“A Praise That Never Ages”

The Australian War Memorial and the “national” interpretation of the First World War, 1922-35.

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Craig Melrose, BA (Hons).
Department of History,
School of History, Philosophy, Religion and Classics.
Statement of Originality

To the best of my knowledge and belief, this dissertation contains no material previously published or written by another person except as acknowledged in the text. It has not been submitted, either in whole or in part, for a degree at this or any other university.

Craig Melrose
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Abstract

In the inter-war years, the Australian War Memorial was one of the nation’s premier cultural institutions, its displays addressing Australia’s fundamental nation-building experience up until that time, the First World War. However, these displays have not before been fore-grounded in interpretations of the institution in this period. The study that follows seeks to make *inter alia* a contribution compensating for this *lacuna* in our knowledge, offering a new understanding of the Memorial obtained through a fresh methodology. It also adds to our understanding of the Anzac Legend and Australian commemoration in the inter-war years, as well as Australian nationalism.

Envisioned and guided by Australian Official War Correspondent and Historian C.E.W. Bean, the Memorial’s inter-war displays (1922-35) offered a heroic vision of the Australian war experience, with a narrative of test, ordeal and triumph at their heart. Integrated into this was an interpretation of why the Australians had come through victoriously, focussed on perceived martial virtues such as courage, determination, ferocity and nobility. In addition, proof was offered that Australian soldiers had been superior to their opponents. At the same time, the Memorial dealt sensitively and honestly with defeat, death and the wounded, although these subjects were treated so as to play down their horror and emphasise Australian triumph over them. Further, the displays were governed by a strict realism of presentation which operated through a process I have named “naturalisation” to insist that both military fact and moral assertion were equally true. I have labelled the Memorial’s version of the Australian overseas war experience the “national” interpretation of it.

It is argued that the influence of what I label “martial” nationalism was the key to these displays, as it was the key to Australian commemoration more broadly. This was a major mode of nationalist thinking in Europe before 1914, expressed in a complex of war memorials and triumphal writings that equated national identity with success on the battlefield. Certain educated Australians were seeking a national history which could compete on this martial ground in the same pre-war period, and when the Australian troops performed creditably in 1915 and 1916, and with increasing effectiveness in 1917 and 1918, martial nationalism was embraced, complete with its accompanying glorification of victory.
A major aspect of Australian inter-war commemoration was the enunciation of an Australian national identity. Two major nationalist models were taken up, the martial, championed by educated Anglo-Australian elites, and what might be termed the “developmental,” advocated by such moderate Leftist groups as the Australian Labor Party. These were manifest in two “cultures,” which have been labelled the “monumental” and the “anti-monumental.” The former recognised the horror of war, but concentrated upon the positive elements of the Australian war experience, building a major national tradition upon those elements. The latter could not see beyond the horror. The result of these varying visions of the war was that the monumental culture wished to publicly remember the war forever, “to keep green the memory of the AIF,” while the anti-monumental argued that the war experience should be consigned to oblivion. The monumental culture was dominant; indeed, it is suggested that this was the predominant commemorative reaction in the immediate post-war years. The so-called Anzac Legend, a myth focussed upon the characteristics of the typical Australian soldier (and by extension, the typical Australian citizen), which emerged from the war and which was regularly rehearsed on commemorative occasions and in war literature, was strongly martial nationalist, being founded upon an assertion of Australian military supremacy.

Through its war narrative, its interpretation of typical soldierly characteristics of Australians, and its proof of military supremacy, the Memorial made a significant and enduring contribution to the monumental culture and its martial nationalist vision of the war. Its displays outlined the characteristics of a typical soldier, and thus typical Australian male, thereby promoting the martial vision of Australian identity against competing visions. It held physical evidence for the many public assertions made about Australian soldiers and their military abilities. Also, the Memorial embodied a strong masculinist ideology: men had defended the nation, its logic asserted, and this made their citizenship deeper and more important than women’s.

Finally, all memory of the war was imbued with political connotations, and throughout its inter-war life the Memorial was associated with the leading figures of conservatism in Australia, with Nationalist politicians and returned officers on its controlling committee. Its messages about the war were in broad agreement with those of the dominant right-wing groups in the country, including the RSSILA, whose agents controlled vital commemorative days and whose non-political stance masked a clear conservatism.
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Abbreviations

ADB

Australian Dictionary of Biography.

ALP
Australian Labor Party.

AIF
Australian Imperial Force.

AWRS
Australian War Records Section.

AWRC
Australian War Memorial Committee.

AWM
Australian War Memorial.

CP
Country Party.

CPD
Commonwealth of Australia, Parliamentary Debates.

GOC
General Officer Commanding.

LHR
Light Horse Regiment.

MHR
Member of the House of Representatives.

NSW
New South Wales.

ODNB

SA
South Australia.
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Introduction

Figure 1: Interior, Sydney Exhibition.
Source: Michael McKernan, Here is Their Spirit.

They gave their lives. For that public gift they received a praise which never ages and a tomb most glorious – not so much the tomb in which they lie, but that in which their fame survives, to be remembered for ever when occasion comes for word or deed.

– Motto for the Australian War Memorial, adopted 1926.

The Museum is rich with the individual genius of the Australian soldier…. The true significance of the greater part of the exhibits lies, not in their character as battlefield curios, but as emblems of those splendid qualities which made the Australian soldier – to quote the words of Marshal Foch – “the greatest individual fighter in the war.”¹

– Excerpt from Foreword to 1922 guide to the Australian War Memorial.

In the aftermath of the First World War, many belligerent countries erected national war memorials as tributes to their war dead. Australia’s memorial was unique, taking the form of a military, technology and social history museum, originally called the

Australian War Museum and later known as the Australian War Memorial. The Memorial’s inter-war exhibitions, to which this study is devoted, first opened in the Melbourne Exhibition Building on 24 April 1922, following Federal Cabinet approval on 29 August 1917. The exhibition incorporated war matériel which the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) had taken from the Germans and Turks during the war, commonly referred to as “trophies,” and objects used by the Force, known as “relics.”

The Victorian State Governor, George Mowbray, Earl of Stradbroke, presided over the opening, and Australia’s foremost soldier, Lieutenant-General Sir John Monash, declared his wish that the museum become “a Mecca for all Australians.” Conceived and guided by Australian Official War Correspondent and Historian, utopian nationalist and master propagandist C.E.W. Bean, the Memorial was designated as the Australian National War Memorial in 1923, following intensive lobbying by Bean and certain of his allies; legislation was passed to this effect in 1925.

The Memorial’s Melbourne exhibition ran from 1922 to early 1925, when the displays were moved to Sydney and housed in its Exhibition Building until 1935. The Melbourne exhibits were seen by 776,000 people, and those in Sydney by over 2,000,000 (with the first million viewing the exhibits in the first two years). Considering that during this period the population was growing from its 1921 census figure of 5,435,734 to that of 1933, 6,629,839, this was a considerable vote of confidence in the institution’s mission.

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2 Hereafter referred to as the Memorial. I have chosen to use the term “Australian War Memorial” throughout the dissertation to refer to the institution at any time of its life, for the sake of simplicity and to reflect its supporters’ attitude that it was the nation’s memorial to its war dead, regardless of when that official designation came to it.

3 Minutes, Australian War Museum Committee (hereafter AWM C), inaugural meeting, 26 June 1918. AWM 1701/1.


5 Charles Edwin Woodrow Bean (1879-1968), b. Bathurst, New South Wales (hereafter NSW), d. Sydney, NSW; journalist and historian. See ADB, vol.7, pp.226-9. For more details on Bean, see Chapter Three. The Memorial was legally created by An Act to Provide for the Establishment of the Australian War Memorial and for Other Purposes. No. 18 of 1925, assented to 26 September 1925.

6 A small collection was retained on display at the Memorial’s offices, which remained in Melbourne.
popularity; the attendance figures were above those for museums such as the Australian Museum in Sydney (whose 255,000 visitors for 1925 were more than matched by the Memorial in its first three months). The Memorial was a significant cultural institution in inter-war Australia, and the only one that was overtly and officially “national.”

The collection and display of trophies was at the heart of the Memorial in the 1922-35 period. As a national war memorial, it was unique in two ways, both concerning trophies. Firstly, it was a military museum, displaying a large amount of equipment captured from the enemy in an attempt, its principal founding document stated, to create “the most prominent traditions” of the Australian nation. Secondly, the Memorial’s first task, even before organising exhibitions, was to coordinate the provision of a large number of captured enemy field guns, mortars and machine guns to Australian municipalities, with a view to their being displayed in public areas.

The display of trophies also occurred in Canada, the United States and New Zealand, but the designation of a military museum as the national war memorial was a development unparalleled among belligerent countries. No other nation involved in the conflict seemed as eager to display the destructive hardware of the war to its public, either during or after the war. In Britain, for instance, a collection of war matériel was referred to in 1927 as “the rusting dusty relics of destruction and poor pathetic reminders in cloth and metal and bloodstains of a host of broken lives.” In Australia, on the other hand, the Memorial’s collection was variously described as “sacred,” “the most significant and stirring place in all Australia,” and “a fitting

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8 See Chapter Three.


10 See Clayton, “To the Victor.” Part 3, pp.5-6, 12.

national memorial.” Furthermore, the attempt by Sir Martin Conway and others to have the Imperial War Museum adopted as the British National War Memorial was rejected in Cabinet, in August 1917, with a certain revulsion. Ultimately the Cabinet felt that making a museum the national war memorial “would be an unjustifiable extravagance now and a white elephant in the future.”

Further compounding the distinctiveness of the Memorial were the messages attached to these trophies in its displays. The principal elements of these were expressed succinctly by the institution’s motto and the foreword to its first guidebook. As the motto declared, the Memorial was dedicated to offering the Australian war dead “a praise that never ages.” The foreword explained that this praise was deserved primarily because of the Australians’ military supremacy, and expressed principally through displays depicting the Australian soldier as a great and victorious fighter. Military success would be the principal element of the fame of the dead enshrined forever in the “tomb most glorious.” In addition, this fame based upon martial supremacy would be an unfailing source of national inspiration in the future.

Within the Memorial’s inter-war displays, victory was also offered as the ultimate justification for the cost of the war, which was presented in a selective yet realistic manner. Death, defeat and the wounded were all depicted within the displays, as part of a comprehensive “national” interpretation of the Australian overseas war experience which claimed positive results for the Australian nation in almost every facet of that experience, be it victorious, disastrous or bleak. The Memorial presented the narrative of the Australian overseas war experience in a public war history of test, ordeal and triumph, arguing that the enormity of the ordeal made the triumph all the greater. At the same time, the dead symbolically conquered mortality through their depiction as victorious heroes sacrificing their lives for victory, and, in the Memorial’s rhetorical logic, provided as they did so an everlasting inspiration to the

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12 See respectively Thomas Ley and Thomas White, two Nationalist parliamentarians who were not otherwise especially prominent in commemorative debates. Commonwealth of Australia, Parliamentary Debates (hereafter CPD), vol. 119, 4 September 1928, p.316 and vol. 121, 22 August 1929 p.261; Melbourne Herald, 25 April 1924, quoted in McKernan, Here Is Their Spirit, p.75; and Senator George Pearce, Chairman of the AWMC, CPD, v.105, 22 August 1923, p.3265.


14 Kavanagh, Museums and the First World War, p.135.
nation they had given their lives for. Death was transformed into glory, the men remembered not in eclipse but in apotheosis. It was through praise for military qualities, then, that the “fame” of the dead would primarily survive, and this provided a perpetual reward for the public gift of their lives. This objective was eventually materialised in 1950 in the stained glass windows of the Hall of Memory in Canberra, the Memorial’s “crowning feature” as Bean called it. The qualities embodied in glass, asserted to be typical of Australian soldiers, are, firstly, the “personal qualities” of Resource, Candour, Devotion, Curiosity and Independence, seen in the South Window: the West Window’s “social qualities” Comradeship, Ancestry, Patriotism, Chivalry and Loyalty; and the “fighting qualities” Coolness (in action, especially in crisis), Control (of self and others), Audacity, Endurance and Decision, depicted in the East Window. The Memorial displayed these, and certain other martial virtues such as ferocity, ruthlessness and a determination to prevail, throughout the inter-war years.

The depiction of the men as victorious was conceived as a national public service, a nation-building service designed to strengthen emotional bonds within the Australian nation through common veneration of mighty warrior compatriots who had faced a terrible ordeal and triumphed. The Memorial promoted such nation-building in everything it did. This included the provision of a triumphal national war history and displays offering “proof” of Australian military supremacy, while the Memorial’s commitment to and caring affection for its nation were never more clearly seen than in the museum’s treatment of elements of the war that were less triumphal – death, defeat and the wounded. All of these aspects of the Australian overseas war experience – battles, military effectiveness, “splendid qualities,” the “realities of war” – were depicted within the comprehensive “national” interpretation of the war. This dissertation is concerned with documenting, analysing and contextualising this “national” interpretation of the overseas war experience during the period 1922-35, in its roots, its objectives, its composition, and its political and social affiliations. Unlike previous studies, it places the Memorial’s main rhetorical displays at the forefront of inquiry, as befits Australia’s first truly “national” museum.

15 Press Release, 21 March 1928. AWM 38 3DRL 6673, Item 620.
This introduction incorporates another four sections. The first outlines my reading of the contours of Australian public memories of the war, and how these related to the Memorial. It includes an examination of the issues which I feel are relevant, and which I address in the dissertation. The second section places Australian reactions to the war into the larger international context of what I feel was a process of fundamental change in commemorative style throughout Western nations. The third explores the extant literature on the Memorial, which I critique and attempt to complement in this study. The final section offers outlines of the chapters to come.

Theories of social remembering inform the dissertation throughout, for it is concerned with “public memories,” themselves elements of a larger “collective memory.” Nachman Ben-Yehuda, following pioneering scholar Maurice Halbwachs, defines “collective memory” as “memories of a shared past that are preserved by members of a specific group who experience them.” I define “public memories” as those memories which are articulated in public through a message-vehicle such as the spoken or written word, the arts, or any other physical means of communication. They

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17 By “rhetorical” displays I mean several kinds of display. Firstly, they include those which dealt with military actions, which I have labelled “campaign” displays because they were organised according to battle and presented chronologically. These include exhibits of objects, dioramas, and paintings and sculpture. Rhetorical displays also include the photographic collection, whose labels contained numerous stories relating military deeds. In contrast, “technical” exhibits explained how military hardware operated. Some technical displays had subsidiary rhetorical elements, but in general they offered audiences a technical military education, which was a subsidiary objective of the Memorial. Despite this being a subsidiary objective, the museum had a large number of display cases devoted to technical displays, close to fifty percent in Melbourne.


differ from “private memories” in that they are articulated in locations generally accepted to be public, such as the media, literature, art galleries, museums, parks, and public squares. They also differ in that they address groups wider than their articulators’ friends and immediate family; they address groups such as the local district, the state or territory, and ultimately, the nation. Public memory is vital to the overall collective memory, for, as Australian memory theorist Kate Darian-Smith asserts, “in the public arena, museums, libraries and monuments possess the material culture that sustains and upholds collective memory.”

Following the Birmingham Popular Memory Group (PMG), I refer to a single speech, painting, novel, or display as a “representation.” “Display” includes objects, documents or paintings, and the labels which interpret them.

II

Australian reactions to the war were varied, including by no means exclusive to grief, nationalist responses to the war (incorporating strong triumphalism), “the politics of victory,” rejection of war, and the sanctification of the memory of the dead. Many responses were in direct emotional or political contrast to each other. For instance, those Australians who wished to reject war completely, a minority, were usually at odds with those who believed in “triumphal” commemoration, that is, the public remembrance of victory. In addition, memories of domestic Australian political developments during the war, particularly the question of reinforcement of the troops by conscription, cast a shadow over all public memories of the war, be they commemorative or literary. Other responses meshed together, as in the case of the widespread feeling that the memory of the dead was sacred in some way. This was magnified and focussed by the national cause, itself claimed by nationalist activists to possess spiritual aspects. Finally, some reactions which appear to have been contradictory found resolution in the “national” interpretation of the war, which was common to most Australian mainstream commemorative representations. This was

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the case with triumphalism and grief, in which the former was offered as consolation for the latter. The twin themes of victory and death were a consistent part of commemorative rhetoric throughout the inter-war years. Indeed, triumphalism, sorrow and political attacks upon domestic enemies often existed cheek-by-jowl in early Australian post-war commemoration. These points are discussed in Chapter Two.

The Australian post-war distribution of the spoils of victory has been little examined by scholars of either the Memorial in particular or Australian commemoration in general, but was a fundamental element of both. For instance, Ken Inglis covers the entire phenomenon in less than a page in his monograph on “war memorials in the Australian landscape.” Michael McKernan affirms that the distribution was seen by many municipal public figures as allowing “adequate recognition…[for] local achievement in the local area,” by which he implies military achievement. McKernan devotes just over three pages to the distribution, but makes no direct judgement, being content to describe the phenomenon. As he says, the distribution proved to be very popular, with a total of 3,497 towns accepting weapons. In many places, as Mark Clayton has shown, these guns arrived several years before any masonry memorial was constructed, for they were distributed rapidly and free of charge. They then served as war memorials, and many continued to do so even after masonry memorials had been constructed. Inglis states that the weapons distributed included, according to a 1929 Memorial press release, “500 hundred guns, 400 trench mortars and 5,000 machine guns” As war memorials, they became the focus of commemorative ceremonies, initially alone in many areas and then, as Inglis puts it, “beside, or within, or on top of, just about every kind of monument. Some…were even made a central feature.” Clayton insists that symbolising victory was the trophy’s primary rhetorical function.

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22 Inglis, Sacred Places, pp.178-9.
23 McKernan, Here is their Spirit, p.70.
24 A total of 469 towns refused, with the vast majority of these having a population less than 500. Forty-six declined on the grounds that no suitable place to display a trophy existed. George Pearce, Senate debate on Australian War Memorial Bill, 21 August 1925. CPD, Senate, vol.111, p.1643.
26 Press Release, November 1929, p.4. AWM 93 20/1/1A. Numerals in original. See also Inglis, Sacred Places, pp.178-9.
The striking contrast in reactions between the British Imperial metropolis and its self-consciously “British” colony, after they had been through a comparable crisis, losing a large proportion of their young men in the war and experiencing considerable domestic conflict as well, was chiefly the result of nationalist influences in Australia. In contrast to established European nation-states such as Britain, France or Germany, Australia saw the creation of a new national mythology – “prominent national traditions” – during and after the war, one based upon the nation’s warfront experience. This endeavour complicated, and largely shaped, commemoration. In creating this mythology, including but not exclusive to the myth now known as the “Anzac Legend,” Australians adopted many of the trappings of a “martial nationalism” that had been the prevailing paradigm of nation-building in nineteenth-century Europe. Martial nationalism was manifest in a corpus of images, ideas, practices, physical objects and monuments, from romantic descriptions of battles such as Waterloo and Agincourt to the Arc de Triomphe and the Berlin Victory Monument, which collectively argued that true national history was founded upon historically-important military encounters.

Many Australian nationalists made free use of this martial cultural “vocabulary,” adapting it to local circumstances as they saw fit in the decade or so after the Gallipoli campaign in 1915. For instance, instead of symbolising the triumph of the great leader, as trophy-monuments had often done in the pre-war era in Europe, trophies in Australia symbolised the victory of ordinary Australian soldiers. There was a demotic triumphalism involved, in which the “glory of war,” a concept of great antiquity traditionally associated with the aristocracy, was democratised. However, as Chapter 1 explores, this “democratisation of glory” was an ongoing Western cultural phenomenon by 1914, rather than an Australian invention. It had been pioneered by the French after the Revolution, although there was still a great deal of classical-style triumphalism in the Republic, especially under Napoleon, who was fond of having himself depicted as Caesar. Australian post-war commemoration was essentially plebeian in its focus from the beginning.

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Trophy-taking and display also illustrates the influence of a desire among some Australians to “historicise” the Australian landscape, to obtain “real” historical objects— that is, associated with the kinds of military events which martial nationalism insisted formed the bedrock of a “true” national history—and display them publicly. The display of trophies offered physical evidence that, following the performance of its soldiers during the war, Australia, too, had assumed a place among the “historical” nations, or as wartime Prime Minister William Morris (W.M.) Hughes often put it, had received “a niche in the temple of the immortals.”30 This national hubris was a widespread phenomenon in commemoration and literature, subordinating grief in many public representations on the war.

For many, bereavement was the bedrock of commemoration, however, fuelling a strong desire to publicly honour the lives of dead loved ones. Spontaneous acts of commemoration were occurring in Australia as early as Empire Day (24 May) 1915, for instance.31 The question was never “should we remember them?,” but rather “how should we remember them?” As this dissertation explores, the answer to this question in some influential areas of Australian society was “as triumphant warriors.”

Bereavement was very strong in Australia, but lamentation was not dominant in early post-war commemoration. There were several reasons for this. Firstly, the victory of 1918 itself was vital, for the overthrow of a Prussian regime that had been painted by Allied wartime propaganda as the greatest threat to freedom in the history of humanity was seen in Australia in the first post-war decade to have been a great

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31 See Inglis, Sacred Places, p.106. This dissertation examines mourning per se very little, for the Memorial spoke only of the war period, and within that period, only of the soldiers’ experiences. Soldiers were depicted as remembering their dead mates, but were not shown in the state of grief. However, recent studies by Jay Winter, Ken Inglis, Joy Damousi and Tanya Luckins cast considerable light on mourning and grief in wartime and post-war Australia, and may be consulted for details. See Jay Winter, Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European cultural history, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp.29-53; Inglis, Sacred Places, pp.97-106; Joy Damousi, The Labour of Loss: Mourning, memory and wartime bereavement in Australia, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp.9-102; Tanya Luckins, The Gates of Memory: Australian people’s experiences and memories of loss and the Great War, (Fremantle: Curtin University Books, 2004).
event, saving the world from a terrible tyranny. The Australian role in the victory was, as a consequence, celebrated for itself. Secondly, the widespread use of narrative as a commemorative device promoted remembrance of victory. Many tales were told publicly which climaxed with Australian armed forces, a conquering host of “paladins of the South,” smashing the flower of the Prussian Guard and ending the war. “It is this,” such activists cried, “that we should remember!” Victory narratives were another feature of pre-war martial nationalism, and more generally of traditional triumphal commemoration, being traceable to the Standard of Ur in Babylonia, c.2650 BC. and probably beyond. Further, pseudo-mythological and epic rhetorical modes, deliberately harking back to the past, were often used in these narratives, and thus Australians heard that their men had “stormed the impossible steep” at Gallipoli, “endured hell” at Pozieres, “liberated the Holy Land from the Infidels,” and wrested “the mastery of the world” from the greatest standing army in Europe during 1918.

The politics of victory was the third major factor promoting triumphal commemoration, with many groups in Australia serving their own interests by sustaining and focussing the spontaneous outpourings of victorious joy seen in 1918-20. The dominant Imperially-loyal Anglo-Australian power elites, such as the Nationalist government, the Anglican clergy, the mainstream press, the Returned Sailors’ and Soldiers’ Imperial League of Australia (the RSSILA), and the Universal Service League, had adopted unconditional surrender of the enemy as their platform during the war, and had demanded that any sacrifice be made to achieve this. The victory, when finally it came, was grasped as validating their self-styled “National” position (the capitalisation being a deliberate attempt to reiterate the point), and was used as justification for the huge cost of the war. In addition, to dwell too much on the cost of the war was politically dangerous for these same groups in the 1918-25 period, for it would associate a still-reigning wartime leadership with wholly negative images


and ideas, bringing their fitness to rule into question. Thus, the bereaved, although
acknowledged, received patriotic salves for their grief, while subjects such as
mutilation and madness were avoided. Overall, the combination of popular elation
and relief at the victory, the influence of martial nationalism, and local politics were
the main factors which led to the subordination of grief to martial national traditions
in the early post-war years.

Memories of the war were contested in inter-war Australia, as were nation­
buiding processes more generally. De facto alliances were formed around particular visions of the past. The Memorial was part of one such “commemorative complex,”
the dominant one controlled by an overlapping, similar-minded group of right-leaning politicians, former officers of the AIF, and the RSSILA, who, in the vast majority of cases, had also had control over aspects of the conduct of the war. They found allies
and apologists in protestant clergy and the mainstream press, and their positive vision
of the war experience received endorsement by the bulk of soldiers’ war literature. Let
us call this loose alliance the “Digger-Nationalist complex,” all of whose agencies
embraced the “national” interpretation of the war as fundamental to their nature and
their commemoration.\(^5\) Dissenters existed, but were unable to find a significant public audience.\(^6\) Thus, by the end of the 1920s, the agencies of the Digger-
Nationalist complex had a virtual monopoly on commemorative rhetoric, with other commemorative interpretations effectively silenced. It is thus possible to refer to the
Digger-Nationalist complex as “mainstream commemoration.”

The silencing of alternative positions was primarily due to the breadth of the acceptance of the “national” interpretation of the war in Australian society. A
majority of Australians, as evidenced by the 1917 election, agreed with the contention
that the war was a “national” matter, and remained loyal to the Imperial cause even if
they opposed reinforcing the Australian troops with conscripts.\(^7\) “Mainstream”

\(^5\) I borrow the term “Digger-Nationalist” from Fiona Nicoll, but the definition here is my own. See
Fiona Nicoll, From Diggers to Drag Queens: Configurations of Australian national identity. (Sydney:

\(^6\) See Alistair Thomson, Anzac Memories: Living with the legend. (Melbourne: Oxford University

\(^7\) At the 1917 election for the House of Representatives, the Nationalists won 53 seats to the ALP’s 22.
Table POL 24-28: “Australian House of Representatives Seats Won by Party, General Elections 1901-
Leftist groups, such as the Australian Labor Party (ALP), having adopted a nationalist understanding of the war from its outset, with Andrew Fisher’s famous pledge of Australia’s “last man and last shilling,” then faced serious limits upon any criticism of the war’s conduct by their political enemies. the Nationalists, which they might wish to make, for they found it difficult to appear both “national” and “anti-war.” Many simply did not mention the war; Joseph Lyons, for example, when he was ALP Premier of Tasmania, remained silent on Anzac Day platforms as commemoration was not his party’s province. Building one’s nation on war memories prescribes those memories to a considerable degree, and the “national” interpretation channelled public remembrance of the war into avenues that were least dangerous (and indeed, most beneficial) politically to those who had conducted the war.

The RSSILA, Nationalist politicians and protestant clergy saw themselves as the leaders of Australian society, and felt a responsibility to shape the nation in a “responsible” manner. They thus conducted, as part of their commemorative rhetoric, a programme of “emotional” nation-building, that is, the inculcation into the widely-scattered populace of a consciousness of community, based on common public memories of the Australian overseas war experience. It was a project that sought to establish a specifically “national” consensus on the war experience, that is, a consensus in relation to what would then be part of the identity of anyone claiming to be “Australian.” The Memorial had an important role to play in this project, for its displays offered stories whose heroes were presented as ideal Australians, exhibiting typical Australian moral virtues, attached to emotionally-powerful physical objects used or captured by those heroes. It was this project which brought the Memorial in closest contact with the rhetorical world of Australian politics, for politicians felt that national history was too important to leave to the historians, and provided their own versions. Chapter Two examines some of these political uses of the past in its exploration of Australian commemoration. The principal points of contact between

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38 Fisher made this statement at Colac, Victoria, on 2 August 1914. See Argus, 3 August 1914, in Brian McKinlay, Documentary History of the Australian Labour Movement 1850-1975, (Melbourne: Drummond, 1979), p.56. See also Thomson, Anzac Memories, pp.139-40.


40 I contrast “emotional” nationalism with the “institutional” nation-building of creating High Court, Constitution, Parliament and so on.
the Memorial's rhetoric and that of politicians such as W.M. Hughes came when the latter used narrative devices, and in the Imperial loyalty ascribed to the Australian soldiers by both agencies.

The Memorial had extremely long labels, often quoted directly from books, which gave it a distinctly literary quality. Indeed, the Memorial's rhetoric had much more in common with Australian wartime correspondence and post-war literature than with the masonry memorial complex with which the institution is often somewhat erroneously compared. The Memorial certainly had many messages and objectives not seen in other national memorials, or in the State and local memorials in Australia. For instance, the Memorial's unambiguous assertion that Australians were superior warriors was a very uncommon message for inscriptions or sculpture on local or State memorials, while the objective of the Memorial's creators to provide mainstream entertainment to audiences was unique. If the designation "national war memorial" is considered for a moment as a recipe for a blend of ideas whose relative proportions could be altered, in the Memorial during its 1922-35 incarnations in Melbourne and Sydney, the purely nationalist elements were stronger than the purely memorial ones. Reciting nationalist tales of successful warriors was perceived to be more important, in the last analysis, than lamenting the cost. Lamentation was carried out to a much greater degree by another element of the Digger-Nationalist commemorative complex, the local memorials with the names of the men on them. Today, the Memorial's Roll of Honour, the public list of the names of the dead now seen on the walls of the cloisters in Canberra, serves a similar purpose.

This tendency towards triumphal commemoration was perhaps not surprising for a "literary" institution, for, as Robin Gerster has shown, "the heroic theme" – by which he means primarily heroic victory – was dominant in Australian war writing throughout the whole inter-war period.¹¹ John Laird agrees with Gerster's assessment, arguing that "the all-pervading sentiments of bitterness, disenchantment, and pacifism, characteristic of a large number of war books published overseas during the 1920s and 1930s are...noticeably absent from the writings of most Australian soldier-authors."¹² Rather, as Gerster demonstrates, the literature of Australian soldier-writers

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¹¹ Gerster, Big-noting, pp.1-171.

was triumphal in the extreme, consisting in his opinion of national and personal "big-noting" – "the giving of extravagant praise to oneself or the exaggeration of one's own performance."\(^{43}\)

Another important difference between the Memorial and local memorials concerned control of the project. The Memorial was the product of elites in Australian society to a much greater extent than were the local war memorials raised after the war.\(^{44}\) There was considerably less consultation with the general population, beyond requests for both donations and information for the Roll of Honour. The main two creators of the Memorial were Bean and long-time Director John Treloar, assisted by political allies including Neville Howse, Thomas Glasgow and Henry Gullett, who had also been officers in the AIF, and Senator George Pearce, who had been wartime Minister for Defence.\(^{45}\) Bean was visionary, politician and propagandist, and guided

\(^{43}\) Gerster, Big-noting, p.3.

\(^{44}\) Inglis, Sacred Places, p.340.

\(^{45}\) John Linton Treloar (1894-1952), b. Port Melbourne, Victoria, d. Canberra, Australian Capital Territory (hereafter ACT). Enlisted in the 1st Division, AIF, in August 1914, and served on Gallipoli. Served briefly with 1st Squadron Australian Flying Corps then as the confidential clerk to Colonel C.B.B. White, Chief-of-Staff, AIF. Appointed to lead Australian War Records Section (hereafter AWRS) in May 1917 on the recommendation of C.E.W. Bean, organising the collection of objects and unit war diaries for the Memorial. Director of the Memorial 1920-52, except for when seconded to Empire Exhibition Committee from August 1923 to April 1925 and to Department of Information during the Second World War. ADB, vol.12, pp.256-7; McKernan, Here is Their Spirit, pp.86-8. 

Sir Neville Reginald Howse (1863-1930), b. Stogursey, England, d. London, England. Served as a surgeon in the New South Wales Medical Corps during the Boer War, winning Australia's first Victoria Cross, although the country did not yet officially exist, on 24 July 1900. Was twice mayor of Orange, NSW, before the First World War. Served on Gallipoli, taking personal charge of medical evacuation on 25 April 1915. Served as commander of AIF medical services from November 1915 until the end of the war. Became Nationalist Member of the House of Representative (hereafter MHR) for Calare, NSW, serving in cabinet from January 1925 until October 1929. Chairman of Australian War Memorial Board of Management 1928. ADB, vol.9, pp.384-6; Lionel Wigmore and Bruce Harding, They Dared Mightily, 2nd edn rev. by Jeff Williams and Anthony Staunton, (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1986), pp.21-3 describes the action for which he was awarded the Victoria Cross.


Sir George Foster Pearce (1870-1952), b. Mt Barker, South Australia (hereafter SA), d. Melbourne, Victoria. Prominent in Western Australian labour movement in the 1890s. ALP Federal Senator 1901-16, Nationalist Senator
every part of the Memorial’s life. The idea itself was his, although he later shared the “glory” with a group in a dugout on the Somme.46 He wrote guides that sold well – over 100,000 – throughout the 1922-35 period, as well as many of the diorama labels, while the Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-18, which he edited and of which he wrote the six key volumes – covering the Gallipoli campaigns of 1915 and the Australians’ campaigns on the Western Front 1916-18 – provided the ultimate authority for the Memorial’s displays.47 His political influence kept an expensive project on the government agenda. He also guided Treloar in the latter’s drafting of the main display labels.48 Treloar also built up institutional relationships with groups such as the RSSILA while Bean had personal relationships with a host of politicians and officers from his war work.49 Treloar’s position was subordinate to Bean’s

46 C.E.W. Bean, “The Beginnings of the Australian War Memorial,” typescript, n.d (post-1945). AWM 38 3DRL 6673. Item 619. Similarities to the British project for an Imperial War Museum (hereafter IWM) suggest it may not have been their idea at all – an interesting area for investigation. See Kavanagh, Museums and the First World War, pp.117-36.


48 For instance, Treloar wrote somewhat officiously to Curator Les Bain that “your transcription of Dr Bean’s draft [of the Nomme Boschen diorama] appears to be correct.” In the same letter he acknowledged that Bean provided the final word on the war’s incidents, telling Bain “Dr Bean had obviously greatly improved the description and I suggest that you telephone Mr Bazley [Arthur Bazley, Bean’s assistant] and ask him to thank Dr Bean for having licked it into shape for me.” Director, Australian War Memorial, Melbourne (John Treloar), to Curator, Australian War Memorial, Sydney (Les Bain), 3 March 1932. AWM 93 13/1/37.

49 For example, Treloar was careful to have letters of appreciation sent to the editor of the New South Wales Returned Sailors’ and Soldiers’ Imperial League of Australia (hereafter RSSILA) branch journal Reveille for an offer to publicise new exhibits in 1929 and to the branch secretary for his dispatch of a circular to all sub-branches urging members to visit the Memorial in 1934. In the first case the journal
throughout their working association, as evidenced by his many deferrals to Bean’s opinion on matters of policy.\textsuperscript{50}

From its inception, then, the Memorial was a thoroughly politicised institution. In addition to these personal and institutional relationships, there was considerable overlap in personnel sitting in the Hughes and Bruce-Page ministries and meetings of the Memorial’s governing council, the Australian War Museum Committee (AWMC) and its successor the Board of Management, while several RSSILA presidents became board members and the League was a consistent and enthusiastic supporter of the Memorial and proponent of the swift construction of its permanent home.\textsuperscript{51} Politicians such as Glasgow and Pearce repeated Bean’s words in their parliamentary speeches, and stories of heroism and sacrifice from the Memorial’s displays also found their way to the dispatch box. There was also considerable convergence of personnel between the AWMC, and Board, and the King and Empire Alliance, a leading
carried an article written by Treloar himself. Director, Australian War Memorial (John Treloar) to Editor, Reveille, 18 January 1929. AWM 265 17/2/3 and Director, Australian War Memorial (John Treloar) to Curator, Australian War Memorial, Sydney (J.S. Kirkland), 11 October 1934. AWM 93 20/1/6.

\textsuperscript{50} Bean addressed Treloar at times in correspondence as “My Dear Treloar,” to which the latter replied “Dear Dr/Mr Bean” at all times. As for Bean’s influence, two examples indicate its scope and the level of detail involved. On 5 June 1926 Treloar wrote to Curator A.E. Scammell that they would proceed with the marking of place-names on a new model of Gallipoli “after agreement has been reached with Mr Bean regarding the names to be shown.” Director, Australian War Memorial, Melbourne (John Treloar), to Curator, Australian War Memorial, Sydney (A.E. Scammell), 5 June 1926. A7702 749/032/004. A second example relates to the purchase of a collection of photographs, which Sir Harry Chauvel, chairman of the Memorial’s finance committee, was considering. Chauvel was having trouble making up his mind, so Treloar wrote to Bean asking the historian “to favour [Chauvel] with your views on the subject.” John Treloar to C.E.W. Bean, 28 October 1935. AWM 38 3DRL 6673, Item 778. \textit{Sir Henry Chauvel} (1865-1945), b. Tabulan, NSW, d. Melbourne, Victoria. Served in the 1st Queensland Mounted Infantry during the Boer War. Commanded the 1st Light Horde Brigade and then the 1st Division on Gallipoli, followed by the Australian and New Zealand Mounted Division in Palestine from early 1916. Sir Edmund Allenby gave him command of the Desert Mounted Corps in June 1917. Conducted a number of important actions, including Romani, a defensive victory, in 1916, and the capture of Beersheba in October 1917. \textit{ADB}, vol.7, p.624-8; A.J. Hill, “General Sir Harry Chauvel: Australia’s first corps commander,” in D.M. Horner (ed.), \textit{The Commanders: Australian military leadership in the twentieth century}, (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1984), pp.60-84.

Imperially-loyal, Anglo-Australian conservative group that was dedicated to the eradication of all forms of “disloyalty” to their own ideals.52

III

Australian inter-war commemoration was located within a larger cultural development common to Western nations such as France, Britain and the USA. The inter-war years were a period of transformation in war commemoration in these countries, with a system that had been elitist and focussed strongly on victory before 1914 being transformed towards the one seen after the Second World War, which was widely democratized and focussed on sacrifice. Both triumphalism and lamentations for the dead were thus seen in commemoration during the inter-war period, often expressed together. Triumphalism was very strong in its first few years, but receded rapidly in Europe.

The main factors leading to this transformation were a growing public awareness of the horrific realities of the war, which tended to mock triumphal or heroic pretensions, and the increasingly poor reputation of the victory won in 1918. Celebrations in that year, centred on a perceived destruction of Prussian militarism and victory of international morality and justice, appeared hollow by the late 1930s, when in the rise of Hitler many saw a resurgence of “Prussianism.” The triumphalism of 1918, which saw the public display of enormous numbers of trophies – mainly field guns and howitzers captured from the defeated Germans – in the London Mall, gave way to soul-searching, pessimism and abhorrence of war.54

The transformation of war commemoration from “triumphal” to “sacrificial” occurred at different speeds in different countries, and the initial degree of triumphalism in 1918 also varied. Australia exhibited a greater degree of triumphalism than most other belligerents, and the feeling lasted longer there also. From the Australian point of view, the inter-war period can roughly be divided into


54 As Mark Clayton shows, many of these guns had been captured by Australians, and were sent back to Australia. Clayton, “To the Victor.” Part 2, p.29.
the optimistic years before about 1935, particularly before 1930, which saw a great deal of triumphal commemoration, and the final pessimistic years tracking the rise of Hitler and Japan up to the outbreak of war in 1939.

The early post-war years were the most important to the Memorial, because its displays tended to reflect the commemorative mood of 1922, and once these were established it was very difficult for them to be radically altered. Bean and Treloar wrote all the labels between them, and the staff was small. Thus the Memorial did not change a great deal, while the rhetoric of commemorative days, be it on the platform, at the pulpit or in the newspaper, underwent considerable revision. The Memorial accurately reflected the Australian commemorative climate of 1922, but by 1935 there were great differences of emphasis, tone and method. Thus the Memorial’s displays, which carried “the spirit of 1922” without significant change until 1935, were an important factor in the persistence of triumphal memory in Australia.

The main issue in historical scholarship in relation to post-war commemoration and public memory has concerned a distinction between “tradition” and “modern memory.” This interpretative distinction, which has framed much debate on the cultural legacy of the First World War, has been discussed by scholars such as Jay Winter and Rosa Bracco.55 As they demonstrate, “modern memory” of the war emphasised disjunction between pre- and post-war eras, and concentrated upon “the creation of a new language in truth-telling about war.”56 “Tradition,” on the other hand, as its name suggests, utilised conventional images and ideas, albeit often in new forms.

Many scholars have recently been piecing together an understanding that both “modern memory” and “traditional” responses existed in the inter-war period, as befits a commemorative system in flux.57 Indeed, a multiplicity of reactions to the war has been delineated by scholarship both in Australia and overseas. The most striking fact about the responses revealed in studies such as Paul Fussell’s Great War and

56 Winter, Sites of Memory, p.2.
Modern Memory: Antoine Prost’s In the Wake of War, Rosa Bracco’s Merchants of Hope, Jay Winter’s Sites of Memory, Alistair Thomson’s Anzac Memories, Robin Gerster’s Big-noting, Raymond Evans’s Loyalty and Disloyalty, and Joy Damousi’s Labour of Loss is their contradiction.  Fussell’s “dynamics of hope abridged” in the work of the anti-war soldier-writers rested uneasily with Bracco’s “middlebrow” writers and their attempt to ensure that “the centre held,” while Thomson’s work on the memories of returned soldiers shows that the literary big-noting explored by Gerster was often difficult to live with, or to live up to. Prost insists that most French returned soldiers became convinced pacifists, leaning to the Left in politics, while Evans shows Australian veterans acting as enforcers, mainly for right-wing groups.

This contradiction has been specifically highlighted by authors. For instance, Samuel Hynes has elaborated the existence of two “cultures” in early post-war Britain, one “monumental” and one “anti-monumental;” one holding fast to traditional patriotism and so-called “Big Words,” the other striving to represent the reality of the war. These two cultures, he asserts, “separate and distrustful of each other; each had its own art, and each denied the other.” Rosa Bracco illustrates the contradiction of the late 1920s starkly. She points out that in Journey’s End, the most popular war play of all time, “not a word was spoken against the war,” as its author attested. It was first performed, and had its extraordinarily successful run, at the same time – early 1929 – that the anti-war tour de force All Quiet on the Western Front was breaking all-time records for the sale of a war book. George Mosse and


59 See Prost, In the Wake of War, pp.51-78; Evans, Loyalty and Disloyalty, pp.141-73.  

60 “Big Words” was the title of an ironic poem by Robert Graves, written during the war. See Robert Graves, Complete Poems, vol.1. (Manchester: Carcanet, 1995), pp.18-19.  


62 R.C. Sheriff, quoted in Bracco, Merchants of Hope. p.149.
Ann Lindar have demonstrated that the German experience was both more overtly politicised, and controlled to a greater extent by conservative social and political forces, than that in the victorious European states. Their accounts offer useful points of comparison, for Australian reactions had certain similarities with German responses, with conservative forces controlling the public memories of the war throughout the inter-war year period and promoting strongly positive public memories.

Jay Winter establishes that many of the writers Fussell sees as committed to a break with past forms and ideas actually used traditional images and concepts throughout their work. For instance Winter shows that Wilfred Owen, war poet *par excellence*, reworked and reinterpreted older forms, rather than rejecting them out of hand. Winter's thesis is that there was a “vigorous mining of eighteenth and nineteenth-century images and metaphors to accommodate expressions of mourning” during and after the First World War. A similar development occurred in Australia. In many countries, in undertaking to commemorate their dead, people cast their glance backward, and adapted traditional commemorative symbols and other images to contemporary requirements, in the process sometimes remaking them, sometimes re-using them in a self-consciously reflexive form to emphasise continuity. In many nations, local war memorials honoured local men rather than the traditional generals and other leaders. In the ceremonies in which these memorials were unveiled, local men were praised in terms that had once been the exclusive province of the great – for heroism, for a panoply of martial and civic moral virtues, for a kind of secular martyrdom in which the men had laid down their lives in the service of their nation, and in Australia, for winning the war itself. Along with this were affirmation of the cause as just, and evocation of various forms of community – the community of the dead, the community of the living, and the national community which joined the two, for example.


66 Winter, *Sites of Memory*, pp.204-22.

67 Winter, *Sites of Memory*, p.5.
The contradictions of post-war Europe are summed up by two opposing visions of the war, two opposing public memories which also were observable in Australia. The first has been seen as arising in Britain, the second in Germany. Samuel Hynes labels the British vision, accompanying the "modern memory" interpretation of the war, "the Myth of the War." This myth, he argues, emphasised "the butchery, the sacrifice of the young by the old, the mindless hatred and the cruel patriotism."68 A signal example of this thinking is embodied in Ezra Pound’s poem "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley:"

Died some, pro patria,
non “dulce” not “et decor”…
walked eye-deep in hell
believing old men’s lies, then unbelieving
came home, home to a lie,
home to many deceits,
home to old lies and new infamy;
usury age-old and age-thick
and liars in public places.69

"The Myth of the War" contrasts in the most striking manner with the "Myth of the War Experience," identified by George Mosse in post-war Germany, "which looked back upon the war as a meaningful and even sacred event."70 Mosse argues that through this Myth "the memory of the war was refashioned into a sacred experience which provided the nation with new depths of religious feeling, putting at its disposal ever-present saints and martyrs, places of worship, and a heritage to emulate."71 Mourning, although widespread, did not dominate German public memories of the war. Instead, Mosse, argued, a feeling of pride "mixed in with the mourning, the feeling of having taken part and sacrificed in a noble cause."72 A similar situation occurred in Australia, while the differing reactions embodied in these two myths mirror the British and Australian attitudes to trophies indicated above.

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68 Hynes, A War Imagined, p 283.
70 Mosse, Fallen Soldiers, p 7.
71 Mosse, Fallen Soldiers, p 6.
Jay Winter points out that collection of the hardware of war was common to many belligerent countries, even if Australia’s collection was unique in becoming part of its nation’s memorial. Winter confirms that collection of the ephemera of the war was common to Britain and France, in the latter country as a private concern, as well as Australia. Such collecting, he argues, was a patriotic act, in France and Britain being mainly the work of “civilians determined to uphold the dignity and honour of their country’s war effort.” He also points out that “by their very nature, they both glorified the war effort and contained, at least initially, little about the appalling character and costs of trench warfare.” Winter further argues that “commemorating the war in this ill-informed and blatantly non-combatant manner took on the air of propaganda,” and that “like most Propaganda it did not dwell on the sadder facts of the war: the maimed, the deformed, the dead, the widows, the orphans and the bereaved.”

In contrast to these civic museums, Winter notes that the pacifist Ernst Friedrich set up an Anti-war Museum in Berlin in 1924, packed with gruesome photographs and other evidences of the true horrors of the war, designed to both campaign against war, and to point out the dangerous selectivity of the patriotic museums. He also notes, however, that Friedrich’s museum was unpopular, and that the concept of an anti-war museum was not adopted elsewhere. Remembering the horrors was not popular in the early inter-war years in Germany, as in other nations including Australia.

IV

This dissertation offers both a complement to previous research on the early Memorial and a critique of it. The Memorial’s early period, 1922-35, has been little studied, although most authors who offer an interpretation of the contemporary institution in Canberra also examine the Memorial’s original objectives at least cursorily. Thus, most writing on the Memorial has at least some relevance to this period. The largest work is Michael McKernan’s commissioned institutional history, *Here is Their Spirit*.

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73 Winter, *Sites of Memory*, pp.80-1.
74 Winter, *Sites of Memory*, p.81.
75 Winter, *Sites of Memory*, p.81.
but other significant studies include those published by Ken Inglis, Tony Bennett, Ann Millar, Kimberly Webber, Jenny Bell, Fiona Nicoll, Margaret Browne and Jeffrey Williams, Margaret Anderson and Andrew Reeves, Peter Stanley and Catherine Styles. I differ from these writers in that I base my conclusions very strongly upon my reading of the main rhetorical displays, as well as archival and other sources. By placing these displays at the forefront of analysis, and by seeking their cultural roots and antecedents, a clearer picture of both the Memorial itself and of inter-war commemoration and Australian attitudes to the war generally emerges. Both the plans of the Memorial’s creators, and the public relations statements of Bean—which have, I feel, been taken as the last word as to the way the Memorial operated in Australia—become easier to interpret.

Regardless of these reservations, the extant literature has illuminated many vital aspects of the Memorial’s nature. Firstly, Michael McKernan makes the key observations that Bean and Treloar wished to “commemorate Australian service and sacrifice” and to “help a generation to grieve.” He argues persuasively that the Memorial thus became a surrogate grave for those many Australians who could never afford to visit their loved one’s final resting place overseas. Thus, McKernan argues,

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77 No Australian war dead were ever brought back to Australia, with the sole exception of Sir William Bridges. Divisional Commander killed in the first weeks at Gallipoli. Sir William Throsby Bridges (1861-1915). b. Greenock, Scotland. d. Gallipoli Theatre. Raised AIF on the outbreak of war, and commanded it until his death. Interred at the Royal Military College, Duntroon, which he had done much to create. ADB, vol.7, pp.408-11; Chris Coulthard-Clark, “Major-General Sir William Bridges:
many bereaved people went to the Memorial to "help them with their grief." He points out that "it was not uncommon" for a surviving mate "to bring the mother of a dead man to the museum and to show her, on the large-scale terrain maps [in the Memorial's parlance, "plan models"] that the museum had constructed, where her son had died and where he was buried." This phenomenon was one of the keys to the Memorial's popularity. The Memorial offered the bereaved a vision of their dead as great warriors and heroes.

McKernan has also explored the right-wing political connections of the Memorial. He details the political (or, as Bean called them, "semi-political") tactics used, mainly by Bean himself, but also by Treloar, in their endeavour to have an expensive building constructed. He shows their alliance-building, both on a personal and on an institutional level, with other agencies within the Digger-Nationalist complex. McKernan demonstrates that these included the RSSILA and other returned soldiers, particularly the command officers such as Sir Brudenell White, Sir Harry Chauvel, Sir Neville Howse and Sir John Gellibrand, as well as the Nationalist Government, whose members included Howse and Donald Cameron, who had been an officer, but not a general or regimental commander. McKernan brings these relationships to the fore in positioning the Memorial within Australian society.

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However, he avoids discussing the political messages inherent in the Memorial’s displays, and makes few comments on the political implications of such groups controlling the national war memorial.

Both these arguments have much to recommend them and I accept that they are vital to any understanding of the Memorial. However, to argue that the Memorial commemorated service and sacrifice alone provides only part of what must become a larger understanding of the institution. Certainly both service and sacrifice were depicted in the Memorial, but they were not predominant in the first decade of the inter-war years. Bean and Trelloar also wanted to commemorate a great victory, to “prove” Australian military supremacy, and to create “national traditions” based on these. In this objective they were joined by many others in the Digger-Nationalist complex, and enjoyed strong popular support.

In remembering the triumphs of the war, especially of 1918, a good many bellicose images were presented to the Australian public. Representations showing Australian soldiers defeating their enemies – overcoming them with ferocity, determination and ruthlessness – were common in the Memorial, as they also were in Anzac Day speeches and writings, war literature, and war art. To perceive only service and sacrifice in the Memorial in the inter-war years is to see half the story at best. Images of victory were indeed more prevalent than images of sacrifice, and were depicted much more directly.\(^82\) The “plan models” on which the survivors showed mothers where their sons were buried had labels that were not laments but epics, tales of triumph over fearful odds.

McKernan is certainly correct when he states that the motto accurately embodied one of the Memorial’s most vital missions – to ensure that the “spirit” of the AIF animated the displays. He argues perceptively that “Bean strongly believed” that the collection consisted of “the sacred reminders of the great deeds of the Australians.”\(^83\) However, he again declines to interrogate his term “great deeds.” Indeed, McKernan tends to conflate these unspecified actions with mourning, arguing that “Bean knew how remote those thousands of graves were from people who still cherished the memories of the dead and he hoped that, by reading their words and

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\(^82\) See Appendix One: “Statistical Evidence” and Chapters Four to Six.

\(^83\) McKernan, *Here is Their Spirit*, p.xi
studying their mementoes, the Australian people would remember them.”

This description of the operation of the Memorial is far too pacifist, as I demonstrate in Chapters Four and Five, which address, among other issues, the Memorial’s war narrative and its proof of Australian military supremacy. The Memorial’s audiences would remember the dead, and Australian troops in general, as great warriors who had destroyed the flower of the Prussian Guard, for they would see them depicted doing so.

The fundamental insights of Ken Inglis explain much about the Memorial and Australian commemoration generally, but I feel that his work requires qualification. I agree with Inglis’s basic premise that religious and sacred elements existed in Australian commemoration and the Memorial, and that commemoration formed part of a “civil religion” in Australia. Inglis argues that Bean intended the Memorial to be “a repository of sacred things,” and, ultimately, to be a “temple or special shrine.” Examining some of Bean’s writings about the Memorial, he concludes that Bean was trying to construct a “holy place,” a repository for “sacred things.” Through exhibitions and possession of these sacred things, and through a building designed to evoke mystical experiences between the living and the dead, the Memorial would become “a sacred place.” There is no doubt that Bean did wish to create a sacred place, and that his thinking did develop more and more along those lines as the years progressed; after the Second World War he drew up a document outlining display policy which officially rejected triumphalism and embraced the sacred. For Bean, the “sacred things” connected the “sacred memory” of the dead to the “sacred nation” of Australia. However, Inglis neglects the historical elements of

84 McKeman, _Here is Their Spirit_, p.xii.
85 Inglis, “A Sacred Place,” p.99.
86 Inglis, “A Sacred Place,” pp.102 and 113.
87 Inglis, “A Sacred Place,” p.102.
88 Inglis, “A Sacred Place,” p.99.
89 “Note on the Principles Governing the Exhibition of Relics at the Australian War Memorial.” (Written 1957). AWM 38 3DRL 6673, Item 620. McKeman, _Here is Their Spirit_, p.222. Bean points to the displays and their labels and guidebooks as subjects for study in the same post-war document, asserting that “the atmosphere of the Memorial can be very largely determined by the captions to the relics, and by the references to them in the guidebook.” “Principles Governing the Exhibition of Relics.”
the Memorial’s messages, which in this period were more important than the sacred. In the Memorial, “the sacred” was subordinated and fused to the triumphal in this period. The Memorial was not simply “a sacred place,” but also a didactic place and a place of triumphal martial nationalist story-telling.

Additionally, in the Memorial during the inter-war era, the elements of the 2004 Memorial which are most “sacred” – the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, the Hall of Memory, the Cloisters and the Pool of Reflection, not to mention the architecture of the building itself – did not exist. What sacred element there was came only from the objects themselves. The space was sanctified only by the deposition within it of objects considered sacred. Although this was itself an ancient and revered practice, and even though many of the Memorial’s supporters believed the Melbourne and Sydney Exhibitions Buildings had been sanctified by receiving the objects, with several going on record to that effect in parliament, I would contend that this still made for an immensely less sacred space than that now seen at the foot of Mount Ainslie. The museum displays alone could never offer the same overall experience as is now provided in Canberra. McKernan points out that the Memorial lost much in its first surroundings, and I feel this is true. It lost some of the element of the sacred that would later come from the solemn, spiritual, symbolically commemorative inner part of the Memorial. What remained, along with the objects, was a nationalist war history, incorporating defeats, selected war realities and a little of “the sacred,” but offering as its main theme Australian military and moral supremacy. Moreover, the display of trophies, and the designation of those trophies as sacred objects, created a militarised sanctity, or sacred militarism.

