our hearts’.

Endnotes: (1) Special thanks to: the Cowra Family History Group; Cowra Shire Council and those good citizens of Cowra who willingly spoke to me of Sep. (2) The Editor noticed that Sep was still irascible during his WWII service. He was charged with disobeying a lawful command given by a superior officer in 1943 and again in 1944; continued to shout abusively after being warned not to do so by the RSM; and had a couple of short stints of AWL.

References:

Menin Gate, Ieper, 1927

The photo below, mounted on cardboard, was sent to all families who had a son or husband’s name inscribed on the Menin Gate. The photo was sent by the British War Graves Photographic Association from Arras. Contributed by Maurice Campbell, whose uncle, Sgt Harold Campbell, 3rd Bn, is listed at Ieper.
A mother’s poem: Private John Forrest, 54th Battalion

Chris Munro, Oatley.

During the 2012 FFAIF Commemorative Tour the group had the opportunity to take part in many individual commemorations of Diggers who made the ultimate sacrifice during the Great War. One of these special occasions took place on 20 July when the members of the Tour gathered at the graveside of Private 3046 John Robertson Forrest as part of the dedication service at the Fromelles (Pheasant Wood) Cemetery for the most recently identified missing soldiers from the Battle of Fromelles. The descendants of Private Forrest were unable to attend the service and the honour fell to those members of the FFAIF present to pay tribute to his service and sacrifice at the request of the family.

John Robertson Forrest [left] was born in Scotland and served with the 6th Gordon Highlanders before immigrating to Australia. ‘Jack’, as he was known to friends, was working as a grocer’s carter and was a member of the Ryde Rifle Club when he applied for enlistment for active service with the AIF in July 1915 at Liverpool, Sydney. Private Forrest embarked from Sydney on 8 November 1915, bound for Egypt as a member of the 2nd Battalion. On arrival in Egypt he was transferred to the 54th Battalion.

Private Forrest was amongst the 5,533 casualties in the Battle of Fromelles. He was amongst the many who fell in that battle who had no known grave until recent times. Jack Forrest was formally identified in March 2012 and a headstone bearing the following epitaph was erected on his grave:

IN OUR HEARTS BRIGHT
VISIONS LINGER THAT CAN
NEVER FADE AWAY.

These lines are from a poem by Isa Forrest, John’s mother.

While standing by Jack’s grave [below right] I had the duty and privilege of reading the poem written by Isa, which appears below.

The Silent Warrior

Silent warrior, vigil keeping
O’er our dear, beloved dead,
Sadly do we bow before thee,
Reverently unbare the head.
At thy feet we lay our tributes,
That do bloom but for a day;
In our hearts bright visions linger,
That can never fade away.
Mute thy message, yet appealing,
To the hearts of young and old,
Down through all the coming ages,
Glorious deeds wilt thou unfold.
Showing forth to generations,
Noble deeds so bravely done,
On the field of France and Flanders,
That the victory might be won.
Cherished names, in golden letters,
Tell how heavy was the cost,
Of the long and bitter conflict,
That the cause might not be lost.
At thy shrine, in sad remembrance,
Every heart will hope and pray
That the peace, so dearly purchased,
Prove a peace to last for aye.
The stylised Rising Sun insignia on a civilian headstone in the Barmedman cemetery, NSW, first caught my eye. The age of the deceased when compared to his date of death confirmed that here lay another WWI veteran. His grave was shared by his wife who had died earlier in the same year: 1957.

The second thing that struck me was the soldier’s German name – Berthold August Fimmel. It must have been difficult at times for men with German ancestry to serve in the AIF, and I wondered if he called himself ‘Bert’ to sound more ‘Australian’.

But what intrigued me most about this headstone was the cryptic epitaph for Berthold, which reads: *Three Beautiful Weeks*. His wife, Lillian, was remembered as *Dear Ma*, and as she had died in March 1957, nearly six months before her husband, it could not have been referring to her last three weeks with her husband. Could there be a clue in Berthold’s service record?

**Berthold August Fimmel** was born in Laura, SA, and his father and next of kin was living at Murray Town, SA, when Berthold enlisted in Cootamundra, NSW, on 11 March 1917. The Barmedman-Temora district had been settled by many German wheat-farmers who had overlanded from South Australia, so this probably accounts for Berthold farming in the area. Berthold Fimmel was aged 31 years and was a single man when he enlisted. He was granted leave to 9 April, perhaps to get his affairs in order before taking up arms.

On 10 April, Private Fimmel arrived at the Sydney Showground but three days later was allocated as Trooper 3357 to the 7th Light Horse Regiment and moved to Menangle for training. Berthold embarked on the *Port Lincoln* at Sydney on 11 June 1917 and must have had a slow trip to Suez, as the ship did not arrive there until 6 August. On that day, Berthold marched into the Moascar Isolation Camp (possibly with mumps).

One month later, Fimmel was transferred to the 3rd Machine Gun Training Squadron. He was admitted to hospital in Cairo on 21 October 1917 and remained there until New Year’s Eve. Berthold rejoined the training squadron on 9 January and due to being absent from stable parade at 1500 hours on 28 January, he was docked a day’s pay. Between 3 and 23 February, Berthold attended the 35th Vickers Gun Course at Zeitoun. He was finally taken on strength of the 3rd Machine Gun Squadron on 10 April 1918.

During June and again in July, Fimmel suffered some illness which saw him in hospital. After a lengthy spell in a rest camp, Fimmel was allocated to the 8th Mobile Veterinary Section on 3 October to work with the sick horses. However, six days later, Fimmel was taken ill with influenza and was sent to a French hospital at Damascus. He rejoined the machine gunners on 16 October but the war with the Turks would soon be over. Berthold was awarded seven days Field Punishment No. 2 for being drunk when on active service at El Mina on 22 January 1919. He returned to Australia on 10 July 1919 for subsequent discharge from the AIF.

No clue to his epitaph was found in Berthold’s record of service. I still felt that ‘three beautiful weeks’ must have had something to do with his marriage, so my next step was to visit the BDM records. One thing that I had noticed beforehand was that his wife, Lillian, was eight years older than her husband, which even today, might be considered a notable age difference (where the wife is the elder of the two).

The BDM website revealed that Berthold had married *Lillian Tate Thorn* in 1936. This means he must have been around 47 years old when he married Lillian, and Lillian would have been 55 years old. Yet the *Dear Ma* implied that Lillian had at least one child. As 55 is a little old to bear children, I sought an earlier marriage for Lillian but could find no record, so perhaps ‘Ma’ was Berthold’s pet name for his wife.

No clue to the ‘three beautiful weeks’ there. However, the BDM records revealed that Berthold August Fimmel married *Ruby King* in Temora in 1957. My supposition is that the couple were married in August 1957 and spent ‘three beautiful weeks’ together before Berthold Fimmel died at the age of 68. Berthold’s second wife, Ruby, remarried in 1958, the year after her husband’s death. It appears that the period of mourning was fairly short in the Temora district.
On 25 January 1915, William Henry Parsons joined the 1st AIF. Aged 21 years and 6 months, a labourer by trade, he was born in Panmure, Victoria. He was attached to ‘D’ Company of the 22nd Infantry Battalion and given regimental number 970.

On 12 May 1916, William was transferred to the 6th Light Trench Mortar Battery and soon promoted corporal. On 28 June he was evacuated to the 6th Field Ambulance suffering from influenza. William returned to his unit on 19 November 1916. He took part in the winter fighting around Lesboeuf village which led to the award of the French Croix de Guerre with the following citation:

On the 24th December 1916, at Lesboeufs, for conspicuous gallantry when in charge of a Stokes mortar which he continued to serve under heavy hostile shell fire and inflicted losses on the enemy. This NCO has rendered exceptional services to the battery.

On 16 January 1917, William Parsons was appointed lance sergeant then sergeant. He fought with his mortar team at Second Bullecourt where he was awarded the Military Medal, along with his colleagues. The citation reads:

970 Sergeant WH Parsons, 844 Corporal RC Laing, 3798 Pte P Cough, 4470 Pte Donald McQueen, 4509 Pte Robert McShane, 1797 Pte William Fowler.

The above men distinguished themselves in action in the captured trenches near Bullecourt on 3rd May 1917 by the gallantry and determination with which they continued to serve their mortars throughout the day and night until relieved at dawn on the 5th. On no occasion was a request for fire not complied with, though the battery suffered heavy losses (over half its numbers). No chance of observing fire or getting targets was thrown away and the casualties the battery inflicted on the enemy were certainly very heavy. On one occasion a hostile party was barraged first in front, then in rear, and when brought to a halt blown out without a survivor. In this the NCOs and men played a prominent part.

Parsons was wounded but remained on duty.

Parsons acted as sergeant major in July 1917, then on 10 August 1917 he joined the 4th Officer Cadet Battalion in England. On 29 November 1917 he was appointed a second lieutenant. One month later, he was in the field with the 22nd Battalion.

On 27 March 1918 the 22nd Battalion was in the sector of La Basse Ville, south of Ieper. The battalion’s commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel AR Wiltshire, wrote in his diary:

Went up the line after dark & saw all the OC Coy's. There was an inter-company relief on which was carried out quietly and without incident. At 10.30 we put gas over on him, up went his red lights and we had a rough passage to 'C' Coy. Little Scotty O'Neill, one of my old originals boys, was found dead in a dugout this morning, killed by shell last night. Poor Parsons died very bravely this morning. Realising both legs were off he asked for a revolver to shoot himself but presently he had less pain. Carricks held him in his arms and he said “It is hard, Larry, but I’m not afraid to die”. He passed out a couple hours later his last words being apologies to the stretcher-bearers for giving them so much work.

In 1919, Captain E Gorman MC, who wrote ‘A History of the Twenty Second Battalion AIF’, added more detail of what happened: Lieut. Parsons died of wounds, which he bore very bravely. His chief consideration, as he was being carried from the line, was that the stretcher-bearers should not unduly distress themselves on his account.

Originally buried at Red Lodge Cemetery, today, Second Lieutenant Parsons, MM, CdeG, is buried in Berks Cemetery Extension, located 12.5 km south of Ieper [right]. He was just 24 when he died.

Endnote: Scotty O'Neill was Private 664 Austin O'Neill, KIA 26/3/18, also buried at Berks Cemetery Extension. O'Neill was from Stockport, Manchester, England.

Sources:
Surgeon Probationer Robert Walker: HMS Shark
‘We roam all over the seas unchallenged and defiant.’
Andrew Pittaway, Fremantle.

When war was declared in 1914, Robert Walker was one of the many Australians who didn’t serve in the Australian Imperial Force, but instead, due to circumstances, offered his services to the British armed forces.

Robert Walker was born in Fremantle on 19 February 1893 to Charles and Annie Walker. Charles Walker was a well-known boat builder in the Fremantle area and the family resided at 21 Tuckfield Street, Fremantle. From his home, Robert only had a short distance to walk to attend the nearby Fremantle Boys School where he excelled. His time here corresponded to when the future Field Marshal Thomas Blamey taught at the school and he may have even fallen under his tutelage. Nevertheless, in 1905 Robert was awarded a scholarship of 50 Pounds value for four years which enabled him to continue his study at Scotch College in Claremont.

For the next six years Robert travelled daily from his house in Fremantle to attend Scotch College, where he continued to excel. In his last year at Scotch in 1910 he was a prefect and also on the staff of the school newspaper, the ‘Reporter’. While at Scotch, Walker, along with several good friends, including fellow student Dick Caldwell, spent much of their spare time sailing and rowing on the Swan River. However, in the last year at Scotch, leisure time was sparse between the many hours of study. All the hard work paid off for Robert as in 1910 he became the Dux of Scotch College.

In 1911 Robert craved to further his education as he wanted to study medicine. He won the first Western Australian University Exhibition and travelled to Adelaide where he won second place on the General Honours list of Adelaide University. He received Special Honours in Modern History, Greek, Latin, French and Pure Mathematics.

It seems he had narrowly missed out on a Rhodes scholarship, but his success at Adelaide University won him a place as a student of medicine at Edinburgh University in Scotland. His dream realised, Robert headed for Scotland in 1912. His aptitude soon showed itself very clearly as from 1912 to 1915 he won Edinburgh University medals for his study in Physics, Chemical Physiology and Anatomy.

Although study and course work took up a large amount of his waking hours, Robert still had time for other pursuits and joined the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve. The declaration of war coincided with Robert’s final years of study but he had no hesitation in serving in the Royal Navy. However, it was not until 23 July 1915 that he was given his seniority by the Royal Navy. He was given the rank of Surgeon Probationer and a month later was posted to HMS Lynx. On arrival at his destination he was told that the Lynx had been mined in the North Sea. The authorities reassigned Robert to HMS Shark. The Shark was a K-Class Torpedo Boat Destroyer built in 1912 of 950 Tons (from Royal Navy List & Janes) with 3-4 inch guns, four 21 inch torpedo tubes, with 23 000 to 25 000 horsepower which equated to 31-32 knots.

In a letter home to his old college, Robert describes some of his initial experiences:

My experience of the Navy is one that I am not likely to forget. I applied for my commission and was appointed to HMS ‘Lynx’. After all my preparations and arrangements were complete I travelled to ---- to join my ship. It was a long, tedious journey of some days duration, and I was at last glad and relieved to be able to report myself to Senior Naval Officer, preparatory to going on board my first
Can you imagine my feelings when this officer congratulated me on my good luck and narrow escape. My ship had been mined that very morning, and 74 men were lost! A narrow escape indeed. I was then recalled to the Admiralty and appointed to the HMS 'Shark'. Fortunately I was more lucky this time, and I got on board this ship without mishap, and here I have been ever since.

I cannot tell anything concerning this ship or her movements – only that the latter are sometimes too numerous and varied for my palate. We roam all over the seas, unchallenged and defiant; and we are proud to think that we are pretty safe from any hostile submarines, in that we have now disposed of them all. Now I am attached to the Grand Fleet, and, of course, have daily opportunities of seeing sights that I will never forget; and I am convinced that should “Der Tag,” when the fleets meet comes, there will only be one in it and that one will certainly not be the German.

HMS Shark was then one of the many ships that patrolled the waters of the English Channel on watch for marauding ships of the German Navy. This was a daily occurrence in Robert Walker’s first 10 months on the ship.

After receiving some mail and news from home, Robert wrote back and congratulated his old mate Dick Caldwell for being awarded Scotch’s second-ever Rhodes scholarship, and as for himself, the ship: is still tossing round the North Sea, keeping an unceasing vigil in all weathers. We have our times of excitement and lately have been having some good “thrills” but of these I must remain silent. Suffice to say, we are ever ready at a moment’s notice to strafe and strafe thoroughly any number they like to send against us. The navy is doing a power of work every day and every night, too, of which nobody knows anything at present.

Little did Robert then know that by late May his ship would be destined to play a large role in the largest sea battle of the First World War, the Battle of Jutland.