The sacred thrives upon the mysterious, upon the symbolic, upon images and concepts that can bear many imprints. This is their greatest power, as the concept of a national Unknown Soldier illustrates. All citizens can (theoretically) imagine a connection with the Soldier, while observers routinely claim that the tombs themselves symbolise the sacrifice and efforts of the entire nation in their very anonymity. As Australian Prime Minister Paul Keating declared at the dedication of

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90 Inghis himself mentions this in “A Sacred Place,” p.113, but does not examine the displays.

91 These statements are examined in Chapter Two.

the nation’s Unknown Soldier at the Memorial on 11 November, Armistice Day, now Remembrance Day, 1993: “We do not know this Australian’s name and we never will,” but “he is all of [the dead]. And he is one of us.” Similarly, reactions in London to the temporary cenotaph placed in Whitehall in 1919 are testimony to the mysterious ability of these empty tombs, imaginatively holding all the “Glorious Dead,” as its inscription asserted, to provide emotional catharsis for large numbers of people. In both these cases, the lack of explicit exposition is the key to the operation of the symbol.

The early Memorial, on the other hand, offered exhibitions which were the epitome of positivism and realistic presentation, backed by a strong and public commitment to portraying “what really happened.” While this portrayal included a very strong “spiritual” element of things that had “really happened,” this was primarily the “spirit” which animated martial nationalism, not commemoration. The invocations of spirit were those associated with nation-building displays depicting military actions. These spiritual phenomena were “courage,” “determination,” “devotion to duty,” “sacrifice for victory,” and so on. They were not, primarily, in this period, “sacred” phenomena of a non-martial character.

Other scholars have examined the Memorial’s nationalism. These studies demand a further analysis that I attempt to provide. Post-structuralist museological theorist Tony Bennett, for example, argues that the Memorial provided Australia with what was considered a “true” history:

In its remembrance of the heroism of Australian troops in Europe and the Middle East (the theatres of “real history”), this institution...enabled there to be figured forth and materialised an Australian past which could claim the same status, weight and dignity as the European pasts it so clearly sought to emulate and surpass.”

Similarly, Jenny Bell argues that the Memorial was designed “to be a focus of nationalism and to continue the nation building which had occurred during the

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94 Winter, Sites of Memory, pp.102-5.
War.” Kimberly Webber identifies the nationalist motivations and imperialist orientations of the creators. These studies provide important insights into the Memorial, yet beg the question as to what this Australian past being “figured forth and materialised,” this nation-building, consisted of in its specifics, something none of these scholars has examined in any detail. This is, however, a key issue, for the Memorial’s public history, seen by three million visitors, was a significant element of the post-war commemorative landscape.

These insights also lead to Bennett’s museological theory concerning the “significance” of history museums. This, he argues, “is not a function of their fidelity or otherwise to the past ‘as it really was.’ Rather, it depends on their position within and relations to the presently existing field of historical discourses and their associated social and ideological affiliations.” It is in both of these areas – the content of the national history displayed by the Memorial, and the connections of such history to wider Australian social and cultural trends and developments – that this dissertation makes a contribution to the historical understanding of the Memorial.

Elements of the symbolic have also been identified in the Memorial, although again I feel the story told has been somewhat partial. For instance, Webber notes the symbolic intentions behind the Memorial’s display practice, quoting the motto, but carries the argument too far, erroneously stating that “at the War Museum artefacts were not valued for their information content.” There were, in fact, an enormous number of displays of a purely technical nature, explaining how military hardware operated, and even the “symbolic” displays had a great proportion of factual information. Indeed, as Chapters Four and Five explore, the authenticity provided to the museum by factual displays promoted the notion that the symbolic interpretations offered by the Memorial were every bit as natural and factual as the descriptions of ordinance and the accounts of numbers of prisoners captured. This was moral instruction within technical instruction.

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96 Bell, “A Misunderstood Institution,” p.45.
98 Bennett, Birth of the Museum, p.147.
In particular, Webber argues that a famous uniform, with battlefield mud caked to it and barbed-wire rents in the knees, “has been transformed into a holy relic and its display has become an opportunity for veneration rather than discussion. Ordinary objects have become symbols of national greatness.”¹⁰⁶ This was a uniform from Morlancourt, where three actions were fought by Australians in early 1918.¹⁰¹ Webber misunderstands Bean’s original intention, for he was hoping to provoke both veneration and discussion, as McKernan affirms.¹⁰² Webber’s account empties the Memorial of its vital historical meanings. The displays operated as the major public history of the Australian overseas war experience – the only way for Australians to obtain information about where their men had fought and what had occurred during these actions without paying for it. Three million visitors took up the opportunity.

Several scholars have made claims about the Memorial with which I must disagree. Catherine Styles, claiming to be following McKernan, argues that “the War Memorial was never intended, by its visionaries, to venerate or glorify the military institution. Rather, that which it sanctified was the willing sacrifice of the ordinary man.”¹⁰³ I would argue that the Memorial did both of these things – glorified a military institution and sanctified willing sacrifice. The two went hand in hand, the latter being a subset of the former. The Memorial was designed to protect the fighting reputation of the AIF, as Chapter Three demonstrates. It was specifically intended to venerate one specific military institution, the AIF. For instance, in Bean’s own memoir of the Australian War Records Section (AWRS), the Army organisation which was the precursor to the Memorial, he stated that the latter would be “the finest monument ever erected to any army.”¹⁰⁴ Further, when curator A.G. Pretty wrote to the Hotel Windsor in 1923, seeking assistance with advertising, he reminded the manager that “admission is free, the Committee’s aim being to keep green the

¹⁰⁶ Webber, “Constructing Australia’s Past,” p.166.
¹⁰³ Styles, “An Other Place,” p.158.
memory of the AIF.” Finally, a review of the Memorial in the *Sydney Morning Herald* in 1924 referred to it as “a facsimile...of details of [the AIF’s] story.” Certainly “willing sacrifice” was depicted often in the Memorial, but it was subordinated to victory and supremacy during the inter-war years. All of these rhetorical elements made up the overarching glorification of the men of the AIF and the Force as a military organisation and institution. This was hardly unique; many returned soldiers spoke or wrote of the AIF in the inter-war period as if it still existed.

The Memorial’s Senior Historian, Peter Stanley, argues that the Memorial’s objective was “to depict the sufferings and misery of the war.” Catherine Styles agrees, stating that in its early years the Memorial was committed to “representing war as appalling.” Stanley goes further, contrasting the truth-telling Memorial with “the Anzac legend,” which he sees as constructed, partial and propagandising. This interpretation, however, does not serve for the inter-war period. Firstly, I would argue forcefully that the Memorial had a great deal to do with the maintenance of the Anzac Legend, and that the two cannot be separated so conveniently. Further, the Memorial’s own displays were far from the value-free, scrupulously objective texts Stanley claims them to be. They were, as Chapters Four to Six explore, very carefully constructed, and as Chapter Three demonstrates, designed to inculcate certain values into the nation. As for truth-telling, Chapter Six addresses the manner in which the Memorial depicted defeat, death, wounding and other “truths” of war, which contrasted both in tone and content with the “truth-telling” anti-war books of the late 1920s, which did represent the war as appalling. The Memorial’s displays were certainly governed by a strict realism in presentation, following a deliberate policy. Bean was committed to realistic modes of display, and the Memorial depicted a war that was terrible in many respects. However, as indicated, this realism served a triumphal master, with the enormity of the ordeal making the Australian victory over

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105 Acting Director, Australian War Memorial (A.G. Pretty) to Manager, Hotel Windsor, 10 October 1923. AWM 93 20/1/6.


it all the greater. The criticism which was so fundamental to anti-war literature was also absent.

Michael McKernan makes the astonishing assertion that "the AWM did not have an ideological or national purpose." Chapter Three, especially, demonstrates that this was not the case, and that both ideology and nationalism were at the very heart of the Memorial project. Further, McKernan mistakenly argues that the main reason for Bean’s desire to educate was that Australians did not appreciate the horror of the war sufficiently:

During the war, people in France, in Germany or in Britain had been constantly confronted with the sight of hundreds of wounded men returning home from the front, convalescing there and then returning to the front. Husbands on leave would tell wives something of what they had seen, and even if they did not speak of war, in their silences they would show the horror of it all.... Whenever people heard the guns or saw the wounded, they thought again of the cost of war. Australians were spared these things. Though not insensitive to suffering and aware of the anxiety with which people had lived during those dreadful years, Australians had missed the sights and the smell of war. The Memorial, Bean hoped, would teach Australians about war.  

This line of reasoning is difficult to accept. As Chapter Two demonstrates, most Australians did not wish to remember the horror of the war, and few did so publicly. The Memorial, as Chapter Six explores, most certainly did not do so. Moreover, as Chapters Four and Five illustrate, it depicted a war which, though dangerous and difficult, had seen the glorious triumph of Australian arms.

McKernan, however, argues in several places that an anti-war spirit animated the early Memorial. In doing so, he goes too far. He argues anachronistically that the Memorial, conceived in 1916-19 and opened 1922, was in touch with a feeling of the future:

European art and literature, and even the popular culture in the years between 1929 and 1939, have a distinct and separate mood, as if the inter-war years produced a literary and artistic climate different from what preceded and what followed those harrowing

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111 McKernan, Here is Their Spirit, p.xii.
times. In its planning and in its original concept, the Memorial reflected that mood.\textsuperscript{112}

His suggestion is that the Memorial was an “anti-monumental” institution embodying the sentiment of anti-war literature such as that written by Erich Maria Remarque, Ernest Hemingway and Robert Graves.

There are several fundamental problems with this assertion. Looking at the statement prosaically, it ought to be reiterated that the Memorial was initiated in the 1916-19 period, not in 1929. Secondly, the fact that the Memorial published Australian Chivalry to counteract the perceived evils of books like All Quiet on the Western Front ought to be enough to dispel the claim, while Bean denounced Modernist, anti-war art as “freak art” and useless for commemorative purposes, being an insult to the relatives of the dead.\textsuperscript{111} Furthermore, McKernan is here discussing European culture, and attempting to apply a conclusion about it to Australian culture. As I have indicated, considerable differences existed, and it is inappropriate to simply borrow a European model and apply it to the Australian situation. European developments provide excellent sources of comparison, but commemoration was distinctive in each country.

McKernan’s assertion does, however, provide a useful point of comparison for my own argument. Anti-war literature presented the First World War as the “heroes’ twilight,” as the title of Bernard Bergonzi’s influential study succinctly labelled it.\textsuperscript{114} The key stance of this literature was a reaction against the perception that traditional rhetoric on war had glorified it and exalted the warrior’s power, courage and nobility. Anti-war writers saw this as a monstrous lie, a despicable falsification of war so far at odds with its brutal, dehumanising reality that it had to be opposed, and the truth told. As Ernest Hemingway has his protagonist say in his anti-war novel A Farewell to Arms, “I was always embarrassed by the words sacred, glorious, and sacrifice and the expression in vain... I had seen nothing sacred, and the things that were glorious had

\textsuperscript{112} McKernan, “A Monument to the Dignity of Man,” p.8.

\textsuperscript{113} Peter Pierce, “Is War Very Big? As big as New South Wales?” War and parochialism in Australia in the 1920s and 1930s, (Canberra: School of English, University College, University of New South Wales, 1996); Inglis, Sacred Places, p.342. See also Bean’s evidence to the Public Works Committee hearing, in 1928, Public Works Report, pp.4.

\textsuperscript{114} Bernard Bergonzi, Heroes’ Twilight: A study of the literature of the Great War, 2\textsuperscript{nd} edn. (London: Macmillan, 1980).
no glory and the sacrifices were like the stockyards at Chicago if nothing was done with the meat except to bury it.\footnote{Siegfried Sassoon, \textit{Collected Poems}, 1908-1956, (London: Faber, 1961), p.75.}

Anti-war literature sought a new meaning in war, one based on truth-telling, no matter how brutal or shocking such testimony might be. In fact, shock was one of the main objectives of anti-war writers who had served in the trenches, for they felt that civilians knew nothing of war, and needed to have the blinkers ripped from their eyes. Many felt that if people knew the truth about wars they would be less inclined to start them in the future. This implied a political critique in anti-war literature, and it was indeed a canon dedicated to the most stringent criticism of the conduct of the war’s leaders. A succinct example is Siegfried Sassoon’s “The General,” written in April 1917:

“Good-morning; good morning!” the General said
When we met him last week on our way to the line.
Now the soldiers he smiled at are most of ’em dead,
And we’re cursing his staff for incompetent swine.
“He’s a cheery old card,” grunted Harry to Jack
As they slogged up to Arras with rifle and pack.

But he did for them both with his plan of attack.\footnote{Siegfried Sassoon, \textit{Collected Poems}, 1908-1956, (London: Faber, 1961), p.75.}

Horror, terror, shock, dehumanisation, anger – these were the emotions poured forth in anti-war literature. Irony, as Paul Fussell has shown, was its main literary mode, which meant that it offered the “dynamics of hope abridged” and its protagonists had less power of action than readers did.\footnote{Fussell, \textit{Great War}, p.35.} They were by no means heroes of the traditional type, who, in the “high-mimetic” art form of epic literature, had enjoyed more power of action than their audiences, being superior warriors and thus superior people.\footnote{Fussell, \textit{Great War}, p.35. He refers to the categories formulated by Northrop Frye and expressed in his \textit{Anatomy of Criticism}, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957). The theories are outlined pp.33-4 and discussed at greater length pp. 35-67.} Anti-war protagonists endured appalling conditions, constant terror and sanity-threatening shocks, and the frequent death of comrades, many killed in heartwrenchingly terrible ways. They were often afraid, and when they did kill the enemy they suffered from overwhelming guilt, as Remarque’s Paul Baumer did as he
crouched in a shell-hole with the slowly dying man he had stabbed in a fear-frenzy. Anti-war literature made soldiers into victims, generals and politicians into fools and murderers.

The Australian War Memorial, I will show, was in no way part of this anti-war movement, with its “modern memory” of the war. It was, rather, part of that “traditional” war rhetoric that the anti-war writers railed against. The Memorial presented Australian soldiers as traditional heroes, having considerable power of action on the battlefield and being brave, strong and “terrible in aspect,” yet courteous to women and compassionate towards the weak. It made a sustained argument that they had achieved a remarkable level of military success, and that such success was due to their moral qualities. Both, it argued, were worthy of great praise. It showed selected realities of the war, including death, but did not depict horror, fear, or dehumanisation, nor attack the leaders of the war effort. Rather it supported them, hardly surprising considering that some of them were on its controlling committee.

Tony Bennett represents a consensus of scholars when he argues that the conception of the nation within the Memorial was not militaristic. Styles, following McKernan, declares that Bean “deplored the term ‘trophies’ as connotating victory over the vanquished.” This is true, Bean did, but at the same time, as Chapter Five demonstrates, the Memorial still had a significant number of displays designed not simply to connote victory, but to denote Australian military supremacy. More generally, Australia developed its own brand of militarism from the early 1900s, and by the 1920s and 1930s some of those who had fought the First World War, who saw themselves as an elite in Australia and the guardians of the nation’s future, were in a position to elucidate an official version of Australian national identity. In so doing they based the typical Australian male on an idealised warrior of the AIF. Further, returned men were given certain special civic rights not available to non-returned

119 This powerful passage climaxes in a savage denunciation of war: “‘Comrade,’ I say to the dead man, but I say it calmly, ‘today you, tomorrow me. But if I come out of it, comrade, I will fight against this, that has struck us both down: from you, taken life – and from me – ? Life also. I promise you comrade. It shall never happen again.’” Erich Maria Remarque, *All Quiet on the Western Front*, (London: Grenada, [1929] 1977), pp.148-9. The whole incident is to be found pp.138-51.

120 Bennett, *Birth of the Museum*, p.139.

121 “An Other Place,” p.150. She paraphrases McKernan: “‘Relics’ and ‘trophies’ were, in the early years, used interchangeably, but increasingly Bean discouraged the latter term as inappropriate in suggesting a spirit of the victor over the vanquished.” McKernan, *Here is Their Spirit*, p.45.
citizens — nominally in some cases, literally in others. Preference in the Commonwealth Public Service was dependant upon wartime service, and a host of informal social benefits accrued. This was most definitely not a Prussian-style militarism, where the armed forces exerted political control directly. It was Australian militarism, in which the principal returned soldiers’ organisation had direct access to federal cabinet, and, more ominously, where prominent returned men led right-wing paramilitary groups dedicated to the eradication of political enemies such as communists, some openly boasting of having the will and the means to do so physically if the communists attempted to “to turn Australia into a Bolshevik country.” Military definitions of national identity came to the fore during the wartime and post-war periods, and the Memorial was a major institution purveying such a vision.

This “militarist turn” in Australian society is an underlying theme of this dissertation. Indeed, the Memorial’s displays, which strongly supported returned men’s demands for extra rights due to their actions during the war by offering proof of those actions, played an important role in strengthening the Australian version of militarism. By international standards, Australian militarism was extremely weak, for the military had no power in government whatsoever, nor did returned soldiers’ groups call for war to be used to solve international disputes. That said, when a criminal offender can escape punishment solely due to a distinguished war record, military service has been deemed to have created a relevant difference between people. Australia meets another test for militarism, Herbert Spencer’s “spirit and traditions of military life.” These were self-consciously maintained by returned men’s groups, and are examined in Chapter Two particularly. The Digger-Nationalist

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122 See Chapter Two for a discussion of these points.


125 The origin of this phrase is uncertain, but it was ascribed to Spencer by the 1913 edition of *Webster’s Unabridged Dictionary*. See the electronic version of the dictionary released by Project Gutenberg at www.gutenberg.org/dirs/etext/pgwhi04.txt.
complex controlled vital public platforms for the delineation of national identity, and this identity was based solidly on military virtues, blended with home-grown egalitarianism and plebeian sensibilities. Australian militarism was primarily a cultural, rather than a political, phenomenon. Add to this popular martial nationalism and widespread triumphalism, and it is clear that Australia was a more militarised society in 1928 than 1901.

The final argument I wish to consider concerns the glorification of war. Dutch writer Freek Colombijn argues that one of the Memorial’s two “distinctive features” is “the glorification of war.”126 In contrast to this, Peter Stanley argues that “the Memorial was intended to show not that war was an ennobling thing – as [Bean] may have believed on Gallipoli – but, as he found at Pozieres, that it was a horror which must not be glorified.”127 I would argue that neither party is entirely correct, but also that, for the inter-war period, Colombijn’s assertion, although in fact made about the Memorial of the 1990s, is the more accurate.128 Catherine Styles agrees with Stanley, arguing that “C.E.W. Bean’s vision was for a memorial museum that sanctified the effort of Australia’s military forces in the First World War, but did not serve to legitimise, let alone glorify, the war itself.”129 How this sanctification was also not going to legitimise the war itself is difficult to imagine, and Chapters Three to Six demonstrate that legitimising the war, as well as the AIF’s contribution to the war effort, were fundamental aspects of the Memorial’s mission and operation.

The Memorial did not glorify war per se in the manner in which Prussian apologists such as Heinrich von Treitschke had done in the pre-war period. Bean asserted that his museum would not increase the likelihood of another war through its displays, and this was the case in the vast majority of them, anti-German displays being the principal exceptions. The Memorial certainly never claimed that war should be the first method of settling differences, or should be used pre-emptively for political purposes. It did not glorify war as an abstract notion. What it did do, though,


128 The question of whether the Memorial glorified war in the 1990s is beyond the scope of this dissertation, but Colombijn’s assertion, for which he does not offer evidence, would at first glance appear to require considerable qualification and interrogation.

The memorial glorified soldiers, glorified victories, and, as a corollary, glorified killing. The moral qualities seen in war were also very strongly panegyrised, and formed the moral basis of the "national traditions" the Memorial offered the nation.

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A substantial study of the early Memorial is desirable for several reasons. The Memorial is a major museum, and as the National War Memorial is one of the central symbolic institutions in Australia, embodying a nexus between war and nation which is fundamental to Australian identity. By examining the Memorial’s early life, I seek to cast some light upon the nature of this nexus generally in that period, through the study of its expression in a vital agency.

Studying the Memorial also tells us more about the beliefs of the Digger-Nationalist commemorative complex, a dominant group in Australian society who held federal political power and commemorative control in the period of this dissertation. Indeed, the Memorial has always been under the control of right-wing political groups and organisations, from the Nationalists and the RSSILA of 1922 to the Liberal-National Coalition and the Returned and Services League (RSL) in 2004. The groups who control the Memorial are jealous in guarding their hegemony, as Stuart Macintyre points out in The History Wars. Part of the reason for the zealousness with which this guardianship is undertaken is the belief of those involved that the conservatives in Australia are the true standard-bearers of nationalism, the only group who can be trusted with the nation’s future. This dissertation examines one of this group’s main institutions, and seeks to highlight the lessons it taught its fellow citizens about ideal character, beliefs and actions. In short, it follows the Memorial’s ideal citizen, and sees in him the ideal citizen of a powerful segment of Australian society.

The dissertation represents a reassessment of the Memorial with its displays in the central position. The first three chapters provide context for the final three, which analyse the displays directly. Chapter One explores the images, ideas, and practices of the martial nationalist theories prevailing in the pre-war period in Europe. It then traces the influences of these in Australia, including the local adoptions made by

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Australians. Particularly important here were the ideas that success in war proved the nation’s mettle, that a nation was defined by its great battles and soldiers to a greater degree than any other element of its life, and that military service was glorious if it was done in the nation’s name. The time period is c.1890 to 1918, and includes a brief examination of the early development of Australian national reactions to the war.

Chapter Two examines public memories of the war in Australia 1916-39, particularly in the 1920s. This covers the political factors affecting commemoration as well as tackling commemoration proper, concentrating on expressions of triumphalism. Other elements of commemoration have been the focus of studies by Inglis, Dameusi, Luckins and Thomson, among others. The chapter outlines the contest for domination of Australian public remembrance between the “two cultures” of “modern memory” and “tradition,” and highlights the importance of formal political control to this contest. Right-wing forces, championing tradition, obtained dominance in formal politics and were able to use this to promote their visions of the past. The Memorial was a direct result of such formal political control.

Chapter Three explores Bean’s objectives for the Memorial, and how these were shaped by his upbringing in an Anglo-Australian, Imperially-loyal milieu, and by his war experiences, from which he developed a deep respect and admiration of the AIF verging on hero-worship, and an unshakeable desire to tell their stories. His objectives for the Memorial were, in brief, the strongly “traditional” ones of praising the men of the AIF in the strongest terms, protecting and enhancing their reputation, especially their fighting reputation; telling military stories that would instil a public-minded nationalist “spirit” into the institution’s visitors and would form the basis of a “true” national history, one based on martial success as European ones were; and, as much as it was consistent with the first two goals, the “modern memory” goal of educating the Australian public as to the real conditions of the fighting in Gallipoli, France and Palestine. This latter goal was important, and helps show that traditional war rhetoric was undergoing significant change during the inter-war period, as it shed its more outrageous glorificatory elements.

Chapter Four begins three chapters of analysis of the Memorial’s displays which are the core of the dissertation, exploring the Memorial’s contributions to the Anzac Legend. It examines the war narrative offered by the Memorial, and the moral qualities of the troops which were integrated into it. This narrative showed the Australians triumphing over difficult conditions and powerful enemies, in the process
revealing a number of martial virtues, such as ferocity, determination and resourcefulness, which enjoyed wide circulation in Australia in this period, being claimed as characteristic of Australians. This collective portrait of the Australian troops, which makes up the second half of this chapter, showed a composite of virtues, such as determination, which were seen as typical of Britons and as showing the Australian “racial” heritage, and those other virtues such as resource, as well as humour, which were seen as home-grown, particularly being seen as “bush” virtues.

Chapter Five examines the manner in which the Memorial attempted to prove Australian military supremacy, a textbook martial nationalist notion which also supported the “the central element [of the Anzac Legend].” Some of these representations featured graphic triumphalism and “a spirit of the victor over the vanquished.” This was the apotheosis of glorification in the Memorial during the inter-war period.

Finally, Chapter Six then explores the “national” interpretation of such “truths” of war as death, defeat and wounds. Here the Memorial’s nationalism was most clearly seen, and as was the desire of its creators to honour the dead through depicting them as heroic, triumphal warriors. Whilst acknowledged with varying levels of realism and directness, these were ordeals which, the Memorial claimed, the Australians had passed through victoriously, and the awe and reverence which Bean hoped to invoke in audiences were greatly enhanced by these representations. At the same time, sadness and irony, two anti-war notions, were seen in these displays.

As this dissertation is undertaking a different type of investigation, a note about sources is necessary. The most important potential problem in assessing the displays is the relatively small number of labels that have survived from the huge number written. However, the number which do survive is still considerable, and is sufficient to gauge their typical style and content. Further, labels for the dioramas, or “picture models,” considered by many including Bean to be vital elements of the Memorial, survive intact. So too do the labels of the photographic exhibition. Bean’s guidebooks, in which he selected those displays he felt were most interesting, and which were widely used, are also extant. The layout of the museums is easily discernible, and the contents of many display cases is known. Thus, the material which exists still offers a rich insight into the Memorial’s displays, and the institution’s master narrative of the Australian overseas war experience can be
completely reconstructed. In addition to these sources, the folio book of artwork, *Australian Chivalry*, strongly informs the dissertation. ¹³¹ This is because it was published with a deliberate rhetorical intent – to counteract a perceived debased image of Australian and other soldiers being espoused in anti-war books.¹³² In the book’s preface, Treloar made considerable claims for it:

“Great nations,” said Ruskin, “write their autobiographies in three manuscripts – the book of their deeds, the book of their words, and the book of their art.” In this record of a vital chapter in Australian history, the first and third of these “manuscripts” are combined.¹³³

The book’s extremely long labels were the Memorial’s last word in the inter-war period on the major battles fought by the Australians, and probably also the labels for the paintings in the museum itself.

In addition, many of the representations were unchanged for the whole period of the early Memorial. The guides had large sections of identical text, and the photographic exhibition from Melbourne was expanded, but little changed, when it moved to Sydney, where it remained, without alteration, until 1935. Of the 174 photographs displayed in Melbourne, 163, or 94%, were also displayed in Sydney, with identical captions.

A masculinist logic and doctrine make up a consistent undercurrent throughout this dissertation. The history created for Australia during the war was perceived to have been achieved by men, for waging war was their sole province. This implied that true citizenship – the deepest, most spiritual connection with the nation – was brought upon by military service, and thus open almost exclusively to men in this period.¹³⁴ Women, who had received nominal equal political rights, including the right to vote, in 1902, were principally cast in traditional non-participant roles during the war, and post-war commemoration reinforced the division. Despite the many advances made

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¹³² Pierce, “Is War Very Big?”

¹³³ Treloar (ed.), *Australian Chivalry*. Preface.

¹³⁴ Nurses were often honoured in early post-war commemoration, but there was never a suggestion of true equality when it came to turning service into a political mandate. Returned nurses had no significant voice in the “national” side of the returned soldiers’ advocacy work.
during the war in women’s workforce participation, which saw women performing “war work,” and the enormous amount of voluntary labour undertaken by women, as well as the participation of nurses on active service, only the latter was considered sufficiently special to be mentioned by commemorative speakers and writers. Apart from this small acknowledgement, women’s participation in the war was generally ignored by commemorative agencies, including the Memorial. The Memorial was dedicated to the overseas war experience, so by definition it excluded all women but those nurses with the AIF. This masculinist reaction, privileging men’s contribution to the nation, was a response to “First Wave” feminism. It can be read as an assertion that despite women’s newfound political equality, men retained their prime position in society, although such a hypothesis requires investigation.

A number of subjects offer themselves for further study. Firstly, these include the Memorial’s role as a military technology museum. Secondly, the return of some objects to mainstream military use during the Second World War, something that also happened to some trophy guns, is, from a museological perspective, an interesting development, for it is unusual for museum objects, once they have crossed the portal of the museum and thus become in Tony Bennett’s phrase “facsimiles of themselves,” to be returned to their original use.\(^\text{135}\) Also promising is the treatment of the enemy within the Memorial, which, beyond a brief, representative survey, was eliminated from the dissertation due to lack of space, as was an assessment of the treatment of individuals, especially leaders. As Bean was always pre-occupied with leadership, and had a preference for “fighting” leaders, such analysis is appealing. Also interesting would be a detailed analysis of the Memorial’s art collection, including a critical reading of the entire art collection on display in 1922-35. However, as I do not pretend to be an art historian, this task, which has been undertaken in part by Ann Grey and others, awaits its author. Finally, the relationship between the Memorial and the RSSILA would be a fruitful subject for detailed analysis.

Finally, in this dissertation I have sought primarily to understand the stories surrounding the AIF’s experiences rather than those experiences themselves, examining the latter only in contrast to the former. I seek not to criticise actions in France or at Gallipoli, but those of politicians, writers, speakers and display-makers in Australia in the 1920s. Other scholars have taken up the question of whether the

\(^\text{135}\) Bennett, \textit{Birth of the Museum}, p.129.
Australians really were as magnificent a fighting force as Bean and his allies claimed they were, and they have concluded, as Bean did, that “at any rate towards the end of
the war,” they were indeed a formidable force, both in France and in Palestine.\textsuperscript{136} I
accept this judgment, which my own research has confirmed. I am not critical of, nor
do I systematically explore in this dissertation, the actions and character of the AIF
from the point of view of establishing empirical “facts.” Rather I am critical of the
political use of the past by Hughes and many others, in which the actions, and the
deaths, of ordinary Australians were arrayed against other Australians as weapons in a
rhetorical battle. Alistair Thomson affirms that some returned soldiers stayed away
from Anzac Day rituals in the early inter-war years because they felt the rituals were
being used to glorify war, and for political purposes with which they did not agree,
and theirs is a position with which I have a degree of sympathy.\textsuperscript{137}

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{sydney_exhibition.jpg}
\caption{Entry, Sydney Exhibition.}
\label{fig:sydney_exhibition}
\end{figure}

\textit{Source: Australian War Memorial Collections Database. cas.awm.gov.au. Photograph P01936.001}

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\textsuperscript{137} Thomson, \textit{Anzac Memories}, pp.125-7.
\end{flushright}
Arrangement of

*Australian War Museum*

The visitor will see the War Museum to the best advantage if, upon entering, he turns to the right and inspects in turn the courts around the outside walls of the Main Hall, then the cases in the centre, and finally the Aeroplane Hall. The route he will thus follow is indicated by arrows on this plan.

Figure 4: Layout, Sydney Exhibition, 1925-8.
Source: Australian War Memorial Architectural Plans, Drawer 2 Folder 3.
Chapter 1: The Rise of Martial Nationalism in Australia, c.1870-1920

Figure 5: Postcard, Australia, 1917: “The Battle of Polygon Wood: From original drawing by A. Pearse, war artist.” Source: Australian War Memorial Collections Database. cas.awm.gov.au. Photograph H00563.

To set the scene for the arguments and contentions advanced in this dissertation, it is necessary to investigate firstly the pertinent formative traditions upon whose basis the Memorial was conceptualised and predicated, and secondly the contemporary Australian reactions to these traditions and to the First World War in this context. The first of these tasks can be divided into two parts: an outline of the cultural roots of the Memorial’s commemoration, which lay in European martial traditions of great antiquity, especially as they had been interpreted by late-nineteenth-century nationalists in Britain, Germany, France and elsewhere, and an exploration of home-grown Australian expressions of these traditions. The latter featured yearnings for a perceived moral cleansing and revitalisation brought on by war, and for the possible creation of a nation as an emotional entity through the same agency.

The second element is focused upon Australian nationalist responses to the First World War during the conflict itself. These included celebration of Australian military success in the nation’s name, beginning with the storming of the cliffs at Gallipoli on 25 April 1915 and progressing throughout the war. The effects of censorship were such that even battles now known to have been terrible failures were celebrated as magnificent victories. During the war, the Anzac Legend was
established, a national myth strongly influenced in origin and content by the pre-war European traditions examined in subsequent pages of the chapter, and based upon the assertion that Australians were superior soldiers. Testifying to the influence of these traditions, both victory and sacrifice were seen as necessary for the satisfactory creation of a nation in an emotional, so-called “spiritual,” sense. These were the nationalist influences upon Australian commemoration which went a long way toward shaping its typical expressions, from Anzac Day speeches to the Memorial’s displays, as the following chapters explore.

Late-nineteenth-century Europe saw the rise of a decidedly “martial” nationalism. The development had several strands to it. Firstly, it was felt that military action created “nations.” This belief was given powerful support by a number of notable cases, particularly Germany and Italy, in which wars had indeed provided that theoretical nationalist ideal – a State for the nation. For other nationalists, military service was sufficient to create a “national sentiment,” and for nationalists in established political entities, no longer needing to concern themselves with obtaining political control of a State, the establishment of a “national sentiment” of which they

1 The definition of “nation” has proved difficult to pin down since it first appeared in the eighteenth century. Here, by “nation” I mean nation-state, that is, both the “nation” conceived as a group of people who have an emotional bond, referred to in many cases by its adherents as a “spiritual” bond, and the “nation” conceived as a political entity in control of its affairs. That is, I am referring throughout to groups who had control of a political State, rather than those who were yet to obtain it, such as the Poles and the Czechs. Many of the points could apply to them equally well, but there are technical and theoretical issues which I do not wish to enter into here involved in the distinction between the two kinds of “nations,” those with or those without control of a political entity. I also do not wish to be delayed by the fact that Australia did not truly have control of its own affairs in this period, being yoked firmly to British Imperial foreign policy, for instance. For the vast majority of Australians, the ethnic British “blood tie” was more important than their lack of power over foreign policy. They were part of a larger “nation” based on British heritage. See Douglas Cole, “The Crimson Thread of Kinship: Ethnic Ideas in Australia 1870-1914,” Historical Studies, 14,56 (1971), pp.515-25. Cole argues convincingly that Australian national identity at this time was “pan-Anglo-Saxon” nationalism, based on the British “race.” The literature on nationalism is vast; some important works, on which the following discussion is partially based, include Carlton J.H. Hayes, Nationalism: A religion, (New York: Macmillan, 1960); Ernest Gellner, Nations and Nationalism, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983); E.J. Hobsbawm, Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Myth, programme, reality. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities: Reflections on the origins and growth of nationalism, rev. edn, (London: Verso, 1991); Elie Kedourie, Nationalism, 4th edn, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993); John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (eds), Nationalism, Oxford Readers, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994); Anthony D. Smith, Myths and Memories of the Nation, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

2 The theoretical ideal of nationalism was that “the political and national unit should be congruent.” Gellner, Nations and Nationalism, p.1. The “political unit” could take on various forms – republican, monarchical – but the “national unit” was generally held in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to be an ethnically-based group of people, “historically constituted” (in Joseph Stalin’s influential phraseology) and economically integrated, sharing a common language and worldview. See Clive Christie, Race and Nation: A reader, (London: Taurus, 1998), pp.3-72; Anthony D. Smith, The Ethnic Origins of Nations, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986).
approved was the key question. The people had to be made to feel part of a group larger than their immediate district or extended family, nationalists felt, and give that group their ultimate loyalty. Under the influence of social Darwinism, another strand of this thinking saw war as good for an established nation, cleansing it of the perceived ills of peace. Military service was also seen as good for the individual citizen, imbuing them with a sense of duty. In addition, active service – the defence of the nation, as it was perceived – was considered the greatest act a citizen could perform in his [sic] life. In addition, it was felt that war proved the nation’s mettle, and thus the greater the enemies overcome, the greater the nation. Ultimately, a nation was defined by its great battles and the great leaders who had fought them – national history was first and foremost the history of a nation’s wars. As all classes were perceived to strive together in a truly national war, all classes were able to see themselves in the vision of the triumphal nation, still usually personified in the late nineteenth century by its great leaders, with supplementary praise flowing to the ordinary soldier.

In Australia, these ideas, which I have dubbed “martial nationalism,” were widely accepted and expressed, at the same time being adapted to local conditions. Conscription was felt by some to be a positive force, while many nationalists looked forward to a future war that would cleanse the nation, prove its virility and its mettle, and simultaneously provide it with a history. During the First World War, many nationalists announced that the war had indeed brought about many of these martial nationalist ideals. Firstly, it was claimed alternatively to be cleansing or to have already cleansed the nation, saving it from moral and physical decay. Secondly, the actions of Australian soldiers were claimed to have created the nation “as an emotional and spiritual entity.” Military service was claimed to be glorious, a soldier’s death heroic. These same actions were claimed to have proved the nation’s mettle and to have provided it with a history which might compete with existing heroic European histories, one based on victories. A practice of trophy-taking and display, prominent in Europe during the nineteenth century, was adopted, with objects


taken from vanquished enemies displayed to glorify national strength, the national moral fibre that had been proved.

Since I argue and demonstrate that the Memorial was part of the Australian commemorative mainstream which grew out of, adopted, and deliberately referred to the traditions of martial nationalism, especially those of Britain, an exploration of some of its major images and ideas is necessary. In addition, as Chapters Four to Six demonstrate, the Memorial deliberately harked back to events in the British past, and referred to British military and martial nationalist traditions. Thus, again, these traditions require examination.

While the decision to focus this chapter on the European roots of Australian commemoration has meant that the Memorial figures less prominently in the discussion at this point, the contextualisation is felt to be essential in establishing points of reference for subsequent chapters, thus obviating the need for extrapolation in Chapters Four to Six.

A number of cultural and political developments led to this “martial” nationalism. The 1870-1914 period of European history saw greatly increased international economic competition, an increasingly complex and fragile system of military alliances, the rise of socialism to contest the political and economic power of the capitalists, and the hegemony of the pseudo-scientific theories of social Darwinism, which were especially important to martial nationalism. It was also the period of High Imperialism, when the national aspirations, fears and self-images of the British and the Germans, in particular, were evident in debates surrounding the acquisition and expansion of empires. Social Darwinist theories asserted that competition was the normal pattern of international relations; nations, equated with “races,” and through them with species in nature, were seen as being in a constant struggle for survival.6

6 German nationalists felt slighted because their nation, great in cultural accomplishments, as evidenced by the likes of Goethe and Beethoven, had no Empire. Their striving for prestige was accompanied by a naval building programme which, along with a profound and every-increasing economic rivalry, led to “the Anglo-German Antagonism,” which was a major contributing factor to the First World War. Paul M. Kennedy. The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism, 1860-1914, (London: Allen & Unwin, 1980).

7 See Mike Hawkins, Social Darwinism in European and American Thought 1860-1945: Nature as model and nature as threat, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp.184-215. For a discussion of social Darwinism as it influenced Britain, including a general examination of the subject,
Superior races, marked out as such through superior racial “characteristics” which assisted their survival, would triumph over those with inferior qualities, who would go under. Thus, war was the greatest “test” of a nation’s mettle, for it faced extinction if defeated. Moreover, qualities were inherited and thus were inherent, but were also thought able to improve or decline.

War had a vital role in the improvement of “races,” also, according to German nationalists such as Heinrich von Treitschke and Friedrich von Bernhardi. In his Germany and the Next War, Bernhardi put forth a reasoned case that war was a positive influence on the nation, because it led naturally to people acting in a communal way, placing the benefit of their fellow citizens to the fore, while at the same time, in a thoroughly social Darwinist manner, it separated the wheat from the chaff:

All petty private interests shrink into insignificance before the grave decision which a war involves. The common danger unites all in a common effort, and the man who shirks this duty to the community is deservedly spurned. This union contains a liberating power which produces happy and permanent results in the national life. We need only recall the uniting power of the War of Liberation or the Franco-German War and their historical consequences. The brutal incidents inseparable from every war vanish completely before the idealism of the main result. All the sham reputations which a long spell of peace undoubtedly fosters are unmasked. Great personalities take their proper place; strength, truth, and honour come to the front and are put into play. “A thousand touching traits testify to the sacred power of the love which a righteous war awakes in noble nations.”

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8 Herbert Spencer, for example, argued that “the killing off of relatively feeble tribes, or tribes relatively wanting in endurance, or courage, or sagacity, or power of cooperation, must have tended ever to maintain, and occasionally to increase, the amounts of life-preserving powers possessed by man.” Study of Sociology (1873), quoted in Hawkins, Social Darwinism, p.86.

9 Spencer argued that “warfare among men, like warfare among animals, has had a large share in raising their organisation to a higher stage.” Study of Sociology (1873), quoted in Hawkins, Social Darwinism, p.86.

10 Friedrich von Bernhardi, Germany and the Next War, Allen H. Bowes (trans.), (London: Arnold, 1913), p.20. The quote came from Heinrich von Treitschke’s History of Germany in the Nineteenth Century (1879-94). Bernhardi continued: “Frederick the Great recognised the ennobling effect of war. ‘War,’ he said, ‘opens the most fruitful field to all virtues, for at every moment constancy, pity, magnanimity, heroism, and mercy, shine forth in it; every moment offers an opportunity to exercise one of these virtues.’” On the glorification of war by German intellectuals, see Michael Howard, “Prussia in European History,” in The Lessons of History, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), pp.49-62.
In Bernhardi’s view, as in that of Frederick the Great, war was really a magnifying force for humankind. Its “brutal incidents” would “vanish completely” before the glory of this magnification, which the fortunate nation, saved from the shams of peace, would be experiencing in its wake.

Despite the invective later heaped upon German nationalist thinkers by Australians during the war, the notion that war was good for a nation was extremely popular in Australia before and during the war. More importantly, the Memorial’s principal message was strikingly similar to Bernhardi’s, although the Memorial also frankly acknowledged the cost of war in a manner Bernhardi did not. Pre-war literature included the work of W.H. Fitchett, an Australian, whose popular volume titled Deeds That Won the Empire: historic battle scenes was first published in 1894. Fitchett made it clear that he wrote to promote “emotional” nation-building, building up a “sentiment” through tales of heroic triumph. In so doing, he mirrored some of the German nationalists’ positive attitudes towards warfare:

The tales here are told, not to glorify war, but to nourish patriotism. They represent an effort to renew in popular memory the great traditions of the Imperial race to which we belong.

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The history of the Empire of which we are subjects – the story of the struggles and sufferings by which it has been built up – is the best legacy which the past has bequeathed us. But it is a treasure strangely neglected.... There is real danger that for the average youth the great names of British story may become meaningless sounds, that his imagination will take no colour from the rich and deep tints of history. And what a pallid, cold-blooded citizenship that must produce!

War belongs, no doubt, to an imperfect stage of society; it has a side of pure brutality. But it is not all brutal. Wordsworth’s daring line about “God’s most perfect instrument” has a great truth behind it. What examples are to be found in the tales here retold, not merely of heroic daring, but of even finer qualities – of heroic fortitude which dreads dishonour more than it fears death; of the patriotism that makes love of the Fatherland a passion. These are the elements of robust citizenship. They represent some, at least, of the qualities by which the Empire, in a sterner time than ours, was won, and by which, even in these ease-loving days, it must be maintained.¹⁴

What Bernhardi was describing as an ideal Fitchett was actively seeking to perpetuate, to immortalise. He, in common with a large number of nationalist activists in numerous countries, felt driven to publicly glorify his nation in the hope that his fellow citizens would become fired with an emotional attachment to the complex of virtues, including courage, determination, devotion to duty and nobility, which Fitchett’s stories offered as characteristic of the “British.” Fitchett was very popular in Australia, at least among the middle classes. His books (there were others such as

¹⁴ W.H. Fitchett, Deeds That Won the Empire: Historic battle scenes, (London: Bell, 1905), Preface. The line from Wordsworth seems almost certainly a corruption of one from the poet’s 1816 poem, “Ode: The morning of the day appointed for a general thanksgiving.” The alteration in connotation is marked:

For Thou art angry with thine enemies!
   For these, and for our errors,
   And sins that point their terrors,
We bow our heads before Thee, and we laud
   And magnify thy name, Almighty God!
   But thy most dreaded instrument,
   In working out a pure intent;
Is Man – arrayed for mutual slaughter.

Yea, Carnage is thy daughter!

Fights for the Flag) ran into many editions and were widely given out as school prizes.\(^{15}\)

The Memorial shared some of Fitchett’s objectives for nationalist education; for instance, it was principally concerned with ensuring that the “great” names of Australian history were not forgotten, and, through the inspiration of tales about these Australians, sought to create strong, robust citizenship. Furthermore, the positive vision of war which Fitchett expressed was mirrored in the Memorial, as was Fitchett’s focus on moral virtues. This congruence is illustrated by a description of Brigadier General Harold Edward “Pompey” Elliott which appeared in the Memorial’s Canberra Guide, as late as 1967, bearing a striking resemblance to Fitchett’s description of General James Wolfe, the conqueror of Quebec. Of Wolfe, Fitchett wrote in exuberant terms:

In warlike genius he was on land as Nelson was on sea, chivalrous, fiery, intense. A “magnetic” man with a strange gift of impressing himself on the imagination of his soldiers, and of so penetrating the whole force he commanded with his own spirit that in his hands it became a terrible and almost resistless instrument of war.\(^{16}\)

This may be compared to the description of Elliott in the 1967 Guide to Australian War Memorial: “His staunchness and vehemence, and his power of instilling those qualities into his troops, turned his brigade into a magnificently effective instrument.”\(^{17}\) The connection speaks of a quite deliberate harking back to past British military heroes.

Some nationalists went further than Fitchett. In 1896 poet Henry Lawson published a poem titled “The Star of Australasia,” which expressed in the clearest of terms that war was far better for the nation than peace:

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A nation's born where the shells fall fast, or its lease of life renewed.
We in part atone for the ghoulish strife,
and the crimes of the peace we boast.
And the better part of a people's life in the storm comes uppermost. 18

It also included numerous ideas that were later to form fundamental elements of the Australian “national” reactions to the First World War, such as the inherent military ability of the larrikin and the notion that there were no classes in war. Lawson presented a pure martial nationalist vision of a nation united in a sweet war, which would rid it of unspecified peacetime ills, and in which great deeds would be done for the honour of doing them. War was the stuff of life, for in this war the warriors would live more vigorously than was the case in the turgid days of peace:

The soul of the world they will feel and see
in the chase and the grim retreat –
They'll know the glory of victory – and the grandeur of defeat. 19

The romanticism of Lawson’s vision of war is striking, for his is not a vision of medieval knights: he sees the shells “fall fast.” Lawson frankly and clearly glorified war, mirroring the extreme statements of Bernhardi and Treitschke, seeing the nation enter a new era of glory:

And southern nation and southern state, aroused from their dream of ease,
Must sign in the Book of Eternal Fate their stormy histories. 20

For Lawson, national history could only truly begin in war. Only in conflict would it sign the Book of Eternal Fate and join the mainstream of the historical nations of the world. This idea survived the outbreak of the war, and in 1916 the Prime Minister, W.M. Hughes, declared that “war has saved us from moral and physical degeneracy.” 21 Hughes felt that, just as Bernhardi had advocated and Lawson had predicted, the war had cleansed the nation.

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19 Lawson, “The Star of Australasia,” p.120.


This was the most extreme Australian nationalist reaction to war, but its positivity was typical. For instance, school children were taught songs in which defending the Empire was asserted as the duty of every white Australian:

Thy dormant days are ended,  
Thy hours of rest are run; 
Now rouse thee for a nation’s work,  
And keep the Empire won! 
Beneath thy bright blue skies,  
Australia Fair, arise!  

Australian nationalists were aware of the fact that war had, indeed, created a sense of solidarity which contemporaries acknowledged, as Bernhardi had asserted. Australians were certainly conscious of the development, and in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries Australian nation-builders searched for a military event that might bring together the Australian nation. For some, any military participation was sufficient. For example, in 1885 the offer of a contingent for the Sudan campaign had prompted one Australian politician to claim that the offer had “precipitated Australia, in one short week, from a geographical expression to a nation.” This optimistic assertion, however, came to nought, for the Sudan campaign was unpopular in Australia and the Australian contingent did very little, but nationalists tried again during the Boer War. However, once again there was insufficient public interest in what was an increasingly distasteful imperial conflict, which W.M. Hughes accused of

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22 Commonwealth School Paper, 1 June 1910, quoted in White, Inventing Australia, p.126.

23 Indeed, Bernhardi gave two examples. The other was equally adamant: “Even defeat may bear a rich harvest. It often, indeed, passes an irrevocable sentence on weakness and misery, but often, too, it leads to a healthy revival, and lays the foundation of a new and vigorous constitution. ‘I recognize in the effect of war upon national character,’ said Wilhelm von Humboldt, one of the most salutary elements in the moulding of the human race.’” Friedrich von Bernhardi, Germany and the Next War, p.20.

24 Victorian Premier James Service quoted in Buxton, “1870-90,” p.200. Buxton also quotes James Munro, who served as Victorian Premier from 1890 to 1892, denouncing the Sudan involvement in the strongest of terms, referring to it as a “mean, miserable, contemptible fight.”

25 Buxton also quotes James Munro, who served as Victorian Premier from 1890 to 1892, denouncing the Sudan involvement in the strongest of terms, referring to it as a “mean, miserable, contemptible fight.” Buxton, “1870-90,” p.200. See also Malcolm Saunders, Britain, the Australian Colonies and the Sudan Campaigns of 1884-5, (Armidale: University of New England Press, 1985); Grey, Military History, pp.45-8. Grey states that “the derision and parsimony with which they were received on their return was in marked contrast to the scenes which had heralded their dispatch.” Grey, Military History, p.46.
being cowardly and contemptible. Martial fulfilment would have to wait on a greater
war and a greater Australian effort.

In the meantime, earnest preparations were undertaken in Australia for a
possible race war. Many Australians perceived threats from Asian “hordes” coveting
Australian space and natural resources. Compounding this was the determination of
almost all Australians to exclude immigrants from Asia, Africa and Southern Europe,
which was thought to add an insult to greed and an undefined natural hostility as
motivations for an attack from Asia. Australia thus needed protection, it was felt.
With Japan’s defeat of Russia in 1905, arriving on the heels of the recall of some of
the Royal Navy ships from the Australian station in reaction to the increasing threat
posed by the German naval building programme, Australians felt vulnerable. To set up
the rudiments of a defence of the continent they had seized, militarists such as ALP
politician W.M. Hughes envisioned a nation in arms: “The whole population (male)
ought to be trained to arms…. I take it this country does not want an offensive army, but
an armed people who can shoot straight.” Hughes, at least, did not envision Australia
as a pacifist nation, but as one which contested aggressively with others in the struggle
for survival which was life. As Manning Clark observed, “as a believer in the survival of
the fittest, Hughes now accepted blood sacrifice as a rite in which man gained an insight
into the meaning of life.” Convinced by Hughes and other advocates, early Australian
governments set up a scheme of peacetime conscription.

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Conscription, to its supporters, would both defend the nation's geographic and political integrity and improve it morally through the disciplining of bodies and minds.\(^3\) The principle behind compulsory military service was that all (male) citizens, without distinction of wealth or rank, should bear arms in national defence, an idea originating in the French Revolution.\(^3\) The idea was still popular in the early twentieth century, with the Council of French Deputies providing a seminal example of this kind of thinking in 1905, when its report announcing increased conscription rates argued that conscription was a positive moral force, and a sign of a healthy democracy.\(^3\)

John Keegan, however, also points out that conscription had the effect of “militarising” society. One of the most complete examples of this occurred in Germany, Keegan argues, for unlike its French counterpart, the German State did not give conscripts political rights in return for compulsory service. Rather, he observes, it offered “the exhilarations of nationalism.”\(^3\)

In Britain, there was no tradition of peace-time conscription, but in the early twentieth century there was a growing conviction among members of the ruling classes that national service was beneficial for the nation. The Chichele Professor of the History of War at Oxford University, Spenser Wilkinson, wrote in 1909 that an individual reached his full potential in service to his State: “To make a citizen a soldier is to give him that sense of duty to the country and that consciousness of doing it which, if spread through the whole population, will convert it into what is required—a nation.” Wilkinson’s pronouncement extended the image of the army as defenders of the people, following the French in his belief in the ennobling, indeed the

\(^3\) There were related developments in youth education, involving the disciplining of younger Australians through uniformed youth groups and “public” schools. See Martin Crotty, Making the Australian Male: Middle-class masculinity 1870-1920, (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2001); Bryan Jamison, “A Great Social Force Making for Order and Morality:” An analysis of institutions for national recreation in late Victorian and Edwardian Brisbane, PhD dissertation, University of Queensland, 2002.

\(^3\) Thomson, Europe Since Napoleon, p.42; John Keegan, A History of Warfare, (New York: Vintage, 1994), pp.233-4, 347-9. The fact that, in the nineteenth century, men had a monopoly on this ultimate national service, as well as on the right to vote, was no coincidence, with the former helping to justify the latter.

\(^3\) Keegan, A History of Warfare, p.358.

\(^3\) Keegan, A History of Warfare, p.234.

\(^3\) From Britain at Bay (1909), p.191, quoted in Howard, The Causes of Wars, p.24. Wilkinson was attempting to create a “Nation in Arms,” according to Howard, and this text was a part of his campaign.
nation-building, effects of military service. In Australia, both ideas appeared persuasive to different parties, as the peacetime militia was created in the early years of the twentieth century, although the actual form of the military system adopted was based upon the Swiss model. Australia began to take a “militarist turn” in the first decade of the twentieth century, according to Keegan’s formula that conscription militarises society, and from the beginning of peacetime conscription those undertaking it were praised in nationalist newspapers such as the Adelaide Observer as “Our Defenders.” Compared to the German example, this militarisation was very weak, but it had begun. These ideas would coalesce during the First World War and in its commemoration.

Two martial nationalist notions were of most importance to Australian commemoration and the Memorial. The first was the belief that participation, and especially successful participation, in war proved the nation’s mettle, providing it with international respect and status. The second was that a nation was defined by its great battles and personified by the leaders who fought them. Both of these notions were vital to the Memorial, which transformed each one, especially the latter, democratising it radically. The nation was still defined by its great battles, but it was personified in the ordinary soldier. The social Darwinist idea that nations, or “races” as they were often known, were competitive, led to national, or “racial,” worth being measured in competitive military terms by performance on the battlefield. As several scholars have shown, Bean agreed, and when the Memorial came to depict the AIF’s experience of the First World War, the difficulties faced, the “test,” would be strongly and frankly shown. A third martial nationalist idea was that war provided a nation with maturity,


38 White, Inventing Australia, p.125.

39 As Michael Howard asserts, “France was Marengo, Austerlitz and Jena: military triumph set the seal on the new-found national consciousness. Britain was Trafalgar – but it had been a nation for four hundred years, since those earlier battles Crecy and Agincourt. Russia was the triumph of 1812. Germany was Gravelotte and Sedan. Italy was Garibaldi and the Thousand (and there remained perhaps a frustrated sense among the Italians of the Giolitti period that it had all been too easy, that there had not been enough fighting, that Italy had not fully proved herself).” Howard, “War and the Nation State,” pp.26-7.


41 On Bean, see for example Inglis, Bean, p.23 and Williams, Anzacs, the Media, pp.22-4.
which Australia was thought by many to lack. For instance, The Bulletin criticised the new flag, when it was adopted, as being that of an immature nation, not one thing nor the other. Successful participation in a serious conflict would overcome the perceived lack of artistic and literary achievement in Australia, and provide a maturity which otherwise would take a long period to establish, it was felt.