By 31 May 1916 the Battle of Jutland had already begun, with the two great navies trading opening blows. In response to a German attack on their ships, Admiral Hood ordered HMS Shark, one of the four screening destroyers for the Battle Cruiser HMS Invincible, to attack the oncoming German ships. The British Destroyers led by Captain Loftus Jones in the Shark, accompanied by Acasta, Ophelia and Christopher, turned towards the enemy with thick smoke pouring from their funnels and bow waves streaming over their narrow fo’c’sles. Their attack foiled the German onslaught, so that only twelve torpedoes were fired, all of which were skillfully avoided. But the Shark and the Acasta were severely mauled.

The attack was made with such fearlessness by the four destroyers that the Germans were forced to turn away, but at a large cost to the Shark. Its commander, Loftus Jones, was mortally wounded as German shells continued to hit the ship. Robert Walker attended the many casualties despite being under devastating German fire. Under heavy enemy gunfire HMS ‘Shark’ suffered steerage damage and was disabled. As a spare torpedo was being hoisted prior to being launched into the tube, it was struck by a shell with a violent explosion causing heavy casualties. The ship continued to sink and was heavily fired upon ...

One by one the wounded crawled brokenly into the lee of the casings and funnels in pitiful attempts to find shelter; among them knelt the devoted figure of the surgeon endeavouring single-handed to cope with his gallant hopeless task. When last seen he was bandaging a man who had lost a hand when the torpedo exploded. He was then himself severely wounded and was apparently shortly afterwards killed.

HMS Shark sank shortly afterwards and Robert Walker was never seen alive again, nor was his body recovered. Along with other missing sailors from the battle, he is commemorated on the Portsmouth Naval Memorial. The Shark’s commander, Loftus Jones, was later awarded a posthumous Victoria Cross for his actions.

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44 Scotch College ‘Reporter’.
45 Dick Caldwell delayed his Rhodes Scholarship to enlist in the AIF. He served in the 48th Battalion AIF and reached the rank of captain. He survived the fighting and post war completed his Rhodes Scholarship. He later worked for the League of Nations in Geneva.
46 Ibid.
47 ‘Jutland 1916’ – Costello & Hughes.
Robert’s parents back home in Tuckfield Street received the terrible news of his death, and among those giving sympathy a cablegram was received from the Keeper of the Privy Purse which read: The King & Queen deeply regret the loss both you and the navy sustained by the death of your son in the service of his country. Their Majesties truly sympathise with you in your sorrow.

A glowing tribute was also printed in the Edinburgh University magazine:

By the death of Surgeon Probationer Robert Walker, who was killed in action on 31st May, the University has lost an especially brilliant and popular student. Before he left his home in Western Australia, Walker had shown that he was a student of more than passing scholastic ability. His activities in Edinburgh were mainly confined to the pursuit of his medical studies, and in all the varied branches of this study he showed consistent brilliancy – winning in all nine medals. In Anatomy, perhaps no student has shown such consistent proficiency as Walker, in which he won four medals, a Mackenzie and a John Aitken Carlyle Bursary, the Cunningham Memorial medal, and the Van Duns Scholarship ...

By reason of his almost phenomenal success in various examinations held, Walker had become well known, and was deservedly popular amongst his fellow students. As evidence of his popularity on HMS ‘Shark’, he was asked by the officers of that ship to stop with them instead of accepting the honour of promotion to HMS ‘Tipperary’ which was offered him. He elected to remain on HMS ‘Shark’ and died fighting as one of those who showed such heroic fortitude, when subjected to a murderous fire as they lay helpless and crippled; and thus perhaps the most brilliant student of this year has added his name to the already long list of Edinburgh University heroes, and at the same time to the roll of loyal Australian sons.49

A Dr R Burns, who knew Robert, wrote another tribute from his position at the Naval Infirmary at Hull: There is great consolation in that he died like an Australian, in the midst of his duties. The gunlayer of that famous last gun and the coxswain of the ‘Shark’ are here. They speak in the very highest terms of ‘Bob’ – of his kindliness and skill in the days before the great action, and of his unquestioned valour when the guns began to boom. The ‘Shark’, these men say, had all her steering gear shot away first of all. Shortly afterwards she was torpedoed in her oil tanks. This prevented her getting oil to her engines and she became a stationary target. They then got the concentrated fire of ‘fully twenty ships’, everything being swept off the decks except one gun. This the Captain manned himself. Both the coxswain and gunlayer before this saw ‘Bob’ busily working among the wounded. The last they saw of him was in striving to reach a badly wounded man just after having attended to another. When ‘Bob’ left him the coxswain distinctly remembers him holding his instrument bag in one hand, himself wounded, reaching out towards a wounded comrade with the other. A hurricane of metal swept the ship and he was killed. A glorious death, but sad in that he was so young, so brilliant, and every inch a man. He was everybody’s pal.

Had Robert Walker lived who knows to what height his study of medicine would have taken him. By all reports he had a brilliant mind and his loss was a tragic one for both his family and the wider community.

Had Robert Walker lived who knows to what height his study of medicine would have taken him. By all reports he had a brilliant mind and his loss was a tragic one for both his family and the wider community.

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49 Edinburgh University Magazine.
The Allonville disaster, 1918
Jonathan Morrison, Geelong West.

By the end of May 1918 the German Spring Offensive had been checked and preparations for its repulsion had begun. The 3rd Battle of the Aisne, however, showed the Germans still had some fight as they tested the strength of the American forces. Along the Somme, further north, the Australians held the lines and patrolled No-man’s land in strength.

Thursday, 30 May 1918, was a very hot day. The 14th Battalion AIF had been resting at Allonville, a small village around three miles to the north-east of Amiens, for a few days and were about to leave once more for the front line. The men were upbeat as they prepared their kits for the march the following day. As the day wore on though, they looked to the shade offered by the nearby woods. Some felt envy at the officers who claimed the coolest spots. Others looked at their own billets to seek a better way to keep cool.

‘B’ and ‘D’ Companies had been allocated billets in the town and in another nearby wood but ‘A’ and ‘C’ Companies were billeted on the eastern fringe of the village. ‘C’ Company was housed in a two storey brick building along with the bands [pipe and brass] and the 4th Division ‘Smart Set’ Pierrot troupe. ‘A’ Company was put in a big wooden barn. Both buildings had a slate-tiled roof held up with massive timber beams and uprights. The barn (rumoured to belong to the Hennessy family – of brandy fame) had a wall of straw at one end and a short brick wall supporting timber boards at the other. One side had a large opening and the other had sliding doors which were kept closed most of the time.

The evening was still very warm and the men entertained themselves before attempting sleep, with wine, song and, no doubt, gambling – they had recently been paid! The brass band played a few numbers for the men in the ‘C’ Company billet. As the dark of night took over, enemy planes could be heard in the skies and cheers went up as the planes scurried away whenever a search light found its target. Night-time shelling continued as per normal, and few of the men thought much about it all as Allonville was a good 10 to 12 miles off the front lines.

Around 1.30 in the morning of the 31st, a shell landed near Allonville. Most of the men were well asleep and paid little attention to the near-distant explosion. In five minute intervals more shells followed without any damage. The third or fourth shell, however, was a direct hit upon the ‘A’ Company barn. The high velocity shell, likely 9” calibre, shattered the main beam which held the roof which, in turn, led to the slate tiles dropping to the ground with such force that many of the men sleeping below were literally cut to pieces. The falling beam crushed others and the general concussion from the blast affected the rest. It could be argued that the beam actually saved the lives of many of the men, as had the shell exploded within the barn, the damage may well have been greater still. We will never know. What we do know is that 13 men were killed outright and a further 12 of the 56 wounded died at the various casualty clearing stations and hospitals in the Amiens sector.

Within minutes of the explosion, a search and rescue mission was started. Edgar Rule wrote in his book ‘Jacka’s Mob’ (page 124): The whole debris had tumbled down on the boys, disembowelling many, cutting off legs and arms as if they were paper. Under it the dead lay silent; the rest made one long moan of agony. Of those unhurt, all but about half a dozen still stood petrified, unable to move; the others were working like fiends, pulling away the timber to get to the victims. To add to the terror, an occasional shell would arrive with a terrific swish and burst not very far away and all this contributed to hamper our work.

One of those shells also hit a mark – the ‘C’ Company building. That blast caused 17 casualties, including five killed. Amongst the debris were the remains of many of the band’s instruments and the stage and performance gear of the Smart Set.

[Right: Close-up of the destruction, taken the morning after. AWM E02462.]

One of those shells also hit a mark – the ‘C’ Company building. That blast caused 17 casualties, including five killed. Amongst the debris were the remains of many of the band’s instruments and the stage and performance gear of the Smart Set.
It was an extraordinary night with a number of stories of courage shining through. Newton Wanliss (page 286) described a few of these:

**Pte. Dick Radnell, M.M.** with a smashed limb and mortally wounded, was carried out of the barn singing. He died next day. Another man with both legs severed above the knee, on being proffered assistance, said, “I am all right; get the badly wounded boys out.” One of the staunchest and most sterling men in ‘A’ Company was **Cpl. Harry Reynolds**, a man upwards of forty years of age, who lost an arm in the disaster. As he lay lying wounded on the stretcher one of his mates gave him a cigarette, whilst another offered to light a match for him. “No,” was the determined response of the veteran, whose sufferings had failed to quench his indomitable spirit. “I have to use one arm in the future, and I will start now,” and he lit the match himself.

Harry Reynolds survived his wounds and lived to the age of 78, finally passing away in 1953. (Thanks to Frev for this info!) It may never be known who was the unnamed man who lost his legs, but cross-checking the Red Cross files provide a possible match – **George Reddish**. Of course, the Red Cross files are not complete, and even if they were, someone other than George may have been the wounded man. However, I still wish to honour such a selfless moment amidst the horror of that night.

The 69 casualties from ‘A’ Company gave them the dubious record of the most devastation from a single shell within the AIF throughout the whole of the war.

There are 18 men buried at Allonville cemetery – thirteen who died that night from ‘A’ Company and four from the second shell. The eighteenth man was **John Mills**, who died of wounds within an hour at the 4th Field Ambulance situated in the nearby Bois de Mai. Originally, there was a hand-made cross with the names of the 18 but now, all the men have proper CWGC headstones to commemorate their lives.

Following is a list of the men who died and where they are buried.

**Buried at Allonville**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Shell</th>
<th>Cause of Death</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1668A</td>
<td>Albert Robert Anderson</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>‘A’ Company</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>KIA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6221</td>
<td>Charles Ballis</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>‘A’ Company</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>KIA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4760</td>
<td>Sydney Ernest Beverley</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>‘A’ Company</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>KIA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2152</td>
<td>Thomas Brinkworth</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>‘A’ Company</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>KIA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2240</td>
<td>Robert Delaney</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>‘A’ Company</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>KIA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5764</td>
<td>Leopold Arthur Downey</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>‘A’ Company</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>KIA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1872</td>
<td>L/Cpl John Herbert Dunn</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>‘A’ Company</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>KIA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7342</td>
<td>Bertie George Englert†</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>‘C’ Company</td>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>KIA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>266</td>
<td>Lawrence Hustler</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>‘A’ Company</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>KIA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>602</td>
<td>L/Cpl Hugh Albert Graham Kent</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>HQ signaller</td>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>KIA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6126</td>
<td>Richard Madigan</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>‘C’ Company</td>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>KIA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1383</td>
<td>L/Cpl Robert Mann*</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>‘A’ Company</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>KIA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55a</td>
<td>Norman McLeod</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>‘A’ Company</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>KIA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2491</td>
<td>John Claude Mills</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>‘A’ Company</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>DOW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7588</td>
<td>George Walter Powell</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>‘A’ Company</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>KIA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5757</td>
<td>George Ray</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>‘A’ Company</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>KIA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2730</td>
<td>Arthur Thomas Riley</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>‘A’ Company</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>KIA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7606</td>
<td>William Wootton*†</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>‘C’ Company</td>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>KIA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Notes:  
º Original enlistment in 14th Battalion October/November 1914.
* Interestingly, William Wootton is spelled with only one ‘T’ on his headstone. A check of his records show clearly it should be two, although on a letter from the Australian Grave Services both spellings are used and may be the root of the confusion.
† According to a witness in the Red Cross files, Wootton and Englert had become the best of mates since being taken on strength of the 14th Battalion only a few weeks before the fatal night.

Buried at Crouy (roughly 16km north west of Amiens)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Death Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>542</td>
<td>Patrick Joseph Barrett (26)</td>
<td>HQ scout</td>
<td>2nd shell DOW 31/5/18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1868</td>
<td>Leonard Best (22)</td>
<td>‘A’ Company</td>
<td>1st shell DOW 4/6/18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>231</td>
<td>Albert V Green (20)</td>
<td>‘A’ Company</td>
<td>1st shell DOW 31/5/18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6612</td>
<td>Leslie Egbert Joshua Witcombe</td>
<td>‘A’ Company</td>
<td>1st shell DOW 31/5/18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note:  
* Barrett was a hard man to find as he wasn’t listed anywhere as a casualty from Allonville. There had always been a discrepancy with the numbers quoted in the war diary, though. Thanks to some fine detective work from Heather ‘Frev’ Ford, he is back in the fold.

Buried at Vignacourt (roughly 16km north north west of Amiens)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Death Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5344</td>
<td>Cpl Patrick Brennan (27)</td>
<td>‘A’ Company</td>
<td>1st shell DOW 31/5/18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1734</td>
<td>George Walter Radnell (21)</td>
<td>‘A’ Company</td>
<td>1st shell DOW 1/6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Buried at Longeau (roughly 5km south east of Amiens)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Death Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5682A</td>
<td>Alwyn Morris Evans (31)</td>
<td>‘A’ Company</td>
<td>1st shell DOW 31/5/18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7522</td>
<td>Charles Edward Leigh (20)</td>
<td>‘A’ Company</td>
<td>1st shell DOW 31/5/18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4877</td>
<td>George Valentine Reddish (30)</td>
<td>‘A’ Company</td>
<td>1st shell DOW 31/5/18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7080</td>
<td>Albert Edward Smith (25)</td>
<td>‘A’ Company</td>
<td>1st shell DOW 31/5/18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Buried at St Sever (near Rouen)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Death Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3442</td>
<td>Frank Newbold (27)</td>
<td>‘A’ Company</td>
<td>1st shell DOW 8/6/18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Buried at Lodge Hill (near Birmingham, England)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Death Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1805</td>
<td>Henry William Delora (22)</td>
<td>‘A’ Company</td>
<td>1st shell DOW 13/6/18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

My grandpa, Ted Graham 1252, was at Allonville that night. As a member of ‘A’ Company he was at one point sleeping in the barn – certainly his billet was there! Family folklore has it that he was sleeping at the brick end and, being too hot, moved his bedding to the other end where the straw was. Alternatively, he had been invited to listen to the band and, perhaps, stayed over there until the first shell hit, whereupon he got out from there prior to that barn being struck. Either way, I feel particularly fortunate that he was not a casualty. What is certain is that he had just returned from a lengthy recovery with a wounded hand that very day, only to witness a terrible reminder of the horrors of the war.

The 14th Battalion were due to leave Allonville at 6am on 31 May. After the night’s events, no-one had the mind-set required, let alone the time to be ready. Even so, the battalion were able to march out by 10am. It was an eerie march, at first, as they made their way to the other side of the Somme River at Daours. One can imagine the silence penetrating the thoughts of the men who had all lost a mate or had had a close shave of their own. The silence was dominant, too, as there was no band to accompany the marching. It took many weeks for ‘A’ Company, in particular, to recover from the loss of so many before they could be used in strength in raids and patrols. By the time of the Battle of Hamel, though, they were all ready to return fire.

Allonville is an out-of-the-way village even now. Then, in 1918, it was a considerable distance from the front and of little military importance so, the question arises, why was it targeted in such a seemingly ad hoc manner? The first thing we must understand is that artillery from both sides had long range options which were used throughout the war. Anywhere a gathering of military forces settled could be a target. Reconnaissance had become more easily available with the improved camera technologies used in conjunction with aeroplanes. Intelligence gathered as many sources of information as was possible and much of this came from POWs. Whether they talked under interrogation or let slip a few words to mates (real and pretend) that were overheard, such information could turn a rumour to near fact.
Aaron Pegram wrote an article in ‘Wartime’ magazine (Issue 57) where he illustrated the effects of such talk. On page 45 he relates the possible background to the attack on Allonville. He cites Charles Bean’s diary:

*The Germans were really shooting for the chateau. They were told some time ago, apparently, probably by a man of ours who they captured, that this was 3rd Division headquarters. They got this fool to talk – made him drunk, I suppose, or put him in with a sham Englishman; or perhaps they simply impressed him with the fact that they knew all about his division by telling him the name of a few officers. Anyway – if any man of ours gave this news to them he himself killed those 18 [sic] comrades as directly as if he clubbed them.*

Pegram then goes on to say that German Intelligence documents recovered at Ville-sur-Ancre confirmed that men of the 9th Brigade captured near Morlancourt had revealed the location of the 3rd Division at Allonville. Bean, in his ‘Official History’ (Volume VI, page 109) gives a clearer, slightly less-emotional, version of the events:

*About this time, according to the intelligence summary (dated May 17) of the 199th German Division then holding Ville, the Germans captured prisoners who disclosed that headquarters of the 3rd Australian Division were at Allonville. They also said that Brigade headquarters were at Frenvillers and a camp at La Houssoye. The result may well be a warning to all captured men against giving any information, or even talking of such things among themselves.*

He goes on to describe the events of 31 May as detailed earlier.

Clearly, Bean believed that Allonville was targeted due to the talk of POWs. While I believe such talk had an important part to play, it was not the sole information used. Wanliss states (page 289):

*Attempts were made to attribute it to the operation of spies but the German flying men had complete observation and, doubtless, noted and probably reported the parking of motor lorries in the immediate vicinity of the quarters of the sleeping men – a combination presenting a most tempting target. Some think that the shooting was purely accidental and that the fatal shells were either ‘shorts’ fired at the chateau housing Divisional Headquarters or were merely discharged on the chance endeavour to explode some of the ammunition dumps in the locality.*

Clearly, Wanliss was more open-minded about the cause of the disaster and without real proof we are still uncertain of the reasons for the shelling. One aspect which intrigues me is the elapse of time between information from POWs (mid May) to actually shelling for effect at the end of May.

This brings me to a question which has vexed my research powers for some time. Who fired the shells? We know that the 199th German Division held the Morlancourt sector in early May 1918. It was they who garnered the information from the POWs. The 199th were relieved by the 107th German Division on 16 May 1918 which may account for the delay in targeting Allonville. Within the 107th the 157th Artillery Command were responsible for any artillery activity. The FAR 213 and I/b. FußA 6 were two artillery regiments under the 157th. It is highly likely that the shells were fired from one of these groups but there are circumstances which prevent actual proof. The most important, to my mind, is that according to ‘Histories of the 213 German Divisions’ compiled from intelligence reports gathered after the war, the 107th Division was rested at Cambrai from the 23rd May. The history does not say they were relieved by any other division, so I wonder if some members of the division stayed at Morlancourt while others rested at Cambrai, or whether all were involved. No information has come to light on any of this.

I asked for assistance on two Internet forums for any information which might confirm or negate any of the possibilities. Unfortunately, many of the German records have been destroyed, with others taken by the Americans (some of which are, I believe, becoming available online). There are some records based at Munich which are accessible, if you are in the area and can read German. The information which has been passed onto me is intriguing and offers nothing but more possibilities and questions. One forum member stated:

*In April 1918, the 107. ID had FAR 213 and I/b. FußA 6. In 1918, a FAR generally had one detachment of FK 98 n.A., one of FK 16, and one of 10.5-cm FH. None of these guns was capable of long range action. I/b. FußA 6, however, had 2 batteries of 10 cm-K 04 and one battery of 10-cm K 14. These guns had a maximum range of about 13 km.*

*If this range fits with contemporary front line maps, the Bavarians of Bayerisches Fußartillerie-Regiment 6 might be the ones who shelled the HQ. - In this case you would be lucky, because the Bavarian Army files have – generally – survived WWII and are available in Munich. For a start, you might look into the regimental history of b. FußA 6 – but don't expect too much here. If the range
doesn’t fit, a Fernkampfgruppe might have been employed. These were led by the army level artillery branch and are almost impossible to track. The army in charge in this sector was the 2nd Army, a Prussian staff, thus files lost thanks to the RAF in April 1945.

This is all very interesting and creates a case for the Fußa 6 but that is as far as it goes. Aaron Pegram responded to this claim by stating: I’d be surprised if it was Fußa 6 as this was a foot artillery unit most likely equipped with the 7.7cm field gun and not a Siege Artillery unit equipped to fire large calibre rounds. The quest goes on.

In the end it probably matters little who fired the shots. It happened. The outcome, as awful as anything could be, was no different in many respects to any event from any day throughout the entire war.

Keeping the memory alive of all the boys who served is important and if this article can assist with that, then I am happy. Of course, if anyone out there knows something else or discovers some more information I am more than willing to revisit the topic.

BUD the MONKEY
AND OTHER TALES OF SOLDIERS’ PETS

Told by Lin. MacDonald and Illustrated by Angus MacDonald (Angus and Robertson, Sydney 1932).
Contributed by Russell Curley, Blakehurst.

Dogs Assorted – The Tyke

On the eve of going back to France after a spell in hospital, I foolishly promised to take a new mascot across to a Scottish unit that had had a casualty. Through this ‘boy scout’ act I was introduced to a place that tickled me immensely, and which I never failed to visit on subsequent trips to England.

It was a sort of dogs’ garage, or crèche, where you parked your pup while shopping in the big store (to which it formed one of the entrances), or dining in the restaurant above. It was fitted up with neat little shelves with larger cubicles underneath them; nicely polished, round rails, to which were fastened the dogs’ leads; clean, brown water-dishes; clean mats; and a nice shiny commissionaire with a ‘whangee’ cane to look after the visitors. Watching this big chap in a grey uniform keeping order amongst his charges, pacifying some dame’s darling with a bit of dog-biscuit, or giving it an imitation bone made of rubber to chew; murmuring things that were evidently not nice to some brute that insisted on putting up a howl, I quite forgot the important business on hand.

I was brought back to earth when my friend at last succeeded in persuading a large, fierce-looking, shaggy-coated beast to come out of his corner and face the world and me. Now, although I had been assured that he was “as gentle as a lamb – he’s only just a pup, you know”, I treated that oversize lapdog with due respect, and wished I could send myself a wire, putting my trip to France back, or even forward, a day.

However, it was too late to get out of the contract with my friend, so The Tyke had to be my bosom companion for a good many hours in the troop-train and transport, until I could deliver him to an emissary of his new unit, who had ‘wangled’ a staff car to get down and collect him at the French wharf.

‘Bosom’ companion was right, for when The Tyke had got over his first apathy, or shyness – I have never decided from which he suffered – he flung himself, terrified, on my chest whenever any strange noise occurred, such as a siren starting or a fog-signal exploding on the rails. As we had a foggy train-trip and a foggy crossing, my chest got lots of work, and, because the hound kept on collecting the damp air in his shaggy coat like a piece of blotting paper, I must have reeked of ‘dog’ from every pore by the time I reached Divisional Headquarters in the line.

I have often wondered what the General who owned the big limousine really said when he smelled his nicely heated car next day.

A nice ‘thank you’ letter arrived from the Scottish mess, asking for his name. I replied that the hound’s name was Egbert, but that wasn’t what I called him personally.
Harry Harlock was born in the village of Singleton in County Sussex in July 1890 and was the son of Harry and Caroline Harlock. Harry (senior) was recorded as being a general practitioner. His son, Harry [left], was well-educated at Eastbourne and could speak Spanish and Italian. For at least two years of his time at Eastbourne he had been in the Officers’ Training Corps.

Harlock’s application for a commission in the AIF shows that he had served for about a year in the Coldstream Guards. He then spent four months with the Royal Irish Constabulary. Harry joined the Fijian Constabulary where he spent some sixteen months starting in early 1914.

Lieutenant Harlock would have held a sub-inspector’s role in the Fijian Constabulary. The photo to the right shows one of the native policemen from around that time. As well as the native Fijians, the force also employed a number of Sikhs, as a large population of Indians had come to the islands to live and work and had considerable commercial dealings in Fiji.

Unsurprisingly, with the outbreak of war in August 1914 there was much interest from the young European men hoping to join the British forces. Many of the officers of the Fijian Police Force had an advantage, as a considerable number of them had seen service with regiments in Britain prior to moving to Fiji, and were able to obtain indefinite leave in order to enlist (similar to many police officers in Australia).

Above is a photo of what is probably the first organised contingent to leave Fiji. Eventually, a more formal agreement was struck whereby European volunteers from Fiji travelled to England in batches to enlist. Many joined the King’s Royal Rifle Corps, as is illustrated by the photo, below right.

Others joined New Zealand or Australian units. During the war years, over 700 men left Fiji to join military units overseas. It was not until 1917 that a Fijian unit was raised and sent to the Western Front, where it became part of the transport corps.

Although the Great War had little direct impact in the Pacific, a force was raised in New Zealand shortly after the declaration of war. This NZ force was sent to seize the German colony of Samoa. (Australia sent a similar force – the AN&MEF – to seize the German
colonies in the New Guinea region.)

Thus, on 15 August 1914 a mixed force of 1 413 men, plus six nursing sisters sailed for Samoa aboard the SS Moeraki and SS Monowai. On its voyage the ship stopped at Fiji to collect some guides and interpreters. It was here that Lieutenant Harlock joined the force in his official role as ‘Military Censor and Interpreter’. He was still officially recorded as being part of the Fijian Constabulary.

The force landed on Apia, the main island of Western Samoa, on 29 August. They remained in occupation until March 1915, when a specially recruited Samoan Relief Force of 360 men took over the garrison. Presumably, Lieutenant Harlock had been on Samoa up until this time. [Right: The NZ landing force arriving at Samoa. Source: nzhistory.net.nz.]

Lieutenant Harlock offered his resignation from the Fijian Constabulary on 26 May 1915 in order that he might proceed to England to offer his services to the War Office. With his resignation accepted, Harlock sailed to Australia, rather than continuing on to England, and so enlisted in the AIF.

On 14 June 1915, Harry applied for a commission, having joined up three days earlier. By now, he was one month short of being 25 years of age. Harry’s application reveals that he was six foot tall and weighed 12 stone. Gaining his commission, 2nd Lieutenant Harlock took charge of the 6th Reinforcements for the 4th Battalion. Harry’s draft of 150 men, sailed for Egypt aboard the Karoola [left], departing Sydney on 16 June 1915.

The photo to the right shows a group of officers and nurses aboard the Karoola. Nurse Coburn is on the left, then Captain Maddock, Matron [?], Captain Morgan (middle, to the rear), Harry Harloch and Staff Nurse Hilda Moxham. Sitting next to Hilda at right is McDonnell. The obscured figure behind Moxham is not named. Hilda Moxham was to become Harry’s wife (she was about ten years older than Harry).

After a short time in Egypt, 2nd Lieutenant Harlock joined the 4th Battalion on Anzac Cove on 22 August 1915. Less than two weeks before, on 7 August, Harry had married Staff Nurse Hilda Moxham. The pair supposedly married secretly (probably in order for Hilda to continue nursing). However, the marriage took place at the Abbassieh Garrison Chapel and was reported in ‘The Egyptian Gazette’ on 23 August. It was also reported in ‘The Sydney Morning Herald’ for all to read in October 1915.

Hilda is shown to the right with some of her fellow nurses; she is second from the right. Hilda was described as being a ‘1st Base Hospital’ reinforcement and ended up serving at the 1st Australian General Hospital at Cairo. It appears from Hilda’s notebook (next page) that she was allowed to continue nursing with the Australian Army Nursing service until 25 February 1916. The notebook gives a brief summary of her and Harry’s movement for the remainder of the war.
Hilda rented a flat in Heliopolis on 29 March to continue being near Harry. She stayed in the flat until 29 May 1916.

When Harry headed for service on the Western Front, Hilda sailed for England, and quickly found work in a UK hospital as matron [see entry right for 24 August 1916]. The birth of their son, ‘Jim’, is recorded on 26.12.17. Hilda recorded that she and ‘Jim’ returned to Australia aboard the Osterley on 10 January 1919, Harry would not join them until mid May 1919.

Like so many Anzacs on the Peninsula, ill-health befell Harry. Only a little over a week after arriving he was admitted to a field hospital suffering diarrhoea and influenza. Rather than rejoining his battalion, Harry remained at a reinforcement camp in Shrapnel Gully. In October, Harlock’s health was reassessed and it was found that he was suffering tuberculosis as well as the diarrhoea he continued to suffer. On 27 October 1915, Harry was admitted to a hospital on Malta, where his condition on admission was described as being enteric fever (typhoid).

In early December, Harlock was transferred to the All Saints Convalescent Camp on Malta. On 18 December, Harlock disembarked at Alexandria in Egypt and was then sent to a depot to await transfer to a unit. Lieutenant Harlock was appointed as Assistant Provost Marshal (APM) at the Heliopolis Camp on 16 January 1916. His appointment was to replace the previous APM, Lieutenant Worthington [left]. Worthington and some of the men of his detachment had been investigated over their running of the detachment and their mistreatment of men detained in the Heliopolis cells. As a result, Worthington was sent home to Australia, services no longer required. Not surprisingly, Harlock was one of the officers formally seconded to join the fledgling Anzac Provost Corps on 3 April 1916. The others were: Capt GL McCallum, Remount Unit; Capt RP Barbour, AMC; Lieut WF Kensett, 24th Bn; Lieut MLF Jarvie, 1st Bn; Lieut AF Jordan, 6th LHR; Lieut J Rogers VC, 12th ASC; Lieut RF Howard, 3rd Bn; Lieut RA Adams, Remount Unit; Lieut AT Watts, Remount Unit.

The photo of Harry [right] possibly shows Harry as a military police officer at Heliopolis. Harry would appear to be wearing a military police armband. The other option is that he is wearing a mourning armband following the death of a fellow officer. The original photo is a faded small Box Brownie shot loaned by Sarah Harlock of Perth.