At the turn of the twentieth century, during the Boer War, fears of degeneration brought about by a warm climate and through “weakening” social security duelled with optimistic pronouncements that the British race was strongest at its extremities. Overall, optimism predominated in public expressions of the mettle of the Australian “race” (although few were yet sure if they could dare this sobriquet). Thus, in 1902, Justice Owen declared that Australians had true British blood: “Although we have changed our skies we have not changed our strength. We are not degenerating, but are of that old British bull-dog breed...worthy descendents of that noble stock.” However, influenced as they were by social Darwinism, many Australians awaited a “sterner test” of the Southern Briton than chasing the Boer homesteaders around the veldt, with huge material superiority, before they could feel that the Australian national virtue had been proved beyond doubt. In South Africa the lamentable Williamsrust debacle had cast a pall over the entire undertaking, although it was publicly forgotten as soon as possible. Material superiority had not stopped the Boers from dealing savagely with the unprepared, poorly-led and clearly inferior Victorian contingent at Williamsrust. Numbers and war matériel, which eventually did beat the Boers, were seen as suspect advantages, which might allow morally inferior peoples to triumph. Material advantages were not the equal of courage, determination and steadfastness. A greater test was felt to be necessary to prove the national mettle conclusively.

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43 See White, Inventing Australia, pp.63-84.


45 White argues that, in social Darwinist logic, Australian mettle had only been “half proved” by the Boer War. White, Inventing Australia, pp.72-6, 125.


47 In many ways it was this moral superiority that nationalist propagandists who concentrated on war were actually trying to prove. Perhaps as a reaction to the perceived dehumanising effects of the
In considering their national history, Australians were influenced by a large existing corpus of mainly British popular nationalist propaganda. As Michael Howard argues, the national frame allowed those who subscribed to it a “link to the glorious deeds – or the terrible atrocities awaiting revenge – that were performed by others long ago.” In the early twentieth-century Australian case, it was glorious deeds, although it was those of Britons, rather than of Australians, which were celebrated. This was because a perceived racial tie with the British, a “blood bond” which transcended geography, allowed Australians to consider themselves to be, in Alfred Deakin’s famous phrase, “Independent Australian Britons.” Britain had that nationalist ideal, a “rich legacy of remembrances,” and Australians felt entitled to bask in a reflected glory. For example, the New South Wales colonial secretary Henry Parkes declared at the Corowa Federation Conference in 1893 that “the glory, the incomparable beauty of her traditions are all ours as much as if we had been born on British shores. In all respects we are one and the same people.” The Memorial, as Chapter Four investigates, was concerned to a significant degree with educating future Australian generations about the glorious deeds of Australians, locating them within larger British military traditions.

There was, by 1900, already a large body of British popular historical writing and popular literature, particularly juvenile literature, available in Australia which celebrated British strength of arms and a number of moral qualities – martial virtues – which had apparently led to these victories. This was the basis of the “national” burgeoning industrialism, such nationalists tried to emphasise that individual human beings had intrinsic value.

48 White, *Inventing Australia*, p.125; McQueen, *A New Britannia*, p.89.


50 Crowley, “1901-1914,” p.263.


52 The expression was coined by Ernest Renan in his lecture at the Sorbonne University in 1882, “What is a Nation?” The lecture has been anthologised in several places, such as in Christie (ed.), *Race and Nation*, pp. 39-48.

interpretation later applied to the First World War, and was essential to the Anzac Legend. The work of writers of juvenile literature, such as G.A. Henty and Henry Rider Haggard, combined history with didacticism, seeking to entertain young people (primarily boys) while inculcating certain values into them. Henty, for instance, wrote tales of adventure in which young heroes, full of pluck and English moral virtues, win through over foreigners. As C.C. Eldridge points out, his intention was “to teach his readers some history, and inculcate the correct manly values, the moral code of the English gentleman.” In 1884 Henty published *With Clive in India*, in which he described a typical young English hero in terms which would become standard for the description of Australian soldiers by Bean and many others thirty years later:

[Charlie Marryat was] slight of build, but his schoolfellows knew that [his] muscles were as firm and hard as those of any boy in the school. In all sports requiring activity and endurance rather than weight and strength he was always conspicuous. Not one in the school could compete with him in long-distance running, and when he was one of the hares there was little chance for the hounds. He was a capital swimmer and one of the best boxers in the school. He had a reputation for being a leader in every mischievous prank; but he was honourable and manly, would scorn to shelter himself under the semblance of a lie, and was a prime favourite with his masters as well as his schoolfellows.

As Eldridge asserts, the Henty hero “was an abstraction of pluck, physical endurance and honour, the qualities which supposedly had built the British empire.”

The “building” of an Empire had been achieved primarily through military victories. The Seven Years’ War against France in the eighteenth century had secured North America for Britain, while victory over Napoleon had left Britain as the uncontested great power in the world. It was such “achievements” which were the main ingredient of popular nationalist histories written in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Henty set many of his books in Imperial wars, as in the case of Clive above, while Fitchett’s *Deeds That Won the Empire* featured rousing


56 Eldridge, *The Imperial Experience*, p.70.
descriptions of battles from Quebec to Trafalgar. For instance, his chapter on Wolfe's victory at Quebec waxed enthusiastic about the glories of British arms:

The year of 1759 is a golden one in British history. A great French army that threatened Hanover was overthrown at Minden, chiefly by the heroic stupidity of six British regiments, who, mistaking their orders, charged the entire French cavalry in line, and destroyed them... At Quiberon, in the same year, Hawke, amid a tempest, destroyed a mighty fleet that threatened England with invasion; and on the heights of Abraham, Wolfe broke the French power in America.\(^57\)

What was more, Fitchett insisted, this battle had had even greater ramifications, for with it "began the history of the United States."\(^58\) Fitchett was in no doubt that war made history. These glories were the benchmark of a "real" national history in the opinion of martial nationalists in Australia in the pre-war era.

Social Darwinism, and the Imperial issue of ruling other "races," were central concerns of British martial national propaganda. The British were, it was believed, a "ruling race," who had wrested control of huge portions of the Earth through their superior moral virtues. As early as 1878 Benjamin Disraeli had told the House of Lords that "all...communities [within the Empire] agree in recognising the commanding spirit of these islands."\(^59\) For many later imperialists, such as Henty, it was even more important that foreign communities recognised that commanding spirit.\(^60\) The idea of Australians as a "ruling race" was also very popular, and a major influence on Australian martial nationalism and later on commemoration in the immediate post-war period.\(^61\)

The enforcement of the right to rule, ultimately reducible to force of arms, was a major theme of much of this British propaganda. Concern with competition between "races" was increasing by 1892, when Rudyard Kipling, "the laureate of Empire" as


\(^{59}\) Speech to House of Lords, 8 April 1878, quoted in Eldridge, *The Imperial Experience*, p.48.

\(^{60}\) See, for example, the incident in which a young Briton "proves his mettle" by thrashing a treacherous young Boer in Henty's *With Roberts to Pretoria: A tale of the South African War*, (London: Blackie, 1902), pp.51-3.

some would later call him, published his first, extremely popular, work of poetry, *Barrack-room Ballads*. In 1847 Disraeli had argued that “all is race; there is no other truth.” It was the mettle of the “Anglo-Saxon race,” he thought, that had “rendered an island, unknown to the ancients, the arbiter of the world.” Now, with Germany beginning to challenge Britain’s place as “arbiter of the world,” that racial truth had to be backed up, to be proved, by military success, the ability to defeat the other race before it defeated one’s own. This was a significant point. For a nation’s soldiers simply to sacrifice their lives in a good cause, or to survive what the enemy threw at them, was not enough to prove the “race’s” mettle. Victory was required for this.

Social Darwinist understandings of national interactions emphasised, in Herbert Spencer’s famous phrase, “the survival of the fittest.” Spencer linked the destiny of races with political organisation, and his idea was a wellspring of martial nationalism: “In the struggle for existence among societies, the survival of the fittest is the survival of those in which the power of military cooperation is greatest, and military cooperation is the primary kind of cooperation, which prepares the way for other kinds.”

Those races least able to cope with the world would ultimately disappear (in Australia, the prime example of course was thought to be the Aborigines, widely believed at that time to be a “dying race”). Those who failed did so due to their inferior moral qualities, be they indolence, lack of determination, lack of “spirit,” or physical weakness caused by lack of healthy activity.

Worryingly for some Australians, it was seen as quite possible for a group to be seen as having the courage to sacrifice themselves, but to be inferior and possibly doomed nonetheless. Robert MacDonald provides an example of this notion from Kipling’s verse, in which one of his British soldiers praises the courage of “Fuzzy-Wuzzy” – “You’re a pore benighted ‘eathen but a first-class fightin’ man” – whom he conquered regardless of this courage – “Our orders was to break you, an’ of course we

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62 Eldridge, *The Imperial Experience*, p.140.
63 Eldridge, *The Imperial Experience*, p.140.
65 See for example Clark, *The People Make Laws*, pp.103-4, 254, 278.
As MacDonald points out, “Fuzzy-Wuzzy...is ‘a first-class fightin’ man’, but doomed in the face of British superiority, whether of weapons or morale.” Superior technology, while questionable as an advantage over the “Aryan” Boers, was simply more evidence of the vast superiority of the Briton over the “benighted heathen.” The British were superior to the coloured colonial “races,” and the ultimate proof of this was the fact that they won the vast majority of their battles over them — or so nationalist propaganda asserted.

What was created by propagandists such as Henty, Kipling, Fitchett, and a host of others, was a popular nationalist history, based on war. Robert MacDonald sees this history as “a stage on which kings and queens, generals and admirals, made their entrances, conducted their heroics, and exited, winning in each battle more glory for the cause.” By the turn of the twentieth century, repetition had yielded a British popular nationalist history which MacDonald calls “The Island Story.”

It began in the Celtic past, announcing its character in Boudicca, defender of the race against the conquering Romans; it discovered its true ancestry in the Anglo-Saxons, and its first national hero in King Alfred; it absorbed the shock of 1066, and rationalised the Norman invasion as a Good Thing. From then on the course of nationhood seemed obvious, and the narrative had only to touch on the great heroic names to make the emergence of the imperial fact inevitable: Richard the Lionheart, the Black Prince, Henry V, Elizabeth, Hampden, Cromwell, Blake, Marlborough, Wolfe, Clive, Rodney, Pitt, Nelson, Wellington —

Not once or twice in our fair island story
The path of duty was the way to glory.


MacDonald, *The Language of Empire*, p.51.

This term was used by, amongst others, Tennyson, in his “Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington.”

they marched forward together in the grand parade that was itself a confirmation of the triumphant present.\(^{70}\)

The Island Story was extremely influential in Australia, providing heroes to compete with and rhetorically imitate, and most especially, to connect Australian soldiers with through a nationalist lineage. These were some of the "traditions" which the Memorial later argued Australians had added to, as Chapter Four examines.

The main ingredient of the Island Story was victory. The "great heroic names" were all successful military commanders who had achieved notable victories in important conflicts. Henry V, for example, had presided over the Battle of Agincourt, which came to be seen as "the archetypal patriotic victory of the 'few' fighting in a just cause against a foreign foe," and a favourite comparison with Gallipoli for later Australian nationalists.\(^{71}\) The anachronistic rhetorical connection of the modern nation with ancient heroes which the Island Story created was a typical nationalistic strategy which has been much commented upon.\(^{72}\)

In fact, High Imperialist writers often rhetorically linked the perceived military superiority of late-nineteenth or early-twentieth-century Britons with that of supposed warrior forebears. For example, in *King Solomon's Mines* (1885), Rider Haggard described his hero Sir Henry Curtis as being as proficient with a battle axe as his Viking ancestors:

There he stood, the great Dane, for he was nothing else, his hands, his axe, and his armour all red with blood, and none could live before his stroke. Time after time I saw it sweeping down, as

\(^{70}\) MacDonald, *The Language of Empire*, p.51.


| This story shall the good man tell his son:                       |
| And Crispin Crispian will ne'er go by.                           |
| From this day to the end of the world,                           |
| But we in it shall be remembered.                                |

The words attributed to Henry V by Shakespeare could be applied to Anzac Day. As long as Australia is a nation it will be remembered, and rightly so." Sydney Morning Herald, 25 April 1928, p.10.

some great warrior ventured to give him battle, and as he struck he shouted ‘O-hoy! O-hoy!’ like his Berserker forefathers, and the blow went crashing through shield and spear, through head dress, hair and skull.\textsuperscript{73}

It was such jism that had led to the winning of the Empire, as Disraeli had told the House of Lords in 1878: “the Empire was formed by the energy and enterprise of your ancestors.”\textsuperscript{74} This was why the British ruled – they were as unstoppable in combat as their “Berserker forefathers.” This was the richest of historical legacies. Haggard-style bellicosity, in which the blood of fallen enemies confirmed the superiority of the hero, was a characteristic of British martial nationalist propaganda in the 1870-1914 period. When Australians later made their own “Story,” such virile martial power would form a fundamental part of it, also.

By the end of the nineteenth century, national commemoration of war had, in many countries, created heroes beyond the great leaders. As the Arc de Triomphe (1806-36) attests, the victorious leader remained an important subject for commemoration. However, nations created new kinds of praise for victories, because they created new social relations. Particularly in countries such as France, which had a conscript army, nationalism in the nineteenth century brought about what Barbara Ehrenreich has called a “democratisation of glory.”\textsuperscript{75} Armies, made up in medieval or early modern times of mercenaries and members of the lowest socio-economic groups, and consequently having a poor reputation, as George Mosse points out, now consisted of “one’s sons, brothers, or neighbours – respectable citizens of the local or national community.”\textsuperscript{76} Moreover, the wars which they fought following the Revolution were “no longer fought merely on behalf of a king, but for an ideal which encompassed the whole nation under the symbols of the Tricolour and the Marseillaise. The Republic honoured these soldiers; they were its heroes.”\textsuperscript{77} This idea had not been seen since classical Greece, whose commemorative practices were

\textsuperscript{71} H. Rider Haggard, \textit{King Solomon’s Mines}, p.150, quoted in Eldridge, \textit{The Imperial Experience}, p.72.

\textsuperscript{74} Eldridge, \textit{The Imperial Experience}, p.47.

\textsuperscript{75} Ehrenreich, \textit{Blood Rites}, pp.175-93.

\textsuperscript{76} Mosse quotes signs in pre-Revolutionary France as prohibiting “dogs, prostitutes and soldiers” from public places. \textit{Fallen Soldiers}, p.18.

\textsuperscript{77} Mosse, \textit{Fallen Soldiers}, pp.18-9.
in nineteenth-century Europe, not least in Victorian Britain. Australian attitudes to military service were egalitarian from the beginning.

In Britain, in comparison, a parallel development occurred. Glory could hardly be said to have been democratised, as the cults of commanders Nelson and Wellington were far stronger than any celebration of the ordinary soldier. 78 In Britain, with its professional non-conscript army, glory was not truly “democratised” until after the First World War. 79 However, beginning at the time of the Napoleonic Wars, soldiers, who for several centuries had suffered from the perception that they were an instrument of tyranny, increasingly began to be portrayed as the defenders of the people. 80 British soldiers again received increasing public sympathy in the 1850s, when William Russell and other war correspondents reported the sufferings of ordinary soldiers during the Crimean War, at the expense of an officer corps depicted as incompetent. 81 In the 1870s war artists such as Elizabeth Butler gave those sufferings dramatic and popular form in paintings such as The Roll Call (1874). Then, as the later years of the century witnessed the growth of a bellicose High Imperialism in Britain, war artists, including Butler, reverted to a more romantic style of depicting war as the victory of British moral forces over colonial foes.

After the First World War, Australians adopted another martial nationalist practice that had been popular in Europe during the nineteenth century – the public display of trophies, usually guns, taken from defeated enemies. The British, along with the Germans and the French, were particularly partial to this, a renovated


Ancient Greek practice. In pre-classical Greece, a trophy was “a suit of enemy armour set upon a stake,” according to the *Oxford Classical Dictionary.* It was “originally intended as a miraculous image of the *theos tropaios* [god of the trophy] who had brought about the defeat of the enemy...[and] marked the spot where the enemy was routed.” Especially in classical times, the Greeks also took captured arms back to their home cities, and there “trophies were also dedicated in the sanctuary of the deity to whom victory was ascribed.” From the fourth century BC onwards, trophies became permanent monuments, while “sculptured trophies accompanied by statues of captives and victors decorated the buildings of Hellenistic kings and took an important place in Roman triumphal art from the first century BC.”

In the nineteenth century, this practice was revived in Western Europe. The Berlin Victory Column, for example, erected in 1864-73 to commemorate the first “nation-making” Prussian victories, those against the Danes in 1864, incorporated gilded captured cannon into its construction. It eventually included mosaics and plaques celebrating all three of the German Wars of Unification, and a golden Victory Goddess, holding a laurel wreath and a sceptre topped with an Iron Cross. The nation’s triumph was wrought in gold for all to see.

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83 *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, third edn, p.1556. “Tropaios” derives from the verb “to turn,” and the phrase “theos tropaios” refers to both the god of the trophy itself, and also the god who made the enemy turn, who caused the battle to be won. I am indebted to Professor Tim Parkin, Professor of Classics and Ancient History at the University of Queensland, for this information. Personal communication 13 September 2004.


86 The other two wars were against Austria in 1866 and France in 1870-1. These were all stunning victories for an efficient German military machine, and had a profound influence on military thinking, as well as foreign policy, in the next forty years. France, especially, was obsessed with reversing the result of its ignominious defeat of 1870, which had seen Germany take possession of Alsace-Lorraine. See Stig Förster, “The Nation at Arms: Concepts of nationalism and war in Germany, 1866-1914.” in Hartmut Lehmann and Hermann Welkenreuther (eds), *German and American Nationalism: A comparative perspective.* (Oxford: Berg, 1999), pp.233-62. One of the principal ways in which the Third Republic sought to overcome a perceived military inferiority to Germany was through the securing of alliances, first with Russia and later with Britain. These, as has been exhaustively discussed by historians, were principal causes of the First World War. A recent survey of this literature is Frank McDonough, *The Origins of the First and Second World Wars,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).
After the First World War, Australians forewent the sceptres and the Victory Goddess (except in newspaper and literary illustrations), as well as the gold, but kept the guns, the most direct, unmediated proof of having conquered an enemy.  

In Britain and France, war material was often remade. The British Guards Crimean Memorial, for instance, had figures made from captured cannon, which the first Victoria Crosses were also constructed from. Further, both the relief panels showing Admiral Horatio Nelson's four great victories at the base of his Column (1840-3), and the huge statue of Wellington as Achilles in Hyde Park Corner (1822), were cast from captured French cannon, offering tangible – and public – evidence of British superiority. 

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87 See for example The Sydney Mail, 26 April 1922, p.6; The Great Adventure of 1914-1918, (Gordon and Gotch, 19--), p.31. The latter depicts the victory parade on Peace Day 1919 overseen by an angel and a toga-wearing Victory Goddess, sporting an Athenian Hoplite headdress and symbolically crowning the entire gathering.

88 Borg, War Memorials, Figure 11.

89 The reliefs depicted Nelson at the battles of St. Vincent (1797), the Nile (1798) and Copenhagen (1801), and his death at Trafalgar (1805). www.victorianlondon.org/buildings/nelson.htm. This website brings together a number of contemporary descriptions of the column.
In the case of Wellington as Achilles, it was more than the Greek practice that was borrowed, with the very figure of the greatest ancient hero serving to personify the nation through one of its great defenders. The Iron Duke – a reactionary and unpopular prime minister after the statue was erected – was remembered publicly in perpetuity as a romantic figure of heroic physique and noble bearing. He was the very model of a nineteenth-century chivalrous gentleman – strong of limb and noble of character – defending his people. Although the specific image, as a sculpture, was not used in post-war Australia, the idea that Australian soldiers had taken Wellington’s place as defenders was widespread amongst martial nationalists. Australians were presented as saviours, defenders, deliverers and mighty warriors in the image of Achilles within the Memorial, in war literature (especially), and in the media.

The French, especially under Napoleon, also erected triumphal statues which deliberately harked back to perceived great heroes of antiquity. Napoleon’s column at Place Vendôme in Paris is a case in point. It was covered in reliefs, each constructed from captured cannon and deliberately fabricated in imitation of Trajan’s Column in
Rome, itself highly triumphal.\textsuperscript{90} Atop it was a statue of Napoleon as Caesar, hardly a subtle statement. Also, Napoleon's tomb at \textit{Les Invalides} in Paris, which C.E.W. Bean later claimed was the institution closest in kind to the Memorial, featured reliefs of unambiguous triumphalism.\textsuperscript{91}

\begin{figure}[h]
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\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{image.png}
\caption{Relief, \textit{Les Invalides}, Paris. Source: www.artandarchitecture.org.uk.}
\end{figure}

These physical commemorative structures embodied the national superiority that martial nationalists claimed. For them, victory in war, as embodied in these monuments, crowned national superiority in all things, both "material" — industry, science — and "moral" — art, letters, and other creations of the nation’s "genius."

Associated with trophy-taking and display \textit{per se} were a complex of monuments which praised victory without necessarily parading trophies to do so. This too was an ancient practice, pre-dating the trophy. Alison Yarrington points out that in the nineteenth century, "large-scale monuments to Wellington and Waterloo fit within

\textsuperscript{90} Borg describes Trajan’s Column itself in these terms: “The column is a victory statement, on the one hand symbolic and deriving from Egyptian obelisks which were symbolic statements of the ruler’s power, and on the other narrative and related to... ancient battle narratives. Since the Emperor’s ashes were subsequently buried in a casket beneath the column it is also a mausoleum, making it a monument of considerable complexity and sophistication.” \textit{War Memorials}, p.56. See Lino Rossi, \textit{T rajan’s Column and the Dacian Wars}, J.M.C. Toynbee (trans.), (London: Thomas Hudson, 1971), pp.98-120, 130-212; Borg, \textit{War Memorials}, p.56.

an established vocabulary of commemorative and patriotic display redolent of classical antiquity."92 This wider complex, which ultimately encapsulated trophies, concretised martial national narratives, wedding State power with a symbol of its triumph.

The creation of monuments to victory was an ancient practice, with early examples including the Temple of Nike near the Propylaea of the Acropolis of ancient Athens, Trajan’s Column in Rome and the institution of the triumphal arch.93 Alan Borg points out that at Adamklissi in Romania Trajan created a rare early example of a memorial space which included an acknowledgement of the cost of war, but that, significantly, the circular mausoleum inscribed with the names of those 3,800 Romans who died defeating the Dacians (the same victories commemorated on the inscriptions on Trajan’s Column) was dominated utterly by a much larger victory monument. Borg postulates that “there can be no doubt that the important thing to commemorate was the Emperor’s victory, rather than to dwell on the price of that victory in human lives.”94 This was typical of commemorative monuments up until the twentieth century.

In nineteenth-century Britain, then, the military leader and his triumph were still very much the subjects of monument-making, complemented by a martial propaganda machine, as the example of Nelson indicates. Robert MacDonald outlines the combination of public commemoration and popular historical writing that created a popular national military hero:

In his own day, Nelson was immensely popular, his victories celebrated with great enthusiasm, his death mourned by all classes of the public…. Robert Southey’s Life (1813) sealed the legends of Nelson’s heroism – and was still being reprinted at the end of the century. Nelson’s monument in Trafalgar Square was designed as the symbolic centre of the national and imperial capital; the column was erected in 1842, and Landseer’s

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93 Triumphal arches were especially popular in modern Europe. The French Arc de Triomphe was the most famous, and the largest, but Germany, for example, had the Brandenburg Gate in Potsdam, built in 1770, and the Victory Gate in Munich, created 1834-54. Borg, War Memorials, p.60.

94 Borg, War Memorials, p.56.
supporting lions in 1867. In St Paul’s Cathedral Nelson’s tomb was positioned in the place of honour below the dome.\(^95\)

Having saved the nation from possible invasion in 1805, and having won the other great victories whose stories were depicted on the reliefs cast from the cannon of his vanquished enemies, Nelson had become one with the nation. This was martial nationalism in the purest form – the great hero’s column became the symbolic centre of a whole Empire, one which shared the “true glory” of both his devotion to duty and his triumph over great enemies. It was of such stuff that the Imperial British race was made.

Australians agreed. Souter illustrates this with a photograph of Trafalgar Day celebrations in Sydney in 1906, featuring a large bust of the Admiral and semaphore flags spelling out Nelson’s famous directive “England expects every man will do his duty.”\(^96\) During the war, postcards and other ephemera used the expression to create nationalist messages combining Imperial loyalty with martial discipline:

![Postcard, Australia, First World War: “Old England.”](cas.awm.gov.au)

The main message of war memorials, then, had always been victory. War memorials were tangible symbols of a military success celebrated in the words of

\(^95\) MacDonald, *The Language of Empire*, p.82.

\(^96\) Souter, *Lion and Kangaroo*, Figure 15, p.128.
nationalist propagandists, and especially in the late nineteenth century, with the advent of social Darwinism, this success was claimed to reflect superior "qualities" in the nation. Moral virtues were glorified over all material factors (Napoleon himself had said that "in war, moral factors account for three quarters of the whole, relative material strength accounts for only one quarter") the argument being that if a nation won a battle or a war, it was due to inherent factors – French élan, British grit, or German spirit. 97

There can be no doubt that Australian nationalists, of whom there were many, were strongly influenced by this corpus of ideas and images, and did desire, very strongly, to have a history of "their own" based on military actions and a recognisable identity which was anchored to it. This was, of course, conceived as an identity within the Empire, but was still definitely and self-consciously focussed on Australia and addressed to Australians, often involving comparisons with the English (naturally favourable to the southern strain of the British line). These comparisons were important, for they brought into domestic Australian usage two notions which had matured in Europe. The first was that war created nations, the second that therefore national history was based on warfare – usually, in the case of established and powerful political entities such as Germany, Britain or France, warfare which had been victorious. According to martial nationalist orthodoxy, what were needed for an internationally significant national history were major, strategically-important victories, if Australia was truly going to acquire one which could compete with the likes of Britain's, embodied by heroes such as Wellington or Nelson, on martial nationalist ground. On 4 August 1914, following a crisis brought upon by the assassination of the heir to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, which ignited 50 years of "explosive materials," a major European war started in which Australians would do exactly that. 98

II

An Australian all-volunteer expeditionary force was raised on the commencement of hostilities. The Australian Imperial Force (AIF) would eventually enlist over 400,000


soldiers, sending 330,000 of them overseas and losing 60,000 dead. They remained the only all-volunteer-force at the end of the war. The AIF went into battle on 25 April 1915 at Gallipoli in Turkey, and the first major account of what has always been called “the landing” (not invasion) was published on 8 May that year. Australians, still concerned about the possibility of racial degeneration, had been deeply anxious about how well their men would perform, militarily, in their first engagement in the great European war. When the first lengthy report arrived, from English war correspondent Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett, praising “a race of athletes” who had stormed the cliffs, there was real celebration, as well as relief. Ashmead-Bartlett’s article was an old-style narrative dispatch, a standard First World War method, so some newspapers, such as the Hobart Mercury, introduced it with a summary of the contents. The Mercury assured readers that their men had won a great victory, proving the nation’s mettle:

We publish today a brilliant description of the landing of the Australians and New Zealanders on Gallipoli Peninsula by that experienced war correspondent, Mr Ashmead-Bartlett. It is a thrilling story, a story that will make us all feel proud of our soldiers. They have shown that, though transplanted to these southern skies, the breed is still the same as that of the men of Mons and Waterloo, and a hundred other great battles. They were in a desperate position when they landed on the narrow beach in the dawn, but they did not hesitate. They carried the Turkish trenches on the beach and on the cliffs, and, without the support of artillery, held on all day of Sunday, April 25. Their dash and courage saved the situation, and no troops that ever marched have done better.  

The Australians, the Mercury felt, had lived up to that great military example of the British heroes who had overcome Napoleon and held a rampaging German Army at bay in August 1914. This was not yet equal in historical importance to Waterloo, but the military qualities needed to achieve the clearing of the first lines of trenches were equivalent to those of the heroes of Flanders. The Australians were of the “Bulldog Breed.”

The article itself declared that the Australians had performed magnificently, determinedly “carrying” the Turkish trenches with that most British of weapons, the cold steel:

RUSH FOR THE TRENCHES.
The Australians rose to the occasion. They did not wait for orders, or for the boats to reach the beach, but sprang into the sea, formed a sort of rough line, and rushed at the enemy’s trenches. Their magazines were not charged, so they just went in with the cold steel, and it was over in a minute for the Turks in the first trench had been either bayoneted or had run away, and the Maxim guns were captured.

A CRITICAL MOMENT.
Then the Australians found themselves facing an almost perpendicular cliff of loose sandstone covered with thick shrubbery. Somewhere half-way up the enemy had a second trench strongly held, from which there poured a terrible fire on the troops below and on those pulling back to the torpedo-boat destroyers for a second landing party.

SCALING THE CLIFFS.
Here was a tough proposition to tackle in the darkness, but these Colonials are practical above all else, and went about it in a practical way. They stopped for a few minutes to pull themselves together, got rid of their packs and charged the magazines of their rifles. Then this race of athletes proceeded to scale the cliffs, without responding to the enemy’s fire. They lost some men, but did not worry. In less than a quarter of an hour the Turks had been hurled out of their second position, all either bayoneted or fled.

...No finer feat has happened in this war than this sudden landing in the dark, and the storming of the heights, and, above all, the holding on whilst reinforcements were landing. These raw colonial troops, in these desperate hours, proved worthy to fight side by side with the heroes of Mons, the Aisne, Ypres, and Neuve-Chapelle. 100

The Mercury’s interpretation of the battle, celebrating its tactical victories in the most rapturous of terms, was a textbook example of the “national” reaction to the war – gazing upon the conflict from afar and seeing not death or loss but fantastic military success and magnificent achievement by one’s compatriots. Around the country there was an outpouring of relief and happiness: the men had done well. 101 This was far more convincing proof that the race had not degenerated in Australia. Henry Lawson

seized the hour to write that he had been certain the men would acquit themselves well:

The wireless tells and the cable tells
How our boys behaved by the Dardanelles.
Some thought in their hearts “Will our boys make good?”
We knew them of old and we knew they would!
Knew they would—
Knew they would;
We were mates of old and we knew they would.\(^{102}\)

These Australians, Lawson assured their compatriots, “got into scrapes,” but they also made the Pyramids shake and the Sphinx wake up.\(^{103}\) Then “they stormed the heights as Australians should,” and “they’ll win for the South as we knew they would.”\(^{104}\)

Such reactions – part celebration, part relief – were tempered by shock at the length of early casualty lists (tiny as they were by later standards). Nevertheless, when it came to contemplation of the “national” impact of the war on Australia, it was celebration that predominated. Australian moral qualities were claimed to have led to the “achievement” of storming the cliffs at Gallipoli. After evacuation of the peninsula in December 1915, most Australians agreed that the defeat there had not been the fault of the Australian troops. Some argued rather that those who had not volunteered were at fault. The first anniversary of the landing, dubbed “Anzac Day,” saw many Australians declaring that a nation in an emotional sense had finally been created in Australia through the achievement and the sacrifice of Gallipoli.\(^{105}\) Both were needed, it was felt, for a nation to be created, and both had been seen on the “far shores” of Gallipoli.

Over the subsequent course of the war, the AIF in France and Palestine fought a large number of battles, successfully backing up the Gallipoli “achievement” with

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102 Henry Lawson, “Song of the Dardanelles,” in Collected Verse, (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1969), pp.152-3, p.152. For several weeks the Gallipoli campaign was known by the term “the Dardanelles,” which referred to the straits connecting the Aegean Sea to the Sea of Marmora, also known as “the Hellespont.”


104 Lawson, “Song of the Dardanelles,” p.153

actions which propagandists could certainly use to create a martial nationalist history. Despite the lack of significant military success between the Gallipoli campaign in 1915 and the final campaign in the summer and autumn of 1918, the Australians held their own against the German army, and in Palestine they routed the Turks in 1917-18. This was success enough for nation-builders to work with, but when the final offensive campaign across Picardy (August-October 1918) left the German Army beaten and close to total collapse, the war was sealed as perfect material for Australian martial nationalist propaganda. If the nation was going to see itself in its battles, it could see itself as a glorious people, the equal of any warrior nation on Earth.

In addition, during the war itself many of the battles of 1916 and 1917, now considered less than triumphant, were described in Australian newspaper coverage as victories. In fact, John Williams has shown that Australians were fed on a steady diet of military success during this period, although they were not always real victories. Propaganda and censorship ensured that Australians read of advances, objectives taken, prisoners captured and casualties inflicted with light loss. In relation to the latter, although the length of Australian casualty lists, also published in the papers, suggested another story, no comprehensive source of alternative information existed. A leader published in the Brisbane Daily Mail on 16 May 1917 offers an illustration of the prevailing Australian wartime understanding of the manner in which their men were fighting, as well as the traditional heroic parameters being used to comprehend the conflict in Europe. The article is all the more illuminating because it was focussed upon the apparent “triumph” of First Bullecourt, during which the 4th Brigade lost over 2,300 out of 3,000 troops and 1,170 Australians were taken prisoner, the largest number for a single battle in the whole war. In short, the battle of which it wrote was a disaster.

Month after month of war, battle after battle, heroic feat after heroic feat – they have been repeating themselves in the cable messages till they have come to be accepted almost...as a matter of course. It takes something of more than epic quality to arrest the attention of the world now. And yet the Australians at Bullecourt have provided this something!... It is hardly possible

106 Williams, Anzacs, the Media.

yet to realise what the unflinching valour of these Australians must have meant, what sublimity of endurance was theirs, what added lustre they have bestowed on their countrymen, what their feat of arms means now, and what it will mean in history.\textsuperscript{108}

The unconscious irony of the final clause makes its innocence all the more poignant. It is clear from this article that many Australians, having read “the cable messages,” were confident, indeed convinced, that their soldiers were mighty warriors.

Popular culture was also enlisted for national duty, as James Wieland demonstrates in his study of wartime picture postcards.\textsuperscript{109} He notes that “popularising cards” claimed that Australian history began at Gallipoli, and feels that on the picture postcards produced during the war Australian “nationalism was measured by feats of arms.”\textsuperscript{110} It was not until the late 1920s that the awful conditions of the war, and the nature of some of the appalling disasters, strongly influenced the public domain.\textsuperscript{111} They were known privately, primarily by returned soldiers, but were not widely discussed in public, and certainly were not the focus of commemoration in the period to 1935 which this dissertation concentrates on.

The many reports of Australian military success published during the war emphatically established the notion that “the Australian soldier was naturally and unusually competent,” which Joan Beaumont reminds us was the “the central element [of] the Anzac Legend.”\textsuperscript{112} The Legend developed as a layering of stories, images and ideas about the war, based on fact but heavily constructed, which glorified the soldiers in terms of their military accomplishments and the moral values said to underpin those accomplishments: courage, ferocity, resourcefulness, loyalty to mates and the cause, dash, and so on.\textsuperscript{113} The basic assertion of Australian supremacy was assumed

\textsuperscript{108} Quoted in Williams, \textit{Anzacs, the Media}, pp.173-4.


\textsuperscript{110} Wieland, “What Do You Think of this Card?,” p.143.

\textsuperscript{111} Fromelles, the first and one of the worst disasters, was an exception, being publicly discussed soon after the war ended. However, this did little to bring the terrible truths of the war to the fore in public memories. Williams, \textit{The Quarantined Culture}, p.118.


by almost all those who contributed to the Legend’s making. Indeed, much of the Legend was concerned with explaining why Australians made such good soldiers, with moral qualities being at the centre of the explanation. Robin Gerster, studying Australian war literature, brings together these two important strands of the Legend, arguing that many writers made a case that “Australians excel, even revel, in battle.”114 The actions of the soldiers, eulogised thoroughly and consistently, were also interpreted as having fundamental importance for Australian nationhood.115 The actions of the soldiers during the war were variously claimed to have created the Australian nation from an emotional point of view, to have revealed an already-existing Australian character, and to have proved that Australians were worthy members of the British Empire.116

Jay Winter argues that the Anzac Legend “converted military defeat into moral victory.”117 This is an early-twenty-first-century understanding, which I will show does not fit the inter-war situation particularly well. Rather, the Anzacs were praised most strongly for a perceived military victory – at Gallipoli, the storming of the cliffs on the first morning and the establishment of a strong defensive line there. This dissertation examines some of the ways in which this more triumphal vision was articulated in the inter-war period.

A number of key contributors to the Anzac Legend have been identified. Scholars have pointed out that Bean was the most crucial single individual. His

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[116] Williams, Anzacs, the Media, pp.24-6.

reportage had been seen as important, but even more crucial, according to several scholars, was his selection and editing of *The Anzac Book*, a collection of poetry, stories and artwork written by the troops at Gallipoli and published in April 1916.\(^{118}\)

Other important contributors included the English war correspondent Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett, who wrote the first substantive report on the initial attack at Gallipoli, and the Australian poet C.J. Dennis, whose *Moods of Ginger Mick* embodied a popular martial loyalty to the Imperial cause which he labelled “pride o’ race” and saw as redemptive.\(^{119}\) Institutions such as the RSSILA and the Brisbane Anzac Day Commemoration Committee (ADCC) have also received attention as contributors through their influence on commemorative rituals.\(^{120}\) Politicians such as W.M.

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118 See D.E. Kent, “The Anzac Book and the Anzac Legend: C.E.W. Bean as editor and image-maker,” *Historical Studies*, 21 (1985), pp. 376-90. Kent repeats his arguments in “Bean’s ‘Anzac’ and Making of the Anzac Legend,” in Anna Rutherford and James Wieland (eds), *War: Australia’s creative response* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1997), pp.27-39. Whilst the point is an interesting and illuminating one, I feel that Kent goes a little too far in ascribing primacy to this book. It was certainly extremely important in reinforcing an already-existing myth, but was not the principal means of the myth’s definition. This was because *The Anzac Book* appeared in April 1916, a year after the landing. In the interval, Australians had read an enormous number of words about the troops, and had heard equally large numbers from speakers. The myth was already far in train by the time *The Anzac Book* appeared. As indicated, it was a powerful force of reiteration, given all the more effectiveness for being the product of the soldiers themselves. On this point see also Gerster, *Big-noting*, p.25. Significantly, Kent does, however, point out that Bean was a highly selective editor when assembling *The Anzac Book*. “rejecting anything which might have modified his vision or tarnished the name of ‘Anzac’.”


Hughes, wartime Prime Minister, also added their vision. Graham Seal has recently shown that folk traditions had a great deal to do with Anzac as a popular cultural phenomenon rather than an official and semi-official construction.\(^\text{121}\)

The Memorial was concerned with all of the themes of Anzac. In fact, it was a major contributor to the Anzac Legend, and this dissertation explores its contributions to all three arguments. The Memorial argued that the Australians had been magnificent troops, winning many battles, and that this was because of superior moral virtues, or character. The “assertion that the Australian soldier was naturally and unusually competent” was widely accepted in Australia, but Bean was always aware of the fact that what he called “the fighting reputation of the AIF” could be contested, and he was anxious to ensure it was proved beyond doubt. The Memorial, along with its twin project, the *Official History*, was designed to do so. In fact, the Memorial was a vital element in the Digger-Nationalist complex generally, offering the most complete public narrative of the Australian overseas war experience delivered to a mass audience, and holding physical objects that were offered as proof of many of the claims made by its agents. The Memorial claimed to be “the Australian authority on matters associated with the war,” and evidence suggests it was afforded this position by important groups within the Digger-Nationalist complex, such as the RSSILA.\(^\text{122}\)

As a permanent public museum, seen by almost three million people, the Memorial was one of the most important sources of propaganda for nation-building based on the war experience. What is more, in its rhetoric the Memorial spoke to the nationalist issues of the day in the early post-war period – loss, triumphalism, social Darwinism, anti-Germanism, realities of war and so on – as this dissertation examines.

Scholars have seldom looked to the Memorial in efforts to explain the Anzac Legend. It has been assumed that Ashmead-Bartlett, *The Anzac Book*, the *History* and Anzac Day rituals were decisive. Clearly these were vital factors in the rise of the Anzac Legend, but there are good reasons to look to the Memorial, as well. It offered

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\(^{121}\) Graham Seal demonstrates that Anzac was both “myth” and “tradition,” the first being officially constructed, the second flowing from pre-existing folk traditions in Australia. I examine only the former in this dissertation. See Graham Seal, *Inventing ANZAC: The Digger and national mythology* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2004).

\(^{122}\) Press Release, November 1929, pp.3-4. A.W.M. 93 20/1/1A. This release gives a list of people who sought advice from the Memorial.
an accessible, complete public history of the Australian overseas war experience, which reached far more people than the History did. Over three million Australians saw the displays, so the Memorial ought to be considered of as much importance as other inter-war developments in the triumph of the Anzac Legend as the dominant public memory of the war. By studying the Memorial’s representations, we learn more not only about Australia’s first national cultural institution, but also about inter-war commemoration generally, especially Australian attitudes to war, nation and remembrance.

As the nation emerged from the war, nationalists quickly moved to reiterate both the fundamental assertion of martial pre-eminence and the myriad of positive moral “explanations” for it. There were several means by which this occurred. For instance, a large number of books appeared in the first few years of the peace. Histories of periods of the fighting or particular theatres or units appeared, many sporting the Hentyesque title *With the Australians to...* These books invariably praised the endurance, loyalty and “fighting qualities” of the troops, and few failed to point out that the Australians had beaten the Germans. In doing so they sought to create an “Australian Story” along the same lines as the British “Island Story” — that is, a series of heroic and successful battles leading to historically-important outcomes, in this case, the defeat of Germany and Turkey. Such tales would easily rank with those attached to Wellington and Nelson, for it was a commonplace by 1919 that the “Great War,” as it was known, was, as its name suggested, the greatest conflict in human history. Australian success on this stage could, if one was apt to view the world in such a way, quite easily put any past military achievement in the shade. As we shall see in the next chapter, many Australian writers and speakers had such a view.

Before, during and immediately after the war, then, Australians looked to British military traditions both as a measure of their troops’ abilities as soldiers and as a means of celebrating them. They particularly adopted trophy-taking and display as a

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practice, using weapons to prove that their nation, geographically so far from where “real” history took place, in Europe, still partook to the full of that history, and interacted on history’s greatest stage – a major war – on terms of equality or better with the world’s premier military nations. The war period, during which time the Anzac Legend was created and took hold as a dominant memory, was characterised by propaganda and censorship, leading to a skewed view of the AIF’s war experience, over-emphasising victory and playing down or even ignoring defeats, which was to last for virtually the whole inter-war period.

This, then, was the cultural “matrix” within which the Memorial was created. The museum’s audiences had already been assured repeatedly that the Australians had done great things militarily during the war. An “Australian Story” had already been told in the flashes and details of the daily news reports. Some synthesis had begun, with a number of publications and speeches. The Anzac Legend had been established; trophies had been brought home. The scene was set for the Memorial to make strong contributions in all these areas – to the popular public history of the “Australian Story” through a complete and accessible narrative of the AIF overseas war experience, and to the Anzac Legend through proof of Australian military supremacy coupled with moral interpretation of the sources of that supremacy.
The Memorial was developed in the period in which memories of the First World War were at their freshest and most influential, affecting every part of Australian society, from formal politics and the workplace to the family and the churches. There were two main types of war memories in post-war Australia, focused alternatively on the actions of the soldiers overseas or on developments at home – primarily the conscription debate, but also sectarian and industrial conflict. The tone of public expressions of the former was overwhelmingly congratulatory, and often glorificatory, while that of the latter was bitter and rancorous. The two had strong and important connections, however, with both being part of a larger ideological conflict and an associated struggle for formal political power, both of which had begun during the war.

The “national” interpretation of the war had “modern memory” competitors for dominance in wartime and immediate post-war Australian society, primarily the product of socialists who, at least in the early post-war years, denied the very
legitimacy of nations. Public memories served political activists in several ways: they were enlisted to provide authority on various subjects, invoked in order that activists might be publicly associated with them, and used as weapons to attack opponents. This was the background, and often even the avenue, of commemoration. The mixing of praise for the soldiers with attacks on political opponents, a development of the war period, was still common more than five years after it.

The Memorial was part of a larger “commemorative complex,” comprising the RSSILA, and thus most Anzac Day orators, the mainstream press and Anglican clergy, and Nationalist and Country Party politicians, which conducted almost all Australian commemoration in this period. There was considerable overlap between the Memorial’s messages and those of certain agencies of the Digger-Nationalist complex. The Memorial told stories, as did soldier writers, newspaper editors and journalists, essayists and numerous speechmakers. Narratives were often used, and attitudes to war were strongly positive overall. The nation was urged to celebrate its troops for their victories overseas and for the moral virtues felt to have underpinned them. In turn the nation was urged to congratulate itself that such virtues were typically national, and to give thanks.

Glorification of the AIF in terms of their military success and martial virtues became a well-established and widely-supported form of commemoration in the first decade of the peace in Australia. Glorification of victory was influenced strongly by the paradigms of nation-building examined in the previous chapter, but also by local political concerns of this crucial period in the development of Australian society – the “politics of victory.”

The narrative comprising this chapter traces the creation of parallel overseas and domestic public memories in Australia, and some of the connections that were asserted to exist between them. It begins with a brief examination of wartime Australian politics, particularly the question of conscription and its companion concept, the desire for complete, non-negotiated, victory in the war – a victory which the Memorial later celebrated and set out to prove in displays. It then proceeds to a detailed examination of Anzac Day speeches and writings in the 1920s, the period most significant to the Memorial, which saw strong triumphalism in many speeches and writings. It also touches briefly on the triumphalism seen occasionally on Armistice Day and often on Empire Day to illustrate the breadth as well as the depth of the Australian commitment to the celebration of the 1918 victories. Examining the
simultaneous creation and utilisation of domestic war memories, beginning in 1916 with the first conscription referendum, helps interpret some of the political rantings which intruded into commemoration until around 1925, and into a debate about ongoing Memorial funding as late as 1929 (examined in Chapter Three).

I

When the AIF returned to Australia in 1919 it was to a society that had been through a great upheaval. The war years saw a sudden and fierce upsurge of both political and sectarian rancour, and traditional anti-Asian xenophobia was extended and transformed into a hysterical anti-Germanism. All these developments were direct results of the stresses of the war, although most historians agree that there was one factor which focussed all the others: the issue of conscription for overseas military service. As the war dragged on into 1916 and then 1917, all belligerent nations except Australia introduced conscription, as their voluntary systems broke down under the stress of enormous troop losses. As AIF casualties increased throughout 1915 and 1916, and volunteers fell, conservatives began to call for conscription in Australia as well.

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1 For example, Lutheran churches were burnt down and people of German ethnicity attacked. Large numbers were interned, including citizens who had been living in Australia for up to thirty years. See Gerhard Fischer, Enemy Aliens: Internment and the homefront experience in Australia, 1914-1920, (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1989). On social divisions more generally see Evans, Loyalty and Disloyalty: Marilyn Lake, A Divided Society: Tasmania during World War I, (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1975).

2 France and Germany already had conscription, while Britain adopted the measure in January 1916, New Zealand in August 1916 and the USA in May 1917. Canada, where Quebecois opposition made the process more difficult, waited until January 1918.
The Universal Service League, for instance, was formed as early as 1915, arguing that conscription was necessary due to the extraordinary nature of both the threat from Germany and of the war itself. The Anglican Church agreed; its Synod, declaring "a religious war," argued that "the forces of the Allies are being used by God to vindicate the rights of the weak and to maintain the moral order of the world." Therefore the Synod "gives its strong support to the principle of universal service."

The menace that Germany was seen by some to pose was expressed clearly by Professor Ernest Scott in one of the University of Melbourne "war lectures" series in 1915. Scott asserted that Germany had planned world domination in response to Bernhardi’s “desperate alternative of ‘Weltmacht oder Niedergang’ – world-power or downfall.” He then warned of the very real possibility of German world domination:

[German] national egoism could not contemplate the possibility of such elaborately organised preparation for victory eventuating in Niedergang: it must be Weltmacht. And it might well have been so if Germany had been as well served by her diplomacy as

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4 Age, 8 September 1916, quoted in McKinlay, Documentary History, p.72.

she has been by her wonderfully efficient military staff. Nay — it will be so — let us frankly face the issue — it will be so — unless by the patient, unremitting pressure of the Allies, the unflagging valour of their troops, the constant reinforcement of their trained armies by ever more and more men, and the overwhelming expenditure of ammunition, the bullying spirit of Prussia is utterly broken.  

The ALP, who were in Government, were committed to an all-volunteer expeditionary force, so although the Prime Minister, Hughes, came to agree with Scott, and to believe that conscription was required to win the war, he felt it politically necessary to put the idea to plebiscites in October 1916 and December 1917, which were defeated by very small margins; a fact which in itself points to the division the issue caused.  

The referendums, as they were known, brought forth statements of definite nationalist principle by many in Australian society, and are instructive. Firstly, Hughes made his plea for conscription in terms of a compact between citizen and State. In his “Manifesto on Conscription” of August 1916, in which he laid out his case, Hughes argued that the citizen owed a military duty to the nation: “No patriot can deny the necessity of reinforcements; no democrat can impugn the right of the nation to demand this duty from its citizens. Democracy and nationalism are one. The supreme duty which a democrat owes to his country is to fight for it.” He quoted both democrat Abraham Lincoln and French socialist leader Jean Jaures in support of his argument that unionism and conscription were perfectly compatible, even complementary. Through Jaures Hughes evoked a “national” variety of socialism.

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7 The decision on overseas service had been taken as early as 1901, when the Labor Caucus decided that “No member of the Forces shall be required unless he voluntarily agrees to do so, to serve beyond the limits of the Commonwealth except in the case of naval forces while on board ship.” Caucus Minutes, 25 July 1901, quoted in McKinlay, Documentary History, p.23; L.F. Fitzhardinge, William Morris Hughes, a Political Biography, volume 2: The Little Digger, 1914-1952, (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1979), pp.171-80: The first plebiscite resulted in a “No” majority of 71,549 out of 2,246,213 votes cast (3.2% of votes cast); the second had a slightly higher “No” majority, 166,588 out of 2,196,906 (7.6% of votes cast). Frank Farrell, The Fractured Society: Australia during the Great War, (Sydney: CCH Australia, 1985), pp.61 and 95.
9 Jaures had said “Socialists demand military service for everyone...they wish to be in the army.... Democracy and nationality are one.” Prime Minister’s Manifesto,” p.539. Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address was later popular with Australian commemorative agencies. For instance, C.E.W. Bean wrote
He was praised by conservatives, his nominal political opponents, for "statesmanship," and attacked by some of his putative friends on the Left of Australian politics.

Secondly, the Anglo-Australian, Imperially-loyal position was that Australia had a moral duty to do as Britain told it to do, accepting conscription if that was required. No attempt was made by supporters of this view to question the quality of British conduct of the war. Hughes was one of these, but the Round Table put the view in its most eloquent yet reasoned form, in an article written in December 1916 and published in March 1917. Firstly, it stated that what was required was simply troops enough "to maintain the five Australian divisions and reinforce them at a rate equal to what experience shows to be their losses." The article continued with the assertion that "the fundamental fact was...that at the present rate of recruiting we shall not be able to replace anything like the number of casualities." At no time was there even the slightest question as to whether the "losses" and the "number of casualties" were higher than they might have been, whether they could have been lowered. Australians were told, often by their leaders and here again by the Round Table, that they should not question the generals, but just keep sending men.

in The Story of Anzac II, (p.906) that in December 1915 "the hillsides consecrated by such a wealth of devotion had now been abandoned." On Anzac Day 1931 the Age leader declared that "in spirit and intention we keep Anzac Day as a holy day in loving remembrance of those who 'poured out the sweet red wine of youth' that freedom might not perish from the earth." Age, 25 April 1931, p.10. Both borrow from the famous final sentence of Lincoln's speech: "It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us, - that from these honoured dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave their last full measure of devotion: that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain: that the nation shall, under God, have a new birth of freedom: and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth." Garry Willis, Lincoln at Gettysburg: The words that remade America, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992), pp.261, 263. The words quoted are included in both the text spoken and the so-called "final" written text of the speech. Willis discusses the myriad problems with establishing a definitive version pp.191-303.

10 The "national" reaction to the war was not greatly different in Germany and Australia, and this led to a number of similar reactions, especially the understanding that the nation had received a spiritual tonic from the war.

11 The Round Table was founded by Lord Milner and others in his circle of Imperial Confederationists in 1910. L.L. Robson (ed.), Australian Commentaries: Select articles from the Round Table, (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1975), pp.v-vii.


13 Robson (ed), Australian Commentaries, p.55.
The *Round Table* explained that such unquestioning loyalty was one of Australia’s most important ethical responsibilities. The fact was, the article declared, “few other nations have been so well-favoured as [Australia] has been, and no other nation has been so completely and utterly dependent on the protection of another as Australia is on the British nation.” Protected by “British arms,” Australia had “been free to gather in the riches of a vast continent.” Further, “such guardian effort and sacrifice have piled up a moral debt,” which Australia had, up until this referendum vote, been doing a good job of discharging, as impossible as this truly was. However, something within the nation had made it hang back from fully accepting its duties:

In some respects the attitude of Australia throughout the war has been admirable. The many thousands of her sons who have gone to the war have been well equipped and supported, and millions have been given by the public to carry on the war charities. No Australian soldier has ever complained of the hardships he has endured, none has regretted his sacrifice, or felt that it has been in vain. Australia has never complained of the statesmanship that led to the war, nor the way in which the war has been carried on by British statesmen. This much is extremely creditable. But the national will has not been strong enough to secure support for a policy which would enable it more fully to discharge its moral obligations.

Significantly, the *Round Table* felt that the war was itself potentially the saviour. Casting an eye upon Britain, the writer saw the war in positive spiritual terms. The tendency towards treating the war as “’Business as Usual’” was all too evident in Australia, the article claimed, but in Britain a miraculous transformation had taken place:

These tendencies were present in England at the beginning of the war, but they have been overcome there, and in her concentration on the sublime purpose of the vindication of liberty and justice in international relations England has reached a spiritual plane from which all sorts of great results

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14 Hughes agreed. He baldly stated in 1916 that “we must supply the men asked for. It is the price we are asked to pay for our national existence and our liberties. We must get the men – so much is certain. The question, then, is, how shall we get them?” His answer was that voluntarism had failed, and conscription was the only way. “The Prime Minister’s Manifesto on Conscription,” p. 538.

15 Robson (ed.), *Australian Commentaries*, p.61.

16 Robson (ed.), *Australian Commentaries*, p.61.

17 Robson (ed.), *Australian Commentaries*, p.61.
will be possible in the future. Australia has not shared this discipline; and when the call to a supreme sacrifice came she did not respond. The moral elevation of spirit which might have come as a product of this dreadful conflict will not be hers, and in the future her politics will be, to a greater degree than before, a dismal record of sordid strife.\textsuperscript{18}

This dire end could, of course, be reversed by the adoption of conscription.

In opposition to this “Imperialist” vision of Australia’s identity as it had apparently been revealed in the war was an “Australianist” one promoted by some on the Left of politics. In one such example, appearing in the anti-conscriptionist journal the \textit{Distributing Trades Gazette} in September 1916, the Australian war commitment was, significantly, still celebrated, yet was presented not in Imperial terms but in terms of a continuing Australian protection of liberty, which entailed freedom from conscription: “the seeds of liberty, sown in the blood-stained soil of Eureka, had created an Australian environment which was responsible for the bold, courageous and self-sacrificing characteristics which had made her sons the admiration of the world.”\textsuperscript{19} This too was an Australian national vision, as Hughes beheld, but its orientation and focus were fundamentally different. This was a moderate leftist “national” interpretation of the war. The fact of Australian involvement was not questioned here, nor did it become a serious issue until much later in the war, especially in its final year when war-weariness was extreme. The failure of the Left to take control of images of the heroic Australian during the period of the conscription debates was vital, though, for there was never later to be any chance for it to do so. The Diggers did not, in dominant public memory of the inter-war years, fight for the anti-authoritarian ideals of Eureka; they fought rather for the Empire. This palpable fact cast a shadow across the entire inter-war period.