Lieutenant Harlock remained (formally) with the provost corps for a little over three months. The period he spent with the provost corps was when the bulk of the men were training to be military policemen. Harry was probably at Heliopolis for most of his time with the Anzac Provost Corps, although it is likely he did go to Abbassia for some training himself.

On 10 July 1916 Harlock left the provost corps to join the 4th Division Artillery. He was sent to an artillery training depot at Tel-el-Kebir to begin learning his new skills. Lieutenant Harlock embarked for France from Alexandria in late July aboard the Ivernia, arriving at Marseilles on 1 August.

On 8 August 1916 Lieutenant Harlock was formally taken on strength by the 4th DAC (Divisional Ammunition Column), joining his unit at Acquin in France. The 4th DAC had moved to Acquin five days earlier, where they rested and resumed training as the unit waited a return to the front. The DAC had taken over the roles of the various individual Brigade Ammunition Columns just prior to the move to France. The 4th DAC’s strength as at July 1916 was 16 officers and 807 other ranks.
On 21 August, Harry was detached to 4th Divisional Artillery Headquarters to act as ADC (Aide-de-Camp) to the CRA (Commander Royal Artillery). The CRA for the 4th Division was **Brigadier General C Rosenthal [left]**. A strong personality, Rosenthal would end the war highly decorated. He had begun his military career with the Militia Garrison Artillery in Australia in 1903. Rosenthal had been twice wounded on Gallipoli, on the second occasion he was evacuated to England. Upon his return to duty in Egypt he was given command of the artillery of the newly formed 4th Division. Harry held his role as ADC up until 21 September when he resumed his regular duties.

On 14 October 1916, Harry was detached to the 11th FAB (Field Artillery Brigade) headquarters. Harry spent about ten days with the 11th FAB before returning to the 4th DAC. On 21 June 1917 Harry was transferred to the 10th FAB, where he remained for a little over three months. Harry was then transferred back to the 11th FAB and formally posted to the 42nd Battery. The photos below show an Australian 18 pounder firing near Noreuil in 1917 [left] and a 4.5 inch howitzer [right].

By the end of 1917, Harry had become eligible for two weeks leave and was able to spend Christmas and New Year in the UK. Hilda gave birth to their first son, Harry Fitzgerald (better known as ‘Jim’) in Torquay in the UK on 26 December, Harry being present for the birth. No doubt he also took the opportunity to catch up with many family and friends that he had not seen for several years.

In mid March 1918, Harry was sent for a weeks training at the Corps Gas School. Shortly after rejoining his unit in late March he was admitted to hospital suffering gingivitis. (Gingivitis was a common gum complaint that both officers and men suffered, which was related to the build-up of bacteria often due to the poor conditions while in the line. The sharing of mess tins and utensils also spread the condition.)

Harry was evacuated to Etaples where he received treatment at the 24th General Hospital for just under a week. After a few days convalescence he returned to the Le Havre Depot on 12 April as he awaited the order to return to his unit. It was not until 24 April that Harry rejoined his unit.

Officers of the AIF were no different to their men and would occasionally run afoul of the authorities. Full details of a FGCM (Field General Court Martial) are not shown on Harry’s file, but on 12 July 1918 he was charged with drunkenness for an incident that occurred on 9 July. Harry pleaded not guilty. However, Colonel TIC Williams DSO, from the 10th FAB found him guilty and as a result Harlock forfeited 28 days pay and relinquished his precedence towards his next level of promotion. The finding was reviewed a few days later, with some minor adjustments to the punishment being made.

On 20 July 1918, Lieutenant Harlock was transferred to the 41st Battery, which was also equipped with the popular 18 pounders. No other major details appear on Harry’s file for the remainder of 1918. In September he was granted a further two weeks leave to the UK. Upon completion of his leave he rejoined his unit in France.

On 7 January 1919, Harry was again granted leave, after which he was ordered to report to AIF Headquarters in London. Harry was ‘selected’ to become a Brigade Claims Officer, a role he carried out until early March.

On 7 March 1919 Harry was ordered to prepare for demobilisation and marched into No. 2 Command Depot at Weymouth. On 25 March 1919 he was given a berth back to Australia aboard the Port Dennison. For the voyage, Harlock was to be the ship’s subaltern.
Hilda, who was now living in Balmain, Sydney, made enquiries regarding being given tickets to meet her husband. The couple had not formally changed Hilda to Harry’s next-of-kin, despite Hilda having resigned due to their marriage. Harry disembarked at Melbourne and then entrained to Sydney. He had his discharge medical in mid May and his appointment with the AIF was formally terminated a month later on 15 July 1919.

Presumably, Hilda had remained in England while Harry was in France and Belgium. She voyaged to Australia on the Osterley on 10 January 1919.

Harry and Hilda took Jim to Fiji from Sydney in August 1919. Phillip was born in Suva on 8 July 1920 and William Mark in 1921. On the birth certificate, Harry (senior) was described as being an Inspector of the Constabulary, indicating he had returned to Fiji to his police duties

The Harlocks left Fiji to return to England (via Sydney) aboard the Baradine on 19 December 1925. The passenger list showing their details is shown below, Hilda’s age is incorrectly recorded, and she was in fact some 10 or 11 years older than the 35 years indicated.

In 1926 the Harlock family moved to Egypt, where Harry worked for the British Colonial Service within the Egyptian Government Service. Although Britain continued to administer Egypt, the French Government had control of the country’s antiquities. Some ten years after returning to Egypt, Harry was awarded the Palmes Academiques (grade of officer d’academic) [right]; apparently Harry had become quite a ‘Classics expert’.

In 1939, before WWII, Hilda returned to Australia with Philip. Jim joined the British Colonial Service, serving in the Malayan Police. He would be interned at Changi during the war. In 1960 Jim and his family moved to Perth from Malaya. Phillip joined the 2nd AIF during the war and was killed in New Guinea in May 1945. Hilda never returned to England.

William Mark (‘Bill’) Harlock remained in England, as did Harry (senior) after his time in Egypt. In 1939, Bill (then only 18) entered the Dartmouth Royal Naval College where he trained alongside Prince Philip. He ultimately became a commander in the Royal Navy. From there he moved into Naval Intelligence, and later into the Government Communications Headquarters where he became the head of the Arab section.

Hilda ended up in Perth in 1963 and died three years later. Despite being some ten years younger than Hilda, Harry Harlock died first, in 1960 in the UK.

Endnotes: (1) Harlock photos courtesy of Sarah Harlock. Apologies for quality of some originals. (2) Phillip Harlock served as NX101682 in the 2/4th Battalion. He appears to have no known grave.
Survived the Western Front but lost at sea: the HMAS *Sydney* Diggers

*Greg Swinden, Evatt.*

On the night of 19/20 November 1941, the Australian cruiser HMAS *Sydney* (II) was badly damaged and on fire after her fateful encounter with the German armed raider HSK *Kormoran* off the coast of Western Australia. Sometime after midnight the cruiser’s bow, which had been damaged by a torpedo strike, sheared off and the blazing ship quickly rolled over and sank, taking 645 men with her to the bottom of the Indian Ocean. Little known today is that some of her crew had previously served in the 1st AIF during World War I.

They were:

**Surgeon Lieutenant Commander Francis Harrison Genge, RAN** (AIF N95010). Born in Paddington, NSW, on 21 March 1897. He undertook his medical training at the University of Sydney and graduated with a Bachelor of Medicine and Master of Surgery; he joined the RAN on 4 November 1935. Genge was a 21 year old university student when he joined the AIF (University Unit) on 4 October 1918 but was discharged on 9 March 1919, following the Armistice, without seeing overseas service.

**Chief Petty Officer Engine Room Artificer Joseph Henry McBain** (RAN 16150/AIF 5745). Born in Glasgow, Scotland, on 28 December 1897, he was an iron welder living at Launceston in Tasmania when he enlisted in the 1st AIF on 11 April 1916 as a private in the 12th Battalion. He served on the Western Front and was wounded in the right thigh at the battle of Hazebrouck in April 1918. He was discharged from the AIF on 6 March 1920 and later joined the RAN on 27 January 1925. Joseph McBain was awarded the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

**Chief Petty Officer Stoker James Robert Sturla** (RAN 13563/AIF N60429 & 3832). Born in Pyrmont, NSW, on 8 June 1900, he lied about his age and joined up on 3 September 1915 but was discharged under-age on 29 September 1915. He is believed to have tried to enlist again in June 1916, but was again found to be under-age and rejected. He finally joined up on 6 December 1916, aged 16½, under the assumed name of James Robert Evans and served as a sapper in the 1st Pioneer Battalion and later in the 10th Field Company Engineers, until discharged on 9 January 1920. He joined the RAN on 16 October 1922. James Sturla was awarded the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

**Chief Petty Officer Cook Thomas Leslie Carey** (RAN 11234/AIF V75616 & V81088). Carey was an 18 year old baker born in Moonambool, Vic, on 22 June 1900. He joined the AIF on 17 April 1918 but was found to be under-age and was discharged on 17 May 1918. He then joined the AIF again as a private on 22 October at the Recruit Depot at Broadmeadows. He was discharged on 24 December 1918 after the Armistice without seeing overseas service. Carey joined the RAN on 6 May 1919.

**Engine Room Artificer 1st Class Ivo Ignatius Bibby** (RAN 12522/AIF V78872). Born in Ballarat, Vic, on 17 July 1899, he was a 19 year old private in the 16th General Service Reinforcements who had joined the 1st AIF on 29 July 1918. Bibby embarked in the troopship SS *Carpentaria* on 7 November 1918, bound for Europe, but following the Armistice the ship was recalled. He was transshipped to the SS *Riverina* which arrived back in Australia on 28 November 1918. Bibby was discharged on 24 December 1918. He missed out on active war service but was awarded the British War Medal as he had embarked for overseas service. Bibby joined the RAN on 9 July 1920. [Right: Ivo Bibby. AWM P07517.001.]

**Plumber 1st Class Percy John Christian Willis** (RAN 12524/AIF N36665). Born in Sydney, NSW, on 3 October 1900. He lied about his age and joined the AIF on 18 July 1916 at the Royal Agricultural Showground in Sydney. He was soon found to be under-age and was discharged on 29 July 1916. Percy Willis joined the RAN on 5 July 1920.

**Stoker Petty Officer William Ernest McLean** (RAN 13426/AIF V46500 & 2760). Born in South Melbourne, Vic, on 14 March 1899. He lied about his age and served as a private in the 2nd Pioneer Battalion from 14 June 1916 until discharged on 28 December 1919. McLean was gassed while serving on the Western Front in October 1917. He joined the RAN on 15 February 1922. William McLean was awarded the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

**Petty Officer Cook Leslie Joseph Crocker** (RAN 13203/AIF V81250). Crocker was born in Kensington, Vic, on 26 December 1899 and served briefly in the 1st AIF from 22 October 1918 to 24 December 1918 as a private at the Recruit Depot at Broadmeadows. He was discharged after the Armistice without seeing overseas service. Crocker joined the RAN on 3 June 1921.
Petty Officer Steward Donald Ross (RAN 16199/AIF V60543 & 7554). Ross was born in Chatsworth, Vic, on 5 April 1899, but lied about his age in order to enlist in the 1st AIF on 24 January 1917. He served as a private in the 14th Battalion and later the 4th Machine Gun Battalion on the Western Front. Donald Ross was discharged from the AIF on 5 March 1920 and joined the RAN on 10 February 1925. His brother (Lieutenant Thomas Ross) also served in the 1st AIF, but was killed in action in August 1918 while serving with the 7th Battalion. Donald Ross was awarded the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

Also lost with Sydney was 44 year old Bandmaster Ernest Victor Lloyd Stear (RAN 19523) who had previously served in the Royal Marines as a bandsman from 1911-1926 and had joined the RAN on 6 March 1930.

There were also a dozen or so RAN/RN personnel lost in Sydney who had served in the Navy during the First World War.

OAWG to fund care for Birdwood’s and VC winners’ graves overseas

Through Facebook, FFFAIF members Sandra Playle and Graeme Hosken became engaged in a discussion with Gary Stapleton of the Victoria Cross Trust, based in the UK [www.victoriacrosstrust.org]. The VC Trust is a charitable organisation which raises funds to restore and maintain the graves of British VC winners whose graves don’t meet the criteria for care and oversight by the CWGC.

When researching a WWII aircrew member for a school study in December 2012, Graeme established contact with the serviceman’s brother, who had an historical interest in General Birdwood through the general’s post-war visit to the Mildura area to open a soldier-settlement scheme. The topic of the poor condition of Birdwood’s grave in Twickenham Cemetery, London, came up in discussion and Graeme’s thought was that the FFFAIF may be able to facilitate a tidy-up of the grave.

Sandra suggested Graeme contact Gary who immediately facilitated the taking and forwarding of photos of Birdwood’s grave [left]. Though not a VC winner, Gary felt that the VC Trust should include Birdwood’s grave in its projects, given his leadership of the ANZAC/AIF. Gary soon issued a press release, was interviewed on ABC Radio and opened his website to donations.

Within 24 hours, the Australian Government, through DVA, advised Gary that they would accept responsibility for the restoration of General Birdwood’s grave. Great news number one! By the end of January the restoration had been completed – great news number two! [See vision of the repaired grave at http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-21258494.]

Sandra also expressed a wish that the FFFAIF take up the case for the restoration of Frederick Bell VC’s grave. Bell was from Perth, WA, and won his VC in the Boer War when serving with the 6th WA Mounted Infantry. He served with the British Army in WWII, rising to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel, and died in England in 1954.

Remembering that he had read somewhere that the DVA had announced it was going to take responsibility for all Australian VC winners’ graves, and after Russell Curley found the press release, [see http://minister.dva.gov.au/media_releases/2011/aug/va069.html], Graeme contacted DVA (who forwarded the email to OAWG) and asked if Bell’s grave [right] would meet the program’s criteria. Kel Pearce, Deputy Director Operations, OAWG, replied: Thank you for your enquiry regarding the grave of Frederick Bell VC located in Canford Cemetery, Bristol. I confirm that his grave will be covered by the ‘Graves of the Bravest’ program. The grave was last inspected by a representative of the London based Australian Defence Attaché in mid 2012. The grave is located in an area of the cemetery that has minimal maintenance; this program will not address cemetery maintenance issues. The personal details on the grave are legible and the grave is structurally sound. It appears to be regularly maintained (unknown by whom at this time) as it is weed free. The grave would benefit from a biocidal treatment to reduce the moss and improve the appearance of the grave. An appropriate service provider is to be approached.