Hughes predicted a campaign without rancour, because he felt there was near-universal approval for conscription. The result was, rather, as Liberal parliamentarian William Watt prophesied, “one of the most acrimonious struggles Australia has ever seen.”\textsuperscript{20} The debates leading up to each vote were the most bitter and perhaps the

\textsuperscript{18} Robson (ed.), \textit{Australian Commentaries}, p.60.

\textsuperscript{19} Quoted in Robson, \textit{The First AIF}, p.96.

\textsuperscript{20} Hughes’s assertion was made in parliament on 1 September 1916. Watt’s on 15 September 1916. See Fitzhardinge, \textit{The Little Digger}, pp.187-8.
most spiteful in the country’s history, the former only exceeded by the latter in fury, with conscriptionists accusing the “antis” – as they were pejoratively branded – of cowardice, and of leaving the soldiers at the front to their fate, while facing the counter-thrust that they wished to send men to their deaths. The Liberals, Anglican and other clergy of “Establishment” churches, mainstream newspapers, and other institutions of the status quo and the elite, came to call themselves “loyalists,” that is, they were unquestioningly loyal to the Empire, as instructed by Hughes and the Round Table. They branded as “disloyal” an inchoate group of Bolsheviks, “Wobblies,” Sinn Feiners, Catholics, unionists, pacifists and, most importantly, the ALP. The following poster put the pro-conscriptionist position succinctly yet dramatically:

**The Coward’s Cry**

The most contemptible cry the Anti have yet put forward is that

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**Australia is Eight Weeks from the Battle Front!**

**But Remember,**

**Thousands of Australians are fighting for you in that battle line!**

The anti's live here in comfort and safety behind the barricade of Australian heroism and valor. Our boys are fighting in the trenches for your honor and your protection and their lives.

The anti's urge you to leave them there alone and unsupported, to desert your own flesh and blood. You can frustrate such despicable treachery by a

**"YES" Vote**

Figure 12: Pro-conscriptionist poster, Australia, 1917.

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21 The terms “loyalist” and “disloyalist” were used extensively by Bean’s contemporaries. The very apppellations attached to each indicate the power relationship which obtained at the time: the Right of the political spectrum was able to claim the positive tag, an important victory in the ongoing battle between nationalism and socialism for the allegiance of Australians. See Evans, *Loyalty and Disloyalty.*

22 “Wobblies” were members of the syndicalist group The Industrial Workers of the World. They have proved a popular subject for historians, partly because of their aggression and radicalism, but mainly because twelve of their members were the victims of a manufactured case accusing them of conspiring to burn down Sydney. The “IWW Twelve” were found guilty and received prison terms of between five and fifteen years. After an inquiry in 1920 all were released. See McKinlay, *Documentary History,* pp.597-605; Ian Turner, *Sydney’s Burning (An Australian Political Conspiracy)*, (Sydney: Alpha, 1969). See also Frank Cain, *The Wobblies at War: A History of the Industrial Workers of the World and the Great War in Australia,* (Melbourne: Spectrum, 1993); Verity Burgmann, *Revolutionary Trade Unionism: The Industrial Workers of the World in Australia,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).
In rebuttal, "antis" offered equally emotive fare, such as the famous poem "The Blood Vote," which appealed to Australian women, newly enfranchised as they were, to vote against sending men to the war:

![Blood Vote poster](source: www.takver.com/history/myunion/myunionp22.htm)

**Figure 13: Anti-conscriptionist poster, Australia, 1917.**

Source: www.takver.com/history/myunion/myunionp22.htm

The animosity of these well-documented campaigns cast a shadow upon all post-war references to the war, including those made by the Memorial. Many of the antagonisms which surfaced during the war remained in full force afterwards, and the actions and positions of individuals and groups during the conflict were often interrogated and used against them in an ongoing ideological and political battle that began during the war.

Conscription also caused a major political realignment. Hughes and a group of followers were expelled from the ALP and formed a new political party, the Nationalist Party, with their former political enemies, the Liberals, with the stated intention of winning the war. The formation of the party was a watershed in

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Australian political life, and for the next 24 years conservative forces controlled federal politics, the ineffectual Scullin Government notwithstanding. The first Hughes Nationalist government had a huge majority—53 seats to Labor’s 22 in the House, and 24 to 12 Senators.24 The Nationalists were the self-proclaimed “win-the-war” party, with victory their overriding priority. With this control came an ability to publicly promote such war memories as they saw best, and to veto those which they opposed. Under this influence, the old labour-dominated image of the egalitarian independent-minded bush worker as hero gave way to the conservative vision of the Imperially-minded, “loyal” Digger.25 The period of the conscription campaigns saw the beginning of this change, which then continued throughout the 1920s and beyond.

By the final year of the conflict, war-weariness had long since taken hold of the country. By 1918 some Australians felt so sick at heart that one wrote to the Brisbane Courier that “people pray for peace; they wish the war was over; they care little apparently which side wins.”26 Another could not see beyond the grief, the pain and the horror, as she wrote to the Queensland Premier, T.J. Ryan:

I voted against conscription. We have enough broken-hearted people already and, to be just, I think we have given enough of the flower of our land—I mean, a good percentage—a fair thing, and oh, such awful deaths—if they were shot through the heart and died instantly it wouldn’t be so terrible—but the lingering awful pain…. Genevieve Macalister said, “Mustn’t Heaven be full Aunty just now?” but I said, “I think Hell must be overflowing—the hellish deeds that have been committed in this frightful war.”27

Reflecting this sense of horror and despair, the ALP adopted a pro-negotiated peace platform in June 1918 as a requirement of its support for recruiting efforts, and publicly put “Australia’s paramount needs” before those of Britain, which was to be


25 Alistair Thomson affirms that “the League had appropriated the definition of ‘the digger’ so that ‘radical digger’ had become a contradiction in terms, and many left-wing veterans shed their identity as returned men and gave their first loyalty to the labour movement.” Thomson, Anzac Memories, p.125.

26 Brisbane Courier, 10 January 1918. Quoted in Evans, Loyalty and Disloyalty, p.111.

27 Miss L. Hetherington (Gladstone), to Premier T.J. Ryan, 6 February 1918. Quoted in Evans, Loyalty and Disloyalty, p.111.
assisted “under the voluntary system...to the best of our capability.” Typical of the polarised times, this was promptly dubbed a “peace-at-any-price” position by opponents (which it was not – it was “upon the basis of no annexations and no penal indemnities”) and attacked. The intensity of the bitterness, and the longing for victory, that characterised the last year of the war, particularly, are summed up from the loyalist point of view in an article in the Melbourne Argus in August 1918, following the successful Allied breakthrough at Amiens in France:

Australians are playing a conspicuous and dashing part in the great advance now being made by the Allies in France. They are helping to win the war by gallantry and by resource. To them, as to their old comrades who have returned, the words “peace by negotiation” have no meaning, excepting that of contempt.

This connection of military success in France with political conflict in Australia was of the utmost importance, for throughout the next five or six years, during which time the Anzac Legend was being diffused throughout the country along with the returning troops, public memories of France or of the New South Wales general strike mixed freely.

The war greatly magnified ideals and emotions. The ALP may have won the conscription argument, but their heavy defeat in the 1917 federal election, fought by Hughes on a “win-the-war” platform which used a healthy dollop of martial nationalism (Hughes argued straight facedly that his party “put country before party”), signalled their crippling as a force in national politics. Many were bitter, and the strength of feeling can be assessed from an article in 1917 in The Australian Worker, casting Hughes in the role of the most famous turncoat in Western civilisation, Judas Iscariot.

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29 Seventh Commonwealth Conference of the ALP, p.86.


31 For instance, in February 1921 Sir George Fuller, who as Premier of NSW later brought the Memorial to Sydney, told the official dinner of the National Club that “he desired publicly to acknowledge the loyalty and assistance of his colleagues and of the community, which stood so much to the credit of the State during the dark and strenuous days of the 1917 strike.” Sydney Morning Herald, 23 February 1921, p.16.
The intensity and scale of the fighting, the killing and the dying, and of the horror, for soldier and anxious civilian alike, demanded of most people a delineation of loyalties, and a commitment to them, of the most stringent kind. Huge numbers of people made these commitments, and were bound by them for decades to come. The demand for avowal grew during the war, also, and at the same time tolerance for other opinions seemed to disappear. There was, then, strong continuity of these acrimonious relations into the peace. Few groups or individuals were willing to forgive and forget.33

II

The returned soldiers were in the centre of the political storm when they returned home in 1919 and 1920. The Diggers’ status as national heroes who had defeated a terrible tyranny led most mainstream political groups, and even some from the extreme Left, to attempt to associate themselves with them. War memories came to the fore here clearly and unambiguously in political debate. For example, a cartoon from the *Australian Worker* in 1919 linked this famed AIF solidarity with the One Big Union movement. The cartoon Digger’s cry of “Cut it out, Fat! Is there anything in my record as a soldier that would suggest that I would go back on my mates?” announced a radical attempt to remake the nature of the bonds of military loyalty from nation to class.34 This was ultimately unsuccessful, mainly because counter-memories...

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33 *Australian Worker*, 12 April 1917, quoted in McKinlay, *Documentary History of the Australian Labour Movement*, pp.80-1.

34 Anti-foreigner violence was also in large part triggered by appeals to memory. For example, in March 1919 a speaker at the loyalty demonstration that led to the Red Flag Riots in South Brisbane inflamed the crowd to anti-Russian violence with the question, “Who let you down at the war?” – the answer in his mind being the Russians, whose “alien” Bolshevik creed was the reason proffered as to why such betrayal had occurred. Evans, “‘Some Furious Outbursts of Riot,’” p.88. See also Raymond Evans, *The Red Flag Riots: A study of intolerance*, (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1988). At the same time, wild anti-German outpourings in 1919-20 were fuelled by writers appealing to memories of atrocity stories which were fictional in any event, and to some of the other worst excesses of wartime propaganda. A signal example of this came from *Smith’s Weekly*, the self-styled “Digger’s Advocate” and fiercely anti-foreigner rag. In 1919 it ran a story entitled “The Horror We Keep at Holdsworthy,” as part of a general campaign to have all Germans deported. This was a tale of a well-coordinated and ruthless armed uprising of German internees, who take over areas of Sydney, massacre civilians and hold out for a week before finally succumbing. It has all the ridiculous desperation of the pre-war invasion scare literature, but is presented in all seriousness, accompanied by an artist’s rendering of the scene. The campaign to deport foreigners was widely supported, and resulted in the deportation of large numbers of former internees, many of whom had lived in Australia for decades. *Smith’s Weekly*, 22 March 1919, p.13. On anti-Germanism after the war generally, see Fischer, *Enemy Aliens*, pp.280-302. Fischer confirms that a total of 5,414 former internees were deported after the war.
were mobilised by the Right. Raymond Evans quotes a clergyman, the Reverend Stanley Morrison, telling an Orange Lodge Thanksgiving Service that “the peace-at-any-price people” had “backed the wrong horse,” and were “now scurrying to seem ‘true blue’” through attempting to identify themselves with the soldiers, saying, apparently, “‘Hooray! Brother Anzac. We have won the war!’” However, “Brother Anzac was too astonished to speak.”35 As Evans points out, when the war finally ended, “loyalists, in thought and deed, demanded capitulation and atonement rather than reconciliation.”36

Hughes went further than demanding atonement; he sought to cast the disloyalists out of the Australian national group entirely. As early as July 1916 he had stated that post-war Australian society would have “no time” for the eligible man who did not enlist (in contemporary parlance, “the shirker”), who would become “a pariah and a leper upon whom men shall spit.”37 Hughes, along with many loyalists, was ready and determined to ensure that people did, indeed, “spit” on the disloyalists. His first post-war speech in Australia, made following his return from the Versailles Peace Conference, indicated this in clear terms. Speaking in August 1919, Hughes argued that the country could be divided into two groups, “all those who have done something here or abroad, however humble, to help [the war effort],” and “those who have done nothing.”38 The first group had, in Hughes’s view, “earned salvation,” while the other had not.39 Hughes made it plain that in post-war Australia the

35 Quoted in Evans, Loyalty and Disloyalty, p.148. Morrison’s stringent attack was simply a continuation of typical wartime loyalist propaganda, which had cast disloyalists as traitors. For instance, the Sydney Morning Herald argued in June 1918 that the Labor Party’s leaders could have only odious motivations for seeking a negotiated peace: “There is no possible room for negotiation, and we must fight on or surrender...all who talk in terms of surrender, whether as fools or knaves...are aiding the enemy, and today, that is treason.” Sydney Morning Herald, 21 June 1918, quoted in King, “Dinkum Diggers,” p.96.

36 In Evans, Loyalty and Disloyalty, p.148. Many who were cast as “disloyal” argued that they were in fact strong Australian nationalists, who loved their country, but Hughes was in no mood to take their word for it. Many historians have argued that his main reason for continuing the fight after the war was that he required a sense of crisis to survive as the non-conservative leader of a conservative political party. At the same time, the mood of the loyalists was vengeful, and Hughes, the ultimate political opportunist, no doubt seized on this to improve his own personal popularity through public displays of solidarity with the soldiers and opposition to anti-conscriptionists, socialists, unionists and the ALP. See King, “Dinkum Diggers,” p.97; Macintyre, The Succeeding Age, p.187.

37 Quoted in King, “Dinkum Diggers,” p.94.

38 Quoted in King, “Dinkum Diggers,” p.86.

39 Quoted in King, “Dinkum Diggers,” p.86.
divisions of wartime were to be perpetuated, for the former group "are my friends. The others need not look to me." 40

As well as their uses within formal politics, memories were found useful in social politics. Memories of the Australian troops' wartime actions were exploited by leaders of returned soldiers' groups and other advocates to provide status for the Diggers as a new social elite. The main arguments for returned soldier privilege all rested upon memories of their service and actions during the war. The RSSILA, for example, argued that they deserved a special place in Australian society because they had defeated the flower of the Prussian Guard. 41 The Memorial was dedicated to supporting the position of the returned soldier in Australian post-war society, and its displays carried out the mission. As Chapters Four and Five show, they purported to prove beyond doubt that the AIF had, indeed, beaten the flower of the Prussian Guard; this was one of the Memorial's most important objectives.

There is ample evidence that the returned soldiers' programme was successful on many levels. The wearing of badges by returned soldiers who belonged to various organisations provided outward proof of membership of this elite, and there is evidence that doing so was socially advantageous. For example, Alistair Thomson reports oral testimony from returned soldiers who stated that "the sight of the League's [RSSILA's] 'great big badge' often prompted job offers or favours." 42 As Terry King points out, wearing AIF uniforms allowed men to enter racetracks free, and the glamour of the uniforms and medals of the Australian soldiers is also indicated by the number of men who fraudulently wore them. 43 Further, King

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40 Quoted in King, "Dinkum Diggers," p.96.

41 See Martin Crotty, "Good Men and True: The beginnings of the Australian Returned Services League," Paper Presented at the 12th Biennial Australian Historical Association Conference, Newcastle, 5-9 July 2004. The RSSILA became the major returned service personnel's association, mainly due to the fact that it made a compact with the ruling Nationalist-Country Party Government which allowed it to effectively lobby for improvements in the material circumstances of the returned men. Other organisations existed, however, particularly in the early years of the peace. These included the Victorian Returned Soldiers' No-Conscription League and the Returned Soldiers' and Soldiers' Democratic League, the latter deliberately named to oppose the "Imperial" RSSILA. Thomson, Anzac Memories, pp.120-8. The beginnings of the League are examined in G.L. Kristianson, The Politics of Patriotism: The pressure group activities of the Returned Servicemen's League, (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1966), pp.3-24.

42 Thomson, Anzac Memories, p.126.
mentions the example of a man who was discharged by a magistrate on the basis of his war record while other men were fined and jailed. However, politics retained its primacy; King also mentions the case of a Gallipoli veteran whose radical politics led to accusations that he was “disloyal,” military service or no.

A further indication of the status of Diggers is provided by an incident in February 1928, in which Sydney Stipendiary Magistrate (SM) May found himself in hot water with the Legacy Club and the RSSILA over remarks he had made about returned soldiers. He had told a returned man who appeared before him that “the war has been over for 10 years now, and it is time those who went to it realised that they are now civilians. If you are going to bring any returned soldiers’ business into this affair, I don’t want to hear you.” There was a fairly clear indication here that the SM had encountered special pleading before. The Club expressed its strong objection, with the president telling a meeting, to considerable acclaim, that “we strongly denounce any derogatory comments passed about the returned soldier.” The magistrate felt constrained to issue an explanation for his comments several days later, asserting that “I never meant in any way to be offensive to any returned soldier.” This explanation was sufficient, it seems, for the executive of the State Branch of the RSSILA, who “decided to inform Mr May that the executive not only accepted his explanation with pleasure, but also without reserve.”

Reinforcing the returned soldiers’ social status was their central role in vital commemorative rituals during the inter-war period. As scholars have shown, rituals and the monuments at which they were performed helped the bereaved to come to terms with their grief. At the same time, they provided a powerful sense of community which in turn was a major reason for the continuing right-wing control of

43 King, “Dinkum Diggers.” pp.91, 93-4. There was a notorious case in which a prominent “colonel” gained rank and honours by the year, only being discovered as a fraud when a member of his putative regiment came on the scene.
45 Sydney Morning Herald, 17 February 1928, p.16.
46 Sydney Morning Herald, 17 February 1928, p.16.
47 Sydney Morning Herald, 22 February 1928, p.16.
48 Sydney Morning Herald, 28 February 1928, p.12.
49 Damousi, The Labour of Loss, pp.35-8; Winter, Sites of Memory, pp.93-8; Luckins, The Gates of Memory, pp.87-106; Inglis, Sacred Places, pp.222-3.
commemoration. For instance, in 1922, the *Argus* reported that “in accordance with the spirit of solemn observance there was no street parade or other pageantry.” However, this brought about a less than satisfying day for most people, as the paper elaborated:

Many members of the public seemed uncertain how to spend Anzac Day. Crowds of men, women and children wandered about the city streets, apparently with the understanding that the anniversary was one for commemoration rather than celebration in the holiday mood, yet not knowing quite how to commemorate it or what to do with their day of freedom from work or school. 

This uncertainty led, the *Argus* was afraid to report, to some less than commemorative activities taking place: “The theatres and refreshment shops were open, and both had many visitors. So had the hotels, and now and then intoxicated men were to be seen in the streets. In some of the suburbs youths and men played cricket or football.” Needless to say, the *Argus* disapproved of this situation, as did other groups such as the RSSILA. Changes were made. Hotels were forced to shut, race meetings were banned, and marches were held.

Marches provided a focal point for the whole population within the evolving collection of ritual actions that made up Anzac Day in the 1920s. They provided an opportunity for all to participate in a public ritual that was both solemn and triumphal in its elements. The nation could come together to give thanks for those who had died to protect them, with those who had stayed also offering respect, admiration and love to those who had returned from defending them. The Melbourne *Age*, which subscribed to this logic, reported as late as 1931 that the returned men took front row “among a people united in grateful reverence.”

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50 *Argus*, 26 April 1922, p.11.

51 *Argus*, 26 April 1922, p.11. In its edition that day, the *Argus*’s rival the *Age* ran a mythical history of the AIF as its main Anzac Day story, as this was for the *Argus*. This history included a long description of the Gallipoli landing. A sample of the style makes a pointed comparison with the moral anxiety of the *Argus* story: “Under the hail of death the wave of youth rolls shorewards; surges upon the beaches, and essays the cliffs, as some great breaker leaping high in air. Across the beach, sweeping the last few Turks before them, by ridge to steep; now the young South is joined in battle with the ancient East; with the dawn and for the time the East is swept as sand before the South.” *Age*, 25 April, 1922, p.7.

52 *Argus*, 26 April 1922, p.11.

victory won, for justice and liberty preserved, and for the fact that it had come triumphantly through its first test, and that the greatest test of nations the world had ever seen. All could participate, either as marchers, or as adoring audience, depending on who they were. Roles were strictly prescribed, in the main, by a logic that gave pre-eminence to the returned soldiers, and placed the rest of the nation in a position of thankful indebtedness; and by the very structure of the march.55

Dawn services were mainly for the returned men, although this was because groups of returned soldiers, backed up by the Establishment press, enforced the exclusivity. The Age came to the point, in so doing illuminating deeper anxieties about social change:

Women have invaded walks of life, manners and customs that once were thought the sole preserve of man, and man has been the last to question their right. There are times, however, when he feels impelled to voice an objection. Such an occasion was the Dawn ceremony at the Shrine of Remembrance yesterday. In spite of many requests that the observance should be exclusive to men, several hundred women, singly, in groups and with male companions, attended an observance that is peculiarly that not only of men, but of returned men.56

Despite their prescriptive nature and resultant friction, there is evidence that returned men, at least, felt a profound sense of community in the marches:

ON THE MARCH: The Digger Feeling (by one who marched)

What a fine muster it is – crowds of men – an inspiring sight. All of them getting back in the old spirit of the AIF, happily renewing friendships as they found the old unit. Surely the war spirit was a big thing; to co-operate for an ideal! There must be something in that.

The signal to move off in columns of eights, the great feeling of swinging along behind a good band again in grand company; crowds of proud people lining the route, many women among them; a mother wearing her husband’s medals and bringing the

54 Age, 25 April 1931, p.8.

55 However, Inglis does give an example of a local grandmother assuming a prominent role in early commemorative rituals. Inglis, Sacred Places, pp.126, 198-200.

56 Age, 27 April, 1938, p.2, quoted in Joy Damousi, “Private Loss, Public Mourning: Motherhood, Memory and Grief in Australia during the Inter-war Years,” Women’s History Review, 8.2 (1999), pp.365-78, p.372. In 1939 the Age reported that “women are specially requested not to attend the [dawn] service.” Age, 24 April 1939, p.12.
young ones along to see the men march; many boys and girls, who will catch the proper spirit; very little clapping, but much enthusiasm – you read it in the eyes and faces and feel it in the air. It makes you proud, swinging along now down Bridge Street. The old feelings of wartime come back: the quiet determination to do one’s duty; the feeling of companionship. It is the march that had done it. We seem to be taking part in a piece of ritual – the close massed ranks become the symbol of the inner spirit of the unity of men fighting for an ideal. 57

This sense of community was part of the reason for the right-wing take-over of commemoration. By assisting, albeit imperfectly, many Australians to come to terms with their war experiences, marches were powerful rituals. Their control by right-wing forces was fundamental to the overall political and commemorative hegemonies created in the inter-war years by loyalist forces. 58

Social and formal politics came together at times. Some leaders of the returned men’s movement saw themselves as leaders of the nation in all things. In 1922 the Victorian State president of the RSSILA, Edward Turnbull, cast his eye upon the state of Australian post-war society and did not like what he saw. “Disintegrating forces” were at work, “but the league recognised that it had an important part to play in the promotion of national welfare.... It was for the League not only to minister to the requirements of returned soldiers, but to set an example in all that was upright and honourable in citizenship.” 59

For some returned soldiers, part of this example involved opposition to communism. Here again was a conflation of overseas and domestic memories. For example, in May 1928 the Melbourne sub-branch of the RSSILA called a meeting to consider how to prevent a recurrence of an incident that had apparently occurred on Anzac Day that year:

57 Sydney Morning Herald, 26 April 1928, p.10.

58 This control was enforced both economically, through Sir Otto Niemeyer’s 1930 mission on behalf of the Bank of England, which made clear the impotence of the ALP to dispute deflationary economic orthodoxies, and physically through the formation in the late 1920s and early 1930s of anti-communist paramilitary groups. See Macintyre, The Succeeding Age, pp.254-74; Michael Cathcart, Defending the National Tucks hop: Australia’s secret army intrigue of 1931, (Melbourne: McPhee Gribble, 1988); Andrew Moore, The Secret Army and the Premier: Conservative paramilitary organisations in New South Wales 1930-32. (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 1989).

59 Argus, 26 April 1922, p.11.
A document containing offensive references to the men who fought in the Great War, and alleged to have been issued by the Melbourne branch of the Communist party, was distributed in the street. A resolution was carried calling upon the Commonwealth Government to prevent any such flagrant abuses in future.  

The meeting had a more sombre warning for radicals, as well, declaring that “if an attempt were to be made to turn Australia into a Bolshevik country members of the AIF would have something to say in the matter.”  

The Victorian Governor also linked perceived past victories with envisioned future ones, telling his audience that “I feel sure that those who have returned will be a source of strength, showing by the lives which they lead that they are determined to overcome all difficulties, and to win through as they did on so many occasions during the war.”  

Whether returned soldiers appreciated this heavy extra pressure upon them to be “glorious” in peace is an open question, but research indicates many were not able to live up to the publicity.

III

As well as being the central figures in rituals, the Diggers were the main subjects of commemorative speeches and writings. What follows is not a comprehensive analysis of post-war commemoration, for it includes, for instance, none of the usual lamentations for the dead expressed on Armistice Day. I acknowledge that lamentation was a predominant response on that day, but wish to illuminate an area of commemoration which has been less fully explored – the numerous references to Australian victory and military supremacy common in the 1920s. This said, the section on Anzac Day does attempt to provide examples of all the important commemorative reactions, especially the extremely common conflation of death and triumph. In fact, the victory of 1918 was held up as the justification for all the sufferings and deaths of the war. The Western Mail report on Anzac Day as late as 1929 affirmed the notion, referring to “the emotions predominant in men’s hearts” as

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60 Sydney Morning Herald, 15 May 1928, p.12.
62 Argus, 26 April 1922, p.11.
63 Thomson, Anzac Memories, pp.157-74.
including "remembrance of the unreturning dead and...thanksgiving for the victory which was the result and the reward of a sense of sacrifice unparalleled in the whole history of the world." 64 This was the standard combination of grief and pride which Hughes had summed up in 1922: "our hearts swell with pride...but our eyes are wet with tears." 65 As Anzac Day was the most important commemorative day, it is examined in detail. However, first we shall explore the appearance of triumph in monuments, trophies, and the ritual days of Empire Day and Armistice Day.

Scholars are beginning to piece together an understanding of the early post-war period as a time of militarist commemoration. The key to this were the large numbers of trophies – objects taken from the enemy on the field of battle – which symbolised Australian victory. As Mark Clayton indicates, these field guns, machine guns and mortars, over four thousand in all, were distributed free to many municipalities. and, being free, were often the first war memorial in a particular area. Even after masonry memorials were constructed, the trophy guns remained part of the overall memorial, and thus "remained for many years integral, if not central, to the annual Anzac ceremony." 66 In fact, the practice of blending trophies with monuments neatly encapsulates the blending of the notions of triumph and sacrifice common to post-war Australia. Clayton also points out that the 173 guns captured by the AIF on 8 August 1918 at the Battle of Amiens "were all shipped to Australia and subsequently unveiled as war memorials, affording the only material evidence of Australia's crowning achievement." 67 Just as the AIF craved kudos, Australians generally sought physical evidence of the success of their nation's soldiers. 68 Some municipalities objected, for example, that their allocation was unworthy of their effort. 69

64 Western Mail, 2 May 1929, quoted in Seal, Inventing ANZAC, p.127.
65 Age, 26 April 1922, p.7.
68 Eric Andrews points out that Australians loved recognition, while Gerster argues that "the classicist Charis Rowan Beye could just as easily have been talking about the Diggers when he remarked of Achilles, Agamemnon, Ajax and company that they, 'like movie stars, can endure anything but being ignored.'" See Andrews, Anzac Illusion, p.178; Gerster Big-noting, p.2.
69 Clayton, "To the Victor," Part 3, pp.6-9; Inglis, Sacred Places, p.179; McKernan, Here is Their Spirit, pp.71-2.
Australians had strong emotional attachments to the trophies. For instance, on the same day that it reported the returned men’s opposition to communism, in May 1928, the *Sydney Morning Herald* claimed that trophies were “the last gifts of fallen soldiers themselves to their country, gifts meant by them to be a speaking record of the Alf’s adventures, its efforts, and its sacrifices.”

They created, the paper continued, “direct personal links to the heroes we would honour.” Trophies aroused strong passions, often linked to wartime politics. For instance, when the ALP Lord Mayor of Sydney, William Lambert, refused a gun for a local war memorial in Sydney in 1921, *The Bulletin* ridiculed him in a cartoon in which the Little Boy From Manly levels two devastating questions at “The Pacifist” which actively link militarism with Australian identity: “Doesn’t that stir your blood? Aren’t you an Australian too?”

The link between captured arms and emotional nation-building is readily apparent.

In addition to trophies, there were a small number of masonry memorials with bellicose themes. When erected within Australia, these monuments proved controversial. However, there was one really notable bellicose memorial outside Australia, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division Memorial at Mont St Quentin in France, which appears to have received a considerable measure of support. Erected in 1925, it stood, as Inglis points out, on the site of the Division’s “climactic triumph.” Its clear bellicosity reflects, yet goes far beyond, the image of Wellington as Achilles, sword in hand to ward off the foe. Here, the foe was seen at the feet of the victorious Digger, about to be ruthlessly finished off:

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72 *The Bulletin*, 3 February 1921. It was a sign of the militarist turn *The Bulletin* had taken that in 1905 it had ridiculed the British Empire as being an “Empire of JINGO ideals.” Quoted in Soutter, *Lion and Kangaroo*, p.116.

73 Inglis, *Sacred Places*, pp.223-4 discusses the reception of C. Web Gilbert’s *The Bomber*, a thoroughly “traditional” heroic representation of a Digger hurling a grenade.

74 Inglis, *Sacred Places*, p.260. The Memorial’s representations of this battle are explored in Chapter Five.
In its symbolic depiction of the Australian Digger destroying the German eagle, the memorial embodied both the moral righteousness perceived by loyalists to have animated the Australian cause, and the bloody racial triumphalism of Rider Haggard. It was certainly not designed to heal wounds or diminish wartime enmities, and in 1940, the invading Germans tore down the memorial.\textsuperscript{75}

Inglis sees this monument as an aberration, and in some respects it was. Few masonry memorials ever went to such bellicose extremes, principally because they were built to assist the bereaved with grieving at least as much as, if not more than, to symbolise triumph. The guns attached to those four thousand monuments provided ample triumphalism, in any case. However, the 2\textsuperscript{nd} Division memorial, being located in France, did not serve this domestic function. Moreover, the idea which it symbolised was extremely common in post-war Australian public war memories more generally. Literature, as Gerster has shown, was filled with tales in which the German Eagle was finished off by the Australian Digger, while commemorative rhetoric itself was replete with them. It became established Australian dogma in the inter-war years.

that Australians were superior soldiers. Further, the eminently mainstream Sydney Morning Herald informed readers approvingly about the monument on the tenth anniversary of the battle:

This battle was considered by higher command as one of the most spectacular and important of the war. The Second Division decided to erect on this famous hill a monument commemorating its operations in Europe, and a noted Australian sculptor, the late Mr Web Gilbert, was commissioned to prepare the design and carry out the work. Two years ago on the anniversary of the battle, this monument was unveiled by Marshall Foch, in the presence of a distinguished gathering, including the High Commissioner for Australia, Sir Joseph Cook and Mr W.A. Holman. The site on which the monument rests was given to the Second Division in grateful acknowledgement of the deliverance of the village from the hands of the enemy.

This was an aberration, then, endorsed by the same man who endorsed the fighting qualities of the AIF in the foreword to Bean’s guide to the Memorial, and by Australia’s first wartime Prime Minister. The last sentence is notable, for the rhetorical use of foreign thankfulness was common in post-war Australian commemoration, but connecting that thanks to such bellicose imagery was not. This adds to the complexity of our model of Australian commemoration, for in other places foreign thankfulness was represented as most clearly associated with sacrifice.

Triumphalism continued in Empire Day speeches. The birthday of Queen Victoria, 24 May, saw many panegyrics to the arms of the Empire, and the President of the United Imperial Navy and Army Veterans’ Association felt this was as it should be: “Empire Day [gives] veterans an opportunity to perpetuate the memory of great leaders and brilliant feats of arms.” Empire Day was also a day when children were urged to prepare themselves for battle, something which was far less common on Anzac Day or Armistice Day, the two strictly commemorative days. On the same page as the Sydney Morning Herald report quoting Matthews was one in which the New South Wales Attorney-General, Francis Boyce, told 2,500 children at Chatswood Intermediate High School that “my advice to the children is, when it is necessary, to

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76 Sydney Morning Herald, 31 August 1928, p.12.
fight with all your might for the Empire, which guards and protects us and which will continue to do so as long as the Union Jack floats over this Commonwealth.\textsuperscript{78}

Triumph was even seen on Armistice Day, although this was much rarer. Australians generally followed the advice of Archbishop Weddy, who argued on Anzac Day 1922 that they should “sound a note of affectionate pride on Anzac Day and the more mournful note of tender regret on Armistice Day.”\textsuperscript{79} However, in 1927 the Sydney Morning Herald ran an article by F.M. Cutlack, Bean’s former collaborator in his work as a war correspondent in 1918 and later editor of The War Letters of General Monash – a stalwart of the rhetorical apparatus which interpreted the war for Australians.\textsuperscript{80} Cutlack, who had stated in 1919 that the image of Australia had become “that strong, picturesque, romantic figure of the Australian soldier,”\textsuperscript{81} now wrote in unambiguous terms of triumphalism:

Citizen soldiers from an unwarlike people, a people utterly untrained in arms, they never failed in battle before the mightiest army the world has ever seen…. We may…be proud of the indomitable tenacity of our soldiers on the Somme and at Ypres, and of the valour and resolution exemplified in the counter-attack of Lagnicourt, the night assault upon Villers-Bretonneux, and the storming of Mont St Quentin. Mothers, wives, and sweethearts may mourn those who died there, but the nation as a whole will lack something of the spirit of its manhood when its war memories have forgotten the proper pride and exultation in those feats of arms. Let our people by all means recall, and recall with meek tenderness, that many brave men died, but let them never cease to remember that before all but death they were invincible.\textsuperscript{82}

It seems clear from this article that not all Australians felt that only a mournful note of tender regret need be sounded on Armistice Day, and that praise of victory was

\textsuperscript{78} Sydney Morning Herald, 25 May 1928, p.14.

\textsuperscript{79} Argus, 26 April 1922, p.11.


\textsuperscript{81} Quoted in Williams, Anzacs, the Media, p.25.

\textsuperscript{82} Sydney Morning Herald, 11 November 1927, p.12.
appropriate then also. The narrative elements used are important, for during the inter-war years there was a clear relationship between the use of narratives, which invariably climaxed in great Australian victories, and triumphalism. Further, the insistence that victory ought to have primacy over sacrifice shows, I feel, the main thrust of mainstream Australian public memories in the first decade or so of the peace.

Anzac Day saw a great deal of triumphalism, but as with Armistice Day there was no single response to the war expressed that day. Indeed, examining *Anzac Day*, the publication of the Queensland Anzac Day Commemoration Committee, helps trace the contours of 1920s commemoration.83 This pamphlet is useful because it conveniently collected sermons and speeches from around the State, and thus offers a sampling of mainstream commemoration. In such commemoration early after the war, solemnity was seldom the predominant emotion. The 1924 edition, recording speeches made the previous year, had definite triumphant overtones, but was relatively restrained from that perspective compared to later editions. This was because it also included, as its first several pages, photographs of the unveiling of the Stone of Remembrance and Cross of Sacrifice in 1924. These pictures, with the Governor-General presiding, clergy and high-ranking officers to the fore, Union Jacks draped on buildings in the Toowong Cemetery, and an accompanying naval honour guard with bayonets drawn, offered a solemn beginning to the volume. Also, the preface informed readers that 350 returned soldiers had been buried in the cemetery since their return from the war.84 This was, however, the most solemn section of the book, for the speeches printed in the edition, all from the previous year’s ceremonies, were a litany of praise for national military successes and the national attributes they were thought to have illustrated.

The first speech, that of the Governor at the Brisbane Anzac Day Commemorative Meeting, contained a classic nationalist connection between past and present warriors, similar to that used by the Hobart *Mercury* had in 1915:

When I was a boy I read many times “A Voice From Waterloo,” an account of the fight by one who had fought there as a non-

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83 This group claimed to have created the rituals of the day, and to have been the first to decide to hold commemorative marches in 1916. H.J. Diddams, *Anzac Commemoration 1921: A brief history of the Movement: Sermons and addresses delivered throughout Queensland: The Immortal story of the Landing*, (Brisbane, s.n., 1921), pp.7-12.

commissioned officer and was then still living and every year when the 18th June came round I pictured to myself, as I still do, the happenings on the Flemish battlefield on that momentous day of 1815. Now every year before the 25th April I read of the landings at Gallipoli, and think of the dogged attack on that day in 1915 as a companion picture to the one of the resolute defence of one hundred years before.  

The Governor’s speech continued with a standard recounting of the story of the Landing, and finished with a plea that the dead never be forgotten. The Governor actually named some men as examples, and then made another plea, that compounded military deeds with national posterity:

I hope, if there is not already a history of the work of the 9th [Queensland] Battalion at Anzac, one will be prepared to preserve, in a form which boys can read, the story of the deeds of the Queenslanders who fell fighting there, and of those who, happily for us, still gloriously heighten the value of the people of this country. There is no battle story of the Empire more worth while the telling.

The Mayor of Brisbane, Alderman Harry Diddams, referred to the Battle of Amiens as “one of the greatest exploits of the world war,” and included in his speech another message from Marshall Foch: “You saved Amiens! You saved France!” The Mayor of Townsville dwelt upon “a loyalty and devotion that was faithful unto death,” arguing that this loyalty “hence enabled them to confer upon Australia a glory that will never fade.” Speaking to the undergraduates at the University of Queensland, Major R.A. Hendy agreed: “When the Empire was called upon to arms the response was magnificent.... Those who answered the call, in the main, did so in the true spirit of patriotism.” The strongest triumphalism came in an excerpt from In Freedom’s Cause, an award-winning essay published in 1923. Concentrating on 1918, its author


86 Anzac Day. 1924, p.4.

87 Anzac Day. 1924, p.9.

88 Anzac Day. 1924, pp.10,12.

89 Anzac Day. 1924, p.15.
Henry Tarden (a.k.a. "Anzacophile") wrote of "the irresistible Australians, who crowned their victory by storming the supposedly impregnable Hindenburg line." The 1924 edition also included a tribute to the AIF from the Bishop of Amiens which expressed thankfulness for "deliverance," an appreciation of Australian martial virtues, and an appreciation of martial nationalism as keen as that of any Australian:

As Bishop of Amiens I owe you and your illustrious Dead my heartfelt thanks, because the land of my Diocese has been your field of battle and you have delivered it by the sacrifice of your blood... 

It takes blood to cement the foundation of a country, and you could not refuse it in the World War, to the cause of Christianity. You have indeed lavished it with a saintly generosity, and in so doing have written a glorious page in the history of Australia.  

This was one of the most complete examples of martial nationalist responses to the war. In 1925 the pamphlet reported the speeches surrounding the unveiling of the Stone of Remembrance and Cross of Sacrifice in the Toowong Cemetery. It included speeches by the Governor-General and the ALP Premier at the dedication, and a sermon preached by Canon David Garland, "the life and soul" of the Queensland ADCC, along with a commissioned article on war memorials and a large number of photographs of local memorials from around the State. The speeches ran the gamut of inter-war commemorative interpretations, including lamentation, triumphalism, and political attacks. The Governor-General signalled a triumphant note: "The pages of history will record the undying story of their triumph. So long as the British race last their fame shall live. And so we set the Stone of Remembrance, and fame." The Labor Premier, however, made a passionate plea for peace:

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90 Anzac Day, 1924, p.29.

The only lasting comfort or reward for those who lost their sons, their brothers, their husbands, or their fathers, is the fulfilment of the promise of a lasting peace. There is no doubt that the 64,000 Australian soldiers who gave up their lives with those of other parts of the Empire did so in that hope. These men were told from ten thousand platforms and pulpits that the war was a war to end war and to save the world, and they risked and gave their lives in the honest conviction that this was so...

It behoves teachers, preachers, statesmen, scholars, editors and authors and Governments throughout the Empire this day to remember that promise to the living and the dead, and to see to it that their every utterance and action conforms to it, for by so doing the broken-hearted, with their burden of loneliness and their legacy of sorrow, and those with their physical sufferings, may take real consolation from the King’s message of 1916, in which he said: “May those who mourn their loss find comfort in the conviction that they – the soldiers – did not die in vain.”

Added to these somewhat mixed messages was the Canon’s sermon, preached at the Requiem Eucharist on Anzac Day 1924, addressing the biblical text “Their Name Liveth For Evermore” that was inscribed on the Stone in Toowong. Much of it was pious, and quite standard as well, with, for example, loyal mention made to the King’s 1922 pilgrimage to continental war cemeteries and the assertion that “in the long annals of human history the stories of their self-sacrifice and heroism will be handed on from generation to generation.” What made this speech remarkable was its vicious attack on shirkers, a common enough topic for wartime sermons, but now seen six years on. The Canon contemplated an experience he had had during the war after meeting some of the AIF in Palestine:

I thought of that unselfishness which, to me, stood out more vividly than to them, because I had not long before been in the streets of the capital cities of Australia, where I had seen men sturdy in health leaning against veranda posts as they waited for trams to racetraces. There would have been fewer deaths in the aggregate had those who hung back shown the same spirit of sacrifice as those whose name liveth for evermore. As we think of that additional sacrifice of life made necessary by the selfishness of some, I blame not only those who refused to go,
but even more the whole body of Christian influence which was so weak and feeble that it had not built up the true ideals of sacrifice and duty.  

This was a powerful attack six years after the war had finished. Taken with the other two speeches, the note struck was not primarily of victory, although that was a significant idea. Contemporary politics intruded so strongly that it tended to somewhat overbear the other two speeches, and overtake either victory or sacrifice as the main theme.

While these commemorative developments were occurring, the notion that the memory of the dead, and the dead themselves, were sacred was also very strong. As Mosse affirms, such feelings were at the heart of the Myth of the War experiences, for through the latter “the memory of the war was refashioned into a sacred experience which provided the nation with a new depth of religious feeling, putting at its disposal ever-present saints and martyrs, places of worship, and a heritage to emulate.” It seems unlikely that “sacred” nationalism would be fully developed without such war-created developments. It feeds off the emotional intensity which wars produce, and thus, the strongest sense of nationalism requires war, and blood sacrifice, for it to develop. This was Bean’s understanding; although he did not worship war, he saw it as a positive experience for his nation.

After the war, Australian commemorative rhetoric abounded with “sacred” references. A Sydney Morning Herald letter to the editor on Anzac Day 1928, entitled “Anzac: A Vision,” provided a dramatic stage for the sentiment, along with a seminal enunciation of it. This letter, written by Captain L. Nisbett Wright, details the writer’s visit to Gallipoli, where he feels a communion with the dead heroes entombed there. He is visiting the grave of one of his old friends, who, he claims, “died in my arms with a smile on his lips in those great old days,” a sentiment straight from Ashmead-Bartlett’s first wartime dispatch, indicating that the peace had not dulled the ability of writers to create romantic notions of war far at odds with the realities as we now know

95 Anzac Day, 1925, pp.11-12.

96 Coming directly after the anti-conscriptionist Premier’s article, it may have been designed to rebuke him.

97 Mosse, Fallen Soldiers, p.7.

98 Ehrenreich makes this point also. See Blood Rites, p.205.
them to have been. Regardless, the writer is at Gallipoli, and he hears a bugler signal “The Last Post.” It is then that he is moved to communicate with the dead:

A great emotion overwhelmed me. I stretched out my arms to the mighty dead, and cried, “O spirits of the great dead, a comrade greets you; may your spirit purify the motherland from baseness and self-seeking; then your great sacrifice will not have been in vain! Farewell, I salute you!” I turned around and found my way down to the beach as in a dream. As I stepped on board the launch, a crisp voice said banteringly, “Colonel [sic], you look as though you had seen a ghost.” “I have stood on holy ground,” I replied in a low voice, and as the launch receded from the shore, I could hear the voices of the dead Anzacs calling, calling across the water as in olden days.

The plea to the dead to return in spirit and save a society seen as increasingly in need of “the Anzac Spirit” was common in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Some expressed hope that such spirit might repair the damage of the Great Depression, others that perceived failures of the peace might be overcome by it.

In 1928 Anzac Day published an entirely different collection of articles, all dedicated to praising the counter-attacking victory ten years before on 25 April at Villers-Bretonneux in France. W.M. Hughes, as he had in his parliamentary speech on the Versailles Treaty, listed some of the battles he felt Australians had excelled themselves in:

This day stands for Gallipoli, and also for Messines, Pozières, Bapaume, Villers-Bretonneux, Albert, Mont St Quentin, Péronne; it stands for the action in April 1918; it stands for the glorious hundred days, and the triumphant advance of the Dominion troops, amongst whom the soldiers of Australia – in five divisions acting together – formed one of the main parts; and it stands for that wonderful campaign in Palestine which culminated in the shattering of the military power of Turkey in what was perhaps the greatest military victory of the war; for Mesopotamia; for the “Sydney” and the “Australia”; for all that our men did on land and sea and in the air. Anzac Day stands for

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99 Ashmead-Bartlett wrote: “I have, in fact, never seen the like of these wounded Australians in war before.... Although they were shot to bits and without hope of recovery, their cheers resounded through the night....” Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett, *Ashmead-Bartlett’s Despatches from the Dardanelles: An epic of heroism.* (London: Newnes, 1915), p.77. See also *Argus*, 8 May 1915, p.19

100 Sydney Morning Herald, 25 April 1928, p.6.

101 Damousi, *The Labour of Loss*, p.35.
all of these. It is like a great pillar set up on a wide plain, so that all may see it from afar, a monument of courage, of endurance, of sacrifices, reminding us now and for all time of the day when this country and its liberties were in deadly peril, and of how we were saved, and the price.\textsuperscript{102}

This was true triumphal commemoration, and it was supported in fine style by the next article in the pamphlet, written by Brigadier-General C.H. Foot on the same subject.\textsuperscript{103} This was, without doubt, a more triumphal message than that of just three years before, and the main factor that led to the overall triumphalism were these two narratives of victory. Lamentations for the dead were entirely absent from the 1928 pamphlet. The tenth anniversary of the 1918 victories was the high point of inter-war triumphalism, as an anniversary function for the victory on 8 August 1918 at Amiens helps illustrate.

As a legitimately decisive battle, Amiens was widely eulogised throughout Australian commemorative rhetoric of the inter-war period. On 9 August 1928, the \textit{Sydney Morning Herald} reported that on the previous evening there had been a reunion of 1,600 ex-servicemen in the Town Hall - with seats in the upper galleries open to the public - to commemorate the victory of a decade before. Under the headline “August 8: A Great Victory,” and accompanied by a large photograph of the celebrants, the report illustrated vital acts of remembering and forgetting that those present were undertaking in their public representations of the battle, and of the war. The appropriateness of celebration on this day was firstly underlined by the paper, which argued that “August 8, 1918, was the day of reborn hopes, the day when, of all days, the Allies struck certainly towards victory.”\textsuperscript{104} Secondly, the journalist claimed that the gathering, while not coming together “to glorify an appalling war,” were consciously rejecting memories of the war’s negative aspects:

\textsuperscript{102} \textit{Anzac Day}, 1928, pp.4-5. Hughes had told parliament something quite similar in 1919: “Not only on the Western Front, around Villers-Bretonneux - that glorious name - at Mont St Quentin or Peronne, or in the piercing of the Hindenburg line, did the troops of Australia take a splendid share in achieving victory, but also in Palestine, where, perhaps, the greatest victory of all ages was achieved by the forces under General Allenby, the flower of whose Army was made up of Australian soldiers. Where Coeur de Lion and Napoleon had failed, Allenby succeeded; and as soldiers of Australia in the frozen and sudden trenches of France and Flanders had endured and battled so did their brothers press forward under the burning sun of Palestine, and across its deserts, to achieve a great and complete victory.” Quoted in Clark, \textit{Sources of Australian History}, pp554-77, p.555.

\textsuperscript{103} \textit{Anzac Day}, 1928, pp.6-7.

\textsuperscript{104} \textit{Sydney Morning Herald}, 9 August 1928, p.12.
The blood, the disaster, the death; the enemy – none of all this they very vividly remembered.... There were, in fact, millions of incidents to be remembered, matters much more pleasant than the days when a man went on climbing in and out of shell holes, cold one minute, sweating the next, hungry yet cursing the meat that is packed in tins for soldiers, fighting and worse, waiting, and always, in one way or another, suffering.¹⁰⁵

During the celebration, however, the speakers did not even allude to these negatives, as the journalist did.¹⁰⁶ Rather they dwelt, as in the case of the Governor, the British Admiral Sir Dudley de Chair, on glory, and Australian military success in a decisive battle:

It is fitting that we should meet and talk over our battles on this memorable day – the 8th of August. It is a day that none of us should ever forget, for you remember that Ludendorff, that famous German General, in his diary of the war, referred to this day as “the black day of the German Army.” This day marked the commencement of a great offensive along the whole Allied line, and the result was the signing of the Armistice. Australians have every good reason to remember this offensive, for the various Australian Divisions once more covered themselves in glory and renown of their gallantry and conduct on this occasion, and played a most important part in bringing the offensive to a successful termination. (Cheers).¹⁰⁷

Later W.M. Hughes, then a backbencher, rose – to “an outburst of cheering that lasted several minutes” – to respond on behalf of the soldiers to the Chairman’s toast to “The Day We Celebrate.”¹⁰⁸ He made it clear that, to his mind, victory in battle was

¹⁰⁵ Sydney Morning Herald, 9 August 1928, p.12.

¹⁰⁶ Following his study of soldiers’ folksongs, which included the examination of reunion ephemera, Graham Seal concluded that “it is clear from the tone of re-union literature that such reminiscence [as occurred] was mostly of the ‘good old days’ variety, with a de-emphasis of the negative aspects of the wartime experience.” Graham Seal, Digger Folksong and Verse of World War One: An annotated anthology, (Perth: Antipodes Press, 1991), p.3. He quotes the foreword to a 1938 collection of Digger songs: “[The] Compiler offers them to you hoping that they will bring back to you in these piping days of Peace happy recollections of some occasion, pleasant thoughts of dear cobbers, and help to preserve that fellowship that existed to such a marked degree in the AIF.” Patches, (Adelaide, 1938), quoted in Seal, Digger Folksong, p.3.

¹⁰⁷ Sydney Morning Herald, 9 August 1928, p.12. Incidentally, the Admiral received a mention in one of the Memorial’s displays, through a German medallion “struck for the purpose of satirising” him. Relics and Records, April 1928, p.11; December 1931, p.44. I have chosen to cite three guides: the first, the last before the December 1928 rearrangement of the Sydney exhibition, and one close to the publication of Australian Chivalry.
the greatest element of national history: “In the history of all nations there are events which stand out like great mountain peaks above the rolling downs of their ordinary lives. These events mark crises in their history, victories gained, disaster averted, liberty won.”109 There was no mention here of failure as a spur to nationhood in the manner of the modern Anzac Legend. Victories gained, disaster averted and liberty won were all triumphal notions that were integral to traditional martial nationalism as it had been expressed in the pre-war era. Hughes then made it clear how the Battle of Amiens formed part of this vision of national history, using his typical Biblical touches:

Tonight we celebrate a great event in Australia’s history, and in that of all civilised nations – the opening of the great offensive that turned the tide of war, and brought the peoples of the world – long walking in the Valley of the Shadow of Death – within sight of the sweet green pastures of peace.... We do well to celebrate this great event in which Australians played a leading role, which meant so much to Australia, to the Empire, and to the civilised world. (Loud cheers).110

Hughes’s conception of the importance of this battle includes all the elements of post-war Australian martial nationalist commemoration. Firstly, Hughes felt that the battle had led directly to a better world, safe from the Valley of the Shadow of Death. He implied that now, after the successful completion of the war, Australians were indeed in “the sweet green pastures of peace.” Australian soldiers had had a vital part in this battle, with its wonderful outcome, and thus it was fitting, in Hughes’s nationalist view, that the battle be celebrated. The governor, a British Admiral during the war, agreed, illustrating the close links between Australian loyalist nationalism and traditional Imperial views of the value of military victories.

Yet it was the “sweet green pastures of peace” that were vital to the whole argument. If the battle was not seen as leading to such a favourable outcome – if it had not averted disaster and won liberty – it could not have been constructed in this way, for it was the battle’s result that was the focus of the argument. If listeners felt that they were not then walking in the sweet green pastures of peace the whole case


110 Sydney Morning Herald, 9 August 1928, p.12.
would not survive scrutiny. If listeners were to retort that the battle had led to "death and debts," which was the position Neville Howse declared in 1926 that some people had adopted, the entire line of reasoning would fail.\textsuperscript{111}

The toast to which Hughes had responded included an uncommon and surprising argument which indicated the high level of positivity towards the war's outcome that was still felt in many quarters in Australia. The Chairman had argued that the war had brought prosperity to Australia, while reiterating the standard argument that the Australians had been masters of war:

Ten years ago, the whole five Australian divisions went into action as one body. Now, 10 years afterwards, a German cruiser was visiting Australia, and they were pleased to know that officers and crew of that cruiser would find Australia in a very prosperous condition. That was a great result of the war. (Cheers). The Australian soldiers...were victorious in many wonderful battles, and were now, in peace, achieving wonderful things.\textsuperscript{112}

To argue that the war had been full of "wonderful battles" was to make a case diametrically opposed to anti-war literature, while the argument that the war had enriched Australia, never especially popular, seems at odds with the increasingly difficult economic position of mid-1928. That the 1,600 attendees cheered the latter assertion leads one to raise an eyebrow; perhaps the refreshments were being liberally partaken of. The most important fact here, though, is that the men were celebrating "a great victory," even ten years later, and in a climate where some were questioning the nature of the war experience.\textsuperscript{113} This incident provides strong evidence that such anti-war interpretations were actively rejected by influential returned soldiers and politicians, and the loud cheers throughout the speeches suggest the rank-and-file went along with the rejection, and with the equally conscious forgetting of unpleasant parts of the war experience. In short, victory was still publicly popular and a major part of Australian public memories of the war in 1928.

\textsuperscript{111} Quoted in Inglis, \textit{Sacred Places}, p. 217.

\textsuperscript{112} \textit{Sydney Morning Herald}, 9 August 1928, p.12.

\textsuperscript{113} On opposition to war during the 1920s, see Carolyn Rasmussen, \textit{The Lesser Evil? Opposition to war and fascism in Australia, 1920-1941}, (Parkville: History Department, University of Melbourne, 1992), pp.6-18.
Such affirmations of victory continued until the mid-1930s, when the rise of Hitler and the deteriorating world situation led many to believe that the victory of 1918 had been either lost or chimerical in the first place. The sweet pastures of peace looked less green with each passing week in the late 1930s. The Spanish Civil War signalled the end of any remaining optimism. Also, the Depression had broken the direct connection with most of the political actions taken during the war, as the press of more immediate concerns – the seemingly overwhelming need for economies, for example – pushed many of the pressing wartime concerns to the edges of public discourse. For the Left, it was now more important that there were thousands of returned men in indigent circumstances than that the capitalists had profiteered during the war, but both accusations were clearly connected.

By the end of the inter-war period, the confidence of its first decade was gone. A poem written by a woman whose sweetheart had died at Gallipoli, and printed prominently in the *Age* on Anzac Day 1939, indicates the change in mood. It displays considerable sadness and an underlying bitterness, while eschewing triumphalism of any sort:

We had been middle-aged now, you and I;
Happy, my heart is sure, fulfilled and kindly.
The years that dimmed the rapture and fire
Of Love’s first flame would leave their own fair dower
Of deep content, or perfect comradeship.

...So do I dream on this Anzac Day; and taste
The never-ceasing heartache of such dreaming.
For I am ageing, lonely, childless, loveless;
And you, beloved, sleep on Anzac’s Beach.

Our love was newly born when War erupted,
Fragile and shy; unspoken. I wear no ring of yours,
No right is mine to rank in love’s proud sorrow
With Mothers, Wives, Betrotheds, on Anzac’s Day of Pain.

However, there had been intimations even from the early post-war period that the peace was not living up to expectations. This is exemplified by the *Age*’s mythical history of 1922, which contrasted “the foretold millennium” with the greed-filled, foreign-influenced strife of the post-war period: “The idealist is engaged in another and more lucrative line of business than wartime idealism. Miserable strife from Europe has engendered strife among us here. We have been infected by foreign pestilences: always these pestilences have troubled us with vile sectarian wrangles affronting common sense and common decency, and contemptible political and industrial strife, based on the common greed. By this ignoble and diseased strife the Australian people have as yet been cheated from the attainment of their inheritance – a nation for their making.” *Age*, 25 April 1922, p.7.
I am the spinster, withering, loveless, bitter.
You sleep for ever young by Suvla’s curving bay.

... Have we betrayed you, you, the heart’s beloved?
You and your comrades, heroes we extol?
Did you not die to break the power of evil,
To build a brave, bright world of peace and Christ’s own dream.

YET... see the war-clouds, the fear, the greed among us.
Our sacrificial dead, our shining ones heroic,
Do we mock you and set you at naught, And rob you of final achievement?
Was it all in vain that you yielded your youth and your manhood?115

IV

The Right’s main rhetorical strategy was to assert the positive aspects of the war, which were mostly “sentimental” – such as the creation of the nation, the revelation of Australian character, and Australian success in the most important international event that had ever occurred, the Great War. The Left, on the other hand, sought to make the pain and loss of the war years the primary issue, trying to tap in to a feeling of rebellion against the existing order which the war precipitated and which saw revolutions in Russia and Germany, riots in Britain and Australia, and the formation of right-wing paramilitaries in Victoria and New South Wales amid the fear of communist revolution. Early in the post-war period, especially, the Left tried to use the real feelings of disenchantment and bitterness which were the legacy of the conscription debates to unite a voting bloc against the Government. They, too, used memories as political weapons in order to gain and enhance political power, as the example of the Australian Worker’s One Big Union cartoon attests.

It is useful here to make a distinction within the Left, based on attitudes to nationalism. “Mainstream” Left groups and individuals accepted the idea of nation, and indeed many pronounced themselves passionate nationalists. Included in this group were most members of the ALP and moderate unions, as well as moderate labour newspapers. On the other hand, “radical” Leftists, such as the communists, rejected the idea of nation entirely, claiming it was artificial and simply a method for capitalists to control society. These attitudes implied greatly differing attitudes to war commemoration, given that it was cast almost wholly in national terms in Australia.

115 Age, 25 April 1939, p.3.
Mainstream Leftists often agreed with their right-wing opponents that the soldiers had fought and died for the nation, that thereby they had placed the rest of society in their debt, and that they ought to be honoured publicly. They disagreed, however, with the martial turn which nationalist rhetoric took in the hands of right-wing speakers and writers. Radical Leftists had rejected the war’s prosecution, following Lenin in claiming it was an imperialist power struggle, and now they rejected both the nationalism and commemoration of the war, recognising in these the diametric opposites of their internationalist, class-focused political theories.\textsuperscript{116}

Both mainstream and radical Leftist groups referred often to the poor economic situation of many returned men, and called upon Hughes to honour his wartime pledges.\textsuperscript{117} The labour papers, which generally had a more radical bent than politicians did, attempted to show the people that the Imperial cause had simply been that of the capitalist, and that, basically, they had been duped. For example, in April 1922 \textit{The Australian Worker} ran a story exposing the fact that a British firm had sold artillery to the Turks (presumably before the war), and that this war matériel had then been used on the Allied soldiers:

\begin{quote}
The Bedford war trophy makes it evident that British workmen applied their skill to the fashioning of death-dealing instruments, which instruments in time (their capitalist owners having made a lucrative deal out of them meanwhile) were used for the slaughter of British soldiers, and that Bedford women are widows today and Bedford children are orphans through this means.\textsuperscript{118}
\end{quote}

This behaviour was not considered treason, the paper cried bitterly, only good economic policy.

One strategy used by the majority of the labour papers in most years was to completely ignore Anzac Day, concentrating instead on the plans for the upcoming May Day celebrations. However, \textit{The Australian Worker} leader of 26 April 1922 carried the title “Anzac Day.” Unlike Establishment editorials, it concentrated entirely

\textsuperscript{116} McDonough, \textit{The First and Second World Wars}, pp.36-7. This was in the era before Joseph Stalin inaugurated the slogan of “Socialism in One Country,” after which socialists were able to reconcile their beliefs with nationalism. See Thomson, \textit{Europe Since Napoleon}, pp.669-72.

\textsuperscript{117} See, for example, “Unemployed Returned Soldiers: Prime Minister’s broken promises,” \textit{The Australian Worker}, 14 April 1922, p.14.

\textsuperscript{118} \textit{The Australian Worker}, 19 April 1922, p.19.
on the plight of unemployed Diggers, without a single mention of the exploits of the AIF, or of the war itself. Opposite the leading article was a cartoon showing the contrast between the grand image of the Anzacs' status in society and the sad reality for unemployed returned soldiers.

The radical *The Worker's Weekly* tried a different tack in 1923. In an article entitled "Capital and Labor: Patriotism and war," the paper repudiated martial nationalist doctrine, asserting an organic connection between "the national spirit" and a destructive "war spirit:"

Patriotism of the kind: "My Country, Right or Wrong!" is being taught in the schools of Australia. The children are told all about England's soldiers and kings from Alfred the Great to George V.... Everything being done in the way of saluting flags, praying for "God, King and Country," etc, etc, is being done to inculcate a spirit of patriotism in the children. Thus the dope of the militarists is still being circulated. Britain and the Empire is the real religion of the patriots.... Britain, France, or America, or wherever the Imperial religionists live, is the only sacred thing...

Communists must counteract by every means in their power these terrible doctrines. We must hold anti-war and anti-patriotic demonstrations. We must hold our own button-days. A "NO MORE WAR" button and button day would be a good thing in this direction. Hurry on, Comrades! Fight against Patriotism and Capitalism's wars!\(^{119}\)

This was a complete rejection of the right-wing understandings of the war seen above, and of the British Public School ethos which underpinned much of it. It was also a rejection of the emotional attachments described by the Digger "who marched," and thus of commemoration itself. The communists had no time for such "bourgeois sentimentality;" they were focussed on the material conditions of Australian society, and it was far from clear to anyone in 1919 that the war had brought about any improvement in these for most workers. On the contrary, real wages had fallen considerably since 1914, and would not regain their pre-war level until 1921.\(^{120}\) This was the crux of the matter for radical Leftists; a war-time poster that appeared in the

\(^{119}\) *The Worker's Weekly*, 16 November 1923, p.1.

\(^{120}\) Ward, *A Nation for a Continent*, p.110.
IWW journal Direct Action asked whether the home in Australia that “father” fought and died for was something worth fighting and dying for, implying that it was not. In post-war Australia, this idea was still very much to the fore in radical thinking.

The Worker’s Weekly, and its previous incarnation, The Communist, were not afraid to attack soldiers, either, something which more moderate Leftists, such as ALP politicians, almost never did, mindful of their eminent stature in post-war society. For instance, in December 1922 its youth supplement, The Young Communist, carried a poem titled “The Soldier’s Creed.” Perhaps a response to wartime “The Anti’s Creed,” this verse made its point in the crudest of terms:

“Captain, what do you think,” I asked
“Of the part you soldiers play?”
But the Captain answered, “I do not think
I do not think, I obey!”

“Do you think you should shoot a patriot down,
Or help a tyrant slay?”
But the Captain answered, “I do not think,
I do not think, I obey!”

“Do you think your conscience was made to die,
And your brain to rot away?”
But the Captain answered, “I do not think,
I DO NOT THINK, I OBEY!”

“Then if this is your soldier’s creed,” I cried,
“You’re a mean unmanly crew:
And for all your feathers and gilt and braid
I am more of a man than you!”

For whatever my place in life may be,
And whether I swim or sink,
I can say with pride: “I do not obey,
I DO NOT OBEY, I THINK!”

The Young Communist had no time for the soldier – unless it be the class soldier, perhaps.

The paper was looking to posterity in the same manner in which the nationalists (and Nationalists) were, and ran, alongside the poem, a primer entitled

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122 The Young Communist, December 1922, p.4.
"The Class Struggle," which began "I want to tell you why there is a Young Communist movement here today."\textsuperscript{123} The extent of the battle for young minds then raging between nationalism and socialism was never more evident than here if one compares this to the children's Anzac Day service in Moore Park reported in \textit{The Sydney Mail}.\textsuperscript{124}

Not surprisingly, \textit{The Communist} also attacked mainstream commemorative rhetoric. In 1922 it published a cartoon re-working the mainstream commemorative slogan "Lest We Forget," with a demonic Hughes wielding the whip of conscription.\textsuperscript{125} Then, in a direct attack on the rituals of Anzac Day in 1923, \textit{The Communist} unleashed its full invective on capitalism, the Nationalists, and all they stood for:

\begin{quote}
On Wednesday, 25\textsuperscript{th} April, a section of the Australian Working Class paused in its task of making profits for the Boss, and united with our exploiters in honouring the sacred name of ANZAC.

Eight years have passed since these working-class stalwarts essayed to scale the impregnable heights of Gallipoli at the instance of a blunderous gang of incompetent imperialist swash-bucklers.\textsuperscript{126}
\end{quote}

This was the diametric opposite of Bean's most cherished values, as well as those of Australian mainstream commemoration, and as we shall see in Chapters Four to Six, of the main messages of the Memorial, as well. The communists were announcing a willingness to engage the Right in a direct battle for control of public memories of the war, and especially of their political interpretations. As mentioned, they were trying to show Australians that their political leaders had lied to and manipulated them. Ultimately, though, the Right won the battle of the war memory, being able to effectively take over definitions of ideal national attitudes as a result. The Leftist efforts at redefinition of wartime stereotypes and the attempts to steer commemorative

\textsuperscript{123} \textit{The Young Communist}, December 1922, p.4.

\textsuperscript{124} \textit{The Sydney Mail}, 26 April 1922, p.20. Manning Clark quotes a girl claiming she had gone to a Socialist Sunday School. Clark, \textit{The Young Tree Green}, p.170.

\textsuperscript{125} \textit{The Communist}, 1 December 1922, p.2.

\textsuperscript{126} \textit{The Communist}, 11 May 1923, p.1.
impulses into radical political outlets was a failure on a grand scale. By the late 1920s the Leftist papers had very little to say about the last war.

The victory of the Right can, I believe, be put down to three main factors. Alistair Thomson points out two of them, asserting that loyalists won "the battle for the Anzac Legend" in the inter-war years because they "achieved control of public commemoration, but also because the version of the war that they enshrined in commemoration fulfilled the subjective needs of the majority of Australian ex-servicemen." Control over commemorative public rituals had important consequences, giving the Right a monopoly on the positive images which could be attached to war memories, and allowed the widely-held and deeply-felt urge to commemorate to be channelled into public memories which tended to legitimise both right-wing conduct of the war and continuing direction of national affairs. This was vital. It might be added that the former was made possible by right-wing federal political power, and the second facilitated by the alliance formed between the Nationalist Government and the most prominent returned soldier's organisations, which effectively co-opted a majority of the returned men. Thirdly, the emotional commitments that many Australians had made to the cause during the war, in the uncompromising conscription campaigns and through the voluntary nature of the national army, generated an inclination to accept positive interpretations of the war memory, and therefore of its conduct by parties of the Right.

The Right won the "battle for the Anzac Legend," and therefore, in public memories at least, martial nationalism held sway. This was the background against which and in relation to which the Memorial was created and functioned. As an integral member of the Digger-Nationalist complex, the Memorial added much to the speeches and writings we have considered in this chapter. For the Memorial held the trophies and relics, the objects which served as evidence for many of the claims of military supremacy made by the likes of Hughes and Cutlack. For example, as Chapter Five explores, it contained convincing evidence that the Australians had beaten back the enemy at Villers-Bretonneux, just as Hughes said they had. It also

127 Thomson, Anzac Memories, pp.128-142.

128 On this issue see Thomson, Anzac Memories, pp.118-28; Beaumont, "The Anzac Legend," pp.149-80, pp.168-75; Cathcart, Defending the National Tuckshop, pp.82-100; Kristiansen, The Politics of Patriotism, pp.3-24.
provided a complete history in a public space, lending its authenticity as a museum to all claims based on assertions of extraordinary Australian military competence, be they made on behalf of returned soldiers or of the nation in general. Thus it strongly supported the Anzac Legend. In turn the speeches and writings of officers, politicians, clergy, journalists and others added a tacit authority to the Memorial’s own explanatory labels through their repetition. Moreover, the respect and deference offered to the museum and to Bean personally as authorities by the RSSILA and others provided it with vital cultural power.

Bean’s ideas were, however, his own, infused throughout with his sincere and passionate love for his nation and his integrity and adherence to a set of strict moral principles. Bean did not use the past as a weapon to castigate those who had been on the other side of the conscription divide, as Canon Garland did. He was a thoroughgoing loyalist, but his Memorial never accused other Australians of being disloyal even while reiterating the Imperial cause. As Ken Inglis affirms, he disliked any political rhetoric which did not take the whole of society as its basis. Thus, the politics of division, a Hughes speciality, were anathema to him. He wished to protect the “fighting reputation” of the AIF, and to simultaneously inspire future generations. The imprint which Bean laid upon the Memorial was very strong. The next chapter therefore explores Bean’s life, his beliefs, and his plan for a martial nationalist museum as a memorial.

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128 The Memorial did not support the political assertions and denunciations with which Hughes often followed his triumphal narratives.

Chapter 3: C.E.W. Bean and the Plan for a Memorial

Figure 15: C.E.W. Bean, by George Lambert.
Source: Australian War Memorial Collections Database.
cas.awm.gov.au. Painting ART07545

The Memorial was primarily the brainchild of C.E.W. Bean, Australian Official War Correspondent and Official War Historian. He guided the Memorial’s life from its inception to the time of his death in 1968, drawing up the official plan for the institution, lobbying the government, writing labels and guidebooks, and shaping the label-writing work of Treloar. Bean was an ardent Anglo-Australian and British nationalist, a sensitive man of integrity who was devoted to the AIF, and a master of subtle propaganda who put his heart into his work. The Memorial’s rhetorical position, one of considerable complexity, mirrored Bean’s own conflicting feelings about the war. He was legitimately appalled by the death and the horror, yet saw overwhelmingly positive signs for his nation emerging from the war. He loved the AIF, and he was proud of their contribution to the war effort. He wanted to defend and enhance their reputation, both because of his emotional tie with the troops and because he sincerely felt they deserved great praise according to his English public school standards.
The institution which Bean planned to perpetuate the AIF’s memory was also a product of his worldview. It was informed deeply with his passionate martial nationalism and Public School ethos of chivalrous conduct in achieving military victory through strength of limb, purity of heart, and boldness of spirit. Feeling honestly that Australians had demonstrated such virtues, Bean sought to incorporate them as morals in national fables attached to objects, especially trophies, which linked audiences with the actions of the AIF. Through this link, Bean hoped, audiences would form a link with “spirit of the AIF,” and it was, ultimately, this connection he wished most to facilitate.

Bean’s vision was generally accepted, and received wide endorsement by political elites, who were the main group who debated the Memorial. There were, however, some dissenters, and their existence illustrates that there were alternative ways of viewing the Australian war experience to that of Bean. Bean saw the horror, but on balance felt that the war experience had been positive for the Australian nation. Others felt the negative results were too great and outweighed any positives. Some could see nothing positive in the war at all. Such people, who included ALP politician Frank Brennan, opposed the Memorial. This reminds us that the Memorial represented a particular vision of the war, which I have dubbed the “national” interpretation.

I

Although Bean was born in Bathurst, New South Wales, and later became a major Australian nationalist activist, he was at first an English nationalist, then an Anglo-Australian, which he remained (within certain parameters) until he died. Bean lived in England from the ages of ten to twenty-five, and developed a strong emotional attachment to the people and the landscape, in exemplary nationalist style. For example, Bean described his joy at returning to England from holidays overseas: “We climbed into one of the clean glossy carriages of the clean glossy English train standing there ready amid the clean smells of tar and rope on the wharf, and set off to race for an

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1 Bean was born in 1879 and died in 1968. This section does not attempt to provide a biography, merely examining certain beliefs and experiences relevant to the War Memorial project. No full-scale published biography of Bean exists, although biographical information may be found in K.S. Inglis, “C.E.W. Bean,” ADB, vol. 7, pp. 226-9; Inglis, Bean; Stephen Ellis, “C.E.W. Bean: A study of his life and works,” MA Dissertation, University of New England, 1969, pp. 10-41; and McCarthy, Gallipoli to the Somme, pp. 9-97, which provides a colourful picture of Bean’s life up to the beginning of his involvement with the AIF.
hour or so between the gentle English hills.” He enjoyed seeing carters and porters “going about their business without shouting or gesticulation – just doing their job in the matter-of-fact, quiet English way,” and ultimately felt “a certain deep spirit of content and agreement that expressed itself in that orderly quietness.”

The sense of an almost spiritual fulfilment which Bean experienced turned out to be readily transferable to his native land when he returned to Australia. Off the coast of Western Australia he had a pleasant shock of recognition, for the porters of England had been replaced by men on the bridge of an Australian tug, “cold, silent, business-like figures:”

We had come 12,000 miles, and we seemed to have forgotten that men who ministered to the wants of the great steamer, or the extravagance of the passengers, could steer a boat or give a command or sell a shawl or load a cart without such swearing and jabbering and spitting of fire and flinging about of arms as reminds the uninitiated of a dog fight.... Here we were 12,000 miles from England; and here at last, at the end of the world, were men of English race, English order, English quiet, and the English language. It was very much like a coming home.

The landscape, too, excited him: “What beaches those are! I have not seen the like of them in Europe.... I doubt if the children of Australia realise their luck.” Later, he was “enraptured,” Dudley McCarthy claims, by the Mount Kosciusko high country, and called the far New South Wales outback “the real Australia.” Bean’s Australian nationalism was also emotionally-laden, then, and this passion stayed with him for the rest of his life. Bean had enormous affection for Australians.

The feeling of “coming home,” of recognising “English” behaviour patterns and values in Australians, grew in Bean in the years he was in Australia before the war. He actively searched for these values in Australians, for their importance had

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2 C. E. W. Bean, “What England Means to Me,” manuscript for an address to the Women’s League of Empire, Sydney, March 1934, quoted in Inglis, Bean, p.5.


6 See McCarthy, Gallipoli to the Somme, p.64; Inglis, Bean, p.12.
been impressed upon him by his father and his schooling, and he felt he found them in many places, especially in the bush. Early travel through country New South Wales when he was a judge’s associate led him to this conclusion, and he reported his findings in a series of articles published in the Sydney Morning Herald entitled “The Impressions of a New Chum.”

In an article entitled “The Australian,” Bean made several important assertions about Australian men which would later help shape his view of the Australian as a soldier. Drawing on ideas which had been concerning Australians since the 1880s, he argued that “Australian country life . . . has hammered out of the old [British] stock a new man,” whom he described, in phrases reminiscent of Henty, as “tall, spare...clean and wiry rather than muscular.” In character, “the Australian and the Englishman are very near to one another,” Bean felt, and elaborated that a simple logic had led Australian men to embrace the ideals of the chivalrous English gentleman. The character of the typical Australian was “the simplest imaginable...taking everything on its merits, and nothing on authority.” This scepticism was extended to “men,” Bean argued, their reputations meaning nothing, and being required to prove themselves, especially if they were of a traditionally superior English gentlemanly class. However, those of high birth who displayed “delicacy or generosity or courage” were embraced, as “the Australian is the first to recognise these qualities,” for the

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7 That is, 1904-10, and 1913-14. The remainder of the time he was stationed in London as the representative of the Sydney Morning Herald. See Inglis, Bean, p.13; ADB, p.227.

8 Inglis mentions the fact that this title was somewhat unusual, as a “new chum was ordinarily a raw immigrant rather than a returned native.” Inglis, Bean, p.9.

9 Bean did not often dwell on the qualities of Australian women, although he did refer to them in a general way at various times.


Australian was "pre-eminently a lover of the truth." Bean felt that the gentlemanly code he had learned in England was a universally beneficent life credo, and was extremely happy and enthusiastic about observing elements of it in ordinary Australians.

In addition, Bean wrote in his books on the outback, *On the Wool Track* and *The Dreadnought of the Darling*, that Australians in the bush exhibited "typically Anglo-Saxon traits" such as initiative, versatility, inventiveness and courage, as Ellis observes. These were traits Bean later ascribed to the men of the AIF. Further, as Ellis argues, "the thesis of [Flagships Three] was that there was a quality of 'sea-faring-ness' peculiar to the Anglo-Saxon race which made it virtually inevitable that Australia would become a naval power." This quality had, Bean felt, enabled Australians to seize and hold the continent.

Bean was a firm believer in the notion of national "spirit," and often in the pre-war era envisioned this in military terms and expressed it in military metaphors. Considering the military potential of Australian men, he asserted that "the Australian is always fighting something...[such as] drought, fires, unbroken horses, wild cattle; and not unfrequently [sic], strong men." Bean felt that "all this fighting with man and nature, fierce as any warfare, has made the Australian as fine a fighting man as exists." However, he was not, Bean claimed, a soldier, for the Australian questioned the wisdom of dying "just because somebody with half a yard of gold lace on their cuff is making a fool of himself." In a final twist, though, Bean felt that the Australian male had in him the stuff of military greatness:

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16 Ellis, "Bean," p.128.


19 Bean, "The Australian," p.6. The idea that Australians were too undisciplined to be called real soldiers was still being raised in early 1917, when General Sir Henry Rawlinson commented that the Australian Imperial Force were "fine fighters but...not soldiers." Quoted in Andrews, *The Anzac Illusion*, p.103. There were numerous other examples of this criticism by British officers, but
If the right and reason of going to be killed is clear to him, he will be killed cheerfully and with a very pretty courage, and will do a deal more damage before he is killed, and perhaps – if you will pardon it – will not be killed at all in the end, and that where 99 out of 100 would be slaughtered like sheep.\(^{20}\)

Here, perhaps, was the seed of Bean’s Anzac Legend: tough, resourceful men, willing to sacrifice themselves for a good cause, but, in all likelihood, being so tough and resourceful as to not actually be sacrificed, rather surviving, even thriving, on the battlefield.\(^{21}\) As we shall see below, when he went with the First Contingent, Bean was hoping his predictions of 1907 would come true, and after an anxious early period, he decided to his enormous satisfaction and relief that they had.

A significant factor in Bean’s nationalism was an attraction “to England’s military and naval glory, past and present,” as Ken Inglis observes.\(^{22}\) In textbook martial nationalist style, he was “brought up on tales of Crécy and Agincourt, Trafalgar, Waterloo, the Indian Mutiny and the Crimean, Afghan, Zulu and other British wars.”\(^{23}\) As a youth, he had responded to these tales with a romantic imagination, creating a military hero, “John Mo.” Bean’s brother John later remembered that this worthy had begun as “a humble American Negro” and “ended up as ‘Field Marshall John Mow’, I fancy with an epitaph on his tomb – probably in [Westminster] Abbey. One of the pictures depicted his earning the V.C. – running an Indian hill tribesman through with his officer’s sabre and fending off other attacking

Rawlinson’s is notable because the Memorial later prominently displayed his glowing praise of the AIF in 1918. See Chapter Four for details.


\(^{21}\)Lawson had forcefully expressed this idea in “The Star of Australasia:”

\begin{center}

There are boys out there by the western creeks, who hurry away from school

To climb the sides of the breezy peaks or dive in the shaded pool,

Who’ll stick to their guns when the mountains quake
to the tread of a mighty war,

And fight for Right or a Grand Mistake as men never fought before.

\end{center}


\(^{22}\)Inglis, Bean, pp.5-6.

\(^{24}\)The quote is from C.E.W. Bean, Anzac to Amiens: A shorter history of the Australian fighting services in the First World War, (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1948), p.9. Inglis deduces that Bean was referring to his own upbringing in this passage, in which “Australians” in general are actually mentioned. I follow Inglis’s interpretation. Inglis, Bean, p.6.
Indians."\(^{24}\) The latter image is reminiscent of Louis Desanges' *Lieutenant William Kerr winning the V.C., July 1857*, one of the famous Victoria Cross series which was exhibited almost constantly in the Crystal Palace in London from 1862 to 1880, and reproduced extensively.\(^ {25}\) In many ways, this idealised image of the clean-limbed, noble young officer gallantly taking on the foe never left Bean's imagination, and it certainly blended with his developing ideas of nationalism to inform his attitudes to heroism and nationalist education.

Bean's interest in British arms extended to the contemporary hardware of the navy. He pored over naval publications, and stated that these were the highlight of his week. When he became a journalist in Australia, he was able to turn professionally to the navy. In 1908 he went to Auckland aboard the HMS *Powerful*, flagship of the Royal Navy squadron on the Australian station, to meet the U.S. "Great White Fleet." Bean came away from this first close encounter with British military men with a great respect for "those brave, quiet, great-hearted men."\(^ {26}\) Bean's book on his experiences, entitled in Henty-like fashion *With the Flagship of the South*, culminated in a call for an Australian navy, for even though "Sir H. Campbell Bannerman at the Imperial Conference gave his word unasked to the Colonies that Britain would be responsible for their safety at sea without seeking anything back...it is hardly worldly wisdom to put even one's best friend to a test like that."\(^ {27}\) He felt the fulfilment of his naval dream was quite possible, for Australians "are Anglo-Saxons; and anything that can be done, the Anglo-Saxon stock can do."\(^ {28}\) Indeed, in the preface to the second edition of the book, Bean marvelled that, due to the danger represented by Japan, "within less than a year of what the writer thought was a far-off prophecy...an Australian Navy has come"\(^ {29}\)

\(^{24}\) John Bean, quoted in Inglis, *Bean*, p.7.


\(^{27}\) Bean, *With the Flagship*, p.128. As well as calling for the formation of a navy, Bean was a member of the Australian National Defence League, whose *raison d'être* was the establishment of compulsory military service. See Ellis, "Bean," p.21.

\(^{28}\) Bean, *With the Flagship*, p.119.

\(^{29}\) Bean, *With the Flagship*, Preface.
With the Flagship finished with “a fascinating dream,” a militarist vision, accompanied by a quote from The Iliad in the original Greek, of “a great Admiral – one whose name goes for more in the courts of the world than a Prime Minister in the old time” – bringing “the Australia-China fleet back for its yearly trip to the home waters.”30 Bean felt that the best place to defend Australia was in China; forward defence was his creed before the war. The blatant militarism of the admiral whose name “goes for more in the courts of the world than a Prime Minister in the old time,” while perhaps exemplary of his naivety at that time, was reinforced many years later by a more sober meditation on the war, in which he speculated that if the First World War had gone on longer, some men may have been given special civic honours for their prowess in battle.

Bean’s first experience with British men of arms, and his subsequent call for an Australian navy, also brought to the fore his interest in education, and his concern with living a moral life. Taking the latter first, it is revealing that he describes a Royal Navy clergyman aboard the HMS Powerful as preaching “the gospel of a straight, clean, simple life.”31 Bean was much concerned with the “clean,” the “straight,” and the “upright,” especially as ideals for the young to strive to, and his war writings are full of such allusions. He was referring to the ideals of the English public schools, which he had taken as his creed for life. These ideals included patriotism and a group of moral values which were thought of as being essentially English. Bean summed up much of his thinking when he wrote of his own understanding of the values symbolised by the flag carried by ships of the Royal Navy:

It stands for each and every one of those ideas – for generosity in sport and out of it, for a pure regard for women, a chivalrous marriage tie, a fair trial, a free speech, liberty of the subject and equality before the law, for every British principle of cleanliness in body and mind, in trade or politics, of kindness to animals, of fun and fairplay, for a politeness that is no mere foreign paper currency, but, like a Bank of England note, represented by so much gold in bank cellars, politeness that will be made good in real life by real

30 Bean, With the Flagship, p.118. The quote was from Book 22, in which Achilles chases then kills Hector: “It was not for a sacrificial beast or an ox hide...” The complete quotation is “It was not for a sacrificial beast or an ox hide that they strove, such as are men’s prizes for swiftness of foot, but it was for the life of horse-taming Hector that they ran.” Homer, Iliad, Books 13-24, A.T. Murray (trans.). (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999), p.465. I am grateful to Emeritus Professor Bob Milns of the University of Queensland for this translation.

31 Bean, With the Flagship, p.130.
sacrifices if need be, for British games and the right to play them, for the British Sunday, for clean streets and a decent drainage, for every other canon of work and sport and holiday, and a thousand and one ideas, wrung out by British men and women from the toil and sweat and labour of nine hundred years, that make Anglo-Saxon life worth living for the Anglo-Saxons. 32

This passage reflected not only British nationalist propaganda, but also the racial nationalism that had become popular in the late nineteenth century. It complemented the martial nationalism we have already examined, and neatly summed up the gentler sides of the ideals of the gentleman.

To these notions can be added the more bellicose ones expressed in Henry Newbolt’s poem about his Alma Mater, “Clifton Chapel” (1898).

To set the cause above renown,
To love the game beyond the prize,
To honour, while you strike him down,
The foe that comes with fearless eyes;
To count the life of battle good,
And dear the land that gave you birth,
And dearer yet the brotherhood
That binds the brave of all the earth.33

Here were some of the notions of chivalry that were extremely influential in the image and ideal of the English gentleman in the late nineteenth century. 34 The element of ferocity here should be underlined, for it was a significant aspect of the ideal of a cultured English gentleman at the turn of the twentieth century, as well as being extremely popular in Australian “greater public schools.” 35 A gentleman ruled, and had to be able to enforce his authority if necessary.

32 Bean, With the Flagship, pp.129-30.
35 On the glorification of militarism in Australian public schools, see Crotty, Making the Australian Male, pp.74-94.
Bean appreciated Newbolt’s poem to the point of using another of its lines as the title of his history of independent schools in Australia, published in 1950, *Here, My Son.* He also followed both the tone and the poetic style of this verse when in 1909 he ended his call for an Australian Navy to defend White Australia with a poem of his own:

To harbour no uncleanness;
To own no mortal fear;
Deem hateful only meanness
And only honour dear;

And fresh and frank and fearless,
And as the ocean free,
With strenuous hand
Make good the land,
And wrest and rule the sea.

Taken altogether these were Bean’s most cherished values, which he addressed in his writings again and again over the next thirty years or so: cleanliness of body and soul; fairness of conduct in peace and war; chivalrous yet ferocious combat; a just, healthy and prosperous civil society; public-mindedness in all conduct. After long and intimate contact with his native land, Bean was to add to these the Australian notion of egalitarianism, arguing that this represented a huge improvement over England’s class system. Bean wrote about these issues in many places, beyond the *History* and the Memorial. This dissertation looks only at some of these, because the Memorial did not discuss civil society or conduct in peacetime, only in war, and only in the 1914-18 war.

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36 C.E.W. Bean, *Here, My Son: An account of the independent and other corporate boys’ schools of Australia* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1950). The line used was the first one:

This is the Chapel; Here, my son
Your father though the thoughts of youth,
And heard the words that one by one
The touch of life has turned to truth.

Newbolt, *Poems New and Old,* p.76.

37 Bean, *With the Flagship,* p.132.

38 Moves to widen the Memorial’s commemorative focus in the 1920s failed. Thus, Boer War veterans were excluded from the Roll of Honour in its planning stages. See *CPD, Representatives,* vol.111, 16 September 1925, pp.2483-9.
Bean’s interest in education brought together his nationalism and his public school life creed. Take for example his discussion of the prevailing method of choosing and educating young naval officers. He noted with satisfaction that they were firstly chosen for their “pluck, wit, morals,” and that they had “the pick of the nation to teach [them], men chosen for what they are more than for what they know.” The first great hero of the Island Story would, Bean felt, pass on his racial legacy to a new generation of warriors, for their teachers had, along with the best schools, “all the traditions of the same navy with which Alfred drummed the Danes to back them.” For Bean this was the best of all worlds, educating the mind, body and character of the young officers.

To Bean’s mind, traditions were a vital force in education: “If one says that in a school of little boys it may be the thing to use cold water rather than hot, not to growl at a fair defeat, always to put the school first and yourself after, and never to tell a mean lie, they may understand how traditions mean more than anything else.” As a corollary, Bean warned of the “forces of disunion” that he felt were attempting to destroy the British Empire, but felt that “so long as the big things in life, which are sentiment, bind the Anglo-Saxon race together, there is no fear of disunion.” He scornfully dismissed “trade! As though it were a pennyweight in the balance against that sentiment for which they [people who opposed an Australian Navy] have a portentous, ignorant contempt.” This educational ideal, emphasising the moral over the material, embodied an idea that was extremely common in British and Australian thought in the pre-war era.

70 Bean, With the Flagship, p.123, italics added.
71 Bean, With the Flagship, p.123.
72 Bean argued that “the proper object for education is every part of the boy which can be educated – that is: body, mind and character,” but “the most important of the three qualities of every Australian is character.” C.E.W. Bean In Your Hands, Australians, (London: Cassell, 1918), pp.89-90. In making such an argument, Bean echoed Herbert Spencer’s 1870 monograph, Education: Intellectual, moral, physical, (London: Williams and Northgate, 1870).
73 Bean, With the Flagship, p.123.
74 Bean, With the Flagship, p.129.
75 Bean, With the Flagship, p.129.
76 Crotty examines the anti-intellectual bias in many public schools in Making the Australian Male, pp.31-94.
Displaying another aspect of his belief in tradition, Bean gave powerful evidence of his attachment to the nationalist idea of the immemorial past in his two navy books, *With the Flagship* and *Flagships Three*. In the latter he perceived a direct continuity between a Viking longboat, the HMS *Powerful* and the new flagship of the Australian Navy, the HMAS “Australia.” The longboat was, Bean felt, “the first flagship of our race,” and he had a vision of the occupants of the vessel: “some of the first ancestors of our race, coughing the North Sea fog through their sagging red moustaches and heavy beards.” Bean stated that the book recounted “the birth of the latest of a very famous and ancient and heroic line of Navies – the coming of the first-born to the British Navy.” In following such a course Bean was underlining yet again his attachment to the prevailing Australian “pan-Anglo-Saxon” nationalism which would continue to surface often in the period up to the end of the 1920s at least, and the supposed Nordic racial legacy, much beloved of those considerable number of Australian nationalists who were influenced by social Darwinist theories of racialism.

In many ways, then, Bean’s nationalism was an archetypal “martial” case, anchored in a strong emotional bond, dwelling on the perceived virtues of the national group, and pre-occupied with the defence of that group and its territory. It was given expression in writings on such large nationalistic questions as defence, education, immigration, and the Imperial “blood tie.” In 1913, when he published *Flagships Three*, his nationalism was about to be greatly enhanced by his service in the First World War.


47 Bean, *Flagships Three*, p.x.

48 The term “pan-Anglo-Saxon nationalism” was coined by Douglas Cole in “The Problem of ‘Nationalism’” to refer to Australian racially-based nationalism. Cole’s thesis is that Australian national identity was based on a perceived “racial” tie with Britons all over the world, but especially in the British Isles themselves. Cole’s thesis, if not his phraseology, has been generally accepted. Humphrey McQueen, for example, writes of “race patriotism,” and the intensification of perceived ethnic solidarity in the early years of the twentieth century, coinciding with the rise of Japan as a world power, is well documented. McQueen, *A New Britannia*, p.10. Social Darwinist ideas remained popular after the war, when, for example, in 1927, Mr J. Lyng. Harbinson-Higginbotham Scholar at the University of Melbourne, wrote of the Australian population in terms of the proportion of “Nordic,” “Alpine” and “Mediterranean” racial groups. See J. Lyng. *Non-Britishers in Australia: Influence on population and progress*, (Melbourne: Macmillan, 1927). Bean himself published a defence of the White Australia Policy in 1907 in *The Spectator*, and again in 1913 in *Flagships Three*. Ellis argues that “his historical assumptions remained basically Darwinian” throughout his life. Ellis, “Bean,” p.103.
Bean’s war service was the pivotal experience of his life. His connection to Australia and Australians grew enormously under the strain of war. Observing first the bearing of Australians under fire, and later their military successes, reinforced and deepened his love for his countrymen, and kindled in him a great awe and reverence for Australian servicemen – for their character, and for the deeds he felt were motivated by it. Along with this attachment, a passionate and abiding desire to commemorate these deeds, and this character, in words and symbols arose in Bean. The war brought together Bean’s ideas of service, nationalism, and “spirit” as an educational tool, his somewhat romantic attachment to Imperial military history and his tendency towards hero-worship, manifest in a desire to depict the AIF as heroes. All these factors impacted upon Bean’s evolving ideas about commemoration, and one of the principal results of this coalescence of sentiments and experiences was the creation of the Memorial.

From his first association with the AIF, Bean hoped that the troops would display the same “English” virtues that he felt he had seen in the bush workers of New South Wales and in an officer cadre that had welcomed him, but expressed concern over whether they would.\textsuperscript{49} For instance, Bean had been told that the “second lot” – the 4th Brigade, a new Light Horse Brigade, and 3,000 reinforcements – were “a big fine lot, mostly country men owing to the new method of selection by which a man can be selected in the back blocks by police without coming to Sydney or Melbourne or the other capitals to try his luck.”\textsuperscript{50} Bean hoped that these men, being country-bred, would behave well. However, there were reasons to expect otherwise, as “a hundred or so of them got ashore without leave, and made a name for Australia in Colombo (some of the officers in the force since they have arrived tell me the thing is

\textsuperscript{49} This cadre were generally public school-educated as well, and thus shared many of Bean’s most precious values. It included Brudenell White, Neville Howse, William Birdwood and Bean’s brother John. Ellis makes this point also, and argues that Bean’s “transparent honesty and discreet patriotism” helped win over these and other officers after initial scepticism of war correspondents as a rule. Ellis, “Bean,” pp.83 and 25. See also Andrews, who is less sympathetic to Bean, arguing that “his reluctance to judge between good and bad Australian officers, together with his partiality for Birdwood and White, in whose small coterie he felt at home, weakened his analysis.” Andrews, \textit{Anzac Illusion}, p.145.

exaggerated: others say it was not...)" What's more, "the first incident we saw" was a man being caught going AWOL (amusingly enough "down the rope in the bows"). As well as this man, "four others got away before the military police got them. The ship was crowded with men...who booed the police.... One couldn't help thinking that we are in for a hot time in Cairo if they are all going to be like this." Fortunately, he noted, "the flagship, which came in just after, seemed to contain a much steadier lot." Bean's tension and apprehension, as well as his hope, are clear in these lines.

In seeking a positive resolution Bean turned to the ancient idea of redemption through battle:

I think we have to admit that our force contains more bad hats than the others, and I think also that the average Australian is certainly a harder liver. He does do bad things – at least things that the rest of the world considers as really bad.... I think that the Australian will have to rely on the good things he does to wipe out the bad ones; and I think the sum will come out on the right side when it is all toted up. That is my great comfort when I wonder how I shall ever manage to write up an honest history of this campaign. I fully expect the men of this force will do things when the real day comes which will make the true history of this war possible to be written.

Bean was committed to presenting as "true" a history as possible, but clearly wanted to present the men in a good light. Concentrating on military successes would do this, and would even allow some of the men's vices to be transformed into virtues, through the argument that the Australians' wildness helped them in battle.

Bean was following a well-established tradition of "the sacralisation of war" in his determination to focus on actions on the battlefield. The idea that battle could redeem had received expression in such places as Ancient Greece, where Pericles, in his oration over the Athenian war dead (in 430 BC) that Bean later excerpted to use as the Memorial's motto, argued in terms strongly reminiscent of Bean's:

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53 Bean, *Gallipoli Correspondent*, p.41.
It seems to me that the consummation which has overtaken these men shows the meaning of manliness in its first revelation and in its final proof. Some of them, no doubt, had their faults; but what we ought to remember first is their gallant conduct against the enemy in defence of their native land. They have blotted out evil with good, and done more service to the commonwealth than they ever did harm in their private lives.\footnote{Thucydides, \textit{History of the Peloponnesian War}, Rex Warner (trans.), (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1954), p.148.}

Later, during the Christian era in Europe, “participation in a crusade [had] had the…effect [of] cleansing a man from prior sin and guaranteeing his admission to heaven.”\footnote{Ehrenreich, \textit{Blood Rites}, p.171.} Of course, Bean was not specifically making such a spiritual assertion, but there was an element of immortality in the notion of the everlasting commemoration which Bean developed. Generally, his classical education at Clifton and Oxford University strongly influenced his attitudes to commemoration.

Bean was also concerned with the men’s behaviour and morals because he saw his job as official war correspondent as consisting partly of propaganda work for the AIF, aimed at home front morale: “the bright side has to be written up in one’s letters [dispatches], and that leaves a great deal more than the due proportion of criticism for the diary."\footnote{Bean Diary, 3 April 1915, quoted in Bean, \textit{Gallipoli Correspondent}, p.49.} After the AIF went into action he stated that he was seeking to present “scenes that will stir Australian pride…which is what the nation I represent wants to hear.”\footnote{Memorandum to AIF First Division Headquarters, 27 June 1915. Attached to Bean Diary, 26 June 1915, in Bean, \textit{Gallipoli Correspondent}, p.135.}

In working as a propagandist, Bean was following a tradition of British war correspondents stretching back to the late nineteenth century. His views mirrored those of William Maxwell who, when reviewing his own career in 1913, said that “in loyally serving the Army” the correspondent “serves best in the end the public, his newspaper and himself.”\footnote{Roger T. Stearn, “War Correspondents and Colonial War, c.1870-1900,” in John M. McKenzie (ed.), \textit{Popular Imperialism and the Military, 1850-1950}, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), pp.139-61, p.145.} Also part of the correspondent’s traditional role was Bean’s desire, echoing a statement made by the famous correspondent Archibald...
Forbes in 1879, the year of Bean’s birth, “to write so as to earn the respect of soldiers.” Bean was devoted to the AIF, and remained so decades after it had been officially disbanded; for him, as for many returned men, the Force never really demobilised. Bean wrote in large part so as to earn the men’s respect, and it is clear that he succeeded completely. Prominent former soldiers, such as his friend Brudenell White, praised him generously for his dedicated work “in the interests of the Australian soldier.” Bean also generally followed the nineteenth-century correspondents when, as Roger Stearn argues, they “tough-mindedly saw the horrors of war in this context [colonial wars, 1870-1900] as the necessary price of victory and a condition of heroism, not as dominating or condemning war.”

Bean was content to be a propagandist, but he would not lie, nor, as he stated, would he give his country “soft pap.” Thus he needed the men to “do well” in battle. If they did, all the poor discipline would be forgotten. As a consequence, when it became clear that the AIF were about to invade the Dardanelles, Bean looked forward to a successful first engagement. He was confident in early April; casting his eye upon his brother Jack’s 3rd Brigade, chosen to land first at Gallipoli, he declared that “if it’s a difficult landing I should say these fellows are just the men to carry it out. Whatever else they can do they can certainly fight.”

However, when the men did actually invade the peninsula, Bean found himself extremely anxious. Would they really do well? The narrative of excitement, worry and relief that fills Bean’s diary for 25 April 1915 was fuelled by the depth of his commitment and attachment to the men and the nation they represented. Early in the morning, before he could see the battlefield with any clarity, Bean’s early April optimism evaporated, replaced with a deep anxiety about the success of the attack:

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61 Stearn, “War Correspondents,” p.145. Henry Gullett told Bean that he did this to an excessive degree. See McCarthy, Gallipoli to the Somme, p.294.

62 The last paragraph of Bean’s last volume on the AIF, published in 1942, made this clear. The AIF, it declared, was “not dead,” but “Marches down the long line of history, with bands playing and rifles slung.” Bean, The AIF During the Allied Offensive, p.1096.

63 Sydney Morning Herald, 11 October 1927, p.11.


65 Bean Diary, 4 March 1915, in Bean, Gallipoli Correspondent, p.43.

66 Bean Diary, 3 April 1915, in Bean, Gallipoli Correspondent, p.48.
4.45 [a.m.]...Not a sign yet from the beach. Only that ceaseless knocking, knocking, knocking. Presently a curiously oval object floats past us low in the water. It is a small rowing boat bottom upwards. That was the first sign we saw.

Now at last as we moved in we could see on the sea, just below the line of the beach, a swarm of small boats – small boats everywhere. They seemed to be going each on its own and going every sort of way – rowing, not being tugged some were stationary – or seemed so. It is hard to tell at this distance. “I don’t like the way they’re all scattered about,” said a staff officer near me. Some seemed as though they might be helping others in difficulties.

The warships are firing more heavily now – there go two great turret guns together. The enemy is still scattering his shrapnel over the water but always between the ships or just short of them.

5.15: Two shells pretty close to us. Those small boats returning for all they are worth each on its own – we can see them much clearer now – makes one just a little anxious. Why are they going so many ways – digging out for all they are worth [?] Has the landing been beaten off – is this the remnant[?]67

Perhaps the men were not going to prove great fighters, as he had predicted. Perhaps he had observed them incorrectly, after all. Perhaps they were going to fail in this, their first great battle. Perhaps they were being beaten off by the Turks, considered at that time to be fighters of a much lower quality than the Germans the British Army was engaged with.68

This anxiety continued until the light began to improve, when Bean was finally able to confirm that the attack was progressing reasonably well, to his great relief:

6.45...Ten minutes later someone sees men upon the skyline. The rumour gradually spreads around. At 7.17 I heard of it. Through the telescope you can see them, numbers of them – some standing full length.... Are they Turks or Australians [?] The Turks wear khaki, but the attitudes are extraordinarily like those of Australians.69 Just below them, on our side of them a

67 Bean Diary, 25 April 1915, in Bean, Gallipoli Correspondent, pp.61-2.

68 Even after the Gallipoli campaign this feeling remained common, with Haig famously telling White in 1916, “You are not fighting Bashi Bazouks now!” Quoted in Grey, Military History, p.103.
long line of men is digging quietly on a nearer hill. They have round caps. I think clearly you can distinguish that round disc-like top. They are Australians! And they have taken that further line of hills! – three ridges away you can see them; the outlines of men on the furthest hill; men digging on the second hill; and the white flags of signallers waving on the ridge nearest the shore..."70

The sense of relief Bean felt on realising that the men were doing so well is very evident in his diary. This was success. Not total success, perhaps, but as much as the British Army had enjoyed on the Western Front, a substantial achievement within the context of the war up until then.

Confidence restored, within days Bean was writing contentedly that “the Australian, when he fights, fights all in. And the Turk knows it – he is said to be afraid of us.”71 He continued on to note with satisfaction that Australians were great soldiers, as he had predicted:

The truth is that there is no question (at least for operations such as those we have had) that the Australian leaves the N. Zealander behind. There is no doubt on this subject amongst those who have seen them fight here. The N.Z. man is a good trustworthy soldier, but he has not the devil of the Australians in him; the wild pastoral independent life of Australia, if it makes rather wild men, makes superb soldiers.72

This superiority was, in the best old Imperial style, acknowledged by the inferior New Zealanders, who “are outspoken in their praise of the way the Australians fought,” and “are proud of any praise given them by the Australians.”73

69 The characteristic appearance of the Australians was a favourite topic of Bean’s during the war. He wrote about it, and drew it. It was a very popular idea generally, as exemplified by the number of writers who mentioned the dress and physical bearing of the Anzacs. See for example the famous lines from English poet John Masefield, that the Anzacs were “the finest body of men ever brought together in modern times. For physical beauty and nobility of bearing they surpassed any men I have ever seen.” John Masefield, Gallipoli, (London: Heinemann, 1916), p.19. This quote became a staple of Australian commemorative rhetoric, and the concept was seen in the Memorial, although it was not one of the museum’s major themes.

70 Bean Diary, 25 April 1915, in Bean, Gallipoli Correspondent, p.65

71 Bean Diary, 29 April 1915, in Bean, Gallipoli Correspondent, p.83.

72 Bean Diary, 29 April 1915, in Bean, Gallipoli Correspondent, p.83.

73 Bean Diary, 29 April 1915, in Bean, Gallipoli Correspondent, p.82. The corresponding idea that the “savages” of India and Africa recognised the superiority of the British, and therefore accepted Imperial control as being for their own good, was a leitmotif around the turn of the century, and one which Bean had himself evoked in The Dreadnought of the Darling. In that volume see chapter 24, with its title,
As the campaign developed, Bean began to see the military qualities of the troops being revealed, and he was deeply impressed by what he saw. In May he went to the tip of the peninsula at Cape Helles with the 2nd Brigade, and participated intermittently in the attack on Krithia as a stretcher-bearer and runner. Here he saw the steadiness under fire, stoicism and determination of the Australians to continue in a very difficult attack. At the same time he came to truly appreciate the fear, horror and pity of war, and this understanding seems to have left upon him an incredibly strong sense that the men's conduct under fire was all the more glorious, and awe-inspiring, because of the enormity of the horror they were struggling with.

Bean was tremendously moved and affected by his experience of death and pain at close quarters, and one short example helps us understand the bond of the trenches which such exposure tended to foster, as it fostered Bean's love of the AIF:

On the way back to the Tommy's trench I saw one poor devil – one of the hundreds who were lying there – trying to get back to cover. I asked him if I could help him – he was hit through the leg, high up, and was crawling. We went some way together, limping – he was in great pain – when he fell saying: "Oh God – Oh Christ – oh it's awful." He had been hit a second time through the same leg, or the other leg. I asked him if he could still come on. "Oh, no – no I can't," he said. The plateau was very exposed, so I simply dragged him by both legs – he consented – into the nearest thing to a dimple in the ground that I could find – got hold of two packs and put them round him, and

"The Benighted Heathen," redolent of Kipling, wherein "The Sydney passenger" (Bean himself) argues with an Afghan camel teamster about India:

"We want to stop the Russians from pushing into India," answered the Sydney passenger. "The British don't want to push on except so as to stop the Russians. The Russians would be worse for you than the English."

"We know that," said the Afghan promptly. "We hate Russians. But we don't want British always pushing on. Why you not give Indians to rule themselves. Money you take away. Why you not let them alone?"

"Now look here," said the Sydney passenger, "you know Indians – the Bengalis and Madrassis. You know what sort of men they are. Do you think they could be left by themselves?"

"Yes I know," admitted the other. "They cannot remain by themselves. But you might give them to rule themselves more."

left him. He had torn open his trousers, as they generally do, to see the wound, and was bleeding pretty freely. I don’t fancy he could have lived — poor chap.\(^{74}\)

In his diary there is a strong sense of horror, and of pity, and the strength of his emotional attachment to the men shines out.

At the same time Bean saw martial virtues at close quarters, and this made an even deeper impression on him. In one passage on the battle at Krithia, Bean noted both patriotism and practicality, mirroring virtues he had recorded in *On the Wool Track* and *The Dreadnought of the Darling* before the war; at the same time he saw a stern aspect revealed for the first time:

They came on very fast, and they were given three minutes in the trench — and then in every case they went over it with a shout of “Come on Australians!!” If there were no officers to lead them on an N.C.O. would. I heard one chap say: “Come on chaps, we’ve got to get it sometime. We can’t stay here always;” and that was the spirit — that, and the feeling that being Australians they must get on. It was very fine to watch, and it was great to watch them as they went, absolutely unaffected by bullets. I never saw one man whose manner was changed by them, except in that moment when they got up and faced them; and rushed over the trench — then their faces were set, their eyebrows bent, and they looked into it for a moment as men would into a dazzling flame. I never saw so many determined faces at once — Oh! what a photograph I missed.\(^{75}\)

For Bean, a sense of awe and a desire to permanently capture the “spirit” of the men for posterity seem to have developed together. As the war continued, and the AIF moved to France, Bean saw the true horror of war, which confirmed him in his belief that those who simply did their job in appalling circumstances were heroes. But he also saw, amidst the rain of steel that had descended on the Western Front, heroism of a more “traditional” kind. That is, he saw, and wrote of, a series of small, tactical victories. These were, he felt, very impressive, because other units — especially British units — failed to advance or take their objectives at all. For instance, he pointed out that the Australian seizure of Pozieres village in 1916 was the only success on the

\(^{74}\) Bean Diary, 8 May 1915, in Bean, *Gallipoli Correspondent*, p.95.

\(^{75}\) Bean Diary, 8 May 1915, in Bean, *Gallipoli Correspondent*, p.93.
whole British front. Bean was fully aware of the horrors of the war, but was cognisant of his role as a propagandist, and wrote little of what he saw in official publications, instead putting his thoughts down in copious detail in the diaries, which he was keeping to assist him in the subsequent production of a history.

As the AIF became a highly professional, well-organised and effective military organisation, Bean was increasingly proud and in awe of what the Australian soldiers had created. The level of selfless, disciplined and concerted action that he observed in the army that had been so raw and rowdy in 1915 deeply gratified him. In 1918 the AIF first helped to stop, then rout, the German army in Flanders, achieving a recognisable superiority over the Germans, thought to be the strongest army in the world. By then, Bean was sure that the AIF was an extremely strong and flexible military machine made up of men of magnificent fibre and represented a great achievement. A dispatch written by “Australian correspondents” (and therefore possibly F.M. Cutlack, but signed by Bean nonetheless) and published in April 1918 made this explicit: “When history comes to be written Australia and the Empire will realise what a magnificent buttress the Australian Imperial Force has been to the cause of our race, humanity and civilisation.” The Memorial would show how this buttress had done its work.

III

Bean did not feel that the public appreciated the heroism he was witnessing, nor what the AIF had achieved militarily. He determined to ensure that Australians came to a realisation of what their troops had endured, and what they had done. At the same time, he saw in the telling of stories about the troops the possibility of performing nationalist education. He was not alone. In 1917 he discussed the creation of a war museum in Australia after the war with a group of officers including the artist Will Dyson. More importantly for the immediate creation of an officially-sanctioned,
publicly-funded museum, in early 1918 he corresponded with the Australian Minister for Defence, George Pearce, with a view to securing objects and creating such a museum. It is in this correspondence that the manner in which the Memorial was to commemorate was most clearly explored for the first time. It also demonstrates conclusively Bean’s attachment to martial nationalism, and to trophy-display as a means of martial nationalist education of the populace.