Mr Pearce then contacted the VC Trust and Gary advised: I can confirm that today we have been contacted by Kel Pearce with a request to undertake ALL work regarding Australian VCs that lay to rest in the UK. This would cover the cleaning and restoration of all graves and also ensuring suitable/allowable memorials to be placed at cremation sites. This is obviously subject to them agreeing to our costings and family/grave owner permission. The men concerned would be: Percy Storkey VC; Guy Wyly VC; Frank McNameara VC; Frederick Bell VC and Neville Howse VC. Great news number three!
In *DIGGER* 41 I revealed the background to the ‘famous’ Hubert Wilkins photograph of men of the 5th Division at Peronne, taken on 2 September 1918 [right]. The site of the photograph was identified and the context in which it and others were taken was explained. However, I could only make an educated guess at the fate of Private 3249 Jack Sweeney. As a result of a chance discovery, the story of Jack’s death can now be completed. [Right: Jack Sweeney is sitting right in the photo taken on the day of his mortal wounding. AWM E03183.]

Jack’s grand niece and her husband, Colleen and Chris Hills of the ACT, were doing some family history research in the Dixon Library at the University of New England, where they were perusing a copy of the *Armidale Chronicle* of 31 December 1918. On page eight they discovered a letter written by Captain Reginald George Downing MC & Bar, OC of Jack’s ‘B’ Company, 54th Battalion. Thus the first discovery was that Jack was Downing’s company runner for twelve months; a fact that was previously unknown to the family. Jack was the soldier charged with taking Wilkins around the mopped-up areas of Peronne that fateful afternoon, referred to in Bean’s diary: a company commander ... sent a man with him to show him the posts set up by the battalion. Downing’s HQ was a couple of blocks to the west of Rue Beranger, where E03183 was taken that afternoon on Jack’s ‘tour’.

Reginald Downing was an Englishman who had completed a degree in Agriculture at the University of Sydney and had served at Gallipoli as a member of the 7th ALH Regiment. He was transferred to the 2nd Battalion and then to the 54th Battalion when the 5th Division was being formed in Egypt. He ended the war in the 56th Battalion. Downing knew Jack very well, as he stated in his letter. He continued:

*On the afternoon of the 2nd [September], when things were comparatively quiet, as most of the fighting was over, he left me to take a message to an officer about a hundred yards away, when a stray shell landed twenty yards or so from my headquarters. A few minutes later, one of the boys reported that Jack Sweeney had been hit badly. The Colonel [Lieut-Col Norman Marshall DSO & 2 Bars, MC] who had just arrived at my HQ and I immediately rushed out, and when we reached Jack he was being attended to by a couple of our stretcher-bearers ... He was hit in the neck by a piece of shell, and although not in much pain seemed to think he had no chance. We encouraged him as much as we could, but he seemed to think it was all up with him. His last words to me as they carried him away were: ‘I’m sorry, Captain, I can’t help you anymore.’ I had difficulty controlling my emotion, as he showed right to the last that fine unselfishness that characterises the real Australian soldier. About an hour before he was killed the Australian official photographer [Wilkins] (a very enterprising chap) took a photo of the gate by which the Battalion entered Peronne, with Jack in the foreground ... Jack died at the 41st CCS (I think) on the 3/9/18, and is buried near there.*

A few comments need to be made about Downing’s letter. Jack had previously suffered a shrapnel wound in the upper arm at Nonne Boschen in the Battle of Polygon Wood, so he would have known, in his own mind and heart, the extent of his wound. Secondly, the story is convincing and reliable evidence that E03196 shows the entrance into Peronne captured by Corporal Arthur Hall, which allowed the 54th Battalion to rush into the town. Thirdly, that it is Jack Sweeney ‘standing guard’ on this gateway to Peronne [below left, AWM E03196].

Many thanks to Chris and Col for alerting me to the letter. Even though a piece from the bottom has been torn off and it is quite difficult to read, such reliable and useful sources are always a delight to discover to complete a story from our AIF history.

**Endnote:** Jack Sweeney can be seen in close-up in the ‘famous’ photo on the back cover of Michele Bomford’s ‘The Battle of Mont St Quentin-Peronne 1918’ [Australian Army Campaign Series – 11], published by the Army History Unit, 2012.
Captain Arthur William Ross: AIF Postal Service

Captain Rupert Dalley RFD, Kyneton.

Background: Rupert was posted (and is still attached) to 39 Personnel Support Battalion at Randwick, which at the time was responsible for all military post offices for Australians serving overseas. A new military post office was being built at Townsville, and Rupert was asked to research a suitable military figure after whom to name the post office. He selected Captain Arthur William Ross who established the first post office in Egypt, then Gallipoli, before establishing the AIF postal services in England and on the Western Front. The postal service had to cater for mail sent home from the soldiers and those letters and parcels sent from Australia to sons, husbands and brothers scattered over the Middle East, the UK, France and Belgium.

Arthur William Ross was born in 1876 on French Island in Victoria. During the Boer War he served as a corporal (1629) with the 5th Victorian (Mounted Rifles) Contingent.

Ross enlisted in the AIF on 31 August 1914 and was attached to Colonel Selheim’s staff at Victoria Barracks to make all the necessary postal arrangements for the 1st Australian Division prior to and after embarkation for overseas. This position was due to Staff Sergeant Ross’s previous postal experience.

Arthur embarked for overseas service on 2 October 1914 on board the Orvieto and was put in charge of the 1st Divisional Train Field Post Office when he arrived in Egypt. The Australian Base Post Office was opened on 22 January 1915 and Staff Sergeant Ross was placed in charge as the senior postal NCO.

In February the 1st ANZAC Corps was formed and headquarters was located in the Shepheard Hotel in Cairo. General Bridges appointed Ross as the Assistant Director of Australian Army Postal Service and promoted Ross to lieutenant. [Above: The arrival of 161 mail bags at Mena. Delivery was delayed due to the mail being wrongly labelled in Australia to ‘GPO London’. Photo taken by Arthur Ross. AWM J02427.]

For the greater part of the Gallipoli campaign, Lieutenant Ross served at Anzac Cove until his return to Egypt following the evacuation. [Right: Troops lining up to collect mail from the Post Office established on Gallipoli. AWM A05384.]

On 14 March 1916, an advance party was sent to France to establish an Australian Base Post Office at Calais (under a Lieutenant Wilson). By June 1916, the Base PO had been moved to London. Ross had been sent to assist with the establishment of the postal services in France, and took over from Wilson on 6 April 1916 as Deputy Assistant Director of Postal Services of the 1st ANZAC Corps.

In November 1916, Ross was promoted to captain and the position of Deputy Director of the Australian Army Postal Service. In December, he handed over to Lieutenant CJ Fletcher, whose posting was Senior Postal Officer for the AIF in France.

Ross then transferred back to the Middle East and from 1 May 1918 was Deputy Director of the received leave to London on 11 March 1919 and thus embarked from Port Said on the Indarra four days later. Ross remained in England until he departed for home in November 1919. He later resided at ‘Corona’, 25 Pusley Street, South Yarra.

The operation of an efficient postal service was vital for morale in an army so far from home, so it is fitting that the new Townsville mail centre was named after Captain Arthur William Ross. [Left: The Australian Field PO and staff at Anzac, 2 October 1915. Photo by Arthur Ross. AWM J02429.]
Fromelles Inscription – feedback result

FFFAIF Committee of Management.

The Committee of Management would like to express its appreciation to members who responded to our request for feedback and opinion on the issue of the inscription of ‘Fromelles’ on National and State Memorials that list battles by name. By the closing date of 1 February, 103 validated responses had been received by email or post.

We believe that a 24% member response is a satisfactory indicator of membership opinion. The result is almost three to one in favour of retaining the existing position of support FOR inscription and reinforces the resolution carried at the 2010 Annual General Meeting.

Each FFFAIF member was assigned a Unique Member Identifier (UMI) for the purposes of recording feedback so that responses could be verified while providing transparency and accountability whilst maintaining members’ privacy. These four digit identifiers were on the December 2012 DIGGER address label. Each response was recorded and allocated a sequential number after being validated. Each email and postal return has also been archived in a separate PDF file. UMIs for participating FFFAIF members are published in the Members’ area on the fffaif.org.au website.

Results Summary – also published in the Members’ area on the website.

<table>
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<th>Eligible Members</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>FOR</th>
<th>AGAINST</th>
<th>UNDECIDED</th>
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<td>426</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>3</td>
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</tbody>
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24% | 72% | 25% | 3% | 0%

[103 responses were validated, 103 UMIs are recorded in the table & 103 responses are accounted for in the summary table.]

The feedback response is now known and the Committee is satisfied that the current FFFAIF policy is consistent with the view of the majority of members who have wished to express their view. This means that the current policy will be retained and puts the issue to rest* until the desired outcome is achieved or a majority in a future AGM or membership survey overturns this decision.

[* Please note: Jacqueline Wilson’s article on pages 16-17 arrived after the publishing deadline for DIGGER 41 and has been published in this issue to honour a commitment made to her at the 2012 AGM.]

Accordingly, the Committee will continue with the job it was elected to do.

The Committee has its focus on the 10 Objectives of the FFFAIF (on the www.fffaif.org.au website go to About and select Objectives and Constitution) for:

1. Preserving for future generations of Australians the sense of national identity and values that the First AIF created, beginning with the ANZAC tradition at Gallipoli.
2. Preserving the memory of the soldiers, sailors, airmen and nurses who served in the Great War 1914-1918.
3. Supporting those serving units entrusted with carrying on the traditions passed on to them by predecessor units of the Great War 1914-1918.
4. Helping to bring together the families and friends of those who served in the Great War 1914-1918.
5. Helping to educate all Australians seeking knowledge and guidance in understanding the campaigns in which Australians participated.
6. Helping Australians to conduct research and publication concerning those who served in the Great War 1914-1918.
7. Encouraging and supporting the provision of courses in Australia’s participation in the Great War 1914-1918, in primary, secondary and tertiary education.
8. Providing scholarships, principally to support younger Australians, to study Australia’s participation in the Great War 1914-1918.
9. Working in co-operation with the Department of Veterans’ Affairs, Australian War Memorial, Returned & Services League and like minded organisations to further the objectives of the FFFAIF.
10. Promoting FFFAIF objectives through the media, with particular emphasis on raising the standards of reporting of Great War 1914-1918 history.
In addition to the general administration and management of the Association, other recent or current activities undertaken in accordance with our Objectives include:

1. Publication of the high quality and significantly expanded quarterly magazine DIGGER with WWI-related articles and photographs mostly supplied by members and never before published.
2. Maintaining access to FFFAIF website: www.fffaif.org.au with topical news as well as more than 300 historical News and Research postings and an exclusive members’ area.
3. Enabling members to visit battlefields of the Great War, including organising commemorative tours for members in 2010 and 2012, with future tours planned for 2014 and possibly 2016.
4. Representation at commemorations and wreath laying services and dedications, such as recently with the Mayor of Pozieres, dedication of commemorative plaques for Australian Infantry Battalions at the AWM, dedication of bridges, parks and roads in honour of AIF soldiers in addition to participation in regular commemorative events on ANZAC Day, 19th July ‘Fromelles Day’, Pozieres service in July and Remembrance Day services.
5. Facilitating the recognition of the war service of Great War soldiers who died in Australia without adequate recognition by affixing appropriate plaques on their headstones, initially in Tasmania through the Headstone Project Sub-Committee of Andrea Gerrard and John Trethewey.
6. Facilitating the recognition of the war service of Great War soldiers who died and are buried in unmarked graves in Australia without adequate recognition and are at risk of the grave sites being reused by identification of such grave sites and erecting appropriate headstones, initially for returned soldiers who were buried in cemeteries associated with hospitals and medical facilities.
7. Preserving the memory of the soldiers, sailors, airmen and nurses who served in the Great War 1914-1918 through:
   o advocating for the exhumation, identification and dignified reburial in individual graves with full military honours for the soldiers buried at Pheasant Wood, near Fromelles;
   o advocating for the upgrading and enhancement of the museum at Bullecourt as the Jean and Denise Letaille Museum;
   o advocating to the local government authorities in Ieper for the maximum preservation of vistas toward Ieper from the Australian Tunnellers’ Memorial at Hill 60 by sympathetic developments nearby;
   o input on the development of ‘ANZAC Trails’ in the UK and Western Front;
   o promoting awareness of projects to commemorate AIF involvement on the Western Front including the Brothers-in-Arms Project in Belgium, Pozieres Remembrance, etc.
8. Promoting awareness of the sacrifice of those who served in Great War through the importation and sale of Rembrella ‘poppy umbrellas’.
9. Facilitating networking of members including recently informal gathering of members in Western Australia, the annual John Laffin Memorial Lecture and the establishment of a FFFAIF Facebook group.
10. Renegotiation of the John Laffin Travel Scholarship to increase awareness of the Great War among tertiary students and to enable an outstanding student to travel to the Great War battlefields, thereby increasing their exposure to and competence to teach history related to the Great War. In support of this, fundraising includes sales of donated books and donations.

We look forward to your continued support as we strive to Keep The Memory Alive.

Pheasant Wood Diggers’ names to be removed from Memorials

The Australian casualties buried at Pheasant Wood were previously listed by the CWGC as having no known grave, and accordingly they are presently commemorated by name on the Memorials to the Missing at VC Corner Australian Cemetery or the Australian National Memorial at Villers-Bretonneux.

When casualties recovered from Pheasant Wood are identified, headstones, inscribed with the following information, will be provided [and have been in 119 cases – Ed.]:
- Service badge (in the case of Australians, this will be the Rising Sun AIF badge); name (initials and surname); rank; unit; date of death; age (optional); religious emblem (optional); a personal inscription chosen by relatives (optional).

In due course, the name of each identified casualty will be removed from the Memorial to the Missing where it is now found as the casualty will have a known grave. [This is normal practice – Ed.]
**Poppy Day**  
*Judith Green, Fitzroy (SA).*

**Colonel John McCrae**, a Canadian doctor, was serving as a medical officer in the battle of Ypres in 1915 when he wrote the poem:

In Flanders fields the poppies blow  
Between the crosses, row on row,  
That mark our place: and in the sky  
The larks, still bravely singing, fly  
Scarce heard amid the guns below….

Take up our quarrel with the foe  
To you from failing hands we throw  
The torch, be yours to hold it high  
If ye break faith with us who die  
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow  
In Flanders fields.

John McCrae died in a military hospital in 1918 but lives on in his poem which is recited on Remembrance Day, and in the poppies which were the first flowers to bloom on the ravaged battlefields. These red field poppies blooming in the muddy fields of the Somme became symbols of the blood of the fallen soldiers and came to be known as ‘Flanders poppies’. The same poppies also grew among the Gallipoli graves. After the war, Moina Michael, an American woman, was inspired by McCrae’s poem and wrote a reply – ‘The Victory Emblem’ or ‘We Shall Keep the Faith’.

Oh! Ye who sleep in Flanders fields  
Sleep sweet – to rise anew…

And now the torch and Poppy red  
Wear in honour of our dead.

Moina and her friends wore red poppies every day and then decided to make silk poppies and sell them to help families of men who fell in World War I. At the same time, a Frenchwoman, Madame Anne Guerin, was seeking ways to help French orphans and villagers whose homes and livelihoods had been devastated by the war. Anne followed Moina’s example and began making silk poppies for sale. Poppy Day began in England on Armistice Day, 11 November 1921, and the first poppies were those made in France. The idea quickly spread to all countries which had sent soldiers to the battlefields.