Bean and Pearce were of a mind that Australia was creating “real” history for the first time in its existence, and that the material evidence of this history was wanted for nationalist education of a pseudo-spiritual nature. The material to which they were referring was predominantly made up of “trophies” – objects, usually weapons, taken from the enemy, and “relics” – objects used by the AIF. This distinction was used throughout the war, and for a long period into the peace. In the mid-1920s Bean sought to eliminate any usage of the word “trophy” in relation to the Memorial, but was not entirely successful, for as late as 1934 the RSSILA New South Wales State Secretary referred to the Memorial’s displays as “trophies” in a circular letter to sub-branches, without mentioning the word “relics” at all.80

In March 1918 Pearce, who had joined W.M. Hughes and twenty-three other ALP members in leaving the party over conscription in 1916, and who was now Minister for Defence in the “win-the-war” Nationalist Government, wrote to the British Colonial Secretary seeking control of Australian trophies, for Pearce felt that his country needed these more than did Britain:

Britain already has a history and traditions and relics and trophies extending back for centuries and the present war, however great, is only adding to a long record and collection, whereas Australia has none here other than what she draws from the mother country. A nation is built upon pride of race and now that Australia is making history of her own she requires every possible relic associated with this to educate her children in that national spirit thereby ensuring loyal adherence to and defence of the Empire of which she forms part.81

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Pearce was concerned with “emotional” nation-building, having already suggested to Bean that he should write the “national” history of Australia in the war. Here he provided a succinct exposition of martial nationalist ideology in its Imperially-loyal, Anglo-Australian guise. “Pride of race,” the emotion to which C.J. Dennis ascribed Ginger Mick’s change from larrikin to national hero, and on which the nation was built, would be constructed through the display of relics and trophies, through the telling of stories about war. The national spirit he invoked was inseparable from the war which had given the nation a “history of her own.”

Bean congratulated Pearce on this cable, and shared his own view of how the objects would aid the Australian nation:

The great meaning of our records I have never seen better expressed than in your cable to the Colonial Secretary, telling him that they mean to us our history and tradition, for the education of our children in the national spirit, which Australians would wish to animate their country. The War has given one an immense belief in the youth of Australia, and I believe that our countrymen are capable of any achievement, provided a high, unselfish national incentive can be encouraged in them; and no-one is readier to be seized with this than the youngsters of Australia, if given the right leadership and opportunity. Australia has lost thousands of her best and finest men, but I believe the history of them, and the appeal which their lives make to young Australians, through the galleries and museums and, not least, the histories of our country, will be the greatest of several great results of their sacrifice.

Bean wished to use the records of the AIF, both physical and written, for nationalist education. A “high, unselfish national incentive” would be encouraged through the appeal of the lives of the dead, as expounded in “the histories of our country,” which of course he would help form. Clearly the dead would be panegyrised “through the

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81 Cablegram, Secretary of Defence to Administrative Headquarters AIF London, including text of message to Colonial Secretary. No. WT 18, 3 March 1918. AWM 38 3DRL 6673, Item 621.
82 McKernan, Here is Their Spirit, p.34.
83 Gerster, Big-noting, pp.15-16.
84 C.E.W. Bean to George Pearce, March 1918, AMW 93 12/12/1, Part 1. Henry Rider Haggard wrote of the British war dead in The Times on 10 October 1914 that “the history of these deeds of theirs will surely be a beacon to those destined to carry on the tradition of our race.” Quoted in Wendy R. Kratz, Rider Haggard and the Fiction of Empire: A critical study of British imperial fiction, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p.59.
galleries and museums” — although in practice, as no other museum or gallery was built, it was only the Memorial that would be left to undertake this goal. It would create a public “history of our country,” or at least of its war experience.

These statements were definitive examples of martial nationalist reactions to the war. Both Bean and Pearce were here looking to what inspiration would emerge from the war — pride of race, built on military achievement. They were not looking at horror or bereavement in this correspondence, and were clearly gazing beyond commemoration per se to nation-building aspirations.

At the first meeting of the Australian War Museum Committee (AWMC) following Bean’s return to Australia, held on 31 July 1919, the committee adopted a plan of deliberate nation-building, based upon military success and to be conducted through the public display of war trophies, with relics slightly subordinate at that early stage (a situation which would later be reversed in public statements). The plan was Bean’s, developed on the ship home after his “mission” to Gallipoli earlier in the year, and encompassed the distribution of trophies to the States as well as the establishment of the Memorial. It included the clearest exposition of the connections perceived by Bean and his allies between remembrance of the dead and remembrance of victories, between war commemoration and emotional nation-building based upon the military paradigms of pre-war Europe.

The connection lay in the trophies themselves. Firstly, a large proportion of them, and almost all those distributed to the States, were indeed captured enemy arms. Unlike Victoria Crosses and the reliefs of Nelson’s Column, but similar to the Berlin Victory Monument, these cannon were not melted down but remained discernibly weapons of war. Secondly, they would be distributed to States “with due

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85 Indeed, for Bean it was “histories” that he created, for he was instrumental in the creation of the Memorial’s public history of the AIF as well as the Official History.

86 See McKernan, Here is Their Spirit, p.60. Bean described the Australian Historical Mission’s trip to Turkey in Gallipoli Mission, (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1952).

87 The members of the committee present included Bean’s “hero” Brudenell White. AWMC Agenda 31 July 1919, AWM 170 1/1. White was a strong supporter of the Memorial’s nation-building objectives, as he indicated as early as 1917, when he prodded the secretary of the Department of Defence to obtain objects for the Memorial: “From a national and educational point of view the value of such a museum will be immense,” C.B.B. White to Thomas Tribble, 19 July 1917. Quoted in McKernan, Here is Their Spirit, p.41.

regard to the sentiment attaching to their capture." The capture of enemy weapons
was, the outline stated, the stuff of future Australian tradition: as a letter to the State
Premiers explained, a distribution of trophies would be made to the States because
"these relics are of the greatest value and interest in the places where their captors are
personally known." The Premiers were assured that the trophies from which they
would receive their share "comprise the finest collection, proportionally speaking, that
has been won by any portion of the British Empire." Reactions suggest that symbols
of triumph were indeed as highly valued in the home of their captors as Bean believed
they would be, with over four thousand displayed, and complaints made at times that
some towns were not receiving their fair share of the spoils. As indicated, many
were the focus of commemorative rituals — solely until masonry memorials were built,
then jointly in many instances. Standing in prominent public places, they brought
some of that sense of "history," or at least, martial nationalist history, that Australia
had previously been seen to lack. The local landscapes of Australian towns and
municipalities were historicised with these evidences of victory won by local men in a
great war.

The official principles for the allocation of trophies, also agreed at this
meeting, further explained both the division of the collection and the martial
nationalist manner in which these symbols of victory were intended to be used. The
collection of trophies was divided into two categories, those "of technical interest"
and those "of general interest." This dissertation does not pursue the former type.
Those of general interest were further subdivided into technical and "national"
categories. The former were "specimens showing sort of instrument used," and, being
similar to the purely technical objects, lie beyond the scope of this dissertation.

90 "Outline of Scheme," p.2. AWM 170 1/1.
91 AWMC Minutes, Appendix C (i), "Suggested Letter to the States' Premiers," paragraph 2. AWM 170 1/1.
92 Clayton, "To the Victor," Part 3, pp.6-9; Inglis, Sacred Places, p.179; McKerman, Here is Their Spirit, pp.71-2.
95 "Trophies: Principles: Allocation."
the other hand, the “national,” as I have labelled them, were those “relics to which the romance of some particular national story is attached,” with which this dissertation is solely concerned.\textsuperscript{96} The Memorial was to select “national” trophies from “those connected with some particular outstanding character or unit in the AIF,...those connected with some historical action or event whose actual author or unit is not known...[and] those showing the general effects of some common incident of the war (e.g. marked by mine or shell explosion).”\textsuperscript{97} The former two types would be chosen on the principle that “if the event [to which they were connected] is of such national importance that it is likely to form one of the most prominent traditions of Australia, the exhibit should be required for Australian Museum.”\textsuperscript{98} The third type of “national” exhibit, which showed the general effects of common incidents, “not being exhibits connected with any incident which will be a tradition for any State or locality in Australia, but rather exhibits showing the nature of the war,” one of the Memorial’s objectives, would go to the Memorial.\textsuperscript{99}

The Memorial, then, was to exhibit objects captured in battle with the expectation that they would form “the most prominent traditions” of the new nation. It would thus form a nexus between nation-building and commemoration, triumph and remembrance. Not only would the dead be remembered, but so too would the victorious actions in which trophies were captured.\textsuperscript{100} Through the dissemination of information about these battles, they would become national traditions. Throughout the whole scheme and the resolutions adopted on 31 July 1919, the strongest emphasis was on the public acknowledgement of victory through the display of its tangible symbols. As other authors have argued, Bean intended that people should worship the AIF, and it is clear from these documents that such worship was to be not primarily for service and sacrifice, but for triumph and the capture of enemy war material.\textsuperscript{101}

\textsuperscript{96}“Trophies: Principles: Allocation.”\textsuperscript{97}“Trophies: Principles: Allocation.”\textsuperscript{98}“Trophies: Principles: Allocation.”\textsuperscript{99}“Trophies: Principles: Allocation.” This document also asserted that the Memorial would show “the general nature of the fighting in the Great War.”\textsuperscript{100}As we shall see in Chapters Four to Six, such actions could be, and often were, smaller parts of battles which the Australians failed to win, or which were pyrrhic victories.\textsuperscript{101}Webber, “Constructing Australia’s Past.”
Chapter Four and Chapter Five, especially, examine some of the ways in which the Memorial directed this worship.

Bean’s position is thus clear: the Memorial would undertake national education based on Australian military success. His principal ally, John Treloar, who as Director wrote all the labels for objects under Bean’s guidance, agreed. Treloar believed whole-heartedly with Bean’s objectives for the Memorial. In 1925 he wrote a memorandum to the curator of the Memorial which stated in the clearest terms his understanding of the nation-building objectives of the institution. He also made it clear that large audiences were wanted to better achieve the aim. He wrote in part:

The larger the attendances at the Museum the nearer would it come to achieving the objects for which it exists (the development of a strong national esprit founded on true knowledge of the achievements of the Australian forces during the war, and our larger responsibilities to the memory of the men).

This was perhaps the clearest exposition of the Memorial’s martial nationalist objectives. Again there was a strong commitment to the truth, but it was also clear that national educational imperatives would order the manner in which the truth was presented. It was also a definitive example of the martial nationalist reaction to the war, centred on past victories (“achievements”), yet oriented towards the future through nationalist education. Whether such “true knowledge” would be the whole truth or a selected truth requires an examination of the knowledge offered, which Chapters Four to Six undertake.

Martial national education was thus the key to the whole Memorial operation as it was initially constituted in 1919. Bean was acutely aware that Australian civilians knew very little about the war in its specifics. Bean reflected this ignorance when he wrote, in 1922, that “I know of nothing which has enabled my own friends to grasp the meaning of a ‘trench’ in the same way at the Mont St Quentin model has done.” Thus, the heart of the Memorial was the telling of Australia’s overseas war

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102 Director, Australian War Memorial, Melbourne, to Curator, Australian War Memorial, Sydney, 28 September 1925. AWM 93 6/3/1.

103 The label for the Somme plan model said it succinctly: “The capture of Mont St Quentin and Péronne was one of the great achievements of the AIF.” Bain to Treloar, 15 May 1929. AWM 265 21/4/5, Part 2.
story, utilising trophies and relics as focussing agents which provided a direct connection with the past. The Memorial’s account was put into the Australian public domain as a master narrative, against which individuals and groups could measure their own recollections of the war. Indeed, Treloar was very proud of the fact that returned men turned to the Memorial to resolve their conflicting memories. The Memorial claimed to be “the Australian authority on matters associated with the war,” and the RSSILA afforded the museum this position.\(^\text{105}\)

One of the most fundamental parts of the education that Bean wished the Memorial to conduct was simply to teach civilians about the AIF’s battles and the war in general. He wished to tell “the bare and uncoloured story” of the AIF, and the result of this was the largest public narrative of the nation’s war experience which existed in Australia.\(^\text{105}\) Stories, realistically presented, proved that the Australians had been to the war, had won the battles people said they had won, had suffered terribly but had come through gloriously.

Bean spelt out clearly in 1928 that the Memorial was a key part of his *Official History* project which, he declared, was dedicated to the protection and enhancement of the “fighting reputation of the AIF.” When testifying in front of the Public Works Committee to urge the prompt erection of the permanent building, he firmly stated that the Memorial was a national necessity because it would help protect this reputation. The Memorial was necessary, because “the history of [“our fighting forces during the war”] cannot be written unless the documents [upon which it is based] are carefully preserved, and worked upon in such an institution as that which we are proposing. Otherwise it would not command the confidence of historians abroad.”\(^\text{107}\) If such confidence could not be commanded, “we should find the performance of our soldiers in some of these battles being questioned.”\(^\text{108}\) He lamented that “the tendency to do that is already observable,” and feared that “historians in time will say, ‘What was there, after all, in this fighting reputation of the AIF?’”\(^\text{109}\) Bean maintained that

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\(^{105}\) C.E.W. Bean to George Pearce, 12 June 1922. AWM 38 3DRL 6673, Item 803.

\(^{103}\) Press Release, November 1929. AWM 93 20/1/1A.


\(^{107}\) *Standing Committee on Public Works Report*, p.321.

prophylaxis was necessary, and that “from the time this was first thought of as a practical proposition, it was intended to house the collection in the Memorial.”¹¹⁰ There were also foreign policy considerations: “Both in America and elsewhere the Australian claims will be challenged unless we can establish them by closely-reasoned proof.”¹¹¹ Needless to say, he was actively providing such proof in his Official History, based on the Memorial’s documents, and I argue that the museum’s displays were designed to provide such proofs in a public arena, and were addressed, not to Americans, but to the Australian public itself.

Significantly, the nation the Memorial’s history was addressed to, and about whom it was constructed, was an Anglo-Australian, Imperially-loyal entity. The Memorial avoided reference to contemporary politics, or any event outside its wartime timeframe, but there was a clear indication of the institution’s loyalist credentials in the title of Bean’s guide to the museum, The Relics and Records of Australia’s Effort in the Defence of the Empire 1914-1918. This emphasised from the start the Imperial connection and asserted that loyalty to the Empire had been the primary motivation of the AIF. The political implications of this in the context of ongoing right-wing accusations of Labor disloyalty need little highlighting. The loyalty of the audience was assumed throughout the displays.

The foreword of Bean’s guide argued that the Memorial would inspire admiration for the AIF and reverence for the dead if “viewed in the right spirit.”¹¹² Bean meant by “right spirit,” a frame of mind receptive to tales of national heroism, ready to learn lessons about one’s obligation to the nation, eager to be infused with “the national spirit, that Australians would wish to animate their country.”¹¹³ It was this national spirit to which Bean had referred in 1918 when enthusing to Pearce about the “appeal which [the dead’s] lives make to young Australians, through the galleries and

¹⁰⁹ Standing Committee on Public Works Report, p.321. For details of one of the situations Bean was referring to, see Chapter Four.


¹¹² Relics and Records, September 1922, Foreword; April 1928 and December 1931, Introduction.

¹¹³ Bean to Pearce, March 1918. AMW 93 12/12/1, Part 1. The use of “spirit” here is somewhat confusing, considering Bean is using it for two different concepts of differing orders, the first refers to a frame of mind and the second to a belief system.
museums...” In Bean’s vision Australians, being lovers of the truth and ready to be inspired, would bring the right spirit to the displays, and it was up to the museum to provide the correct inspiration, the “high moral lead,” through the “true history of the war.”

This loyalist vision of Australians was confirmed in parliament, where the Memorial’s political connections with the right in Australia were also made clear. Sir Thomas Glasgow, who had commanded the 13th Infantry Brigade and the 1st Division during the war, was the Chairman of the AMWC when the Bill was passed in 1925. His speech contained the official Australian War Memorial Committee (AWMC) position, and concentrated on “achievements” and the moral qualities these were thought to embody, as well as linking the qualities needed in war with the tasks of peace and posterity. Firstly, he argued “Australia is... in a fortunate and unique position in having a memorial which was created by the men, and, may I add, the women, whose achievements it is intended to honour.” The nature of this memorial was to show the nation the virtues of its soldiers for its great benefit:

The relics, pictures and models all record incidents illustrative of the self-sacrifice, courage, fortitude and initiative of the men of the Australian Imperial Forces [sic]. These qualities count for as much in peace time development as they do in time of war. For this reason they must always be a powerful inspiration to Australians of the present and future generations.116

Glasgow then explored this moral equivalence between war and peace through an unacknowledged quote from Bean’s 1919 utopian nationalist pamphlet, *In Your*

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114 Bean to Pearce, March 1918, AMW 93 12/12/1, Part 1.

115 CPD, Senate, vol.111, 26 August 1925, p.1676. Glasgow did not, it would appear, reflect upon why Australia was uniquely in this position. No other nation seemed as eager to embrace the traditional symbols of triumph, nor the victorious interpretation of the war experience, as Australia, and Australians appear to have been somewhat unable to comprehend this lack of enthusiasm. One particularly naive example surrounded the first playing of the University of Sydney’s War Memorial Carillon. Organisers wanted to broadcast this live into Britain on the BBC, and were at first taken aback, then deeply hurt, when the BBC declined, claiming there was no interest in that sort of thing. Professor Holme reminded the BBC that the bells were the largest in the Empire, outside of Big Ben. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 April 1928, p.10. A poem, “The Bells,” was published in the same issue of the *Herald.*

116 Commonwealth of Australia, CPD, Senate, vol.111, 26 August 1925, p.1676. Donald Cameron agreed, claiming that several examples of displays that he had provided illustrated “the interest and inspiration these collections will have for future generations.” CPD, Senate, vol.111, 16 September 1925, p.2482.
Hands, Australians. In so doing he was also expressing a prevailing conservative argument designed to appropriate memories of the past for contemporary political benefit, and the Memorial’s part in the argument’s legitimation:

Those men who fell believed Australia was destined to become the greatest and best country in the world. They cannot make her so now. Those 62 000 of the very best we had are out of the struggle... They can never finish the fight they began for Australia. But we and our children can do it for them. This memorial, containing their names and the relics of their greatest achievements, will be a constant reminder of our responsibility to their memory – our responsibility to make Australia the great nation they believed she could become. 117

Naturally it would be the Nationalist politicians, their paymasters in the National Union and their media supporters who would define the parameters of the new, great, Australia. The Memorial would offer the evidence, taken from that nation’s glorious past, that helped authenticate that political settlement. The continuist argument went that the nation had been unified [under right-wing leadership] during the war, and that the task facing the country now was the same as that faced during the war. The “unity” stressed was usually the discipline of the soldiers, in fact, rather than any unity of civilians. The soldiers, both those who had died and survivors, had shown themselves loyal to the Empire (“steadfast unto death”), submitting themselves to wise leadership and unwavering (battlefield) discipline. The argument was that audiences should do likewise, bowing to the authority of the Nationalists and the Country Party. Bean did not necessarily condone this political usage of positive warfront images, but the Memorial was too large an institution for him to completely control its path, and Glasgow was clearly aligning the institution with the continuist argument, one of the principal platforms of the conservative groups.

Realism was a vital element of the Memorial project. From the outset, Bean decided to follow his wartime propagandist and publicist roles in his writing and editing of the official history of Australia during the war, as well as in his guidance of and writing for the Memorial. He did all in his power to ensure that Australia and the

117 CPD, Senate, vol.111, 26 August 1925, p.1677; Bean, In Your Hands, Australians, p.13: “They believed Australia would be the greatest and best country in all the world. They cannot make her so - 60,000 of the very best we had are out of the struggle.... You will see in your midst the great museum and gallery sacred to them. They can never finish the fight which they began for Australia. But you, the younger generation, their survivors in the AIF, the young people of Australia, can do it for them.”
Empire would understand the truth as he saw it, which was that the old notions of heroism still had value, but sometimes needed new vehicles:

To me, the sight of a hero in a flashing uniform charging across the glacis is not so very impressive, but if you think of the ordinary old Australian just as you see him in the paddocks or workshop, in his battered felt, plodding across a hell of a filthy corner (from which he knows he is most unlikely to come back) just because he can see a bit of movement in the mud and grass which he reckons to be one of his mates in a desperately bad place – well, it’s the same picture really but the true colouring makes all the difference.\footnote{C.E.W. Bean to Gavin Long, 30 June 1930, in C.E.W. Bean, Making the Legend: The war writings of C.E.W. Bean, selected by Denis Winter, (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1992), p.236.}

The “true colouring” would be provided not only by the multi-volumed written history, concentrating upon the actions of named individuals and small groups at the front line, but also by a war museum with a similar focus. Both would tell the same story, but the former would provide the documentation for, and the latter the physical links with, the actions of the AIF enshrined in the project. This multi-faceted commemorative project served three main motivations and objectives: to glorify the AIF, to construct an Australian history that connected and competed with pre-war European propaganda such as the Island Story, and to “educate” the character of young Australians through the provision of the “high, unselfish national” lead.

In the mid-1920s several other objectives were announced in various ways by personnel related to the Memorial. These were the almost entirely contradictory objectives of providing simultaneously a sacred space and a source of family entertainment. The idea of the sacred had been mentioned publicly as early as April 1918, in a memorandum circulated to the next-of-kin of each member of the AIF and dated 20 April 1918, the first public announcement of the intention to create a war museum (not yet memorial), appealing for objects so that the “great days and adventures” of the war, and the “sacred” sacrifices of Australians at home and abroad, would not be forgotten.\footnote{Department of Defence Circular. 15 April 1918. AWM 93 12/12/4. Part 1.} However, from the beginning the sacred was fused with the triumphal. The designation of captured weapons of war as sacred things naturally promoted this fusion, as did certain of Bean's public statements. For instance, in In
Your Hands, he wrote that “You will put up a memorial to them—a memorial which will enclose for ever the sacred relics of their fighting, and the treasured, precious pictures of their sacrifice.”

The feelings that the memory of the dead was sacred, and that remembering the dead publicly was a sacred task, were extremely common in many belligerent countries, although fusing the notion to triumph was not. Bean indicated in many places that he felt the Memorial, when finally it was built in Canberra, would be a sacred space, and that the objects being displayed in the southern capitals in the meantime were sacred as well. Bean did not develop this idea in the 1919 proposal which oriented the Memorial’s inter-war operation. It was not until 1928 that Bean made a major public statement about the Memorial which dwelt almost entirely on this notion, without the admixture of triumphalism.

Bean, master propagandist that he was, used the sacred strategically. For example, in a March 1925 letter to Alderman William Brooks of the Federal Capital Association, Bean attempted to show him why the Memorial would be a better memorial in Canberra than the one Brooks’s organisation had proposed, one dedicated to Captain James Cook. The Memorial would be, he wrote, a “still more sacred” memorial than the one to Cook, and offered to show the Alderman around the displays, soon to open in Sydney, personally: “I think I can show you that this War Memorial is sacred ground for Australians.” By contrasting the secular memory of Cook and the sacred memory of the AIF, Bean was creating a powerful rhetorical dialectic.

In the early, “triumphal,” period of Australian post-war commemoration, display of “historically important” objects was extremely popular, and thus this was the main thrust of the 1919 programme. By 1928, while the anniversaries of victories were celebrated and the ADCC’s Anzac Day was at its most triumphal, Bean identified a strong public undercurrent of unease towards military subjects, running contrary to the public respect almost universally given to the soldiers and the dearth of open dissent. In his public relations statements, such as his evidence to the crucial Public Works Committee hearing which decided the museum’s fate, he dwelt at length on the sacred, for it had enormous emotional appeal without being at all controversial. The sacred’s

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120 Bean, In Your Hands, p.10.

121 C.E.W. Bean to William Brooks, 24 March 1925. AWM 38 3DRL 7953, Item 60.
star was on the rise by 1928 as triumphalism’s popularity reached its pinnacle and began to fall.

Bean did, however, refer to AIF military glory indirectly, through his discussion of the overtly “commemorative” elements of the Memorial’s design, particularly the Hall of Memory, and in a general statement. The latter made an argument increasingly common in the late 1920s, which was that “whatever one might think about war, nothing could ever detract from the importance of Australia’s part in the war.” The former blended the sacred and the triumphal carefully. The Hall of Memory would, Bean asserted, contain some suitable relics, “such as the signed speech of the Bishop of Amiens” seen in Chapter Two: “these things would be indicative, as it were, of the world’s tribute to the men of the AIF.” He also stated, on several occasions, that the Memorial would not glorify war, and claimed that “we have set out with the definite intention, as shown in the drawings of Will Dyson, to depict, as far as possible, the sufferings and misery of war.”

Several comments may be made upon this public relations statement. Firstly, as the 1919 plan indicated beyond any doubt, this was never the institution’s original predominant intention. As Chapter Six demonstrates, miseries and sufferings were depicted as ordeals overcome. Secondly, with certain exceptions the misery of war was subsumed by the victory won, as Chapters Four to Six explore. Thirdly, Will Dyson’s drawings were less popular even with Bean than he was asserting; they were only mentioned in his first guide to the institution in reference to their humour, and it was not until the exhibitions in Sydney that their depictions of miseries were highlighted. Memorial Curator and Acting Director, A.G. Pretty, stated plainly in 1923 that he had had great trouble selling reproductions of Dyson’s work, because the public did not like it: “Dyson’s impressions were too heavy and stressed the more miserable aspects of the soldier’s life. That sort of thing people want to forget as rapidly as possible.”

To round out the extraordinarily complex and contradictory objectives of the Memorial, it was also conceived during the inter-war years to be an entertainment, as

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122 Sydney Morning Herald, 24 March 1928, p.18.
123 Standing Committee on Public Works Report, p.323.
125 Acting Director, Australian War Memorial (A.G. Pretty) to Cecil Palmer [Dyson’s publisher], 18 August 1923. Quoted in McKernan, Here is Their Spirit, p.85.
well as a national educator teaching from the spoils of victory and a sacred space. For example, on 25 March 1925, just over a week before the Memorial’s Sydney exhibition opened, Pretty, again Acting Director, authorised the release of a long advertising piece to newspapers in Brisbane and country New South Wales. It began: “Visitors to Sydney this Easter will find that the Royal Show has a close rival as regards interest and patronage in the Australian War Memorial Museum which has been transferred from Melbourne and housed in the Exhibition Building in Prince Alfred Park.”126 The press release then continued with a definitive statement of some of the Memorial’s fundamental principles:

The collections which comprise this national monument to those members of the Royal Australian Navy, and Australian Imperial Force, who gave their lives for their country, are regarded as the finest of their kind in existence. Their charm and interest is not due as much to the varied nature of the military equipment shown, as the close association of the majority of the exhibits with the experience of the troops.127

This was the most solemn section of the release, pointing out that the museum was a national memorial, making the assertion of the collection’s supremacy, and underlining the fundamental aspect of the objects, their status as physically connected with the men and their lives.

The release then outlined the displays, in a relentlessly upbeat list:

Relics of lucky escapes, small articles closely associated with deeds of gallantry, exhibits which bear testimony to chivalrous acts on the part of the enemy, expressions of appreciation by leaders, and those for whom the men fought, are there and claim the close attention of the most casual visitor.... Portraits of great leaders and others who earned distinction look down from the walls.... By means of picture models, all highly artistic productions, visitors are brought face to face with incidents of note in the history of the AIF.... War worn flags, carried in the field by their respective units, hang from the pillars of this place of sacred memory.128

126 Memorandum for Chief Clerk, Australian War Memorial, from Acting Director, Australian War Memorial, 25 March 1925, attachment. AWM 265 17/2/3.

127 Memorandum for Chief Clerk, 25 March 1925, attachment.

128 Memorandum for Chief Clerk, 25 March 1925, attachment
According to this press release, the Memorial was a place for affirmation, a sacred space where experiences were positive, men were not maimed and destroyed by war but shown in their most heroic light, where war was a dangerous adventure through which the nation had come gloriously. This might have been an institution that remembered service, but there is no mention of sacrifice anywhere in the release, nor of death, nor fear, nor horror, nor any other “anti-war” message. As we shall see in Chapters Four to Six, this was indeed exactly how the displays represented the war, albeit accompanied by considerably more considerations of the cost and futility of the war than this list would suggest.

Two comments may be made about this kind of advertising. Firstly, by emphasising adventure and escapes, it appealed to the impulse towards forgetting the war – at least, that is, forgetting the most horrible aspects of it – that Pretty had identified in 1923. If war was an adventure which retained a sense of danger, and even an acknowledgement of death, but was cleansed of its fearful smells, its nauseating sights, and its terrible moral dilemmas, it could be popularly accepted as a subject of public discourse in the inter-war years. Secondly, and far more importantly, striving to entertain had fundamental implications for the message of the Memorial as the Australian National War Memorial. No other national, State or local memorial attempted to entertain; they promoted a solemnity that saw any levity in their sight as sacrilege. Witness the text of the Shrine of Remembrance in Melbourne, opened in 1934:

LET ALL MEN KNOW THIS IS HOLY GROUND
THIS SHRINE ESTABLISHED IN THE HEARTS OF MEN AS ON THE SOLID EARTH COMMEMORATES A PEOPLE’S FORTITUDE AND SACRIFICE
YE THAT COME AFTER GIVE REMEMBRANCE.  

As Inglis and other authors show, war memorials in Australia were perceived as the most serious of public spaces. Utility was rejected forcefully, levity much more so.

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129 Quoted in Inglis, Sacred Places, p.2.
Many, from communists to women, were criticised for intruding upon spaces perceived as sacred, and there was strong criticism of Anzac Day race meetings and hotel trade, both of which were subsequently banned. Entertainment was most certainly neither intended or delivered in Australian State or local war memorials, or indeed national memorials in Britain, France or the USA.

But the Memorial was a different kind of memorial. It was a museum, and took on many of the roles that such an institutional form implied - education, naturally, but also entertainment. Aware that the Memorial was an expensive publicly-funded institution, its creators felt they had to compete with other popular entertainments, for they wanted a popular (hence large) and not just a museum-going audience to ensure continuity of funding. Striving always to be popular, the Memorial promised excitement, which, as we shall see, it delivered in a number of displays. McKernan shows clearly that one of the objectives of Bean and Treloar was to make the Memorial so popular it could not be shut down by any political party without a huge outcry. This was one of the reasons for the desire to entertain and its attendant pressures on selection of content for the displays. The Memorial would appeal to the senses, the intellect, the emotions of awe, reverence and enjoyment.

It may be this objective that explains the Memorial’s anti-German tendencies which, despite Bean’s stated intentions to the contrary, were a significant element of the overall rhetorical complex. For instance, Bean appears to use the legendary German “Frightfulness” to distract readers of his guide from contemplation of the horrors of the Pozieres bombardments. In a section entitled “What England Escaped,” Bean calls attention to the German phrasebook included in showcase No.10. In this phrasebook, which was “captured about this time [August 1916],” were “the phrases which German soldiers were to employ in conversing with English country people in the event of an invasion of England.” They provided evidence of the “frightfulness” of the Hun: “One phrase states... ‘We are not barbarians as people often say,’ but another conversation-book shown elsewhere in the Museum contains the illuminating phrase, ‘I will have you shot and destroy the village.’” Surely sacrifice to defend loved ones from such beasts was worthwhile? No editorial comment was made, a policy which Bean adopted throughout the Memorial, a technique emphasising


132 Relics and Records, September 1922, pp.17-18; April 1928, pp.20-1; December 1931, p.24.
authenticity. However, he used the far more subtle and powerful method of "indirect" editorial, as Chapter Five examines. One more example shall suffice to show the level of antagonism that was seen in places. A 1932 label referred to "Ville-Sur-Ancre, a miserable little village," in which "the Huns put up an obstinate resistance and were responsible for at least one act of treachery—a German officer pretending to surrender and then shooting an Australian."133

Finally, Bean and Treloar harboured a desire to "appropriate" the Memorial's returned soldier audience. Bean and Treloar wanted returned soldier support, specifically seeking approval of the war narrative and other representations. Soldiers' narratives were deferred to and generally viewed with great respect, and their acceptance of the Memorial's messages might bring it general respect, approval and social status. In order to achieve this rapport with the soldier audience, the very modern museological practice of "appropriating the visitor through the use of the second person" was used within the Memorial's representations.134 Soldiers were addressed directly quite often both in the displays themselves and in Bean's guides. For example, in his first guide Bean mentioned "a 4.7[inch] gun—a Ladysmith veteran—which will be recalled by Australians who served at Anzac as a good friend on the left flank."135 This and other messages to veterans were sometimes very revealing, as in his 1931 book, in which Bean wrote that, on viewing the Somme plan model "the soldier who fought on these fields will find his memory wonderfully refreshed."136 Considering the horror of the fighting on the Somme, this assertion is startling, but reflected Bean's predominantly upbeat public presentation of the war. It also mirrored the Age's report

133 "Ville-Sur-Ancre," label attached to letter, Curator, Australian War Memorial, Sydney (Les Bain) to Director, Australian War Memorial, Melbourne (John Treloar), 28 December 1932. AWM 265 21/4/5, Part 7.

134 See Parker B. Potter, "Appropriating the Visitor by Addressing the Second Person," in Susan M. Pearce (ed.), Museums and the Appropriation of Culture, (London: Athlone, 1994), pp.103-28. This was but one of many museological innovations introduced by the Memorial. It also saw the creation, by Treloar, of low-reflection cases for the Canberra Memorial and the perfection of the diorama.

135 Relics and Records, September 1922, p.9; April 1928, p.13; December 1931, p.13. The anthropomorphising of guns was a very common practice in the Memorial, as it had been during the war. See for example Melbourne Photograph 63, "A Powerful Friend," whose label reiterated the practice: "'Hilda,' a 12-inch Howitzer on Railway Hill, in the Ypres Sector, in November, 1917. 'Hilda' was accustomed to taking up different positions on the railway line, and firing on special targets in enemy territory." Melbourne Photograph 63; Sydney Photograph 167. Relics and Records, September 1922, p.73; April 1928, p.94; December 1931, p.95. See also Clayton, "To the Victor," Part 3, pp.18-20.

136 Relics and Records, April 1928, p.19; December 1931, p.20.
on the opening of the Melbourne exhibition in 1922, which stated that the day had seen veterans “fighting their battles over again.”\textsuperscript{137} It would appear that Bean felt such positivity was appropriate to an audience he had an intimate knowledge of, even in the 1930s.

Trelloar’s copy was more informal in tone and addressed the returned soldier constituency more directly. He wrote quite a few labels in a style much more akin to the informal, jocular and droll tone of “internal” AIF literature than that of official commemoration.\textsuperscript{138} This was used at times to declare the supremacy of the AIF, as in the following label:

\textbf{THE RATIONS THE HUNS DID NOT RECEIVE}

A table setting forth the food to be issued on the 8th Aug., 1918, to the members of a German regiment opposed to the Australians. Early in the morning of that day, however, the British, Canadians and Australians made a rapid advance into the German position, which it is only reasonable to suppose, upset the Huns’ culinary arrangements.\textsuperscript{139}

This may be compared to Bean:

On [a small notice board] was written in chalk the menu for the German soldiers’ meals that day – so many grammes \textit{[sic]} of preserved meat, groats, potatoes, etc. Owing to the swiftness of the attack, some of these meals were certainly never eaten.”\textsuperscript{140}

Together these encapsulate the extremes of emotion and of factual statement that combined to create displays which claimed pure realism while purporting to display “the spirit of the AIF.” The “dash” embodied in Trelloar’s label was, the Memorial argued, every bit as real as the domestic item to which it was attached.

To reiterate, Bean was a martial nationalist, but not a bellicose militarist by any means. In the pre-war era he believed deeply that Australians exhibited many

\textsuperscript{137} \textit{Age}, 26 April 1922, p.8.

\textsuperscript{138} RSSILA magazine articles, for example.

\textsuperscript{139} Label AWM.854: “The Rations the Huns Did Not Receive.” Attachment, Bain to Trelloar 28 December 1932. AWM 265 21/4/5, Part 7. I have chosen to use bold type for all labels, as this replicates the appearance of the Memorial’s original labels. On the other hand, books are not rendered in bold.

\textsuperscript{140} \textit{Relics and Records}, September 1922, p.28.
moral virtues which he felt were characteristically “British” and which he valued highly. These included love of truth, reserve and courage. He also believed Australian men had enormous military potential due to constant battles with men and nature. Bean’s martial nationalism developed during his war service, along with a great love, awe and respect for Australian soldiers and the AIF as an organisation.

Reactions to the Memorial from political elites were overwhelmingly positive. As a publicly-funded organisation from its inception, answerable to a Minister and from 1925 legislatively established, the Memorial had principally to convince parliament, rather than the Australian people generally, that it was a worthwhile commemorative project. This the museum did, although it is clear that two separate cultures existed in post-war Australia, and the contours of their conflicts could often be seen animating debates on the Memorial. Some observers, who subscribed to an “anti-monumental” view of war memories, opposed the Memorial in a manner that illuminates it by reflection.

IV

In 1920 the AWMC offered both Victoria and New South Wales half-shares of the exhibits. The offer brought forth a number of differing reactions in various quarters; again the “two cultures” showed their differences and their passion. This was especially the case when the New South Wales ALP Government under John Storey politely declined the offer, on the basis that “no central accommodation” existed.141 The loyalist Sydney Morning Herald was not amused, and in its articles in support of the Memorial endorsed a perceived martial nationalist institution. Firstly, the Herald announced in August 1920 that the Memorial’s collection consisted of “all sorts of relics (too numerous to mention) which were snatched out of the very heat of some immortal performance of Australian soldiers,” that is, that it was evidence of great Australian military deeds, and should therefore be accepted.142 The Government did not agree, however, and it was not until 1925, following the election in 1922 of the Fuller Nationalist Government and the opportunity in late 1924 of obtaining a lease on a suitable exhibition space, that the Memorial moved to Sydney.

141 Sydney Morning Herald, 20 August 1920, p.8.
142 Sydney Morning Herald, 20 August 1920, p.8.
The Right were vocal in their satisfaction with the change of government in 1922, and when ALP members of the Sydney City Council, which owned the Exhibition Building, again expressed reservation, they were denounced in a long and revealing article. The comments which the Herald found so distasteful had been uttered by Alderman Richard Bramston, whose declaration of opposition was exemplary of the so-called “disloyalist” group who were especially war-weary. He announced simply that “we do not want an exhibition of the implements of war, and it should be dumped over the Gap, so that we may forget all about the war.” War, Bramston felt, was horrifying, its implements all the more so. Such reminders of an awful conflict were not to be publicly displayed, the alderman argued. Bramston’s statement represented a clear argument against the belief that trophies symbolised the “great deeds” of the AIF which ought to be permanently represented in public space, and this dialectic between remembrance and forgetting was a principal element of arguments surrounding the Memorial.

This line of reasoning brought forth strenuous denunciation from the Herald, along with a definitive defence of the Memorial on martial nationalist lines. Firstly, the Herald invoked national pride, based firmly upon military actions and linked deliberately to the community of the dead:

The Labour [sic] party is, with all Australians, proud, and rightly so, of the present international prestige of Australia. Who made it? Is it not reared on the bones of 60,000 Australian dead, the flower of their generation, whose supreme thought during the exacting years of war service was of their home country?

143 The attitude of conservatives to the change in government was exemplified in the Anzac Day edition of The Sydney Mail in 1922, which followed an image of the Anzacs being crowned with a laurel of oak leaves in a classical allusion to victory with a spiteful attack on the departed ALP State Government: “The anniversary of Anzac Day is happily come this year with a change of government. The antipathy to the soldiers that characterised the previous Administration was openly shown when it determined to cancel the preference law. The business community loyally stood to it. Their Government did not. The returned men now have a government that can be depended upon to do its best in their interests.” The Sydney Mail, 26 April 1922, p.6. The Nationalist-RSSILA compact had by 1922 firmly established the former as the party of the Diggers, and the fact that large proportions of the business community had not “loyally stood to” the preference law at all was simply ignored. See Ward, A Nation for a Continent, p.138 on the problems of enforcing the preference law in the private sector.

144 Sydney Morning Herald, 14 August 1924, p.9. The Gap is a cliff on South Head, Sydney Harbour.

Those who dared question the conduct of the war were then attacked, as were those “Australianists,” such as the Distributing Trades Gazette writer of 1916, who had cast the war in strictly Australian, and therefore rebellious, terms:

We hold it disgraceful that the service of our gallant youth in the years from 1914 to 1919 should be derided and maligned, as it so often is, here in their own homeland. It is the fashion among some who prate about their Australian sentiments, not only to advocate the burying of the memory of that service out of sight, but to besmirch the high spirit in which it was offered.146

The Memorial was, the paper argued, a collection of evidences of great national service, indicative of a “high spirit” of loyalism. It would bring audiences closer to the dead, for it was “a priceless collection of their relics, a faint facsimile (as good as it could be made) of details of their story, a thing which will remind us of a debt and pride everlasting.”147

The Herald elaborated somewhat disingenuously on its assertion that the Memorial offered a “facsimile of details of their story,” arguing that the Memorial’s collection ought to be accepted and displayed because it embodied a vital element of Australia’s national history, the story of the nation’s life in the world, and therefore could not possibly be controversial:

Strange indeed that some people in Sydney should make such a national record a matter of party politics! Is a party political issue established about any treasured relics of Cook’s landing or Phillip’s foundation efforts; or about the mighty days of the gold rush; or about the heroic achievements of the inland explorers and the pioneers who followed them? Do we remember their deeds now in some farcical distortion to influence a vote on some ephemeral issue in local politics today?148

Some issues were above party politics, the Herald was arguing, those being matters closely associated with the glorious history of the Australian nation. None could argue with these historical relics being “treasured,” nor oppose dominant interpretations of their importance. The disingenuousness involved in claiming direct congruence between eighteenth-century events and those of less than a decade previous, ignoring

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146 Sydney Morning Herald, 15 August 1924, p.8.
147 Sydney Morning Herald, 15 August 1924, p.8.
the considerable number of political issues that still reverberated around war memories – repatriation and preference to name only two – which the other events and phenomena mentioned patently lacked, is notable, and was typical of such mainstream agencies as the Herald. Through its support, the article linked the Memorial to its attack on those who “derided and maligned” war service, that is, the New South Wales Labour Party.

The Herald’s was a typical martial nationalist argument, predicated on the assumption that specifically national issues existed, and the complementary assertion that in relation to these issues no division of opinion should exist. Social unity was urged on “national questions.” Of course, what constituted a national question, and what the unified position on each such question ought to be were themselves important matters. The ability to declare a particular issue “national,” and to an even greater degree the ability to define the issue’s content and forms, conferred considerable social and formal political power which was, as we have seen, seized by the RSSILA, the Nationalists and other loyalist groups.

In parliament in 1925 and 1928, debates lent strong approval, overall, to Bean’s main objectives for the Memorial, and to the assumptions about the AIF and Australian nationalism which underpinned them. There were several dissenters, one especially trenchant, although the institution certainly always enjoyed overwhelming in-principle support from lawmakers. During debates on the Australian War Memorial Bill, differing visions of Australian nation-building were observable from either side of the House in speeches on the Memorial. Firstly, Donald Cameron, returned officer and strong supporter of the Memorial, strongly echoed the 1916 ideas of Bean and Pearce in their desire to use the Memorial for nationalist education:

Sentiment and tradition are the soul of a nation. Without national sentiment there can be no national life. Symbolism of one kind or another has been the form in which sentiment has always expressed itself. These collections are symbols of the courage, self-sacrifice, and fortitude displayed during the war by the men and women of the Australian forces. They will be to us a constant reminder of our responsibility for completing the task which they began, that of making Australia the greatest and the happiest country in the world.149

149 CPD, Representatives, vol.111, 16 September 1925, pp.2482-3.
Cameron, like Bean, saw the displays as fables, containing morals on which a nation ought to base its ideal behaviour. The final sentence, expressing a common right-wing argument also expressed by Glasgow, was in accord with Bean’s thinking, having been asserted in *In Your Hands, Australians* in 1919.

In 1928, in reply to pressure that the Memorial’s Canberra home was an “unreproductive” public work, the Prime Minister, Stanley Melbourne Bruce, defended the Memorial in the clearest of nationalist terms, arguing that a nation without a national war memorial was incomplete. To this, Country Party member Victor Thompson added that “no institution is more calculated to create the right national atmosphere than a great war memorial.” No more powerful invocation of the martial nationalist metanarrative could have been made.

The display of trophies and relics was also strongly supported in the 1925 debates. Pearce, naturally a big supporter of the practice, praised it because of the public acknowledgement it provided for the achievements of specifically named individuals and groups. Pearce argued that the practice had been the wish of the soldiers:

> The men gladly gave their most precious relics in order that the achievements of their units might be immortalised in a national institution. Many exhibits were presented in the names of fallen comrades, in order that the memory of these names might be perpetuated in the museum.  

Glasgow, Cameron and Sir Neville Howse agreed. Bean’s intention to remember the dead as triumphant heroes was popular with both leaders and the rank-and-file.

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151 CPD, Representatives, vol.119, 4 September 1928, p.6318.


The proposed location of the Memorial at the foot of Mount Ainslie, directly facing the provisional parliament house, also brought forth nationalist responses. Senator Needham commented that he knew of "no more appropriate place for the erection of a memorial to Australia's valiant dead than the capital city of the nation for which they surrendered their lives."\(^{154}\) Pearce stated that "the site which has been chosen faces the front of the provisional Parliament House, and from Parliament House to the side of Mount Ainslie there is a prospect which will be practically free from buildings for all time."\(^{155}\) The same point was made in 1928 by a series of eminent witnesses to the Public Works Committee hearings, from Bean to the chairman of the Federal Capital Commission, Sir John Butters.\(^{156}\)

On the other hand, several ALP members had counter-proposals, predicated on differing visions of national identity. Percy Coleman, for example, suggested the creation of a national museum which would have an area "devoted to relics of the late war and previous campaigns, and another portion to historical records and interesting relics associated with the discovery and development of Australia."\(^{157}\) Coleman was proposing the widening of the scope of historical thinking in Australia, which would have allowed the ALP's "developmental," non-martial, nationalism more space in the public historical sphere. Notably, this idea accorded with one of Bean's original suggestions, expressed in early 1918, which had subsequently been quietly dropped. This had occurred without specific explanation, but on the evidence of the parliamentary debates, was most likely due to the fact that political support existed only for a national museum of military deeds. Coleman's idea was simply ignored by the Government, and the Bill passed.

Several Labor members spoke for the Memorial, but interpreted it quite differently to the conservatives. For instance, party leader Matthew Charlton recognised that the Memorial taught history lessons, but saw no inspiration issuing from them: "Let us hope that it will be a lesson to them, so that in their time they will


\(^{155}\) CPD, Representatives, vol.111, 21 August 1925, p.1643.


not have a repetition of the horrors of war. I do not advocate the establishment of this museum for the purpose of popularising the war; quite the reverse.” This was a rather serious expression of reservation, for as we have seen it directly contradicted the Memorial’s stated policy of ensuring that the deeds of the Australian soldiers were permanently remembered. Edward Mann replied that “the museum will not be an encouragement to war,” which was true, but the reply did not really match the terms of the concern, for encouraging and popularising are entirely different things.

Charlton’s colleague Percy Coleman claimed he supported the Memorial, but not because it would educate “our children in the national spirit, which Australians would wish to animate their country,” but rather because it was “a perpetual reminder of the horror and innate savagery of modern warfare.” Finally, Coleman, supposedly a supporter of the Memorial, made a direct criticism of its collection, and through this, an implied criticism of its entire project: “I admit that it is filled with interesting historical relics, but amongst them also are devilish examples of mechanical ingenuity, containing nothing that appeals to the Christian instincts of mankind.” Coleman’s Christianity differed from the muscular, chivalrous Christianity of the English gentleman, the Australian “public” schools, and, in Bean’s view, the AIF itself.

Conservatives felt constrained to remonstrate with the ALP. Replying to Coleman’s speech, Nationalist Charles Marr reiterated the right-wing interpretation of the Memorial’s displays, saying “I do not share the view of the honourable member that the memorial may remind our people of the tragic side of war only. One cannot view the collection of records and relics that has been made without being reminded of the great deeds of Australians.” He did provide, however, examples of such


159 CPD, Representatives, vol.111, 16 September 1925, p.2481.

160 Bean to Pearce, March 1918, AMW 93 12/12/1, Part I: CPD, Representatives, vol.111, 16 September 1925, p.2483.

161 CPD, Representatives, vol.111, 16 September 1925, p.2483.

deeds which were non-martial in character: the flight of Ross Smith, which had nothing to do with the memorial’s real collection policy parameters, and the (under-displayed) work of nurses. He argued that the Memorial did not “cultivate in the minds of young Australians a desire for war,” and that he would not have supported it if it had. Nevertheless, it was to contain things of which Australians could be proud. The dialectic between the two sides was here clearly on display.

The political strength of martial nationalism in inter-war Australia is illustrated by the parliamentary debates of 1928 and 1929. These concerned the question of whether the Memorial ought to remain open or have its operation suspended and the erection of its permanent Canberra home postponed on the grounds of economy. Under the pre-Keynesian economic orthodoxies of the late 1920s, deflationary policies were dictated, being manifest in large cuts to government expenditure. As a result, many members, including some right-wing members, saw in the Memorial expenditure which could be cut back upon during the crisis, and several suggested postponement. However, almost all, including the vast majority of ALP members, were very careful to preface their suggestions with avowals of support for the returned soldiers and respect for the dead. They went out of their way to declare that their calls for suspension of public works or the museum in Sydney were based purely on economic grounds. All were certain that appearing “anti-Digger” was politically disastrous.

A typical example of economic opposition to the Memorial came from the ALP member George Yates, whose argument combined a statement of respect for the soldiers and in-principle support for the construction of a National War Memorial with a strong assertion that the greater duty of the parliament was to see to the welfare of living returned soldiers and the families of the dead. He claimed that he could not “be accused of want of appreciation for the efforts of the soldiers” because he himself was a returned soldier. He had, he declared, no in-principle objection to the
building of a memorial, but he was sure the large amount of money involved "could be better spent in the relief of distressed soldiers."\textsuperscript{165} He had a practical argument as well: "I would be prepared to go to the limit in assisting the soldiers and those dependent on them, but how many diggers will ever see a memorial at the foot of Mount Ainslie?"\textsuperscript{166} Instead of such an impractical scheme, Yates suggested that the government "first give the consumptive soldiers enough to live on for the rest of their lives, and see that no man who has suffered for his country was in want."\textsuperscript{167} He reminded the House with some bitterness that "sounding the reveille will not wake a single dead soldier."\textsuperscript{168} Yates's argument represents a fair summary of the views of those who in 1928 and 1929 opposed the allocation of monies to the Memorial on the authority of the then-prevailing economic orthodoxy of deflationary, cost-cutting fiscal policy.\textsuperscript{169}

It is particularly telling that Yates accused Henry Gullett, friend and colleague of Bean, AWRS collector and strident supporter of the Memorial, of "merely playing up to the war sentiment, with one eye cocked to the next election" in a speech he had made in favour of the institution.\textsuperscript{170} Yates attacked Gullett often, but the nature of this jibe implies that Yates, at least, felt that there was a legitimate "war sentiment" in Australia to which one might appeal as a politician. Considering the nature of Australian public memories, full of triumphalism as they were, it is not impossible to imagine that this was true — a fascinating topic for further study.

In 1928, the distinct air of criticism in Coleman's "support" of 1925 was exceeded by Frank Brennan, who took aim at the Memorial on the grounds that it perpetuated enmities:

\textsuperscript{165} CPD, Representatives, vol. 119, 13 June 1928, p. 6079.
\textsuperscript{166} CPD, Representatives, vol. 119, 13 June 1928, p. 6079.
\textsuperscript{167} CPD, Representatives, vol. 119, 13 June 1928, p. 6079.
\textsuperscript{168} CPD, Representatives, vol. 119, 13 June 1928, p. 6079.
\textsuperscript{169} Other members who advocated postponement of the Memorial's construction were Edward Mann (Nationalist), 30 August 1928; George Bell (Nationalist), 30 August 1928 and 22 November 1929; Matthew Charlton (ALP), 31 August 1928; George Maxwell (Nationalist), 31 August 1928; Percy Stewart (Country Progress Party), 31 August 1928; John Curtin (ALP), 22 November 1929; and John Parker Moloney (ALP), 22 August 1929.
\textsuperscript{170} CPD, Representatives, vol. 119, 13 June 1928, p. 6079.
What is this useless and most expensive memorial designed to do except to remind succeeding generations that we engaged in a bloody conflict, extending over four years, with our brothers and sisters of another nation, who, like ourselves, were members of the white race? Long after the feeling of hostility is forgotten, and the absurd prejudices that gave rise to the war have been laid aside, and buried in oblivion, this memorial, if erected, will record that we fought – as doubtless most men believe we did – a just war against a barbarous and unjust people.  

Brennan and Bean agreed that the Memorial materialised a spirit, but they were diametrically opposed as to what that spirit was. For Bean it was the spirit of the great deeds of great men. Brennan, on the other hand, felt it would materialise “the war spirit” of enmity. Brennan’s racial affinity with the Germans had not been fashionable in Australia for many years. Bean actually agreed with Brennan to the extent that he campaigned for a more magnanimous settlement towards Germany, but the anti-German displays in the Memorial, almost impossible to replace en masse, remained in place.

Brennan’s most radical suggestion was the logical complement of his assertion that the Memorial, through its method of remembering the war, perpetuated enmities. This was the simple suggestion, which Alderman Bramston had already expressed in Sydney, that all reminders of the war be removed, and the memory of the war cast into the abyss:

I am one of those who believe that no useful purpose can be served by perpetuating the memory of the war as war...

Rather than erect such memorials, let us relieve the distress, the suffering, the loss, arising out of the war; let us pay the debts we incurred in connexion with it; let us, if possible, forget the last war and the tragedies and follies associated with it, and devote our energies to the building of a new world, based on a better understanding among nations.  

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Brennan deliberately separated his objections from those of the far more mainstream "economic objectors:” “This matter is one of fundamental importance; it is not a question merely of economy, and I do not on that ground, important though it be, base my objection to the erection of the war memorial.” 173 His objections were ones of principle, and he wished this to be recorded.

Brennan was certainly correct that the Memorial wished to "perpetuate the memory of the war as war," as did the RSSILA, and, at least in the first decade, the Nationalists. The war was not just transformed into a spiritual ordeal – victories were publicly recalled until the end of the 1920s, and even beyond, as we have seen. For Brennan, the war was too terrible to remember. This was because of what he remembered – “the distress, the suffering, the loss, arising out of the war.” He wished to forget these, and in this wish he was joined by a large number of Australians, as Bain’s comment regarding his inability to sell Dyson’s artwork attests. Immediately after the war few wished to remember these issues, but many, as we have seen, found positive memories as well, and were happy to express them. Stridently, Brennan argued that the war, and all the regressive elements of human nature which it embodied, ought to be forgotten so as to build up a better society and international climate. He and Bean saw the same war with very different eyes, for Bean saw in the Memorial’s educative mission, using trophies and relics to carry stories of inspiration which would become new traditions, another path to a better nation, at least. Brennan represented the anti-monumental culture, as Bean represented the monumental.