Poppy Day began in Australia in 1922 and when my father, Walter Cecil Vandenbergh MBE, became honorary secretary of the United Returned Soldiers’ Fund he organised Poppy Day appeals and inaugurated the Remembrance Day Concerts in Sydney Town Hall [see DIGGERs 40 and 41].

My father was a wonderful gardener and he grew Flanders poppies in our garden at Willoughby, Sydney. Poppy seeds lie dormant in the ground and begin to germinate in Spring if the soil is disturbed. I remember my father saying ‘throw the seed around on Anzac Day, hoe the soil on Legacy Day and there will be poppies on Poppy Day’.

The Legacy Club was founded in Melbourne in 1923 in a spirit of mutual self help. On the battlefields the Diggers had said to their mates: ‘If I go west, look after my missus and kids’. The Legacy Club chose as its emblem the torch from McCrae’s poem, and on Legacy button days, miniature torches with laurel leaves are sold to raise money for war widows and orphans. My father, ‘Vandy’, was a legatee and helped organise Legacy fundraisers – concerts and ‘button days’ – as related in the article in DIGGER 40.

**Left:** Singer, Gladys Moncrieff, rides a poppy-laden float donated by Holeproof Hosiery Company, 11 November 1927-1930. Source: http://www.flickr.com/photos/statelibraryofnsw/3380561129
Trooper 2898 Walter Rupert Tink, 7th Light Horse Regiment

Graeme Hosken, Dubbo, with thanks to Brian Tink.

Walter Rupert Tink was a 24 year old grazier when he enlisted on 14 March 1916 at Menangle Park, Sydney. He named his mother, Margaret Tink, of ‘Benalong’, Dubbo, as his next of kin (his father was deceased). Rupert stood 5’7” tall, weighed 138lb, and had fair complexion, blue eyes and fair hair. He was allocated to the 20th Reinforcements for the 7th Light Horse Regiment (NSW).

Not long after he arrived in Egypt, Rupert was admitted to the isolation camp at Moascar with mumps on 25 August 1916. He was moved to the 24th Stationary Hospital on 12 September and stayed there until 3 October, when he rejoined the 2nd Light Horse Training Regiment. However, Rupert was returned to the isolation camp between 15 November and 10 December (reason unknown).

Trooper Tink was taken on strength of the 7th LHR on 11 December 1916. On 26 March 1917, Rupert was reported killed in action at Gaza. A note on his file states that ‘this man was not buried on account of retirement of regiment’. He is commemorated in the Jerusalem War Memorial Cemetery. [Above left: Walter Tink is standing on the right of this photo of members of the 7th LHR taken at Menangle Camp. AWM P05093.011.]

Churches are common places for members of the First AIF to be remembered. A marble or brass plaque on a wall, a pew, silverware, an honour roll or a stained-glass window may carry the name of a parishioner who did not return from the Great War. How many churches, though, would depict the soldier in AIF uniform, rather than just carry his name? How many stained-glass windows feature a .303 SMLE?

The (former) St Andrew’s Presbyterian Church in Wingewarra Street, Dubbo, provides us with the answer of ‘at least one’ to the above questions. The Tink family arranged for a magnificent stained-glass window to be installed in their family church to honour their dead son and brother.

The window [left] shows Jesus preparing to crown Walter Tink as Walter kneels before him, rifle in hand. Angels appear to be welcoming Walter to heaven, while a child holds his hat, replete with emu feathers.

The biblical verse on the window states: Be Thou Faithful unto Death and I will give Thee a Crown of Life [Revelation 2:10] and To the glory of God. At the bottom of the window is: In loving memory of Walter Rupert Tink, killed in action at Gaza, March 27th, 1917. Presented by his Mother, Brothers, and Sisters 1927.

The unveiling of the window and the opening of the church took place ten years after Walter’s death.

Postscript 1: The Tink family’s understanding of Walter’s death is that he was shot whilst on advance patrol as the 7th LHR moved towards Gaza. When the order to withdraw from Gaza was received, his body had to be left behind. While it was searched for in later weeks, Walter’s body could not be found. The 7th LHR history on page 43 states: Our own casualties were, one man killed and two wounded [in the First Battle
of Gaza] – this single death must have been Walter Tink. However, in reading the ‘Official History’, Volume VII (Gullett), another possible explanation of Walter’s death appears: When the order to break off was received by the 7th LHR, on the extreme right, Onslow concentrated his men upon the beach. Ryrie stood firmly to his declaration that he would not move as long as a single man was unaccounted for [p284]. The bodies of the few Anzacs who had been killed were strapped to limbers and carried back to Belah; and so thorough had been the search, that at dawn only one man of the 2nd Brigade [which included the 7th] was missing – and it was remembered that he had been asleep close to the point of re-assembly [p285]. After two nights without sleep, had Walter fallen sound asleep and been missed in the dark, to be captured and shot by the Turks? Unfortunately, no Red Cross file exists for Walter Tink to provide further information on his death.

Postscript 2: Walter Tink’s file contains a copy of his Last Will and Testament which is much more detailed than those sometimes found in service records. Most wills gave the deceased soldier’s estate to the next-of-kin – usually the father or mother – but Walter’s will shows he gave careful consideration to his extended family. It reads:

... I appoint Herbert Thomas Tink of ‘Kameruka’, Rawsonville, Dubbo aforesaid, Albert Henry Sutton of Macquarie Street, Dubbo aforesaid, Executors and Trustees of this my will. I give and bequeath one hundred pounds to each of my two nephews, Mervyn Lloyd Robinson and John Leonard Lawson Tink, son of my brother Samuel John Tink as they attain the age of twenty-one years and one hundred pounds to my niece Barbara Eileen Tink, daughter of my brother, the said Samuel John Tink, on her attaining the age of twenty-one or on her marriage, and in the event of any the said beneficiaries dying before the date of payment of the aforesaid legacy to the said beneficiary the said gift shall form part of my residuary estate. I give my gold chain to my brother Ernest Albert Tink. I give, devise and bequeath all the rest and residue of my estate, real and personal, to my Trustees upon trust to convert all such as is not money into money and to hold the said estate upon trust to divide it equally between my brothers and sisters, share and share alike, and in the event of any brother or sister of mine dying before me leaving issue, such issue shall take the share of the parent so dying, if more than one equally and if only one absolutely, such share to be paid to such issue on his or her attaining the age of twenty-one years and in the event of any brother or sister of mine dying before me without issue the share or shares of the one or more so dying shall be divided among the survivors and the issue of those predeceasing me as hereinbefore stated ... [Will recorded 18/1/1916, two months before Walter enlisted – Ed.]

Above: Framed portrait photograph of Walter Rupert Tink, courtesy of the Tink family.
[Left: A closer view of the bottom left half of the window. Note how the stained-glass artist has produced a good likeness of Walter, rather than just a generic image of a soldier.]

Endnotes: (1) Walter Tink was educated at Newington College, Sydney. (2) On the ROH Circular, his mother gives Walter’s date of death as 27 March, but officially it is the day before. Note that the stained glass window also gives the incorrect date of death. (There is some confusion in Walter’s service record as to the date of death, which is sometimes given as 26 or 27 March. However, the official records show 26 March. The confusion may have come from no-one actually witnessing Walter’s death, which would strengthen the ‘left behind’ version of his death.) (3) Photos of the window supplied by member and Walter’s great nephew, Brian Tink. If any member would like colour photos of the window, e-mail the Editor or ask for a pdf copy of this issue. (4) Ernest Tink’s son, Gordon, can recall his father wearing the gold chain (and Walter’s gold watch) but he has not seen them since Ernest passed away. They are believed to be still in the family. (5) St Andrew’s Presbyterian Church was the focus of community concern in 2012 when it was put up for sale by the Uniting Church. The church has always had strong links to WWI heritage and the remaining parishioners were worried that the church would be demolished or converted to an unsympathetic commercial landuse. Fortunately, a local funeral director purchased the church and adjoining hall and it is now being used as a funeral and wedding chapel. The Tink window is safe for the time being. (6) The ‘Daily Liberal’ newspaper on 21 March 1919 carried the following In Memoriam for Walter: May the winds of Heaven blow swiftly, O’er that hallowed spot unknown. Inserted by his fond sister-in-law and brother, Millie and Ernest. (7) An Internet search found the following mention of Walter’s death as a diary entry from Trooper McRae Archibald Cameron, 5th LHR. 27 March 1917: Poor old Walter Tink was killed yesterday. He came over with me with the 20th. The use of the word ‘killed’ implies that Walter was KIA rather than taken prisoner after falling asleep. However, Cameron was not in the same regiment, so is unlikely to have been an eye-witness to Walter’s death. Source: http://pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/64423/20090520-1059/www.lighthorse.org.au/pershist/macameron.html.

COUNTRY VICTORIA’S OWN [Neil Leckie]

Unit history of the 8th/7th Infantry Battalion that started as a Ballarat infantry unit in 1858. The battalion also had men serving from Mildura, Bendigo, Geelong and smaller towns, as well as southern NSW areas – covers 150 years to 2008 and includes WWI & WWII.

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When I was absorbed in civilian life, over three years ago, little did I think I should ever have seen what it has been my lot to witness, nor to have had the many wonderful escapes which was my good fortune while in action.

I enlisted when I was 22 years of age at the Perth Drill Hall, on March 4th, 1915, and went into camp four days later. After three months training I was sent abroad with the 28th Battalion on June 9th, 1915, by the SS Ascanius.

After three weeks steaming we reached our first port-of-call, which was Port Suez. We remained aboard four days, and then disembarked, and proceeded by train to our allotted camping place, Abbassia. From thence we had seven and a half hours train journey, which provided many interesting sights. We remained at Abbassia four weeks, during which time we underwent some solid training.

From Abbassia into the Citadel, where we were placed on garrison duty, and remained there for two weeks.

After this brief period we were moved to the famous camp of Heliopolis, but only remained there for one night, after which we entrained for Alexandria, there to embark for the journey towards Turkish soil. We arrived at Alexandria after an all-night journey; and there embarked for our first port-of-call, Lemnos Island, which we reached after 3½ days sail. We remained aboard the troopship, the SS Ivernia, for four days, and had a welcome rest before we boarded our steamer for the Dardanelles. We were given rations for 48 hours, and then ordered aboard the small steamers which came alongside our ship, and within 3½ hours we were fronting the heights of Gallipoli.

We disembarked into a punt, which would hold about 50 men packed close together, and then, after our unpleasant trip from the steamer to the shores of Gallipoli, we landed at 8 o’clock on Friday night, September 12th, 1915.

We were soon moved towards the front line to relieve the New Zealanders and Maoris, who had been there for some months. On the following day we relieved our tired mates, and were warmly welcomed, as you may well imagine. What they had of cigarettes and other luxuries they insistently forced upon us.

Our battalion remained on the Peninsula until the evacuation, and in that arduous and anxious period paid a heavy toll for their holding of the line.

When my company went into the line on the first night, I had a marvellous escape from death. We had only been two hours in the line, where I was placed behind a parapet of sand bags, when suddenly I was staggered by the force of a bullet against my body. I recovered quickly, and to my surprise did not feel any pain or observe any blood marks. I had been shot alright, for further search revealed to my astonishment that a bullet had penetrated my great-coat through my equipment, and then into my tunic pocket, inside of which I had a wallet containing a Testament, and inside that again a little book, in the centre of which the bullet had lodged.

After that exciting event I fell a victim to the prevailing enteric fever, and had to be removed to hospital.

When convalescent I was able to thoroughly appreciate the luxury of a wash, a shave, a change of clothes, after six weeks without any of these aids to comfort.

When I left Gallipoli on the hospital ship, our first port-of-call was Lemnos Island, where there was a lack of accommodation, and from thence to Malta, where the same condition of affairs obtained. We had therefore to continue on the voyage to England, at which beloved isle we arrived after sixteen days voyage, landing at Southampton.

There, many of us were taken off and transferred to the University War Hospital, where I remained for 10 weeks.

From the Southampton Hospital I was transferred to the Crescent Road Military Hospital, Manchester, and remained there for seven weeks in that great industrial centre. Here I visited, in company of two of my mates, the High Openshaw School, and there we had a very enjoyable afternoon. My next transfer was to the Sweeping Hill Military Hospital, Stockport, and during my time there I visited the Bon Ton Hat Factory, which was interesting; also the Preston Clothing Works, which were making the khaki for the British Army.

After three weeks in Stockport, I was discharged from hospital for my sick-leave, which was six weeks.
During my leave I visited South Wales, the land of my forefathers, for the double purpose of seeing the sights and visiting some relatives of mine, who were very pleased to see me, as I was their first cousin from Australia.

I also visited my relatives in North Wales, and was subsequently taken over the historic Carnarvon Castle and the home of the Hon. Lloyd George, in Criccieth, which is a beautiful home, standing in lovely grounds.

At the expiry of my leave I was sent back into camp at Salisbury Plain for training, preparatory to going to France, and after two months of this I was shipped across the Channel to join my battalion, which was at the time fighting on the Somme Front. After returning I saw quite a number of new faces and also some old mates, but not half the number that left the West with me, as the battalion had been badly cut about in different engagements.

I had not been back more than nine months before I received a piece of shell in the right eye [at Lagnicourt – Ed]. I was then sent to hospital in Rouen, France, where I remained for two weeks. Was then shipped across to Blighty, and found myself in the Southern General Hospital, King’s Heath, Birmingham. [Right: The photo of Griffith Owen shows him wearing an eye patch.]

After four months treatment there I was sent to Second Australian Auxiliary Hospital, Southall, where I remained for a month, after which I was transferred to the First Australian Auxiliary Hospital in Harefield.

After two more months at Harefield I was granted furlough, and again visited South Wales on my final visit before sailing for home.

When my leave was finished, I was transferred to a camp in Portland called the Verne Citadel, and there I remained for one month before I was shipped for Australia.

We commenced the homeward voyage on February 16\textsuperscript{th}, 1918, calling at Sierra Leone en voyage, and remaining there for eight days; thence to Cape Town, where we remained five days.

Homeward bound once more, we arrived at Fremantle on April 9\textsuperscript{th}, 1918.

During my travels I visited the following cities and towns: Manchester, Birmingham, London, Southampton, Woolwich, Stockport, Southall, Swansea (South Wales), Pwelli, Carnarvon (North Wales), Harefield, Weymouth, Windsor, Slough, Portland, and also the Windsor Castle, where Princess Alice regaled us with afternoon tea.

Poem: ‘Narrow Escape of Private Owen’
who, while exchanging shots with the enemy on 14\textsuperscript{th} September, 1915, had a bullet turned by a pocket Testament,

I’ve often heard a Bible has at times been known to save A soldier when in battle from a swift and early grave; What doubts I had regarding same have now been set at rest, On beholding how a Testament to-day withstood the test, And stopped a deadly bullet from causing death to one. Those who hear about it scarcely comprehend how it was done; But the fact is undisputed – the Testament will show A bullet which would otherwise have dealt the ‘final blow’.