In opposing the Memorial on the grounds that it might perpetuate enmities, Brennan was in a minority: most Australians, along with the large majority of citizens of most other belligerent nations, wished to see permanent memorials, including a permanent national memorial, unafraid of whether these might tend to promote enmity. Certainly, very few members shared Brennan’s fears. Only Richard Crouch and George Yates were willing to go as far as he was in criticisms of the Memorial’s concept and form. 174 Glasgow, for example, again emphasised martial virtues,


174 Richard Armstrong Crouch (1868-1949), b. Ballarat East, Victoria, d. Port Lonsdale, Victoria. Member of Australian Natives Association in the 1890s. Deakinite MHR for Corio 1901-10. Served in the militia before 1919 and supported peace time conscription. Commanded 22nd Battalion on Gallipoli until September 1915, then Mudros base camp. Invalided back to Australia in March 1916 and campaigned against conscription for overseas service. President of the Victorian branch of the
declaring that “it is our bounded duty to see that the names of these men and their great achievements are not forgotten.”175 After Brennan’s attack, in 1929, White elaborated further on the concept: “certainly those men who lost their lives in the service of their country will not be forgotten in this generation…but will the next generation remember, and the next? This memorial is designed to be a perpetual reminder throughout the ages of the sacrifices made by those who died for their country.”176

Despite its strenuousness, Frank Brennan’s objection to the Memorial, expressed in August 1928, elicited only one truly passionate response, from Thomas Ley.177 This was because in 1928 the Government had the numbers, and there was no danger of the Memorial being postponed, but after the Scullin Government came to power in 1929, when the economic situation was also much worse, more and more distinguished supporters of the Memorial rose to their feet in parliament. An announcement of the Scullin Government in November 1929, that it had “decided temporarily to suspend operations in connexion with the War Memorial,” fully stirred the Memorial’s parliamentary defenders, and their arguments are illuminating, concentrating on the idea that the Memorial was a “sacred” national undertaking, an idea which Ley’s speech had already touched upon.178

Following the announcement Gullett and Glasgow invoked the sacred in their defences of the institution. Gullett, especially, was appalled, and his speeches defending the Memorial reveal a mind which may have been temporarily overcome by emotion, as some of the logic defies interpretation.179 Before reaching the point of hysteria, however, Gullett laid out a passionate case for the Memorial. His key idea

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175 CPD, Representatives, vol.111, 26 August 1925, p.1676.

176 CPD, Representatives, vol.121, 22 August 1929, p.262.


179 For instance, in 1929 he claimed that the museum had been open only two or three years, and that “the museum does not exist.” CPD, Representatives, 29 November 1929, pp.503, 508.
was that the Memorial had received donations from men who later died during the war, and that as a consequence items donated on the understanding that they would become part of a national memorial, the parliament faced “an obligation of the most solemn and sacred kind.” A promise made to the dead, he felt, could not be reneged upon. This sense of obligation, and the idea that the memory of the war dead was in some way sacred, were almost universal reactions around the world to the trauma of the war losses. Even though the building, with its sacred elements, did not yet exist, its most vociferous supporters saw it as being indeed a sacred space.

The Memorial’s displays brought together the sacred nation and the sacred dead through the agency of the sacred martial relic, which forged the connection. The Memorial had a special role in the “sacred matrix” of Australian war commemoration, for it held the objects, used or captured by named individuals, which provided a mysterious link with them and their (described) actions, as well as with the values that the accompanying texts asserted they embodied. In Medieval Christianity, as the Dictionary of the Middle Ages asserts, relics were “objects associated with the saints, most especially with their bodies.... Relics physically linked the supernatural and the natural worlds in medieval mentality.” These Medieval connotations were mirrored in Bean’s vision for his museum, particularly in his desire to facilitate a connection between the living visitors and the members of the AIF (alive and dead) whose objects were presented.

Thus, even though the building, with its sacred elements, did not yet exist, and even though the displays were governed, as we shall see, by a strict adherence to realism, its public supporters, at least, saw it as a sacred place. The tradition of consecrating temples (as Inglis says the Canberra Memorial was “a temple consecrated to the memory of the AIF”) had its roots in ancient practices which had seen a renaissance in Victorian Britain. Borg argues that “from the earliest times there has also been a tradition of giving memorial buildings a more practical meaning. The idea was to make the memorial part of the daily life of the people, and the commonest way of doing this was through an alliance with religion.” It is at this juncture of

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180 CPD, Representatives, 29 November 1929, p502. Gullett was referring to an order issued by Birdwood on 14 December 1917, which mentioned both “the formation, after the war, of museums,” and that such museums were desired to be “a memorial worthy of the AIF.” AWM 27 623/33.

consideration that Inglis has seen an alliance in Australia with a “civic” religion. Certainly Bean wanted the Memorial to become part of the nation’s daily life, and there is evidence that the makers of local memorials often did as well, given that many sited their monuments in prominent public places where they would be seen daily by many.\textsuperscript{183} The ancient practice had been to build a temple or church in thanks for victories. For instance, William the Conqueror built a church, Battle Abbey, on the site of the Battle of Hastings, in fulfilment of a vow made before the battle to establish a church free from Episcopal control if God granted him victory.\textsuperscript{184} The Chronicle of Battle Abbey, written c.1180, stated that the Abbey was founded as “an atonement” for the sin involved in the conquest.\textsuperscript{185} Temples could also become “memorials by association,” through the deposit inside them of captured arms. Borg argues that “in this way temples which were not themselves founded in commemoration of victories could take on a specifically memorial aspect.”\textsuperscript{186} Religion would be directly associated with both military success and with the ruler, in whose name the victory was won and the spoils deposited.

To sum up, Bean’s plan, and its realisation in Melbourne and Sydney, enjoyed widespread support in all-important elite circles. By the end of the 1920s, the project was firmly associated with the soldiers, and even those “economic” opponents who advocated its postponement ensured that their support for and solidarity with the soldiers was on the record. Few opposed it on principle. Those who did, though, such as Richard Bramston and Frank Breman, exemplified a counter-movement in Australian society which could not see positive national results in the war experience. The “two cultures” identified by Samuel Hynes in post-war Britain, the “monumental” and the “anti-monumental,” were thus seen also in Australia, where their conflict was over whether the war should be remembered, because of what they remembered. Selection was always vital to public representations of the war, for the conflict itself supplied

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{182} Borg, War Memorials, p.60.
  \item \textsuperscript{183} Inglis, Sacred Places, pp.135-7.
  \item \textsuperscript{184} At the Conqueror’s insistence, the altar stood above the place where King Harold had been killed. The Chronicle of Battle Abbey, Eleanor Searie (ed. and trans.). (Oxford: Clarendon, [c.1180] 1980), p.45; Borg, War Memorials, p.62.
  \item \textsuperscript{185} The monastery at Battle Abbey was given special rights and privileges, presumably also in expiation for the sin. The Chronicle of Battle Abbey, pp. 69,71,85.
  \item \textsuperscript{186} Borg, War Memorials, p.61.
\end{itemize}

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material for both “cultures” to present truthful memories. The war had seen horror and courage, success and catastrophe. As the next two chapters explore, it was perfectly possible to present the war as dangerous, difficult and arduous, but not horrific or emasculating, and the Memorial did so. The key to doing so was the “national” interpretation of the war, which underpinned all the material analysed in the remainder of the dissertation. The following three chapters, particularly Chapter Four, investigate the ways in which the Memorial spoke to its audiences, through narrative, fable, strict historical and technical realism, and deliberate strategic selection of the war’s subjects.
The Memorial made significant contributions to the maintenance and enhancement of the Anzac Legend throughout the inter-war period, as this and the following two chapters examine. The Memorial’s narrative of the Australian overseas war experience, while concise and readily followed, was the most comprehensive available in any public space in the country. It made two important contributions to the Anzac Legend. Firstly, it offered proof that the Australians had won a large number of battles, thus supporting the Legend’s fundamental premise. Also, in standard myth-making style, it entered into interpretation as to why the Australians had in fact been so successful.

The public display of proof of Australian military prowess was vital, for although few Australians ever publicly questioned the received version of the overseas war experience as a litany of triumph, questions nevertheless seemed to raise themselves. For instance, in October 1927 a scandal erupted when stories in various newspapers declared that proofs of the British Official History contained criticism of the Australian troops at the Gallipoli landing. A number of officers were outraged, returning fire with invective against the historian; this was then published in Britain. Meanwhile the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported that Bean “convened a conference of generals in Sydney to refute allegations [that] the Anzacs were ill-trained, badly led,
and herded together on the beach,” and even worse, that they “were nothing more or less than a disorganised rabble.” ¹ The story was swiftly shown to be a shameless beat-up, as was the story of Bean’s convening the council of war. However, he did send proofs—which attached “more importance than I would have done to confusion and straggling,” to a group of officers to be examined.² The Minister for Defence, Memorial supporter Senator Glasgow, asserted that the proofs were “subject to revision,” and that this process of review by the generals would allow “accuracy to be achieved,” assisting “the production of an absolutely authentic account of the landing.”³ There was concern that the central plank of the Legend be accepted unreservedly, particularly in Australia and Britain, and the Memorial’s narrative, incorporating explanations of military success in national terms, was an important element in the campaign to ensure this was the case. Through realistic presentation and an overt claim to be displaying nothing “except what is an exact representation of fact,” this narrative affected to prove that the Australians had won many battles and been highly successful warriors.⁴

At the same time the Memorial sought to create national traditions based on the “romance” of the “national stories” surrounding trophies. This objective blended seamlessly with the primary one of proving military effectiveness. Thus, integrated into the narrative was further interpretation, focussing on why the men had won such a number of battles. The reasons offered centred on martial virtues, such as dash, audacity, ferocity and endurance—the virtues already established as strong planks of the Anzac Legend.⁵ The displays consisted in part, then, of martial nationalist fables, in which Australian soldiers, representing the best their nation had to offer, faced and bested great obstacles, including terrible conditions and strong enemies. In winning through they had displayed ideal moral virtues. The traditions created in the Memorial were thus based upon the men of the AIF, and incorporated an exhortation that visitors should strive to emulate them.

¹ Sydney Morning Herald, 8 October 1927, p.17; 10 October 1927, p.10.
² Sydney Morning Herald, 8 October 1927, p.17.
³ Sydney Morning Herald, 8 October 1927, p.17.
⁴ AWM Minutes, 31 July 1919, Resolution 2 (d). AWM 170 1/1.
⁵ See Chapters One and Two.
Martial virtues were, however, only half of a “collective portrait” of the AIF which the Memorial displayed. These virtues originated in British martial tradition, and thus located the Australian traditions presented in the Memorial’s narrative and associated displays firmly within British racial and Imperial orthodoxies. Complementing these martial virtues were ones considered home-grown, the “bush” virtues celebrated by Bean, amongst many others, in the pre-war period. The strictly martial virtues were sourced from the Imperial tradition, whereas larrikinism, playfulness and laconic humour – virtues of a more “social” nature – as well as “pioneering” virtues such as intelligence, ingenuity and marksmanship, were recognisably elements of a pre-war Australian self-image. In the Memorial, the Australian was a chip off the old British block, with all the strength of limb and nobility of character of Wellington as Achilles, but at the same time was animated by the natural intelligence and sense of humour of the bushman.

When describing the Memorial’s narrative I seek to understand not so much the world of the battles themselves, but rather the world of the displays, in which the Memorial’s very own Myth of the War Experience was in residence. This remade reality, but did not change the past. The question was always one of selection. As in Mosse’s Myth in Germany, the Memorial’s Myth transformed the Australian overseas war experience, sifting out poor discipline and poor battlefield performances, and putting the spotlight firmly on Australian military achievement in terms of actual victory on the battlefield. The difference between the Myth and what the consensus of military historians might call “the reality” was often very small, or negligible; sometimes it was considerable. It is certainly true, of course, that the AIF ended the war as a formidable fighting force, and thus that the Memorial at times amplified, but never invented, its claims about the Australian troops. I am less concerned with this fact, however, than with the manner in which the Memorial sought to prove it in the public domain, and what this desire to do so tells us about a society in which the men’s actions remained part of normal political discourse and a major part of commemorative ceremonies, in which returned men were demanding preference and

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6 The Australian larrikin image was transformed during the war from a dangerous anti-social rebel to a national hero. The signal example of this was the hero of *The Moods of Ginger Mick*, Gerster, *Big-Noting*, pp.15-16.
other social rewards due to outstanding service in defence of the nation, and in which a new national tradition, based upon those men’s actions, was being created.

The Memorial told a story of test, ordeal and finally triumph. This particular structure, in which the test revealed the moral virtues that would, after many trials, deliver victory, was a structure reminiscent of saga and epic. As well as being strongly suggestive of the Memorial’s narrative structure, it was common among early post-war Anzac Day sermons, speeches and newspaper leaders. Many commentators wrote of test and triumph, others of ordeal and triumph. The Memorial’s narrative itself was a combination of the three concepts.

All but the first “test” of the Australians, which occurred at Gallipoli, was summarised, and presented to the Memorial’s visitors, through tributes to the AIF from three high-ranking officers who had been in positions of command over its units during 1918. These three messages, delivered in the full flush of victory in autumn 1918, were exhibited on pillars in the Memorial’s displays, sketching not only the contours of the narrative that surrounded them, but also those of the moral explanation for the successes that was such a fundamental part of it. In their tributes French Generalissimo Marshall Ferdinand Foch, and British officers General Sir Henry Rawlinson and General Sir Thomas Allenby, outlined a history of ordeal and triumph, but went much further, and offered names of battles, a comprehensive assertion that moral virtues led to success, and even an assessment of the national benefits for

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7 In *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, John Cuddon states that “an epic is a long narrative poem, on a grand scale, about the deeds of warriors and heroes... [Epics] are often of national significance in the sense that they embody the history and aspirations of a nation in a lofty or grandiose manner.” Cuddon traces a tradition of epic literature from Gilgamesh’s “search for glory and eternal life” and the trials of Odysseus to the chivalric *Chanson de Roland*. Spenser’s nationalist poem *The Faerie Queen*, and Tennyson’s *Idylls of the King*. The Memorial, while not using grandiose language, certainly offered a narrative on a grand scale, with the deeds of warrior heroes the constant topic, and in so-doing embodied the aspirations of a large section of Australians. Historically, the saga is a less significant literary mode, but it also concerned “the exploits of heroic kings and warriors.” J.A. Cuddon, *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, 3rd edn. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991), pp.284-93,823-4.

8 Bishop Lees, for example, took the biblical text “we went through fire and water, but thou broughtest us out” as the focus of a sermon on Anzac Day 1922, in which he claimed that the text was “a principle of history,” that there “was always...a great test, a great triumph and a great testimony,” and that Anzac Day was a celebration of precisely this doctrine. *Argus*, 26 April 1922, p.11. In a phrase reminiscent of Bean, Lees also argued that “the tests of war were searchlights of character.”
Australia flowing from that success. In displaying these messages, the Memorial allowed three famous and well-respected officers to outline its assertions about the soldiers.

Rawlinson, commander during 1918 of the British Fourth Army which included the Australians, provided the basic narrative structure of the European section of the history, moving from the Somme in 1916 through the winter of 1916-17 to the final successes of 1918:

I have watched with the greatest interest, and admiration, the various stages through which [the Australian Corps] have passed from the hard times of FLERS and POZIERES to their culminating victories at MONT ST QUENTIN and the great Hindenburg System at BONY, BELLICOURT Tunnel and MONTBREHAIN.

During the Summer of 1918 the safety of AMIENS has been principally due to their determination, tenacity and valour.

9 Foch's message was seen in part in the foreword to Bean's guides, quoted in the dissertation introduction. However, only a short section was used in the foreword, and the message was displayed in full on a pillar in the displays:

The Australian troops have upheld the cause of the Allies with magnificent dash. From start to finish they distinguished themselves by their qualities of endurance and boldness. By their initiative, their fighting spirit, their magnificent ardour, they proved themselves shock troops of the first order. In the grave hours of 1918, with their British, American and French comrades, they barred the enemy rush. They stopped it, broke it and, at the appointed hour, drove it far backwards. I am happy to express to Australia the undying memory which we shall cherish of her incomparable soldiers.


10 AWM Ex Doc. 186, Sheet 23, Item 1, capitalisation in original. Sir Henry Seymour Rawlinson (1864–1925), b. Dorset, England, d. Delhi, India. Conducted British Expeditionary Force's (hereafter BEF's) first attack on entrenched positions, at Neuve Chapelle in March 1915, and soon realised that artillery preponderance and "bite and hold" tactics were required, although "such insights did not inform all his subsequent actions." ODNB, vol.46, p.159. Commanded main BEF attack on the Somme - the 4th Army attack in front of Albert on 1 July 1916. Rawlinson was against Douglas Haig's ambitious plan for the battle, but was dependent upon Haig for his career and did not oppose the plan actively. After the Somme disaster Rawlinson was promoted. Commanded 4th Army (including the AIF) during the main German offensive in March 1918 and main Allied offensive on 8 August 1918 and in operations breaching the Hindenburg Line. ODNB, vol.46, pp.157-61.
The Memorial's narrative was far larger, encompassing all theatres and almost every battle, but both the dynamic of ordeal and triumph and the relative weight given to victory accurately reflect its exhibitionary programme.

Both Rawlinson and Allenby offered explanations for the success they referred to, and these are worth quoting extensively, for they accorded almost perfectly with the attitude of Bean and many other concerned martial nationalists, summarising the Anzac Legend to a remarkable degree. Firstly, Rawlinson launched into an interpretative passage that reads as if it were written by C.E.W. Bean in collaboration with W.M. Hughes:

The story of what they have accomplished as a fighting Army Corps, of the diligence, gallantry and skill which they have exhibited, and of the scientific methods which they have so thoroughly learned and so successfully applied, has gained for all Australians a place of honour amongst nations and amongst the English speaking races in particular.\(^{11}\)

Bean was particularly taken with the ability and eagerness of Australians to learn new skills, to master the "science" of war, while naturally both he and Hughes agreed with the virtues invoked and the identification of "the English speaking races." Hughes ended every commemorative speech during his prime ministership with epithets such as "a niche in the Temple of the Immortals," which the Anzacs had apparently obtained for their nation.

Allenby, who oversaw Australian operations in Palestine, weighed in with an even more striking endorsement which expanded the messages being offered about the men, and sharpened the analysis as well:

When I took over command of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force in July, 1917, the light horse were already veterans, tried and proved in many a fight. Since then, they have shared in the campaigns which achieved the destruction of the Turkish army and the conquest of Palestine and Syria, and throughout they have been in the thick of the fighting. I have found them eager in attack and staunch in defence. At Beersheba, a mounted charge by a light horse regiment, armed only with rifles, swept across the Turkish trenches and decided the day. Later, some of the regiments were

\(^{11}\) AWM Ex Doc. 186, Sheet 23, Item 1.
armed with swords, which they used with great effect in the pursuit of last autumn...

The Australian light horseman combines with a splendid physique a restless activity of mind. This mental quality renders him somewhat impatient of rigid and formal discipline, but it confers upon him the gift of adaptability, and this is the secret of much of his success mounted or on foot. In this dual role, on every variety of country – mountain, plain, desert, swamp or jungle – the Australian light horseman has proved himself equal to the best. He has earned the gratitude of the Empire and the admiration of the world. 12

Rawlinson again contributed, finishing his tribute with a triumvirate of themes that would become standard Australian commemorative rhetoric in the immediate post-war years: the Australians playing a prominent role in the main offensive that was winning the war (in the white heat of the historical vortex, as it were, changing the world for the better), the honour that command of such men conferred upon the speaker, and the renown the AIF had won for their nation:

It has been my privilege to lead the Australian Corps in the Fourth Army during the decisive battles since August 8th which bid fair to bring the war to a successful conclusion at no distant date.

No one realises more than I the prominent part that they have played, for I have watched from day to day every detail of their fighting, and learned to value beyond measure the prowess and determination of all ranks.

In once more congratulating the Corps on a series of successes unsurpassed in this great war, I feel that no mere words of mine can adequately express the renown that they have won for themselves and the position they have established for the Australian nation, not only in France but throughout the world. 13

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12 This message was displayed on a pillar. AWM Ex Doc. 186. The last two sentences were excerpted in Relics and Records, September 1922, p.15; April 1928 p.16; December 1931, p.16. Finally, it was printed in full in Australian Chivalry, Plate 24. Sir Edmund Hynman Allenby (1861-1936), b. Southwell, England, d. London, England. Took over Egyptian Expeditionary Force (hereafter EEF), including Australian Light Horse units, in July 1917. Inflicted comprehensive defeat on Turks September – November 1918. ODNB, vol.7, pp.831-4.

13 AWM Ex Doc. 186, Sheet 23, Item 1.
Here then, in the messages of two British generals, was the Anzac Legend of the early post-war years. Combining the tributes provides a near complete summary of both Australian wartime propaganda and post-war commemorative rhetoric. It is notable that they should have so completely summarised Australian commemorative rhetoric, but almost all its elements were there. There was gallantry, determination and victory in important battles. There was an eagerness to fight and a ferocious ability to destroy the enemy. There was a great physique and a questing mind, underlying a military success that had made Australians famous amongst those most discerning of judges, “the English speaking races.” The men are the equal of any, with admiration and thankfulness their due. John Williams points out that these and other tributes were widely printed in newspapers before and during the time they were publicly displayed in the Memorial.  

These were the stories, and these were the interpretations, that occupied much of the Memorial’s national war history. That all three leaders had commanded the Australians in victorious campaigns was of course a vital fact, giving their words greater authority, and the Australian war experience they presented was overwhelmingly positive. The Memorial followed this lead, but it did include acknowledgement of Rawlinson’s “hard times” as well.

In the Memorial’s narrative, the concentration was upon “diligence,” “gallantry,” “skill” and so on, with display after display affecting to prove the generals’ assertions, while the final judgement as to “a place of honour amongst...the English speaking races” was always left to officers and politicians. The Memorial provided a great deal of commentary on individual battles, particularly to point to morals perceived within stories, but used the generals’ words to “naturalise” its editorial comment on the overall achievements of the Australians. By displaying the original texts of the tributes, the full impact of the words of these famous and celebrated soldiers was arrayed, and the Memorial’s interpretations given the authority of the expert.

The test was the invasion of Gallipoli, an operation which is generally considered to have been poorly planned and badly executed. Some historians have argued that a great opportunity for success was lost on the first day, due to inexperience in the leadership and troops, and the effectiveness of Mustafa Kemal’s counterattack. Others, however, argue that this was never the case, as the numbers of men provided for the operation were approximately half that necessary for success. The Turks had been pre-warned by an attempt to force the straits by naval power earlier in the year, and had reinforced the peninsula. There was little secrecy and thus there was no chance of true tactical surprise. The boats bringing the men in to shore drifted a mile north of their correct landing points, and landed the men under a precipitate cliff. The initial attack was held up on the second ridge - day one objectives lay on the fourth – and trench warfare swiftly set in. Despite repeated attacks, the Anzacs (and their British and French allies at other points of the peninsula) were unable to break out of their tiny perimeter. In December 1915 the positions were evacuated, and the expedition’s strategic goals – to advance on Constantinople, the Turkish capital, and force the Turks out of the war – were “as unattainable as the sources of the Amazon or the mountains of the South Pole.”

The Memorial’s interpretations of Gallipoli exhibited the combination of sacrifice and triumph characteristic of Australian responses to the war, in so doing illustrating the “national” interpretation of the war addressing its first, and most enduring, topic. In the Memorial’s various representations on Gallipoli, preoccupations with national characteristics, particularly those leading to military victory, and with victory itself, were evident. Also evident in Bean’s guides, but not in the photographic exhibition or the displays especially, was a deep lamentation for the men who died on the peninsula, and a public acknowledgement that many lives had

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17 Keegan, *The First World War*, p.241. Bean *Gallipoli Correspondent*, pp.46-51, covering Bean’s diary entries for 1-10 April 1915 makes it clear that the imminent attack was common knowledge.

18 This was Bean’s description of the status of enemy trenches on the Western Front. Bean, *The AIF in France During the Allied Offensive, 1918*, p.336.
been lost. These two notions, which appear natural antagonists, were blended seamlessly in the Memorial’s representations on Gallipoli, setting a model for its treatment of other battles, and particularly its treatment of death. “A tomb most glorious” showed the men as victorious in death. (See Chapter Six for more details).

The national characteristics depicted in the Memorial’s representations of the off-capitalised “Landing at Anzac” were those martial virtues that were felt necessary to win battles: courage, determination, ruthlessness, the will to conquer – in short, the fundamentally “British” virtues which had, it was felt, won the Empire. The Memorial’s representations, in concord with mainstream commemoration generally, praised the AIF for passing a perceived test in a two-fold manner. Firstly there was the simple fact that the men stuck to their task and did not run away. Thus, the absolute minimum requirement for honourable martial behaviour had been satisfied; the troops had stood up to the “moral test” of combat. However, the men were seen to have performed extremely well in this first battle, not simply surviving their “test,” but passing it triumphantly. In making such an argument, a somewhat arbitrary, and somewhat self-delusional, criterion for success was utilised – the scaling of the cliffs and the establishment of a defensive perimeter on that first day. This “feat,” as it was often called, was viewed as a great success, as great as Waterloo in the Hobart Mercury’s opinion, with the first day’s actual goals – never reached – being completely ignored. They were never mentioned in the Memorial, either, nor in any commemorative rhetoric of the inter-war years. A different, arbitrary sign of “success” was chosen, and with its adoption much greater praise could be heaped upon the troops than if they had been seen as simply courageously trying, but failing.

The test depicted in the Memorial was certainly a stern one, in which many men died. The terrain, the enemy and mistakes by unnamed non-Australians were all foregrounded to insist that the Australians had faced a difficult task. The attack was made more difficult by planning errors and the terrain, as a long caption for George

19 The Sydney Morning Herald asked the rhetorical question “was it a defeat?” on Anzac Day 1927, answering “a thousand times, no” The paper also argued that 25 April 1915 was the “day of the Anzacs,” and that “they came with the dawn: [the day’s] meridian saw their triumph over fearful odds; its close knew them immortal.” Sydney Morning Herald, 25 April 1927, p.8. The Age wrote in 1931 that “no historical analyses could dim the glory of the Anzacs.” Age, 25 April 1931, p.10.

20 Indeed, it was routine practice for Anzac Day speakers and writers to refer to “an almost impossible task” being undertaken on 25 April 1915. See for example Age, 24 April 1922, p.6, Argus, 26 April 1922, p.11, Diddams, Anzac Commemoration 1921, pp.13-23, Anzac Day, 1928, Preface.
Lambert’s painting of the Landing in Treloar’s folio book of war art *Australian Chivalry* explained:

The task of launching the attack fell to the 3rd Australian Brigade, but, through an error in direction in the dark, its battalions were landed at points about a mile north of those intended. Instead of open beach, they found themselves confronted in the dim morning light by a tangle of steep, scrub-covered cliffs.\(^{21}\)

However, “undaunted by this initial misfortune and the formidable task before them, the troops dropped their packs, charged the magazines of their rifles, and, moving into the scrub, began the precipitous ascent in the teeth of a fierce, concentrated fire, which quickly grew in intensity.”\(^ {22}\) The Australians were clearly in a very inferior position, exposed to intense fire and attempting to scale a daunting cliff. This indeed was a test of their military manhood.

As was made plain, however, the force came triumphantly through this great test, facing the ordeal with determination and achieving a triumph:

Clutching at the roots of stunted shrubs or digging their bayonets into the shallow soil, they struggled upwards, the slope becoming steeper at every yard. Many who were killed outright or wounded by the enemy’s fire, rolled down the cliffs until stayed by some bush, where they could be reached only with the utmost difficulty. But, as the sun rose, knots of these grim, determined men swarmed on to the summit of the “first” ridge, the Turks falling back at the last minute to the inland side of the plateau, whence they were soon chased into Shrapnel Gully.\(^ {23}\)

Certainly the attack was difficult, even grim, with many men killed. However, the survivors were able to overcome the obstacles of planning error, terrain and enemy to wrest from the latter the first ridge and chase them down into the valley beyond. This was a test most emphatically passed, a collective military manhood affirmed.

To underline the fact that the focus of this Landing story was on success rather than sacrifice, the *Australian Chivalry* caption summarised its position:

\(^{21}\) *Australian Chivalry*, Plate 7.

\(^{22}\) *Australian Chivalry*, Plate 7.

\(^{23}\) *Australian Chivalry*, Plate 7.
"ANZAC'S FATEFUL DAWN"

The daring military feat attempted and brilliantly achieved by the previously untried Australian troops, whose superb courage, resource, and unflinching determination won the admiration of the world, and set for all time the standard of conduct for the Australian soldier, is brought vividly to the imagination by this canvas, which portrays the scene on the slopes of Plugge's Plateau at dawn on the 25th of April, 1915. "

In the entire caption there was no mention of the ultimate fate of the expedition. Judging from this representation it was a victory. The Turks are in full retreat, the Anzacs in the ascendancy. Naturally visitors knew the eventual fate of the expedition, but the nationalist result of concentrating on this first great rush of victory, and ignoring the campaign's end, was at least as strong, for many important moral virtues were on display. Thus the ultimate defeat of the Australian expedition did not need to be, and was not, mentioned.

However, and in both contrast and complement, Bean's first guide to the Memorial's displays focussed significantly on another quality which he and other Anglo-Australians valued, the willingness to sacrifice one's life for one's nation. The fight at Pine Ridge on the first day gave evidence that Australians were animated by this quality, now the primary commemorative virtue. Bean referred to this action as "a tragic episode," following his practice of referring to defeats with this word, but under

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24 *Australian Chivalry*, Plate 7.
the heading “To the Last Man,” emphasised the heroic elements of this first
Australian failure: “at the end of the long day’s fierce battle, part of the Australian
line was cut off by the Turks at dusk, and was last seen fighting on, but hopelessly
surrounded. Not a man survived…”25 This “devotion to duty” was an essential part of
the chivalric public school ethos in which Bean was steeped, and not coincidentally
was a fundamental element of British popular military tradition. Here, on the first day
of their test, the Australians were upholding this moral code, which harked back to
ancient Sparta, that Fitchett had summed up in the preface to his Deeds That Won the
Empire as “heroic fortitude which dreads dishonour more than it fears death.”26 As
much as the courage, resource and determination heralded in Australian Chivalry, this
fortitude was embraced as characteristically Australian. In Gallipoli representations,
then, there was a blend of sacrifice and victory. The death and the glory mentioned in
the institution’s motto had become one.

That the Memorial embodied the “spirit of 1922” can be seen from the Age’s
leader of 24 April 1922, which made a claim similar to that of Australian Chivalry,
but expressed it in a more ferocious, overtly propagandistic style:

With wild cheers the troops leapt from the boats waist deep into
the water, and with fixed bayonets charged the steep cliffs. The
Turkish trenches on the top of the slopes were taken; by
daybreak the Australians were starting to dig their trenches on
the second ridge, and by the next day the seemingly impossible
feat of establishing a strong position had been accomplished. The
history of war contains no more daring achievement than that of
the landing on Gallipoli.27

As Bean wrote to Treloar two weeks before this leader was published, the Memorial’s
painting of the Landing depicted this exciting, victorious undertaking in realistic
detail: “Lambert portrays the great task which our men were set exactly in its proper

26 Fitchett, Deeds That Won the Empire, Preface. Gavin Souter points out that John Monash took a copy
of Fitchett to the peninsula “to stimulate the interest of his men in British military traditions, he said.”
Souter, Lion and Kangaroo, p.222. Souter argued that “the Gallipoli campaign lacked only one of the
qualities that went to make such deeds, though admittedly rather a vital one: the quality of success. But in
all other aspects – courage, suffering and persistence – Gallipoli was as much the stuff of legend as Albuera
on another peninsula, or the Heights of Abraham at Quebec.” However, as we have seen, the landing, the
key moment, was represented as a success in many quarters.

27 Age, 24 April 1922, p.6.
proportion and light – the climbing of an almost precipitous hill, in the uncertain light of dawn, in the face of an unseen enemy." Bean was sure that much could be learned by visitors from the men depicted, telling Treloar that “every face and attitude is worth study.”

In the Memorial in the 1922-35 period, as in Australian mainstream commemoration more generally, it was always the landing itself which was the key event in the entire story of the Australian overseas war experience. The storming of the cliffs, such a dramatic “test” of military manhood, was more than sufficient to answer the question as to whether Australians were truly “of the Bulldog breed.” The fact that the campaign itself was lost was almost entirely irrelevant in 1922 as it had been in 1916. The popular 2004 interpretation that failure was important or necessary to the myths created at Anzac is, I think, largely anachronistic. “Sacrifice” never equated with “failure,” for instance. Indeed, through the Memorial, as in the wider commemorative networks, sacrifice was very often organically fused with triumph in the 1920s.

III

After their “test” at Gallipoli, the AIF’s infantry retired to Egypt, expanded from two to four divisions, and moved to France to fight the Germans, arriving at the line in April 1916. For the next year, the AIF fought a series of battles in which inadequate resources and planning, poor communication between headquarters and front line, and inferior execution of the weak plans (particularly ineffective coordination between artillery and infantry) combined with stout German resistance to produce a string of disasters and pyrrhic victories at Fromelles, Pozieres, Mouquet Farm and Flers. These battles were launched in the expectation of achieving a decisive breakthrough, but when they foundered the justification offered for them was that they would wear down the Germans more quickly than the Allies. This, at least, was the justification of

28 C.E.W. Bean to John Treloar, 15 April 1922. AWM 93 20/1/1A.

29 Bean to Treloar, 15 April 1922. AWM 93 20/1/1A.

30 The Light Horse went to Palestine.

31 Fought respectively on 19 July, from 23 July to 5 August, from 8 August to 3 September, and November 1916. For details see Coulthard-Clark, Encyclopedia, pp. 116-22.
Douglas Haig, British G.O.C. Scantily-prepared attacks against formidable defences, with the element of surprise forfeited from up to two weeks in advance through registration of targets and slow preparatory barrages, were repeated throughout the second half of 1916 in an attempt to find a breakthrough that was clearly not possible with the tactics and resources available.

These were battles which were difficult to cast as heroic victories; although some ground was taken they were clearly not decisive and few believed they were worth the lives lost (this few did include Haig). Therefore, in the Memorial a different method of glorification was used, casting this period as an “ordeal.” The endurance of the men in surviving the appalling bombardments that the AIF experienced during 1916 was brought to the foreground. This theme, once established in the narrative at Pozieres, remained and was utilised often in descriptions of 1917 as well. At the same time, the moral qualities established by the test at Gallipoli – courage, determination, an ability to win trench battles in hand-to-hand combat – were reiterated, with the reasons for defeats being of a “material” nature: lack of artillery support negated an overabundance of “dash.” Victory was still emphasised whenever it could be perceived, however.

Pozieres provides an excellent example of the way in which the Memorial “redeemed” a generally unsuccessful, costly battle, mixing together victory, endurance and cost to highlight the former two notions and acknowledge, yet depoliticise, the latter. Pozieres was the most pyrrhic of victories, and is now usually seen in terms of its horror, and the endurance of the men who withstood the bombardment there. In the Memorial in 1922, though, it was a battle in which the Australians had been successful, carrying the town with superior soldierly qualities, only to have a bitter enemy retaliate by a resort to the material in the form of a monstrous artillery barrage. Whilst the cost of the battle was clearly acknowledged, there was a strong emphasis on success in the plan model label which outlined the campaign. Firstly, there was success:

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At 12.30 a.m. on the 23rd July, 1916, the 1st Division attacked Pozieres, which had already defied several attacks. The operation was a complete success, but the casualties were heavy. The 2nd Division relieved the 1st and captured the O.G. (Old German) lines on the eastern side of the town. In turn the 4th Division entered the line and extended the Australians’ gains.34

The fact that casualties were heavy did not in any way detract from the complete success; this was war after all, and in war men unfortunately died. The visitor was urged to dwell upon the success of the Australians, which Bean stated in his 1929 volume of the History was “at last...a victory of importance on the Western Front,” and in fact, the only one on the British front in the third stage of the Battle of the Somme.35 The Australians had clearly outdone the British; the southern branch of the race was superior, it seemed to some.

The enemy retaliated against the victorious AIF, resorting to the material, having been shown wanting in martial virtues by their eviction from the town:

For six weeks they...suffered under an artillery fire of unprecedented intensity, the fury of which may be appreciated from the fact that under it the village of Pozieres completely disappeared. The Australians faced it unflinchingly.36

Here the men showed that, in addition to courage, determination and devotion to duty, they had the strength to endure anything the enemy could fling at them. It was this bombardment, concentrated on a very small area at Pozieres, which led to the battle being referred to as an “ordeal by fire” in the photographic exhibition.37 It was an ordeal, though, that was also a “complete success,” proving that even during the Battle of the Somme, that most iconic of disasters, the Australians had moved ahead.

34 AWM Ex Doc. 186, Sheet 5, Item 1.
36 AWM Ex Doc. 186, Sheet 5, Item 1.
37 See Melbourne Photograph 34; Sydney Photograph 107. Relics and Records, September 1922, p.68; April 1928, p.80; December 1931, p.81.
Finally, there came the sad truth: “At a cost of 25,000 casualties they seized the summit of the Pozieres Ridge – an area of a square mile.” The numbers were stark, and the cost of the “complete success” at Pozieres therefore hit the reader with considerable impact. A square mile won for 25,000 casualties was, objectively, a shockingly pyrrhic victory, but it was still to this victory that the narrative clung.

The ordeal reached its climax at the end of 1916, as a savage winter closed over the Western Front. Two abortive attacks were made, both disasters. The 1922 Somme plan model asserted that the failure of the attacks was not the fault of the troops, but of the mud:

The terrible bombardments of the summer and autumn, and the rain, had reduced the forward areas to muddy wastes, which were spanned here and there by narrow duckboard track. Here, in the wrecked trenches, the Australians held a section of the line during the severest winter experienced in France for several decades. In November they attempted two attacks. The ground was practically impassable and the attacks were not successful.

The two attacks were in fact conducted in conditions that were so bad that a strictly factual institution might have made angry accusations against those who sent their nationals to fight in them. That no such criticism came from the Imperially-loyal Memorial was not a surprise, but did underline the museum’s commitment to those who had conducted the war.

In the Memorial’s narrative, the winter was represented explicitly, as befitted an “ordeal.” It showed the AIF as having been tried to their utmost by the weather, and bowing under the strain: many were ill, morale at its lowest ever ebb. It is notable that the enemy were never presented as being able to sap the morale of the Australians to anywhere near the extent that the weather did. The narrative never had a depressed tone, however, and it stressed that the Australians, though “sorely tried” did not break, and fought back against nature as against the enemy, using that natural intelligence so often commented upon by Bean. The severity of the winter and the Australian recovery were explored in the caption for the photograph “Somme Mud,” which

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38 AWM Ex Doc. 186, Sheet 5, Item 1.
39 AWM Ex Doc. 186, Sheet 5, Item 1.
40 For a discussion of truth and its “national” limits in the Memorial, see Chapter Six.
showed Bean struggling along a trench. The difficulty of the conditions were first foregrounded: "the freezing cold was preferable to the milder weather, which filled the trench with liquid mud, as in the case of Gird Trench here photographed." As Bean said in *In Your Hands*, though, AIF minds were sharp and could overcome any problem by applying their minds "to it straight." The caption elaborated: "At first the terrible conditions were responsible for a heavy sick wastage, but the problem was faced, and after a short time the Australian wastage figures were among the lowest." Again, here was triumph over a terrible ordeal, and the Australian recovery from the winter was symbolic of a change in the course of the war as the Memorial told it. It consisted thereafter of a long string of "successes," some larger than others, almost uninterrupted except by the intervention, once again, of the weather at the end of 1917.

By the summer of 1917 the Australians’ military performance was improving. They were learning new methods of warfare, particularly co-ordination of infantry and artillery and better gunnery. Their planning abilities had increased through experience and assimilation of information from their allies. They also had available hugely increased numbers of guns, especially heavy guns, as well as machine guns, mortars and other forms of firepower, although not yet reliable tanks. These material factors, which are now acknowledged by historians as decisive, were played down throughout the Memorial’s displays, although they were acknowledged obliquely at times. This had the effect of giving the troops even more credit for the victories that occurred both in this year and 1918 than modern historiography suggests is due, considerable as that is.

The AIF experienced a real success in June 1917, at the well-planned Battle of Messines. Here was a legitimately positive development, and the tone of the Memorial’s narrative takes a decisive turn in that direction at Messines and continues in this fashion almost without break thereafter. In the Memorial’s narrative Messines

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41. Melbourne Photograph 41; Sydney Photograph 112. *Relics and Records*, September 1922, p.69; April 1928, p.81; December 1931, p.82.

42. Bean, *In Your Hands*, p.91.

43. *Relics and Records*, September 1922, p.69; April 1928, p.81; December 1931, p.82.


saw the Australians reaping the reward for complementing their moral qualities with the intelligent creation and application of new methods of planning, while the material elements of the victory, mines and a massive bombardment, were relegated to the sidelines of the action. To illustrate the idea, the Memorial exhibited a photograph of Australian soldiers researching the terrain over which they would fight:

![Figure 18: “Studying the Battlefield.”](cas.awm.gov.au. Photograph E00532)

**STUDYING THE BATTLEFIELD**

Australians of the 13th Brigade, on 6th June, 1917, studying the large contour map of the Messines battlefield made near Petit Pont, Belgium, to enable the troops to acquire a thorough knowledge of the ground. This was one of the means adopted to make victory certain. Indeed, the battle of Messines was a masterpiece of careful planning and organisation, and the thorough staff work was largely responsible for the complete success with which the operation was attended.46

Here the men were absorbing some of those scientific methods that Allenby would later praise so roundly. The men in the photograph are focussed on the model; this is serious business. Yet the tone of the caption is upbeat, and there is an air of excitement in the crowd. War was not a terrible thing, perhaps, if one was brave and ready to plan, ready “to make victory certain.” This was the kind of message Bean

46 Relics and Records, September 1922, p.70; April 1928, p.85; December 1931, p.86.
had used during the war to keep up public morale, that is, it was propaganda, exhibited for the whole 1922-35 period.

Messines was successful in part because it had limited objectives, and the third quarter of 1917 saw a continuation of such battles. The Australians met with success in late September and early October at Menin Road, Polygon Wood and Broodseinde Ridge, all in Belgium, but as rain turned the low-lying Flanders battlefield into a giant bog that made movement almost impossible, the slow “bite-and-hold” offensive, known as the Third Battle of Ypres, ground to a halt near Passchendaele. Haig, who had not personally inspected the terrain, ordered the attacks to continue in impassable mud, with the result that enormous casualties — even the successful attacks had had these — multiplied without progress of any kind being made. In the Memorial’s narrative, ordeal began to give way to triumph more strongly, but this segue was cut short by the Passchendaele mud. It is significant, though, that the narrative showed the enemy as no longer being able to withstand the AIF by September 1917; only the weather could defeat them now that their martial virtues were being matched by their preparation for combat, the visitor learned.

The winter descended, and in the spring of 1918, with the Australians at rest, the Germans attacked in their last great effort to win the war in the West as they had in the East. The Soviets having sought an armistice, concluded in December 1917, the Germans were able to bring large forces to the West. These were unleashed in March 1918 in a final attempt to destroy the French and British before an American force of over a million fresh troops arrived. The Germans at first had spectacular success, breaking through British army formations and advancing at unheard-of rates. As the Memorial’s narrative told it, the situation was critical and urgent action was needed. The AIF were sent to stop the advance, and this they did at Villers-Bretonneux and Hazebrouck, redeeming the failures of British troops. The German offensive marked the end of the AIF’s ordeal, and the beginning of their triumph.

47 The 1922 Flanders Plan model label declared that “between September 20th and October 11th there were launched five attacks.... All were successful until the final assault by the 3rd and 4th Australian Divisions on October 12th,” John Treloar to C.E.W. Bean, 15 May 1922. A7702 166 003/005. See Coulthard-Clark, Encyclopedia, pp.130, 131, 132-3.

48 The 1922 Flanders Plan model label stated succinctly that it was “the fine weather that permitted the rapid progress of August and September.” Treloar to Bean, 15 May 1922. A7702 166 003/005. This interpretation, in no way “untrue,” was not the entire “truth,” either. This essentially museological issue is discussed in the next chapter.
At Hazebrouck the enemy were first halted:

THE DEFENCE OF HAZEBROUCK

The honour fell to the 1st Australian Division which upon joining the other divisions in the Amiens sector about the 9th April was immediately hurried back to reinforce the British line near Hazebrouck, at the time reeling under a new and heavy German offensive.

Taking up a position near Strazeele, between the 13th, and 17th, April they succeeded in holding up the German advance. In these operations, the 12th, Army Brigade AFA and some Australian Light Horsemen with the XXII Corps Mounted Regiment also played a prominent and gallant part. 49

The Australians were now in the middle of clearly vital military operations, equal to Waterloo and Trafalgar from a martial nationalist perspective, and thus worthy of considerable elaboration.

After this initial and important success, further gains were made. The Australians, building on their 1917 achievements, were establishing dominance over their enemies:

From then on to the end of July the Division constantly harried the Huns in this area. Patrols, raids, or battalion attacks were a daily occurrence, and yielded a generous return in the destruction or capture of enemy personnel and material, and the gain of ground.

Altogether 1923 prisoners from twelve German Divisions were taken, 25 guns and trench mortars, 130 machine guns and one flammenwerfer (flame-thrower) were captured. 50

With supremacy thus established, the AIF then went over to the offensive, and after a triumphant dress rehearsal at the Battle of Hamel in July “decisively defeated” the

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50 “The Defence of Hazebrouck.” This label -- for the Somme 1918 plan model -- was slightly longer and more elaborate than the original one installed in December 1928, which stated simply that “with this attack [Villers-Bretonneux] the tide in this sector turned. During the following three months the Australians carried out a series of minor operations by which they established a marked ascendancy over the enemy.” Bain to Treloar, 15 May 1929. AWM 265 21/4/5, Part 2. It is also interesting to note that in 1922 Bean labelled the flame-throwers “flame projectors;” the evolution of military nomenclature can be seen in the change of designation.
enemy on 8 August. In the Memorial's story the Australians continued their domination throughout the third quarter of 1918, demolishing one German defence line after another, until they finally smashed through the vaunted Hindenburg Line shortly before the Armistice. In describing the last few months of the war, Bean's guide featured the headings "Smashing Through," "Breaking the Hindenburg Line," "Fighting Spirit Extolled" [Foch], "An Audacious Advance," "Magnificent Feat of Arms," and "Beginning of the End." The temper of these pages is exemplified by the passage following the latter headline, which made clear the historic triumph of the Australians:

It was intended by the Germans that the high ground across the Somme at Péronne should be held, although the rest of their line was being withdrawn behind the river. When, however, on the 29th August, 1918, the enemy carried out this withdrawal, the 2nd and 5th Australian Divisions advanced with such dash that Germans left to defend their important corner were rushed from their positions and driven back with the rest. This occurrence had consequences of the greatest importance in making possible the subsequent attack by the Australians upon Mont St Quentin and Péronne.


51 The Somme 1918 plan model used precisely the words "decisively defeated." Bain to Treloar, 15 May 1929.

52 Relics and Records, September 1922, pp.31-2; April 1928, pp.35-41; December 1931, pp.35-41.

Whilst Mont St Quentin remained the most famous action, the breaching of the Hindenburg Line – with its name associated with the most famous German general of the war – gave the tale of the AIF a glorious ending. It was made clear that this was the last, and greatest of all the German defensive lines, “the famous Hindenburg Line, which, with its concrete field works, belts of wire, and underground shelters, was a most formidable obstacle which had already defied the British army.”

This would not be obstacle enough to defy the Australians, however: “within a month the Hun had been driven from this, his last stronghold in France.” A step-by-step description was furnished, which foregrounded prisoners and trophies captured: “80 guns and 4243 prisoners” on 18 September, for example. “The war furnished no similar record of such important tactical and material gain at such slight loss,” the label declared.

The Australians then worked with their inexperienced allies, the Americans, and overcame both American mistakes and the enemy to achieve a historic success, as a plan model label explained:

The American Divisions succeeded in getting through the German defences but inexperience caused them to neglect thorough “mopping-up.” The Germans reappeared from underground shelters behind them and were able to oppose the 5th and 3rd Australian Divisions advancing to exploit the American successes.... The fact that many American wounded were lying in front of them caused the Australians to refrain from using adequate artillery support. This made their task much harder. By the evening of the 1st October the famous Hindenburg Line had been forced. Over 3000 prisoners and 35 guns were captured.

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54 See Relics and Records, April 1928, p.38.
56 “The Hindenburg Line,” p.1
57 “The Hindenburg Line,” p.1. See also the Somme 1918 plan model originally installed in December 1928: “Many prisoners were taken and the fact that little heavy fighting occurred was primarily due to the dash of the infantry and the accuracy of the barrage. The whole of the objective was gained and consolidated. The victory was the swiftest and most complete ever won by the Australian infantry.” Bain to Treloar, 15 May 1929. AWM 265 21/4/5, Part 2.
Then, in one last push, the Australians become not only conquerors, but also the deliverers of French civilians:

On the 3rd October the 2nd Division, on a front of 6000 yards, attacked the Beaurevoir Line, captured it before midday, and pushed on to the ascent of Beaurevoir Hill. It improved its position on the 4th and on the 5th captured Montbrehain. Here for the first time the Australians released French civilians who had been under enemy domination since the autumn of 1914. In these operations the 2nd Division captured 2400 prisoners and many guns, machine guns, etc. 59

The breaching of the Hindenburg Line was a symbolic destruction of German militarism in the eyes of some Australians, and it was often used as a climax to the brief narratives of commemorative rhetoric, just as in Rawlinson’s tribute, generally accompanied by a note of distinct satisfaction. The Memorial’s narrative itself ended contentedly, noting the completion of “a memorable and decisive campaign.” 60 It also remarked that “before the Australians entered the line again the Germans signed the Armistice,” suggesting, perhaps, that it was the threat of facing the Australians again that finally made the Huns see the futility of continuing the struggle. 61

Thus was a narrative of ordeal and triumph created around the Australians who served in Europe. The story of the Australians in Palestine was also one of ordeal followed by a great triumph, but the fighting was very successful almost from the beginning, and the narrative is one of near-constant victory, beginning with the defensive Battle of Romani, through to the pursuit east of the Jordan River in 1918. This time the ordeal consists of the terrible desert conditions in which the fighting occurred; the bombardments of the Western Front, the major element of the ordeal there, were absent. In general, the narrative in Palestine was even more triumphal, with the label of the “Semakh” plan model ending on a note of ferocious triumphalism:

The Light Horsemen would not be denied. Rushing from their cover they battered in the doors of the main station

building and, entering one by one, followed the Germans and Turks in the darkness from floor to floor and room to room, not pausing in the struggle until the whole of the enemy force was destroyed or captured.\textsuperscript{62}

This small example of the less layered Palestine section is sufficient to illustrate its content.

The Memorial's narrative materialised a vision of the Australian war experience that was almost perfectly in accord with that of dominant commemorative agencies such as the RSSILA, soldier-writers and politicians. Right the way through the narrative, victory was yoked to the moral qualities of the troops, while the moral-material dialectic was also maintained throughout. The structure of test, ordeal and triumph meant that difficulties and setbacks were quite frankly acknowledged, but sublimated by the ultimate victory. The "national" interpretation, with its moral emphasis, ensured that the men could be praised at all times, for courage in a lost cause as much as for skill in a successful one.

IV

With its position as a powerful and triumphant military force strongly asserted in the narrative of its deeds, the AIF was further exalted by a large number of representations which praised the moral qualities of its members. There were two strands of such praise. The first set of representations, which explained victory, were the more numerous and important. It was these that elevated ordinary Australian men to the stature of national heroes. The second strand consisted of "social" virtues, such as humour and playfulness, which humanised the troops, and "pioneering" virtues, such as ingenuity and physical prowess.

Victories and defensive successes - those events claimed to be great events in Australian history, forming the basis of Australia's "most important traditions" - were ascribed to dash, audacity, ferocity, initiative (or decision as it was known in the First World War and is still known in the Memorial's Hall of Memory), determination, and a willingness to sacrifice oneself for the victory of one's comrades and one's cause. All of these virtues were recognisable components of pre-war British Imperial military propaganda, and a connection between Australian soldiers and their Imperial forefathers was asserted repeatedly. It was these virtues which, in martial nationalist

\textsuperscript{62} AWM 93 13/1/14; Relics and Records, December 1931, pp. 16-17.
ideology, proved the strength, and therefore the worth, of a nation, as the British
nation had proved its worth over many centuries. As Pearce had said, Australia was
now “making history of her own,” and not least in this process was the perceived
exhibition of these virtues by Australian soldiers.63 History was seen in part as a series
of moral revelations, realised by physical actions. Martial virtues were national
virtues, so the Memorial displayed such qualities. This was the principal content of
the “praise that never ages.”

Dash and audacity – traditionally the province of the glamorous cavalry arm –
were virtues ascribed principally to the Light Horse in their campaigns in Palestine,
and also to some of the final infantry attacks on the Western Front. They were
embodied in the swift seizure of the enemy position by a frontal charge. Ironically,
this was the same type of attack which, in its 1916-17 Western Front form, was a
major element of anti-war rhetoric. This was because until 1918, frontal assaults over
open ground resulted in enormous casualties without discernible gain. In Palestine
though, such attacks faced vastly weaker defences, particularly in relation to artillery,
and some were stunning successes. This was a return to the type of warfare that had
spawned pre-war martial nationalist literature, in which rapid movement was possible
during battles that were generally small in scope and duration. Thus the
representations that embodied dash and audacity tended to resemble pre-war military
art in their treatments and themes.

The finest example of this resemblance consisted of the representations
depicting the charge of the 4th Light Horse Brigade at Beersheba in Palestine on 31
October 1917. Often claimed to be the final successful cavalry charge in history, it
resulted in a strategic defeat of the Turks, and was thus the kind of subject matter
much used in much pre-war martial nationalist propaganda.64 The Memorial’s
treatment was twofold. Firstly it was “traditional,” emphasising victory and glorifying
dash and audacity. The charge was shown in two different yet strongly-drawn
representations. The first surrounded George Lambert’s painting The Charge of the
Australian Light Horse at Beersheba, 1917, which hung in the exhibitions throughout
the period. Bean’s guides proudly declared that “the fearless horsemen, in capturing

63 Cablegram, Secretary of Defence to Administrative Headquarters AIF London, including text of
message to Colonial Secretary. No. WT 18, 3 March 1918. AWM 38 3DRL 6673, Item 621.

64 Fitchett’s Deeds That Won the Empire had offered a catalogue of such victories from the Seven
Years’ War and the Napoleonic Wars.
this strongly entrenched position by sheer audacity, turned the flank of the whole Turkish line, and made possible the advance to Jerusalem.\textsuperscript{65}

Figure 20: The Charge of the Australian Light Horse at Beersheba, 1917, by George Lambert.
Source: Australian War Memorial Collections Database. cas.awm.gov.au.