Young Owen, of ‘the 28\textsuperscript{th}’, a conscientious lad, Who leads a clean and righteous life, stooping to nothing bad – Was on duty in the trenches, attending to his work, As ordered by his officers, fighting the wily Turk, When suddenly a blow received gave him an ugly start, And nearly knocked him down – ’t was in the region of the heart; He couldn’t understand it, but on close inspection saw A more wonderful escape than his had seldom been seen before.
An elongated bullet from a Turkish rifle shot,
By the barest shave had stayed its course right on the vital spot –
You may see it in the centre of that tiny little book,
And anyone who doubts it, let him come and have a look –
The mother’s always pleased to show the book that saved his life.
Let us hope his luck continues through this present cruel strife;
But if he should receive a call from Him, our Lord of All,
As a Christian he has lived, as a soldier he will fall.

Far away in East Fremantle, a mother learns with joy
That his early childhood teaching has been useful to her boy,
And prays for his salvation, a swift and safe return –
When his ship is sailing homeward, her heart will cease to yearn –
Whilst father tells his friends about the doings of his son.
Hoping that peace will bring him home when vict’ry is won,
Sisters and brothers likewise are proud of the one they love.
And pleased to learn his faith is still centred in Him above.

The poem was written in the trenches by Private E St Ives Bilston, ‘C’ Company, 28th Battalion. To further confirm the truth of the tale, Lieutenant GAF Smith wrote: I saw the bullet which stuck in the Bible which was carried by Private GJ Owen, No. 495. Private Owen is one of my lads of No. 12 Platoon, ‘C’ Company, 28th Battalion.

Endnotes: (1) Griffith John Owen published his memoirs in 1918. The pamphlet was reprinted in 1992 by grandsons Geoff and Ray Owen in a limited run of 200 copies (Maurice has copy number 174). Thanks to Geoff and Ray for permission to reprint in DIGGER. (2) Griffith married Sarah Jones on 15/11/19. (3) Griffith’s brother, Pte 967 William Ernest Owen, served in the 44th Battalion as a headquarters’ signaller and in the Postal Corps following the Armistice. [Right: William Owen. Photo from ‘WA Fighting Sons of the Empire’, courtesy Andrew Pittaway.] (4) The poet, Private 398 Euliseus St Ives Bilston, enlisted on 7/1/15 and RTA 24/6/16 [shellshock/senility]. The AWM has two more of his poems in their collection: the first titled ‘Out to Win’, written prior to departure from Australia; the second written at Gallipoli after a fruitless search of the Lone Pine battlefield for the body of his nephew, Private 1125 Charles Chetwynd Currie of the 7th Battalion. (4) Captain Gordon Arthur Friend Smith returned to Australia in 1919. He served also in the 47th Battalion, 15th Battalion and the 4th Training Battalion in the UK.
Narrative by 2716 Corporal Len Jones, 3rd Battalion AIF, Part 4

Transcribed and contributed by Phillip Mannell, St Andrews, and Christine Dessertaine.


Our job was to keep up with Don [‘D’] Coy and link them with HQ when they had established themselves. Don Coy split into two, so we did our best to tail on behind Captain Harris [Captain John Redford Oberlin Harris].

Of course, the Hun knew that an attack on Pozieres could be expected any day, but this 12:30 a.m. attack instead of dawn caught him a bit on the hop and so the ‘mob’ got over pretty well. He – the Hun – soon woke up. A salvo dropped just behind we two sigs and somehow I felt the line had gone already. There was only one thing to do; go back and mend it. So back we went and in the gloom we worked round in circles to find the two ends. The Hun SOS barrage fell. It missed the ‘mob’ and fell on two sigs. It was a nightmare of exploding 5.9s. Choked by fumes, staggering around, we didn’t expect to live a minute. The intensity of fire was terrific, but we had to find those wires and we did, and squatting in a very recently made shell hole we somehow bared the joints and made good.

We were in a desperate hurry so as to not to lose Don Coy altogether, so we plunged forward through the barrage and found ourselves in a quiet zone. Away in front was a mass of fire and flame – our objective. About another 100 yards a bullet whistled just over us. ‘Mac’ [Cpl 294 Alexander Sawers McKenzie, CdeG] yelled, “By Cripes, that’s one of ours!” We knew the sound of the Lee Enfield rifle. He yelled out and we suddenly found ourselves on a crowd of Diggers, facing our way. All was confusion. There was an officer on the ground shot through the stomach, NCOs excitedly arguing, and about 30 men trying to deepen a shallow trench. They were 3rd Brigade chaps. We told them who we were and that they were facing the wrong way and on the wrong track, but nothing would do but that they had reached their line and were doing right. Mac realised the situation was fraught with possibly very dangerous consequences. These chaps might do untold damage. We tried ringing up on our line to warn HQ but the line was cut. Probably cut into mincemeat. He said: “Rear HQ must be warned and I’m going back to do it”, and handing over the phone he told me to push on and make contact and that he would bring up another reel. Off he went. Well, I tried to argue with these chaps, all to no avail. I cursed ’em, called ’em squibs and then asked them to come along and join with somebody, somewhere. No, they were right and I was mad, so away I staggered with rifle, equipment, phone, lamp and reel.

In front was a furious, almost incredible, Hell. I felt very lonely and horribly frightened. I was going straight for an inferno of fire. The Hun had shortened range and shells were crashing into Pozieres. Bricks, plaster, trees were going up in the air, and over the lot hung a pall of dust coloured by the burning timber. Machine guns were going hell for leather, and bullets whistled round like angry bees. One struck the reel and bent it up jamming my hand on the handle. I dumped the reel, now useless anyway. On I went and dropped into a trench manned by Diggers working like demons deepening a trench, 1st Battalion men. Goodo. I found an officer, a cool calm individual who quietly sat down and listened to my tale, wrote it down then told me to hop in and stay till I could find the 3rd.

There were some Hun guns just in front knocked sky-high by our shells but some gunners were sniping us, so half a dozen of us suddenly rushed forward and got them. Only two, but we stuck them like sticking a knife into cheese. Cripes, doesn’t a bayonet go in easily. It seems to be in before you know. We routed around quickly and got back into the trench.

Shelling eased off, but MG fire kept going. Our shells were passing the back of the village, screaming over head in salvoes. Dawn was breaking and what a queer sight. We were right on the edge of a one-time fairly large village, now in shambles. Planes were up but it seemed unearthly quiet. Surely the night was a horrible dream. Goodo now. Little we knew. I found ’my’ officer, said cheerio and picked up my load and along the top set off to find Don Coy. Everywhere were men digging in and consolidating – good work. Eventually I found Captain Harris and reported. He was urging the men on to deepen the trench, assuring them that the Hun would shell and counter-attack. Every man except those engaging snipers and on watch was to dig. Bombs, SAA, flares etc. made as safe as possible. I hopped in and got busy. There was considerable sniping. We were near the main road to Bapaume.

There came the drone of a plane flying low and then ‘C-R C-R’ in Morse on his klaxon horn, and hearing Captain Harris singing out, “Where is that signaller? Pass the word for Jones”, I went to him, got strafed for leaving him, and was requested to make contact with the plane and ask for more SAA. So, holding the sig. lamp to my forehead I followed him round and got Harry Mitchell [Pte 2743 Henry Mitchell], a Coy Sig, to send ‘C-R C-R’ – our old call on Gallipoli. He could see something but evidently couldn’t pick it up properly. There was only one thing to do – get out in the open. Callaghan [Pte 1716...
Alfred Callaghan, the Lewis-gunner, saw what I was going to do, so hopped out in front into a shell hole and made it his business to engage the snipers. The plane kept an altitude of about 60° and flew round in a circle. There was a deafening tat-tat of hostile machine guns at him, mostly from the rear of the village. Harry Mitch [Mitchell] kept on sending ‘C-R C-R NNN’ (ammunition required) and I followed him round kneeling down, too concentrated to duck bullets whizzing round. It’s hard for a sig. to send slowly but I kept yelling to Harry to send slower and then we heard ‘C-R C-R NN RD’ (read correctly) from the plane, and off he went, waving his hand, and I didn’t waste any time getting into the trench but ‘Cally’ [Callaghan] said he had a good possy and was staying there.

In turn, we had some ‘Anzaes’ and bully. The morning wore on, shelling gradually increasing, mostly 5.9s and I was hoping to see Mac come along with wire. We had a strong position now with Fritz searching all the place and our guns firing way back. After ‘lunch’ word was passed along for me to report to the Battalion HQ somewhere on the right and slightly rear. (Mac, I learnt afterwards, had started out to me and had been hit in the neck with shrapno. ‘Whitty’ [Pte 990 Ernest Whittaker] also had been hit in the eyes.) Off I went across the top. Shelling was now much worse and there seemed a lot of stuff dropping where I was making for. Now and again I hopped into a shell hole and kept low. No one seemed to know where HQ was. With salvoes dropping all round me I decided to drop into a trench, ‘Centre Way’, and found Colonel Price [Lieutenant Colonel Owen Glendower Howell-Price] with Colonel Heane [Lieutenant Colonel James Heane], 1st Battalion.

Shelling was hot, and sensing one salvo would surely drop, we fell flat, me full length. It just went over the top. The earth heaved and shook and clods fell on us. Feeling something warm under me I found I was lying on the naked remains of our sergeant, ‘Toc’ Oates [Sgt 12 William Aubrey Oates]. There was only the trunk left with the ‘Cawnpore Angels’, a relic of his India days tattooed on his back. Along the trench was an arm holding a D3 phone. This was his prophecy written up at Tasman’s Post, Gallip: ‘Finish war Jonny, July 23, 1916’ fulfilled. The most remarkable instance I know of. Whatever explanation is there of this? I thought I would soon follow too.

The colonel [Howell-Price] told me ‘Huggy’ [Private 732 George Hugman] and Cochrane [Pte 3047 Athol Brien Cochrane] were in the rear, trying to get wire to link with Brigade. Actually, they went miles for it but as far as the C Coy where Lieutenant Chapman [Lieut 1311 Henry Stanley Chapman], Clarrie Page [L/Cpl 1166 Clarence Garfield Page MM], ‘Pick’ [Pte 3192 Frank Hessell Pickering] and Clark [Pte 3048 Rupert Clark] were. Buckley [probably Pte 1098 Alec Thomas, alias William Buckley] was wounded. I found the wire, got through and reported OK. Tried again, silence. Actually the whole four were killed at once.

It was now shelling like mad. Pozieres was one upheaval of houses and dust. I believed that [seen] from Brigade it was one huge cloud of smoke, dust and exploding shells. The colonel’s groom, Jack Berry [Pte 4010 John James Berry] and myself dug into the bank, making an egg-shaped possy. The colonel went off, telling me to stay and sit tight and take any messages that came by runner. The noise was terrifying. One shell hit the parapet; my dust and exploding shells. The colonel went off, telling me to stay and sit tight and take any messages that came by runner. The noise was terrifying. One shell hit the parapet; my tin hat was smashed over my nose. The now useless phone between my feet was neatly cut in two. My rifle propped up was bent double, and men were screaming and running about; one man running round and round with blood coming from his nose and mouth. There seemed to be millions of stars and hammers in my head, and dimly I heard Lieutenant Howie [Lieut 2444 Clarence Malcolm Howie] come rushing along yelling “Stand to, watch the right!” Automatically I grabbed my gun and tried to work the bolt. This seemed to clear me, so I jumped up, grabbed another rifle and tore after Howie. [Left: Captain Clarence Howie. Source: ‘Randwick to Hargicourt’, Eric Wren.]

But the attack didn’t come off, so back we went and saw Colonel Price. He told me to work in with a mob on our left and to tell all hands to conserve their strength, not to try and dig trenches, but to make shell holes as strong as possible and not to bunch together, try to rest if possible and to watch the front in turn. I got in with four chaps near a sap with a big fallen tree across a shell hole. We made a good possy, but ran short of sand bags. The earth wouldn’t stay put. It was all crumbly, having been continually blown to dust. We were now under a constant stream of HE from the front and half right. We could tell that it was coming from a long way back, probably Bapaume Ridge. Nearly all 5.9 Howitzer and at times 8” or 10” Crumps. A great word: that’s just as it sounds: ‘CRR-UUMMP’. We cursed our gunners for not getting on to ‘em, and cursed the planes with complete mastery of
the air for not spotting better. Actually, our guns were going like Hell, and what a mass there was in Sausage Gully, but we couldn’t hear them. Small parties of Huns came in. They had evidently been hiding in the village. They were ‘non-committal’ and, of course, looking the worse for wear.

Night came on with a little relief from shelling. We tried to get some sort of rest but continually we climbed across to similar possies, bandaging up wounded men and digging others out, and in this manner a man somehow wandered far from his own possy. One chap I remember quite well. Struck somewhere in the neck, he bled like hell. It seemed an awful thing, trying to stop the flow. I did my best but he died in my arms. Somehow the earth seemed to soak everything up. I was a gruesome sight: bloody, dirty strides and puttees torn and hanging.

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Morning came but no relief from the hurricane of shells. The air was thick and choking. Several times we had alarms of attack but nothing seemed to come of it. “Nobody seemed to know anything.” The battalion was being slowly decimated. Our possy had several narrow escapes from direct hits, for all along the line, similar positions were simply being blown sky-high with their occupants. We scraped around after water bottles and tucker but didn’t have much luck. We felt very helpless and ached for some definite action. Something to take our minds off things a bit. Weren’t we going to advance? What’s the use of sticking here? It would certainly only be a matter of time and up we would go. He hit Pozieres with everything he had. Men were looking glazed. Some were going silly. We crouched in our shell hole like rats. Wounded and dying were all over the place. Screams and unearthly yells of unconscious men filled the air. The day wore on.

Another night of horror. Men crawling around going anywhere or somewhere. We made our possy stronger, and kept watch in turns. Helping wounded, digging men out. We called up every atom of reserve in our bodies, working like maniacs to get men out of buried positions.

Early in the morning of Tuesday, our possy got the inevitable. We were near a sap. One shell hit just between the sap and us, blowing one of the five’s arm clean off. The next, I think, hit our fallen tree and I don’t recall much of it but seemed to be going a long way with a dreadful hammering on the chest. I must have been blown into the sap and wandered about dazed for some time, for the next I remember I was sitting down in a strange place picking the entrails of a man off my puttees. There I was, just like picking off bits of straw as we used to do in the billets, only it was a pal’s insides. I was very sick but only got rid of green slime.

I staggered along and picked up a rifle and some gear. I was now in some sort of a communication trench, all blown in with bits of men hanging on to Dixies. I found a tin of milk, swigged it, but fetched it all up. Those TNT fumes played the devil inside a man.

There didn’t seem to be many men about, but presently I came across a small party of good chaps. There was Sergeant Major ‘Col’ Smith [CSM 378 Colin Lawson Smith], Corporal ‘Hughie’ Robb [L/Sgt 2900 Hugh Douglas Robb], and about 30 more in a sap. Col Smith had evidently gathered them together and was making plans to form a stronger point. Shelling was easier here, but still bad enough. I felt all in and sat down. A salvo came over and a huge piece of earth landed fair on my stomach, winding me. Two men were hit, one having the side of his face taken off and ran screaming away. [Right: CSM Colin Smith, a hero of Pozieres. Courtesy Maurice Campbell collection.]

Captain Price of the 1st Battalion [Captain Philip Llewellyn Howell-Price] came along and cursed us for staying here and wanted us to get into the village – to be blown to bits. I remember he had a bandage round his head and revolver in hand. Col Smith had a better idea – we would, one by one, advance through the village and dig in if possible. We might thus miss some shelling and yet hold a good possy.

We made our way in single-file along the sap to the edge of the village, passing my old possy. I recall the smashed tree and the dead cobbers in the hole – all killed by that shell – then one by one we jumped and ran along a fairly wide road. I was about the third and the two in front were fired on but escaped. Through the village I ran, heard the crack of a rifle and a bullet sizzle across my ‘tummy’. Hastily glancing to the right, I saw a big
bearded Hun, hatless, in a shallow trench near the road, with a rifle lying on a mound in front, near a fallen tree. I saw real red and charged him at the point in a flash. I couldn’t reach him owing to the mound. He held up one arm which was smashed, but I tumbled up on my knees and bringing over the butt and sliding my hands down the barrel, like using an axe, I smashed his head in against the tree. The sights on my gun lacerated my fingers, but on I went, joining some of the crowd in a trench against a high bank.

We were now on the other side of ‘Possy’ [Pozieres] and on the left of the village but the right side of the road. It wasn’t too good here, for the Hun could creep up and bomb us. He dropped some big stuff onto the bank, breaking it in, burying and killing men. I remember pulling out ‘Lofty’ Maughan [Pte 2639 Harry Maughan] untouched, but yelling for St Patrick and numerous saints. [Harry was 6’0½” tall – Ed.] Then someone spotted a shallow trench running at right angles on the other side of the road. We would nick across and risk the hail of MG bullets along the road. A sergeant went first and as I jumped up to follow, the mad cow levelled his rifle at me and threatened to shoot. The mob behind were yelling at me not to squib it, but Sergeant Smith saw the antics of the chap opposite and yelled, “Drop that rifle!” and he did, and over I went and booted his backside and pulled him along the narrow trench to make room for the mob.

All got over. The trench was only waist high and short. Hughie Robb got up our end and Col Smith the other. Hurriedly we dug deeper. There were scores of dead Huns, evidently caught by our shells whilst digging this trench. We had a splendid field of fire and overlooked the valley into Martinpuich and Courcellette. We were rather crowded but worked like tigers with Hun shovels. No bombs and no Lewis guns.

It didn’t take long for the enemy artillerymen to get on to us. Very rarely indeed did these chaps ever miss a target. (Only once – when the attack on Bullecourt was called off and the 4th Brigade had to get back in droves to their trenches, and he made up for that later). He duly registered, gave us a few more, then a party of Huns debouched about 100 yards away and came on. We gave it to them hot and strong and they broke. We soon had a good trench but no fire steps or sand bags. So he shelled some more. (The enemy at Pozieres mystified me but I learnt later that our barrage broke up many of his attempts, and also that a German colonel lost his job through messing things up. Never thought they were guilty of that.) He had another go to attack but only half-hearted and we did some good shooting. We had to. If he had got close with bombs, it would have been ‘good night nurse’.

More shelling – several hits and our ranks were thinning – only about 15 now. We thought we were about the last of the Third. He put three big ‘dud’ crumps on my bit and the next wasn’t, and four of us were buried. I managed to wriggle out and I saw ‘Brownie’ [not identified] moving under the top, practically level with the top of the ground – the trench was filled in. I set to work with a Hun spade, lying flat and working the spade down till I found the end of his feet – there was now an MG spraying the trench and I managed to lever Brownie out backwards. He was okay so we scraped for the other two but they were dead and a lot of clothing blown off them. Things were looking pretty rotten. If the Hun came again there were only ten men left. Brownie said, “Oh well, we shall have all the harder fight, that’s all”. I was feeling pretty gloomy. It was alright doing something but reaction set in when we spelled, as we had to, from sheer exhaustion. We were past sleep and tucker – which we hadn’t got, but still had a drop of water in our bottles.

Col Smith called for a volunteer to take a message to Price [probably Lieutenant-Colonel Howell-Price] if possible. I took the job on, if only to move about. Just as I was about to go, behold Captain [Philip Llewellyn] Price again stalked up. Well, we helped him sketch the possy, take bearings etc., and he went off. Things were quieter now. [Right: Captain Philip Howell-Price. AWM P00267.004.]

Late afternoon I told Brownie I had a queer feeling that we would be relieved soon and before night. He called me a goat – reliefs don’t take place at that hour. But I was right. The heads were wise and sent up relief about 4 p.m. so as the new troops – 2nd Division – could find us. I don’t remember who filled in – I know they cheered us up by telling us that Fritz was shelling the back area now like hell. Our guns had lengthened and giving the distant ridge a bad time. It was one cloud of dense white smoke and we could hear our big chaps whistling over in droves. But a fearful lot of those 9.2s were duds. We didn’t stay to have a chat. Showed the new mob their front. Col Smith yelled: “All Third men (about eight of us) pass out and make their way out to the rear and find shelter near our ‘RAP’ but don’t hang around it and ‘draw the crabs’.”
We got, believe me. Did a sort of Indian ‘lope’. Still, we were getting out. Plenty of troops about; Pioneers working like maniacs on the communication trench, incidentally finding many ration parties still carrying their loads meant for us buried and blown about. Back we went. Found the regimental aid post and up to the right into some deep trenches, just as some 5.9s came over and blew up some of the wounded lying on stretchers. We ran, Brownie and I, although I was carrying a petrol tin of water and Brownie a sand bag of tucker. We dropped into a trench. The water had been put into the tin with remains of petrol in it and we were violently sick. Got some more and tore into crumbed bread with condensed milk spread on. Then some Maconochie (bless him) and I think we slept where we lay.

Bits of the Third dribbled in during the night and walked on us, but we were ‘done’ and I wouldn’t have moved for a steam-roller. Early morning we found we were all surprised to see other Third men. I think each little party reckoned they were the only survivors. About 100 moved out and back, being joined now and again by small parties. ‘Porky’ [Private 2758 Henry Neil] and ‘Dinny’ [Private 2717 Arthur Lyndon Knowles] came from Brigade. The Padre [Bicton Clement Wilson] came up and I could see him trying to count us, his Third Battalion.

What a sight we must have looked. More men joined us but we must have looked a pitiful few. Sergeant Smith and Brownie joined with ‘C’ Coy. Col Smith later on became RSM then 1st Lieutenant, and was killed up Meteren way in ’18 in one of those silly little straightening-the-line stunts: the sort of thing Fritz was too sensible to do. Brownie survived and at our reunions in Sydney, when he gets half full, he comes and shakes my hand about every minute and reckons I saved his life. He saved my morale at a critical time without doubt. The old Padre shook as many of us by the hand as he could with his eyes roaming for faces he would not see again – here. He looked as if he had also been through it. I’m afraid we didn’t sing or talk much on our way out to the rear of Albert where we billeted. Cleaned ourselves up a bit and had a good feed – there was whips of ‘scran’ for the roll still showed full strength. [Above right: Chaplain Bicton Wilson. Source: ‘Randwick to Hargicourt’, Eric Wren.]

Somehow we didn’t say much to each other. Porky and Dinny had had a hectic time with Brigade. Huggy and Cochrane had spent a lot of valuable time going for wire and trying to link up HQ. L/Cpl Kirkwood [Lance Corporal 1549 Albert Kirkwood] joined us up, having been under a minor operation. Lieutenant Chapman [left: AWM H12682] had been his cobber from Lithgow and he missed him. Nobody seemed to sleep well that night. A man would think he was the only one awake, but found the others the same. The guns kept up their rumble and angry mutter, with now and then one from Fritz into Albert. Next day we marched out through Warloy, full of troops due for their stint in the furnace. Up along the sunken road, swinging along – and the 3rd could march. Colonel ahead, then a handful of us sigs, then the companies like platoons. All our company commanders had gone and the RSM (Morris) [1149 RSM George Alfred Morris MC], the first warrant officer in the AIF to get the MC. No sergeant majors but Col Smith. The men, for all their nights spell, looked gaunt and glazed. We marched like automatons. A kilted Jock stood on the bank. “Where have you been, chums?” Someone said something about Pozieres. He turned and yelled: “Hi, come and see the Aussies what took Pozieres.” And they came from all directions: Jocks, Tommies, Aussies (4 Division I think) and we marched through them. I noticed one thing. It was the usual thing when a battalion passed through others to give a bit of backchat, such as: “By cripes, Fritz has a new bomb waiting for you”, “mud up to your neck up there” etc etc. The onlookers did start a bit about the Yarra and our ‘arbour etc., but they all seemed to go very silent, as if they sensed something. The Jocks’ band playing us out – bagpipes. I think we all felt better when we swung into the opening rolling Picardy.

To be continued in the next issue.

**Victorian VC winners’ research project**

New member Tim Reynolds is commencing a project looking at Victoria Cross winners who are buried in Victoria, particularly from the angle of the trials and tribulations they endured once they returned from the war. If you are family, a friend, or you just know some interesting stories about these brave men, Tim would love to hear from you. Please contact Tim at timofporirua@yahoo.com.au or via the Editor.
**ETCHED IN STONE**

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

This is the forty-first in a series of extracts, from John Laffin’s “We Will Remember Them – AIF Epitaphs of World War 1”, which will appear in successive issues of ‘DIGGER’.

The fifth episode on the theme “Brief and Beautiful”

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<td>A WORTHY SON</td>
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<td>A GALLANT SOLDIER</td>
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**There’s a link death cannot sever sweet remembrance lives forever**

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*Continued next issue.*
Captain Charles William Snook, RFC
Andrew Pittaway, Fremantle.

Charles Snook was born in North Fremantle in 1891. He spent his early years in the Fremantle area until he moved with his mother to Sydney, where he completed his schooling. In 1914 Snook unsuccessfully applied for a position of pilot at Point Cook, and although he missed out on a spot, he kept up his love of flying. In 1915 he departed for England, where he joined the Royal Flying Corps. Snook was posted to No. 5 Squadron as an instructor and stayed in England in this role until March 1916, when his squadron was posted to the Western Front. He soon rose from the rank of lieutenant to captain and by August had carried out many missions.

On August 2nd, Snook and another pilot took off on a long flight to bomb the German zeppelin shed near Brussels. Both planes completed the long journey and had dropped their bombs successfully, but on the return journey, shrapnel fired at the aeroplanes from behind the German lines struck Snook’s propeller. The damage to the propeller caused the plane to shake tremendously, with the result that he had to reduce his engine power, which subsequently slowed the plane.

With the other plane now far ahead of him, Snook’s plane was sighted by the pilots of two German Fokkers. They took advantage of Snook’s crippled plane and fired several bursts into it. Though Snook managed to duck and weave, there was only going to be one result, and his engine soon received a direct hit. With the Germans coming in for the kill, Snook still managed to weave around, spiralling downwards as he kept manoeuvring out of the path of the German bullets.

Fortunately, as he neared the ground he spied a flat grassy field and was able to land his heavily damaged plane. The bad news was that this field was some distance behind the German lines. Upon landing, Snook torched his plane and documents that might have been of use to the Germans.

One of his German adversaries landed in the same field and chatted to Snook while German soldiers stationed nearby quickly arrived to take him prisoner. Snook was to be a prisoner until mid 1918 when he was repatriated to England through Holland.

Post-war, Snook took up flying again in Melbourne, Sydney, then Perth, where he joined Western Air Services. Through the 1920s and 30s, Snook continued with his work in the WA aviation industry and in WWII set up the Air Training Corps and rose to the rank of wing commander. He died in 1948.

[Right: The main building at Clausthal lager (prisoner of war camp), Germany, that was a hotel before the war. Standing in the foreground is Captain Charles William Snook, Royal Flying Corps, from North Fremantle, Western Australia. AWM Negative number A01713.]

DIGGER Quiz No. 42: ‘Campbell’s challenge’ – The First Contingent’s convoy
Maurice has been reading up on the First Convoy to leave Australia and New Zealand for this issue’s quiz. He wonders if Australia could replicate this feat of logistics today.

1. Where did the convoy carrying the First Contingent assemble?
2. What was the expected destination for the convoy?
3. By what date were the ships all expected to assemble?
4. How many men and horses sailed in the First Contingent?
5. How many of the convoy were transport ships?
6. What ships formed the escort for the convoy?
7. Which ship carried the Australian Headquarters Staff?
8. How were the escort vessels positioned around the convoy?
9. When did the convoy finally leave the WA harbour?
10. Why was the First Contingent directed to disembark at Alexandria in Egypt?
Answers to DIGGER Quiz No. 42

1. King George’s Sound, Albany, on the southwest coast of WA.
2. The convoy was originally expected to sail to the UK (on 21 September) where the men would be trained prior to fighting on the Western Front.
3. 28 October 1914.
4. 21 529 men and 7 882 horses [Source: ‘Postal History’, RC Emery. Note: Bean records the number of horses as 7 843.]
5. 28 Australian Transport Ships plus 10 New Zealand Transports.
6. Escort consisted of: HMS Minotaur (armoured cruiser, 14 600 tons); the Japanese battle cruiser, Ibuki (14 600 tons); HMAS Melbourne (light cruiser 5 400 tons); HMAS Sydney (light cruiser 5 400 tons). The Minotaur left the convoy on 8 November and Melbourne took her place.
7. A3 SS Oriveto of 12 130 tons.
8. The Minotaur was 5 miles (8km) in advance of the convoy, which followed in three lines abreast; Sydney was on the left; Ibuki on the right and Melbourne five miles astern.
9. 1 November 1914.
10. Turkey had declared war on the Allies on 31 October 1914 and the War Office wanted the Australians and NZers to help defend the Suez Canal from Turkish attack. Also, it was thought inadvisable to bring the troops from the southern hemisphere to Salisbury Plain in an English winter, with a lack of suitable accommodation.

Strange Coincidence

April 6, 1917, had been a strenuous day in the 34th Casualty Clearing Station on the Popieringhe road. Wounded soldiers had been pouring in all day. A request went around for a volunteer from among the nursing staff for a blood transfusion for a poor fellow lying almost at the door of death.

Feeling that I should get a rest from the horrors around me, I volunteered. A test was taken of my blood, and I was chosen. After the transfusion I had 24 hours rest, and when I resumed my duties I was told by the doctor that the man to whom I had given my blood wished to see me. I made my way to his side, and when I saw his face I promptly fainted across the bed.

He was my own brother, who had been reported ‘killed in action’ eight months previously. He is alive to-day. – ‘Springbok’, Perth.

Snippet from ‘A DIGGER’S DIARY’ – a column in the Western Mail (Perth) – conducted by “Non-Com”, which published brief accounts and reminiscences from ex-servicemen. Thursday, 22 December 1932. Contributed by Heather (Frev) Ford, Montrose. [According to the CWGC the 34th CCS was at La Chapellette, Peronne, France from Apr-July 1917, which casts some doubt on the reliability of the story.]

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