The kinetic energy of the painting suggests the men’s dash and audacity, sweeping over the hapless Turks and winning the day. In using such a style the artist was placing his work within the tradition of Victorian battle painting which had been a major element of traditional pre-war nationalist propaganda. Compare Lambert’s painting with, for example, Lady Butler’s Scotland For Ever! (The Charge of the Scots Greys at Waterloo), painted in 1881 in a deliberate attempt, the artist stated, to repudiate anti-militarist influences from the Aesthetic Movement:

\textsuperscript{65} Relics and Records, September 1922, pp.17-18.
Both paintings have the same kinetic elements, the same sense of excitement, but most importantly, the same reckless courage and (at least in the initial stages of the Grey’s charge) the same successful outcome.

The second representation related to Beersheba was typical of the Memorial’s desire to prove its claims, although it was as emphatic as Bean’s guide entries in its boast of victory won through superior moral qualities. This was a photograph displayed in Sydney, titled “After the Victory” and said to show “squadrons of the 4th Australian Light Horse (ALH) Brigade among the ruins of Gaza. By their dashing charge, mounted over the Turkish trenches at Beersheba, these troops played an important part in driving the Turkish force from the Gaza-Beersheba line.” This second representation also provides visual evidence that the men had triumphed in the battle, for they can be seen in Gaza, which other representations made clear had withstood two previous attacks by British troops.

Such reckless verve had long been the stuff of pre-war nationalist military propaganda, had occupied wartime propagandists, and was most especially the content of much Australian war literature. Thus was the action of the Australian Light Horse connected to a long line of similar actions performed by past British heroes, such as the Scots Greys at Waterloo. These connections were doubtless deliberate, and in hanging the painting the Memorial could not have been operating less as an

66 Sydney Photograph 51. Relics and Records, April 1928, p. 70; December 1931, p. 71.
anti-war institution and more as a martial nationalist propaganda agency. The fact that Bean and Treloar believed what they were saying does not make the representations less ideologically charged.

The attack of the Light Horse showed the Australians eager to get to grips with the enemy, to kill his soldiers and vanquish him on the field. This ferocity was a primal impulse which was much praised by wartime propagandists, for it was intimately linked with military success. With the Memorial’s commitment to representing victory, ferocity was commonly depicted. The most dramatic of such images was also one of the most symbolically important in the Memorial, gracing as it did the cover of Bean’s first guide. It was the first of a series of images of the Digger which, in their contradiction, offered in miniature the complexities of the Memorial project. For the ferocious Digger was accompanied by a gentle and a tender Digger, although it must be kept in mind that the ferocious Digger came first, and was never superseded by the less bellicose images, simply given another face.\textsuperscript{67}

The cover of Bean’s first guidebook was a definitive statement of the Memorial’s “traditional” commemorative intent and heroic vision of the AIF. It showed a soldier in full battle dress with rifle and bayonet in hand, looking grimly downwards as if to the fallen opponent he is about to dispatch with his cold steel.

\textsuperscript{67} Fiona Nicoll discusses a different set of arguments over the typical Digger’s face in \textit{From Diggers to Drag Queens}, pp.97-122.
This was an image of overt military strength, reminiscent of wartime propaganda and even of the “war-god” images of Norman Lindsay’s wartime anti-German propaganda. It was, in short, a militarist image, glorying in the virility of the warrior doing “bloody work.” It announced that the Memorial would show the Australian soldier as a formidable fighter – strong, merciless and determined – single-mindedly seeking out his enemy with the cold steel. It also announced the depth of the Memorial’s commitment to traditional understandings of war and the glorification of the warrior. This was a Memorial, it said, which saw the destruction of the enemy as an act to eulogise, ferocity a character virtue to emulate. The cover image was, in fact, the man on the front of the *Anzac Book*, transformed from a battered, bloody yet determined stoic into a rampaging berserker, looking only for a German Eagle to finish off with the bayonet.

The rugged, enduring hero on the *Anzac Book* cover, tattered Union Jack behind him, was the very image of the determined Briton – the Bulldog breed at its most pugnacious. The Digger on Bean’s guide cover was the triumphal Australian – the Briton reborn as Achilles.

A brief examination of two representations – one photographic, the other an object display – helps illustrate the manner in which ferocity, the desire to attack and harm the enemy, was linked to victory. Firstly, a photograph displayed in Melbourne depicted Australians shooting at the enemy from a position they had ejected them from:
DEALING WITH RUNNING HUNS

The 45th Australian Battalion, at the final objective of 18th September, 1918, overlooking Ascension Farm, near La Verguier, in France. The fourth soldier from the right is sniping at Germans, who are running up the hillside opposite, but are hidden from view in the photograph by the smoke. On this day the 1st and 2nd Divisions captured the Hindenburg Outpost Line. Their casualties were, comparatively, remarkably few, especially when the importance of the position and their capture of personnel and material are considered.69

The caption foregrounded the men’s ruthlessness in their pursuit of victory and the destruction of the Hun, while also providing vivid evidence of the common wartime story of Australians driving the enemy from their trenches and harrying him as he fled. The claim of victory is unmistakable, as the Australians stand in complete command of the “final objective,” and when the element of “keeping score” – the comparison of Australian to enemy casualties – is added, the representation provides a comprehensive message of AIF military supremacy.

“Dealing With Running Huns” was used only in Melbourne, but its withdrawal ought not to be taken as evidence that such representations were no longer

desired in the Memorial. Another label, on display in Sydney in 1932, went much further, adopting the devil-may-care ferocity of the most bellicose soldier-writers:

A RAID BY THE SIXTH

At midnight on the 12th/13th July [1918], B Coy. raided the Huns near Meteren. At first the Germans showed fight, but when the raiders got close to them they turned and ran. The Lewis gunners with the raiders, firing from the hip, gave the fleeing Huns a warm time. Among the captures were 2 prisoners, 2 machine guns and this spade.70

This jocular ferocity in the story-telling tone, in which the fleeing Huns were given a warm time, expressed a desire to exterminate the enemy, and a joy in his destruction, that “Dealing With Running Huns” did not even approach. It was in accord with the cover image of 1922, though, and its existence in 1932 indicates that anti-war ideas had gained little purchase. The expression “a warm time” was characteristic of wartime propaganda and “big-noting” war literature, but had a ferocity and an antipathy seldom used in war memorials. The style was also used in a display of trench raiding clubs, presented by Bean under the carefree heading “When Clubs Were Trumps,” and described as “effective weapons, especially for stunning recalcitrant prisoners who refused to ‘come quietly.’”71

Although it may labour the point, one final example illustrates the exuberance with which destruction of the enemy was presented:

OFF TO HARRY THE HUNS

An armoured car, moving up the main Amiens Road from Warfusee-Abancourt, on 8th August, 1918, during the advance of the 15th Australian Infantry Brigade, near Harbonnieres, encounters an obstacle in the form of a fallen tree. On this day the armoured cars appeared as a bolt from the blue, in the German billets, well behind the line. They sped through villages, firing through the windows of the houses at German soldiers at breakfast, threw transport columns into wild confusion, chased staff officers, and

70 Label AWM.821: “A Raid by the Sixth.” Attachment, Bain to Treloar, 28 December 1932. AWM 265.21/4/5, Part 7.

71 Relics and Records, 1922, p.48.
incidentally carried out a valuable reconnaissance of the enemy’s territory.\textsuperscript{72}

These armoured cars caused absolute chaos amongst the enemy, the label claimed, creating what British military writers liked to call “merry hell.” It was exciting and enjoyable, the label argued, to wreak such havoc on the enemy, and the visitor is invited (and expected) to agree.

That reviews of the Memorial never mentioned the cover picture, never took exception to its obvious militarist connotations, nor said anything negative about these displays of ferocity, suggests that such images were accepted in the public arena. Indeed, Rider Haggard-style ferocity had been a widespread theme of both private and public writing since the war. Certainly it was widely expressed by soldiers during the war.\textsuperscript{73} For example, after a trench raid Signaller G.H. Molesworth gleefully recounted the aggressiveness of his unit’s attack in a letter of March 1918:

Our artillery opened into the Germans and Belted Hell & Blazes Into them – we sneaked up under the Barrage & It was lovely shells Bursting & Lights shooting all over the sky...all of a Sudden It lifted back a couple of Hundred yards & away we charged yelling like devils right Into His Trenches Fritzey Bolted & we after Him I was directly after my officer & a couple Dodged Into a Dugout. We Fed Them on Bombs etc & on To the next...\textsuperscript{74}

Thus, the Memorial was using language which was actually more reserved than that which soldiers had used to their correspondents during the war. This put the Memorial on the less extreme end of a continuum of usage of the theme.

Dash and ferocity were clearly useful in battle, but also high on the register of traditional military virtues was decision. The AIF were routinely claimed to be superior in initiative to other troops, both allied and enemy, in the Memorial and elsewhere. In most cases an explicit link with AIF victories was asserted. The Memorial followed a similar course. Two actions suffice to illustrate this. Firstly,

\textsuperscript{72} Melbourne Photograph 116. \textit{Relics and Records}, September 1922, p.83.

\textsuperscript{73} Robin Gerster suggests that accounts of the destruction of the enemy may have been a way of soldiers reassuring themselves and their loved ones that they were in control of the battle situation. Gerster, \textit{Big-noting}, p.4.

\textsuperscript{74} Gammage, \textit{The Broken Years}, p.155. Capitalisation in original. See also pp. 221-5, 257-9. Gammage goes so far as to declare that “many [Australians] killed their opponents brutally, savagely, and unnecessarily.” \textit{The Broken Years}, p.259.
there was the action at Broodseinde Ridge during the Third Battle of Ypres. This was a heroic tale of quick-thinking Australians defeating their German enemies man-to-man despite their being seriously depleted in numbers before the action began:

Here is the actual tape from which the great attack started upon the 4th October, 1917, when the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Australian Divisions, together with the 7th British Division, the New Zealand Division, and other troops finally captured the commanding Broodseinde Ridge [surrounding Ypres]. As they lay upon the tape, just before dawn, the 1st and 2nd Divisions were subjected to a murderous bombardment, which killed or wounded no less than 20 per cent. of the men in some of the units.

When the moment of the attack came, and the men rose, they had advanced some 30 yards only when they discerned, in the dim light ahead, a line of Germans rising to their feet not 50 yards away. The Australians realised in an instant that an enemy attack must have been planned for the same hour, neither side knowing the intentions of the other. The Australian Lewis gunners dropped on the ground and began to fire; the German line broke, and the Australians rolled over it and seized the ridge. One of the helmets of the Germans who were killed in this incident can be seen, covered with sandbag cloth.75

The Australians' superior martial ability once again secured an important victory: this time the AIF succeeded (albeit with some outside help) in capturing a height which for three years the Germans had held, making the British trenches "precarious."76 The "individual genius of the Australian soldier" was here displayed in a pure form, and there was a trophy taken from the enemy dead to prove it. The fact that the Australian attack had superior numbers to the German was discreetly left unsaid, so as to better highlight the quick-thinking of the Australians, and to amplify the quality of the victory.77 This was a "national" truth – selective, yet based firmly on verifiable fact.

The Broodseinde story exemplified quick-thinking, which was one manifestation of the claimed superior initiative of the Australians. A story accompanying a German megaphone provided proof of another, the ability of Australian Other-Rankers to act without explicit direction and press an attack home successfully:

77 Coulthard-Clark, Encyclopedia, pp.132-3.
This German megaphone, which is made of paper, was found in Haut Allaines by the 1st Div. Salvage Coy. This village & Allaines, which is immediately adjacent to it, were captured on the 2nd September [1918] by the 27th Battalion. In the attack the battalion encountered heavy M.G. fire directed from the village, and all officers except 2 became casualties. The men pressed on however & drove the Huns from the villages, about 600 of them rapidly withdrawing to a trench in the rear of the villages. The battalion captured 102 prisoners and 15 machine guns.78

This label was on display in 1932, by which time the innate initiative and intelligent quick-thinking of the ordinary Australian soldier, and his ability to act without orders, were well-established elements of mainstream Australian war commemoration, pillars of the Anzac Legend. The element of ferocity within the claim of victory, with “the Huns driven from the villages,” is clear, and illustrates the close connection which existed between decision, ferocity and victory within the Memorial’s rhetoric.

In a war of attrition such as the First World War, endurance was a major military virtue, and used to redeem military failures and pyrrhic victories. Whilst not leading directly to victory, endurance allowed the AIF to survive the worst of the war’s attritional battles in 1916 and 1917, and was thus a fundamental component of the Memorial’s glorification of the men. The longest example is also one of the richest. This is a catalogue of the hardships of the Jordan Valley in Palestine excerpted in Bean’s Sydney guide of 1931 from Gullett’s volume of the History published in 1923. It has an assortment of Biblical allusions, thereby utilising a treatment that was popular for war stories in general, but especially for stories set in the Middle East. The title of this part of the book, firstly, was “Armageddon,” a reference to the battle of Megiddo, in the Christian Bible the battlefield at which will be fought the final battle between good and evil, according to prophecy.79 There followed a long description of the terrible conditions of the Jordan Valley, a place of great heat and humidity, where the troops suffered from plagues of Biblical proportions:

78 Label AWM.990: “Allaines and Haut Allaines.” Attachment, Bain to Treloar, 28 December 1932. AWM 265 21/4/5, Part 7

79 It is mentioned in Revelation 16:16 and Judges 5:19.
Blinded and choked by the dust, with rifles and tools almost too hot to touch, harassed by flies and mosquitoes and a strange plague of stinging scorpions, great black spiders, snakes and other venomous creatures, insect or reptile, which seemed in keeping with that infernal region, the troops were weighed down with a sense of physical oppression due to the abnormal weight of the atmosphere and its excessive moisture. Rations reached the lines in regular supply, but in a condition which would have revolted any men but soldiers on active service. The bread was dry and unpalatable as chaff; the beef, heated and reheated in its tins, came out like so much string and oil. The men’s ‘bivvy’ sheets gave little shelter from the fierce sun by day, and the heat and insects made sleep almost impossible at night. And upon this threshold of hell the men were called upon not only to hold their line against an aggressive enemy, elated with his recent successes, but had for many weeks to engage in severe physical labour.  

As a means of impressing upon the audience what the Light Horse had endured in Palestine, this passage was extremely vivid. It was also designed to inspire admiration and awe in a measure equal to the tale, while praising the men and enhancing their reputation for toughness and stoicism. The notion that the First World War was the final battle between good and evil had been widely expressed in Australia during the war, and would have been very well known to the Memorial’s audience. The title “Armageddon” was thus a symbolic shorthand for the complex of myths surrounding this notion, which was compounded of clergy’s anti-German sermons and the works of other propagandist writers and speakers.

The Palestine example implied that the Australians had overcome the conditions they had encountered, for their final triumph in Palestine was shown elsewhere in the Memorial, and in true romantic style was well known. Another illustration of the men’s endurance, an archetypal one from the Western Front, made this even more explicit, arguing that the men had transcended the conditions:

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Members of an Australian battery hauling their gun forward through heavy mud, after the advance, near Hannebeck, in the Ypres Sector, on 4th October, 1917. The Third Battle of Ypres was the most searching test to which Australian artillerymen were subjected during the war. The terrible state of the ground made it indescribably difficult for them to get their guns into position, and to keep them supplied with the enormous amounts of ammunition which they expended. The frequent attacks, and ceaseless German counter-attacks, kept them in action almost continuously. The infantry did their job, and were relieved. The gunners stayed on to help the newcomers. But through it all the Australian artillery maintained, and even enhanced, its reputation.  

The caption’s focus on the performance and reputation of the Australians is a key example of Memorial rhetoric. The men endured a “searching test,” with terrible conditions and a formidable enemy, yet they did not let these adversities best them. They persevered, doing their duty conscientiously as the photograph depicted. In fact the image chosen is noteworthy, for while the mud is bad it is not impassable, and the men look as if they will successfully pull the gun out of it shortly. In a similar manner, the caption argued, the Australians had overcome all obstacles to emerge.

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82 Melbourne Photograph 87. Relics and Records, September 1922, p.78.
with greater glory than they had entered the battle. Whilst it suggests terrible conditions, the representation presents a war in which men’s dignity remains.

Praise for the Australian soldier in traditional terms reached its zenith in 1933 in the preface to *Australian Chivalry*. This contained almost all the elements of traditional nationalist military propaganda – powerful warriors fighting nobly and with great effect in the defence of the weak – and none of those common to anti-war literature – terrified, emasculated creatures sent to slaughter by fools in the service of knaves. Treloar, in fact, announced that he was publishing the volume as a rejoinder to anti-war propaganda. Thus, the volume was a pure illustration of the traditional approach taken by the Memorial.

The title page asserted a direct connection between two figures, an Anzac on the right and a knight on the left. The knight wears chain mail and a smock with a St Andrew’s cross on the chest, and carries an enormous sword. The Anzac, in frontline rig of steel helmet, puttees and rifle, greatly resembles Charles Wheeler’s figure of *The Digger* in his painting of the same name, included in the collection. Both warriors have calm, assured expressions on their faces, the knight looking across to the Anzac, who stands, smoking, gazing out at the viewer. The two men stand on ground which begins on the left of the picture with a tree and a farm, representing the agrarian idyll so common in propaganda posters, and ends on the right in the devastated landscape of the Western Front, with the stump of a tree, tangles of barbed wire, and the ubiquitous duckboards, on which the Anzac stands. The landscape and the gaze of the knight, especially, promote the idea that the Anzac is heir to the knight, and to the ideals of chivalry which he represents, and this message is continued in the preface thus:

The slouched hat replaced the crested heaume, the sombre khaki tunic the mail hauberk, and the magazine rifle the sword and lance. But, with enthusiasm as lofty as that of any knight of old, these young men swore fealty to the oppressed against the despoiler, and from that pledge, voluntarily given, they were not to be diverted by pain, peril or privation.⁸⁴

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⁸³ On propaganda posters see Peter Stanley, *What Did You Do in the War, Daddy?: A visual history of propaganda posters*, (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1983).

⁸⁴ Treloar (ed.), *Australian Chivalry*, Preface.
This classic example of the nationalist claim of connection between the present and an idealised, mythologised past continued in the same vein, arguing that “knights” had a strong impact on the fortunes of the Allies in the war, for although “their banners, their lances, and their armour have decayed centuries since...their spirit, sent down through the generations, proved on countless occasions the most potent weapon in the armory of Great Britain and her allies.”85 A more perfect example of martial nationalist ideology could not be envisioned.

Readers were left in no doubt as to the noble vision of Australians at war that they ought to have:

Australians who served in the War, in whatever capacity, were inspired by “the high sense of honour, disdain of danger and death, love of adventure, compassion for the weak and oppressed, self-sacrifice, and altruism” – which, as a learned dean has written, were the embodiment of chivalry.86

Here was the clearest possible embrace of martial nationalism. Chivalry was the very stuff of traditional war commemoration and literature, the epitome of the glorious warrior. To ensure that this message was received, it was underlined several times. There was reference to “the inauguration of this new Order of Chivalry,” which saw the coming “from all grades of society [of] Paladins to champion the cause of peace-loving peoples whom they believed to have been wantonly assailed.”87 This was the Memorial’s clearest ever refutation of the idea that the First World War had destroyed the concept of personal heroism on the battlefield.88

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85 Treloar (ed.), Australian Chivalry, Preface. For a striking and somewhat polemical discussion of the traditional connection of generations of warriors to perceived lineages of great antiquity, and the connections between this idea and the nationalist notion of the immemorial past, see Ehrenreich, Blood Rites, pp.150-203.

86 Treloar (ed.), Australian Chivalry, Preface.

87 Treloar (ed.), Australian Chivalry, Preface.

88 The idea that Australian soldiers were paladins had been popular directly after the war. In 1919 the yellow-press paper Smith’s Weekly, the self-styled “Digger’s Advocate,” declared the assertion in a dramatic manner:

Out of the mists of battle-dawn they broke,
Flashing their virgin steel, untried yet strong.
Laughing, they died to right a nation’s wrong,
Died, and the soul of nationhood awoke.
The preface continued with another, and even greater, invocation of traditional heroic notions. It asserted that “among Australia’s knights were to be found Bayards ‘without fear and without reproach,’” in a reference both to the original Bayard, Pierre Terrail (c.1472-1524), who was called *le chevalier sans peur et sans reproche*, and perhaps to certain popular biographies of military officers published in the pre-war years. A quick examination of the saga of Bayard indicates the nobility being asserted. When still very young (“Your beard is not of three years growth”) he challenged a famous knight at a tourney, for his love of single combat was insatiable. He then became a hero and general in the Italian Wars (1494-1559). Richard Barber asserts that his virtues were “in the traditional mould: courtesy, generosity…and above all, courage: at Milan he was so intent on the pursuit of his enemies that he was captured right inside the town, though the skirmish had begun some miles outside.” Such was Bayard’s prestige and nobility that Francis I, King of France 1515-47, in a dramatic step, actually accepted a knighthood from Bayard, “wherein he did wisely,” Bayard’s chronicler declared, “for by one more worthy it could not have been conferred on [Francis].” Although few of its readers may have known the story in detail, these were the virtues invoked.

These were our men, who, answering the brazen clangour of the War-God’s gong, forsook the plough, the mine, the pasture, the workshop and the pen. Hurling themselves across a watching world, they were gay as the sunshine of their far-off southern home. Splendid in the thou bestowed by their deep-bosomed mothers, reckless and gallant in the spirit of their pioneer forebears, they came on that immortal April morning up out of the sea which for ages was furrowed by the keels of the soldier adventurers of the heroic past. An army of warriors, these Anzacs, of, perhaps, the greatest physical perfection that the world has seen. Trained at the highest athletic pitch, briefly, but effectively, instructed in the use of unfamiliar weapons, untested in battle, these laughing paladins of the South, leaping on to the now famous beach of Anzac, blooded their maiden steel in one irresistible rush upon an astonished but stubborn enemy.

*Smith’s Weekly*, 26 April 1919, p.9.


91 Barber, *The Knight*, p.152.

The Australian Bayards were dangerous men, with a “terrible aspect,” but beneath this “they were gentle and chivalrous with a clean, brave outlook, and an unfailing respect for all that was good and just in life.” These were clearly the same Australians Bean wrote of in 1907. Here again was Bean’s assertion of the cleanliness of mind and character of the AIF, while the assertion of respect for the good and just had become a standard element of mainstream commemorative rhetoric by 1933, common not just in Australia but in Britain as well. The preface to *Australian Chivalry*, then, represented the AIF as great men—strong, courageous, and noble. The Memorial’s displays had been quietly making the same claim for over a decade by 1933.

The argument that Australians were latter-day knights was summarised in the notion of “the Glory of Anzac.” Compounded of all the martial virtues perceived to have been displayed at the Landing, it was deeply “traditional,” as illustrated in the several representations that included the notion. According to Bean’s guide, Lambert’s painting *Anzac: The Landing, 1915* was powerfully revelatory, being “an almost exact representation of the actual scene on that fateful April morning, when the Glory of Anzac was revealed.”

The notion was also used in summary of the whole Dardanelles campaign, which he said was the “first, most tragic, and in some ways, most glorious, of the Australian campaigns.” Finally, he invoked the “glory” popularly attached to one of the most famous failures of British arms through a quote from Tennyson, “While All the World Wondered,” putting the visitor in mind of the Victorian Poet Laureate’s famous “Charge of the Light Brigade:”

Flash’d all their sabres bare,  
Flash’d as they turn’d in air,  
Sabring the gunners there,  
Charging an army, while  
All the world wonder’d:  
Plunged in the battery-smoke  
Right thro’ the line they broke;  
Cossack and Russian  
Reel’d from the sabre stroke  
Shatter’d and sunder’d.

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93 Treloar (ed.), *Australian Chivalry*: Preface.

Then they rode back, but not
Not the six hundred.

When can their glory fade?
O the wild charge they made!
All the world wondered.
Honour the charge they made,
Honour the Light Brigade,
Noble six hundred.  

Whether the campaign was a success in military terms was ultimately not the question to contemplate when reflecting on Gallipoli, Bean was suggesting. There were greater issues at stake: the upholding of ideals of manliness and military conduct which a popular Imperial military tradition of the pre-war period had espoused, which were proved by the perceived successes at the landing.

That the sniper of the 45th Battalion depicted in the photograph “Dealing with Running Huns” had “dealt” with the “running Huns” in a fatal manner was suggested by other displays, those concentrating on marksmanship. It was here that locally-sourced ideas of Australian identity entered the Memorial’s explanatory rhetoric. Whilst not strictly a virtue, marksmanship was perceived as an important part of the military ideal of manhood promoted in Australia from 1900 and reflected in such statements as that of Hughes in which he argued that Australians wanted “an armed people who can shoot straight...” Certainly marksmanship was praised in the Memorial with all the gusto that giving Huns a warm time was, and implied a number of virtues – coolness, control of oneself, ruthlessness.

Taken from the “bush myth” of the pre-war period, and echoing tributes that had been paid to Boer War troops, Australian marksmanship was praised in two clearly-drawn representations. The simpler was a label, a small part of which was included in a letter from Treloar to the curator Les Bain dated 14 December 1932: “It [the object, although unnamed, was probably a rifle] bears evidence of the accurate shooting of the Australians in the dark as it will be noticed an Australian bullet struck and lodged in the barrel. It can be seen just in front of the second band.” Another, much more resonant,

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claim was the contrast between an Australian and a Bedouin marksman which appeared in Bean’s guides throughout the period:

The case also contains some relics of...the Bedouin tribes who hung round the armies in search of loot. Worthy of mention among [these] is a rifle, on the breach of which is engraved a text from the Koran: “Nothing can be accomplished unless God is willing” – a consoling clause for a poor marksman!

In the right-hand corner of the case is a Turkish entrenching tool, neatly drilled by a bullet. A Turk held this up in a trench near Rafa. A Light Horseman fired at it, and found it when the position was captured a little later. It is ample proof of the accuracy of his aim.98

Claims of Australian marksmanship were summarised in the photographic exhibition. In a clear line of progression from Boer War praise through the Sydney Morning Herald’s argument in 1914 that “as in South Africa, so in Europe, the Australian horseman will be able to do a service to the allied armies which they can expect from no other reinforcements,” one caption argued that “in making the most of natural cover, and in sniping, the Light Horseman was without peer.”99 While summarising the argument about marksmanship, this label also reinforced prevailing ideas that the bushman was a better shot than the city-slicker.

Displays concentrating on leisure activities were also used to prove Allenby’s claims of the superior physique and physical qualities of the AIF. There was, for example, an entire showcase devoted to sporting trophies won in the field by the AIF, and this was supplemented by the display, on a pillar, of paper certificates for horse riding.100

97 Director, Australian War Memorial, Melbourne, (John Treloar) to Curator, Australian War Memorial, Sydney (Les Bain), 14 December 1932. AWM 265 21/4/5, Part 7. Treloar’s attention to detail is exhibited in the letter also, where the Director points out a small amendment that had been made, in which the word “seen” had been substituted for “noticed.”

98 Relics and Records, September 1922, p.15; April 1928, p.17; December 1931, p.19. The Bedouins had a poor reputation amongst the main powers of the war, being considered scavengers without allegiance. There is striking evidence of this in the Canberra Memorial’s displays themselves, in an incident in which General Ryrie allowed a group of Turks to keep their rifles so as to protect themselves and the Australians from Bedouins; he disarmed them when the danger had passed. Australian War Memorial, Guide to Australian War Memorial, (Sydney: Halstead, 1942), pp.32-3.

99 Sydney Morning Herald, 10 September 1914, quoted in Williams, Anzacs. the Media, p.51; Melbourne Photograph 140; Sydney Photograph 41. Relics and Records, September 1922, p.86; April 1928, p.68; December 1931, p.69.

100 These certificates are at Ex Doc. 186, Sheet 10 Item 1.
The physical strength asserted by such a display was given artistic form in the second of the symbolic images of the Digger, the sculpture “Anzac Undress” which was prominently displayed in the entry of the Melbourne exhibition.

101 See also Relics and Records, April 1928, p.14.
The lean physical strength and pleasing proportions of the figure embody the beauty of the Australian soldier, a vital element of wartime propaganda and of post-war commemorative rhetoric. It had been widely commented upon, especially by British observers, with poet John Masefield’s reactions perhaps the most well-known: “For physical beauty and nobility of bearing they surpassed any man I had ever seen.” The Memorial’s leaders were happy to display the men’s perceived beauty, but it was never more than an occasional theme.

An adjunct to the military virtues of dash, ferocity and endurance was ingenuity, the practical application of intelligent comprehension of one’s surroundings. Also known as “resource,” it was usually represented as associated with victory rather than contributing directly to it. This was in accord with Bean’s view, and one widely held in Australia, that brains were useful but character was decisive. Battles were perceived to be more often won by dash or ferocity than by creating and using an ingenious new device, not entirely consonant with the experience of the AIF on the Western Front. Nevertheless, being resourceful was felt praiseworthy, and was praised accordingly. Part of the pre-war Australian “bush myth” which was transferred readily to the AIF, ingenuity was widely acclaimed by wartime and post-war propagandists and the Memorial alike.

One of the symbols of Australian ingenuity was the “jam-tin bomb,” an improvised grenade produced and used at Gallipoli. A photograph showed men at work producing the bombs, proving such ingenuity while educating the public as to what these looked like and how they functioned. Victory is not specifically mentioned, but the possibility had surely been increased by the men’s ingenuity:

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102 See also Relics and Records, April 1928, p.8.

103 Masefield, Gallipoli, p.19. This quote was extremely popular, being seen as late as 1939 on Anzac Day. See Age, 25 April 1939, p.8.
A BOMB FACTORY

Within a few days of the Landing at Anzac, the Turks were using bombs. Quickly appreciating their value, the Australians, having none supplied to them, set out to make their own, introducing the famous “jam-tin” pattern. The container, as the name implies, was an issue jam-tin. In the centre was placed a cylinder containing high explosive, in which was inserted a fuse and detonator. The space between the explosive and the side of the jam-tin was filled with scraps of metal – pieces of iron, cartridge cases, nails, punchings, barbed wire, etc. The fuse was lit before the grenade was thrown. Towards the end of the Gallipoli campaign more elaborately designed grenades became available.104

In this representation, clever Australians, thinking with characteristic swiftness, had “fearlessly and independently” faced the problem, applying “their mind to it straight,” as Bean stated was their custom.105 They had solved it with the kind of practical simplicity Ashmead-Bartlett had referred to in his first dispatch.

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104 Melbourne Photograph 20; Sydney Photograph 29. Relics and Records, September 1922, p.65; April 1928, p.65; December 1931, p.66.

105 Bean, In Your Hands, p.91.
In addition to ingenuity, the Memorial provided evidence of Australian superiority in the more intellectual endeavour of invention. A display of gas-masks, which at first sight appear to have been arranged in a completely traditional typological manner, with examples from different countries and different years shown, carried the message.

Bean’s guide argued that one of the masks, invented at Melbourne university, was “so far as is known...the first British box respirator.” Here, the ingenious colonials were contributing to the Empire and its greatness, and as a nice bonus, surpassing the metropolitans in achievement. All of this surely proved that, as Bean had written in 1919, given a group of young Australian minds set upon the task of determining how best to improve their country, great things were inevitable.

The preface to Australian Chivalry argued that as well as having a “terrible aspect,” the Australians were also “gentle and chivalrous.” Part of this chivalry was exhibiting “compassion for the weak.” This included humane treatment of vanquished enemies. During the war the Australians actually had a fearsome reputation for not taking prisoners, but this was never addressed in the Memorial except through the

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106 See also Relics and Records, April 1928, p.44.

107 Relics and Records, September 1922, p.44; April 1928, p.46.

display of contrary images. For example, the diorama label for the battle at Semakh in Palestine, as triumphal and ferocious as any in the museum, finished with the Light Horsemen, having "destroyed" the enemy garrison, respectfully laying out the bodies of enemy dead side by side with their own. The 1917 section of the Sydney photographic exhibition carried a more dramatic example, a shot entitled "Helping His Wounded Enemy" which provided a visual representation of the argument. This was "a scene during the Battle of Messines, showing an Australian stretcher-bearer assisting a wounded German prisoner towards a field dressing station on the St Quentin Road, on 7th June, 1917."

Figure 30: "Helping His Wounded Enemy."
Source: Australian War Memorial Collections Database. cas.awm.gov.au. Photograph E00481.

Once the enemy had surrendered, the implication was, the fight was over and the Australians solicitous. This was an idea much cherished by Bean; he contrasted the Australians' forgiving nature with their grudge-bearing Scots allies.

109 Indeed, Bean explicitly informed Treloar that such images were not to be included in the Memorial. C.E.W. Bean to John Treloar, 18 May 1922. A7702 566/003/005.

110 AWM 93 13/1/4.

111 Melbourne Photograph 51; Sydney Photograph 123. Relics and Records, September 1922, p.70; April 1928, p.84; December 1931, p.85.

The kinder side of the Australian soldier was also depicted through examples of his humour. Such representations tempered the Memorial’s generally serious tone, injecting a little harmless fun.\textsuperscript{113} For example, under the heading “Dodging Discipline,” an exhibit presented the lighter side of war, in which a unit (the 2\textsuperscript{nd} Divisional Train) “acquired” the timber for a billiards table from dubious sources, then attempted to have its officers use it often, to avoid them insisting “on us cleaning harness and grooming the horses.”\textsuperscript{114} The AIF dislike of parade ground formality was legendary, and a fine subject for appropriation of the returned soldier constituency. The Memorial did not neglect to examine the playfulness of the Anzacs, either, with this virtue contrasted to German turgidity in an exhibit of street signs. The Australians named street “Roo de Kanga,” and “Dingbat Alley,” in happy contrast to the Germans’ “Hohenzollern,” “Tirpitz” and Moltke” streets. In reviews of the Memorial, this was popular, and usually received a mention.\textsuperscript{115}

Bean liked to emphasise that when the men played, they played in wholesome ways. In his guide, he reported gambling, sport, devising souvenirs for his friends, needlework (when convalescing in hospital), badge collecting and autograph hunting” as being the typical leisure activities of the typical Digger.\textsuperscript{116} Unpleasant topics such as the high rate of venereal disease were ignored, of course, as was the Australian tendency, mentioned by many observers, to drink to excess as often as possible.\textsuperscript{117} Bean wrote constantly of “clean, straight” young men in his numerous public references to the troops. Therefore, the AIF’s leisure, as depicted in the Memorial, was generally wholesome, although gambling was freely mentioned. However, gambling was by a distance the least of the unholy trinity of drinking, wenching and gambling that wowsers railed against. Gambling was relatively acceptable, considered by many a harmless pastime, and even a game which one could be skilled at and victorious in.

\textsuperscript{113}Levity was also present in Treloar’s use of the rhetorical devices, common to returned men’s literature, of a devil-may-care ferocity and an ironic understatement.

\textsuperscript{114}Relics and Records, April 1928, p.30; December 1931, p.47.

\textsuperscript{115}Relics and Records, September 1922, p.32; April 1928, p.41; December 1931, p.39.

\textsuperscript{116}Relics and Records, September 1922, pp.39-40.

\textsuperscript{117}According to Eric Andrews, the rate of disease was one in seven in France in 1917. Andrews, Anzac Illusion, p.184.
The creation of trench sculpture was a completely wholesome leisure activity, and was displayed in several places. One Sydney exhibit carried a label combining the claim of AIF morality with the droll humour so characteristic of the AIF of legend:

**TRENCH “SCULPTURE”**

The pieces of chalk dug out of the ground when constructing trenches, provided first rate material for carving. Many a soldier in the trenches whiled away the time in this way. Boyd Cable tells a story of a man who carved an elephant. A bullet struck it while it was in his pocket and drove a piece of it into his body. Upon his arrival in hospital he considerably startled a nurse by telling her he had been wounded by an elephant!\(^{118}\)

Finally, the following photograph was displayed, illustrating the men in a domestic situation, which Bean had often done in his war correspondent work. The caption combined the themes of seriousness in battle and levity out of it which became pillars of the Anzac Legend, while providing evidence that such images of safe, happy soldiers appealed to the Australian public:

![Figure 31: “Telling the Latest.”](cas.awm.gov.au/photograph/E01223)

Source: Australian War Memorial Collections Database. cas.awm.gov.au. Photograph E01223.

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TELLING THE LATEST

Members of the 1st Australian Division around a fire in a billet at Ypres in October, 1917, listening to “the latest” of one of their comrades just back from Paris leave. It is a typical scene, for billet life with the Australian was as cheerful as his fighting was terribly earnest. The War Museum has exhibited this photograph in a number of cities and towns in Australia, and judging by the copies sold, it had everywhere been the most popular photograph in the exhibitions.¹¹⁹

The Digger presented by the Memorial was, then, a composite of the martial virtues originating in British martial nationalist propaganda and the Australian virtues promoted by local commentators. The emphasis was on the former, due to the emphasis on military victory within the Memorial, and as a consequence the image of the typical Australian soldier – and thus by analogy the typical Australian – which emerged was more “British” than “Australian” This was because the virtues seen as most vital to the establishment of a healthy nation were the martial ones, with the more social virtues sourced from Australia simply providing a happy bonus, a useful, yet optional, set of human characteristics that put the local icing on an Imperial cake.¹²⁰

In sum, the narrative and the collective portrait of the AIF presented in the Memorial addressed core issues of the Anzac Legend, military effectiveness and the moral explanation of it. Both sought acceptance as incontestable truth. Such acceptance would gain the Memorial authority on matters concerned with the war. This in turn would influence commemoration, supporting those who spoke of AIF successes. The narrative and the collective portrait outlined the broad contours, and many of the details, of the Memorial’s Anzac Legend. The following chapter looks in more detail at the ways in which the principal assertion of the Legend, Australian military supremacy, was addressed.

¹¹⁹ Melbourne Photograph 70; Sydney Photograph 163. Relics and Records, September 1922, p.74; April 1928, p.94; December 1931, p.95.

¹²⁰ The “pioneering” virtues such as resource were, as indicated, useful adjuncts to the moral core of the nation-building project.
Chapter 5: Australian Military Supremacy and National History

Figure 32: Interior, Sydney Exhibition.
Source: Australian War Memorial Collections Database.
cas.awm.gov.au. Photograph J02198

"Historians in time will say, 'What was there, after all, in this fighting reputation of the AIF?'"1

The fighting reputation of the AIF was, in the first post-war years, the foundation of the Anzac Legend. Bean was determined to prevent any such questioning if he could. The Memorial was a principal outcome of this determination, with the History being the other. The twin elements of Bean’s larger project performed complementary functions. The History would make a sustained and well-documented case for Australian military superiority over almost all other groups. The Memorial offered physical evidence of the fact, publicly displaying material purporting to be proof of Australian military supremacy in the public domain.

This “proof” had two elements. The first was embodied in the most triumphal battle displays of the national war history, which used a variety of museum presentation methods to “prove” that Australians had been successful in important battles and campaigns. The climax of the national war history saw the Australians

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1 Standing Committee on Public Works Report, p.321.
triumphant over their enemies. Thus, this series of battles – beginning with Messines, but mainly from Villers-Bretonneux onwards – was one of the main subjects in the campaign to establish unquestionable proof of the fighting reputation of the AIF. The battles considered here – Menin Road, Villers-Bretonneux, Amiens and Mont St Quentin – were all integral to the Memorial’s national history, and the last three were the most famous of all Australian victories in mainstream commemoration in the 1920s.

Thus, the issue was how to ensure that the displays themselves had authority. As a museum, the Memorial’s claims to legitimacy were different from those of speakers at Anzac Day gatherings or Bean as the Official Historian. Nor was the Memorial a normal museum. Therefore, the important museological issues surrounding the displays require examination by way of introduction. The most important of these is the process by which ordinary-seeming objects were transformed into proof of military supremacy based on superior moral virtues. The primary method was “naturalisation,” a presentation system under which both military fact and moral assertion were to be considered equally “true” by visitors. The role of both object and label were vital. This in turn highlights the importance of labelling to the Memorial project and confirms its literariness.

The representations of the four victorious battles are then considered. The recapture of Villers-Bretonneux was portrayed through several related displays that took the method of “naturalisation,” typified by the generals’ tributes, to its limit; the attacks at Amiens and Mont St Quentin in 1918 were depicted as both exciting adventures and historically-important victories, combining entertainment and nationalist education; and the Battle of Menin Road, fought in 1917, placed these Australian military traditions in the British Imperial context. All were fundamental to the Memorial’s programme of creating “the most prominent traditions,” each being potentially the kind of important event referred to in Bean’s 1919 plan.

The second element of the “proof” of the fundamental basis of the Anzac Legend displayed Australian military supremacy as an abstract notion, concentrating on the representation of the enemy and of enemy material. Display of their words of praise for Australian soldiers, a common propaganda tool during the war, helped assert it. Tales of their fear of the Australians and desire to flee were also useful in this regard. More dramatic and telling, though, was the evidence provided by the possessions of the enemy, and ultimately, by their bodies. Images of vanquished
enemies, both captured and killed, and items taken from them on the battlefield, offered the ultimate tribute to the strength of Australian arms, although it was at times a bloody testimony.

The imaginative power of the museum form was an important element in the Memorial’s messages, differentiating them from those of all other memorials through the provision of a unique immediacy. For example, the rhetorical leap from ordinary spade to exciting deed of domination over the enemy in the label titled “A Raid by the Sixth,” considered in the previous chapter, is an operation that is characteristic of a museum setting and could not be replicated elsewhere. The “romance” of the “national story” attached to it performed a kind of alchemical operation on the base spade, transforming it into a symbol of triumph within a tale of derring-do. The spade itself, though, was vitally important to the chain of signification, for its physicality made the battle at Meteren palpable for audiences and gave the label’s interpretation an added sense of reality. Museological theorist Susan Pearce argues that objects in museums connect viewers with the past because of their “eternal relationship with [that] past, and it is this we experience as the power of the ‘actual object.”5 The Memorial was able to mobilise this power on a large scale during a period in Australia when there was still widespread ignorance about the simplest realities of war.1 Its museum form made it a unique war memorial, one that could combine the physicality of objects with copious interpretation, appealing simultaneously to the senses, the intellect and the emotions while forging a direct link between its audiences and the past deeds of the Anzacs.

However, the Memorial was also a unique museum due to its particular treatment of its objects. Pearce argues that most museum objects are indexes, a semiotic term that refers to the object’s relationship to an event being evoked in a display. An index is a sign-vehicle (a “signifier”) which has an intrinsic relationship to its message (“signified”).4 A museum object was “there at the time,” was part of the event and thus

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1 Bean reflected on this ignorance when he wrote, in 1922, that “I know of nothing which has enabled my own friends to grasp the meaning of a ‘trench’ in the same way as the Mont St Quentin model has done.” C.E.W. Bean to George Pearce, 12 June 1922. AWM 38 3DRL 6673, Item 803.
operates through synecdoche, that is, the part stands for the whole event. The Meteren spade was, therefore, an index of the battle that occurred that day, making that battle present for visitors. However, the Memorial had an added level of complexity, for Bean indicated that the objects in the Memorial were “emblems...of qualities,” or in semiotic terms, symbols. Such sign-vehicles have an arbitrary relationship to their message; decoding is necessary to understand their significance. So in the Memorial the spade, which operated as a symbol of Australian military supremacy, as did “the greater part of the exhibits,” only did so due to the labelling that confirmed the fact. The labelling, in turn, had to resonate with the audience to achieve its propagandist aims. It had to convince.

Two factors affected this question of influence most strongly. Firstly, the authority of the museum institution was important. In early-twentieth-century Australia museums operated primarily as sources of knowledge, controlled spaces where the world was systematically ordered and displayed. “Repositories of the already known,” they were the physical expression of that knowledge. In short, museums of the early twentieth century displayed the truth, the world “as it really was.” This was partly because most of such museums were devoted to natural history, but a British tradition of industrial display, also anchored on a fundamental truth-claim, had existed since at least

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6 Peirce, Elements of Logic, pp.156-73.

7 Relics and Records, September 1922, Foreword: April 1928 and December 1931, Introduction.

8 Bennett, Birth of the Museum, p.147.
the middle of the nineteenth century and the Great Exhibition at the Crystal Palace. The Memorial appropriated the formal authority of both forms by utilising their display techniques and organisational principles. The Memorial’s leaders sought legitimacy, with a press release of November 1929 claiming it was “the Australian authority on matters associated with the war.” Importantly, evidence suggests that influential groups such as the RSSILA indeed afforded the Memorial this position to make pronouncements on the war. Secondly, the naturalisation typified by the generals’ tributes was an important source of legitimacy for the Memorial. The voices of experts were arrayed to authenticate its messages, and this extended to the reprinting, as extensive labels, of various literary sources, especially the History. Naturalisation was the vital element, for it promoted the notion that the Memorial’s proof of Australian military success, such as the spade, was also proof of the spiritual and moral virtues perceived by Bean and Treloar to have caused it, as well as being proof of the national historical lessons which were inserted into stories surrounding the objects. The “truth-effect” was to flow from “the actual objects” to all the surrounding assertions made about them, insisting that all of them were entirely natural, in no way ideological or constructed.

A definitive example of this authentication project surrounded the “Glory of Anzac,” first mentioned in Bean’s original guide of 1922 in reference to George Lambert’s painting of the Landing: “Unlike most battle pictures, this painting is an almost exact representation of the actual scene on that fateful April morning, when the Glory of Anzac was revealed.” This claim of the painting’s fidelity to the truth was reinforced by a footnote referring to a small controversy that had arisen: “some visitors to the Museum have claimed that this picture is incorrect in two minor details:— (1) That men at the Landing wore caps, not hats, and (2) that the scrub was then higher and thicker than is shown.” This suggested of course that all the other details had been agreed on by those visitors, who were quite obviously former soldiers and who therefore could pass judgement upon the war’s incidents. The implication was that

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10 Press Release, November 1929. AWM 93 20/1/IA.


these expert visitors, while unhappy about the height of the scrub, agreed that the Glory of Anzac was indeed on display in the picture. This of course meant that the Glory of Anzac was something completely natural, part of the constitution of the men themselves and in no way “created” by writers such as Masefield, Ashmead-Bartlett, or Bean himself.

Two displays concerning the defence of Villers-Bretonneux in April 1918 serve to illustrate the Memorial’s naturalisation project in its purest form. The treatment of Villers-Bretonneux utilised a mixture of factual and overtly propagandistic content, all presented through the words first of the soldiers themselves and their British commander, used to prove that the Australians had been successful, and of another British officer to make a nationalist claim replete with pre-war martial nationalist ideology. The role of the museum as interpreter of the representations was thus removed entirely, with the proof of the victory and the nationalist moral provided by experts. The result was a powerful example of the prevailing Australian “national” interpretation of the war.

The battle of Villers-Bretonneux was of considerable importance to the overall fortunes of the Allies. The village was near Amiens and, if lost, would have given the attacking Germans, then several weeks into their final great offensive and threatening to win the war, access to Amiens, itself considered “the key to Paris.” In the Memorial, five official military telegrams associated with its loss and recapture were displayed on pillars. They established, in terse military language, the facts of the action, which was well-known by 1922, having been the subject of considerable propaganda during the war. If any visitor was unsure as to whether the stories they had read in the papers during the war were correct, these telegrams offered proof direct from the soldiers. The telegrams, although utilising military language throughout, still totalled over 200 words, and thus constituted a very long label by the standards of modern museum practice. They told the story in considerable detail.

The telegrams began with one of 22 April, an intelligence message from 5th Division headquarters to its brigade and other headquarters, warning of information

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from two prisoners which independently suggested an attack was imminent.\textsuperscript{15} This duly arrived early in the morning of 24 April, with considerable severity:

[Telegram 2]: Morning report AAA At 3.45 a.m. enemy opened heavy barrage on right sector right Bn support and reserve line with H.E. and gas AAA Battery positions shelled with H.E. and gas AAA At 4.20 a.m. POUILLOY shelled with gas AAA ... signed, L. Merkel, Capt. 6.45 a.m.\textsuperscript{16}

The town was temporarily lost to the Germans. The Australians and some Imperial troops quickly reorganised themselves, however, and a full-scale attempt to recapture the whole town was then made, which was successful. To indicate just how successful, the final telegram came from the AIF’s British General Officer Commanding (GOC), Rawlinson:

[Telegram 5]: Following from Army Commander begins AAA Please convey to the 15\textsuperscript{th} and 13\textsuperscript{th} Aust. Bdes my congratulations and warm thanks for their brilliantly executed counter attack against VILLERS BRETONNEUX last night AAA It was a difficult operation and was carried out with a dash and determination which does them the greatest credit AAA General Rawlinson.\textsuperscript{17}

With such evidence offered, there was to be no doubt that the AIF had performed brilliantly in the recapture of Villers-Bretonneux. Rawlinson, in his overall tribute, had asserted dash and determination; here was the proof. To set the nationalist seal on the story, the plan model of Villers-Bretonneux used yet another quote: “A prominent British staff officer has written: ‘even if the Australians had accomplished nothing but the recapture of Villers-Bretonneux, they would have won the right to be considered among the greatest fighting races of the world.’”\textsuperscript{18} Here was the complete message: the Memorial first “proved” that the Australians had conducted the recapture of the vital village, then that this was an extraordinary feat. This proved Australian military supremacy on this occasion. The proud social Darwinist boast of Australians as a “fighting race” took the matter further, directing the visitor’s mind to Allenby’s

\textsuperscript{15} Ex Doc. 186, Sheet 17, Item 1.

\textsuperscript{16} Ex Doc. 186, Sheet 17, Item 2.

\textsuperscript{17} Ex Doc. 186, Sheet 17, Item 5.

\textsuperscript{18} Relics and Records, April 1928, p.32.
tribute, with its assertion that Australia had earned a “place of honour” amongst the “English speaking races,” as well as unambiguously invoking pre-war martial nationalist ideology and wartime propaganda. Together the representations on Villers-Bretonneux asserted the doctrine of victory as history, of triumph as act of national establishment, in its purest, most pseudo-scientific form, packaged so as to appear the natural corollary of a well-documented military action.

Most of the Memorial’s displays did not take naturalisation to such a degree, however, and the important battles of Amiens and Mont St Quentin in 1918 were dealt with in a more standard museological manner. The museum, using its authority, interpreted the objects, the events for which they were indexes and the qualities for which they were symbols. However, in both cases the Memorial appealed to (unacknowledged) sources to summarise the position. Just as in the case of the narrative, in which the generals offered summaries of the Australian performance, the key interpretative elements were naturalised, if not the whole displays as in the Villers-Bretonneux representations.

The Battle of Amiens, fought on 8 August 1918, was the great breakthrough that began the final campaign of the Western Front, known after the war as the “Hundred Days.” The Memorial presented the battle in the most triumphal of terms, as a great Australian victory that had ensured German defeat in the war. This placed the museum in agreement with other loyalist nation-builders such as Hughes, who saw the battle as one of the great events of Australian history. It was presented through a combination of a serious historical assertion of its importance, with naturalisation to the fore, and an excited, triumphal series of photographs of the troops in action.

In Bean’s guide, the reader was left in no doubt as to the historical importance of the battle. He labelled it “Germany’s Day of Doom,” and to prove that it had been he quoted the German Quartermaster General (and effective commander-in-chief), Erich Ludendorff, to the effect that “after the severe defeat of August 8th, I gave up the last vestige of hope.”19 This defeat was inflicted by “the British Fourth Army.

19 Relics and Records, September 1922, p.27; April 1928, p.35; December 1931, p.36. The Somme 1918 plan model installed in Sydney in 1928 used the same quote, and added triumphantly that the capture of Liéons on 11 September “under the conditions of open warfare, was no ordinary feat of arms.” Bain to Treloar, 15 May 1929. AWM 265 21/4/5, Part 3. Erich von Ludendorff (1865-1937), Quartermaster-general, and effective supreme commander, of German forces on the Western Front from August 1916 until the end of the war. Participated in Adolf Hitler’s abortive coup attempt in
attacking mainly with Australian and Canadian troops, and with the French First Army on its right,” who “broke through the German line at Villers-Bretonneux, near Amiens, and began the great forward movement that ended the war.” Here were Australians “in the thick of it” where the fighting was at its most important, when the war was finally won, as the enemy’s commander-in-chief confirmed.

A series of photographs supported this judgement, offering proof, and meanwhile presenting Australians with an almost arrogantly triumphal vision of their soldiers, who the enemy could not withstand. Both the nationalist education and entertainment objectives of the Memorial were furthered in the process. The first showed the mighty Australian warriors relaxing during a lull in the fighting:

![Figure 33: “Final Instructions.”](Figure 33: “Final Instructions.”
Source: Australian War Memorial Collections Database. cas.awm.gov.au. Photograph E02790.

**FINAL INSTRUCTIONS**

Lieutenant Downes (29th Battalion) giving the men of this platoon final instructions, near Warfusee-Abancourt, before the advance on the second objective commenced on 8th


20 *Relics and Records*, September 1922, p.28; April 1928, p.35. In December 1931 the passage read “the great forward movement which assisted materially to end the war.” *Relics and Records*, December 1931, p.36.
August. The photograph, which shows the men in a variety of poses, with their helmets at various rakish angles, suggests the insouciance of the Australian soldier in battle. The background is obscured by the smoke of heavy shell-fire.21

Here the Australian warriors, having taken the first objective, wait self-assuredly on the smoke-filled battlefield, now their natural home, for the order to continue their destruction of the enemy. Naturally the second objective will be taken as the first has been; the Australians are irresistible.

The next image offered solid proof of the claim of Australian triumph: prisoners taken in the advance.

Figure 34: “Anxious Moments.”
Source: Australian War Memorial Collections Database. cas.awm.gov.au. Photograph E03017.

ANXIOUS MOMENTS

German prisoners, taken during the Australian advance along the Somme on 8th August, 1918, proceeding up a hill near Morcourt, in France, in charge of a single Australian. The prisoners are looking anxiously over their shoulders to the hills in the background, over which the German guns are shooting at any movement in the Australian area noticed from an observation balloon.22

21 Melbourne Photograph 113; Sydney Photograph 196. Relics and Records, September 1922, p.81; April 1928, p.100; December 1931, p.101.
This representation added proof of supremacy in two ways. The first was its vital visual confirmation of the capture of prisoners; the image of a long line of Germans controlled by a single Australian strongly enhanced the claim of supremacy. Secondly, the caption emphasised the danger the Australians were in as they made their historic push, and by pointing this out suggested that it was not the enemy that had become weaker (although this was the case), but the Australians who had improved and mastered them (also true). Emphasis was the key to the representation.

The nonchalant warriors of the first photograph had their counterparts in the final one in the series. Here the conquerors sit metres away from their dead foes, enjoying the fruits of victory:

Figure 35: “The New Front Line.”
Source: Australian War Memorial Collections Database. cas.awm.gov.au. Photograph E02887.

THE NEW FRONT LINE

Troops of the 11th and 12th Australian Battalions, near Bois de Crepy, in France, about midday on 10th August, 1918, smoking cigars salved from captured enemy dug-outs... Half an hour before the 12th Battalion had passed through the 11th...
at this point, to press the attack towards Lihons, which was captured after a desperate struggle. 23

The cigars are certainly not “looted” from the bodies of dead Germans, they are salved.” The word implies that the cigars were in danger in the hands of “the destructive Hun,” and have been removed from them for their own good. 24 The amused tone of the caption clearly served the Memorial’s entertainment objective as well as bolstering the primary claim of supremacy.

The Battle of Amiens was a great victory, as significant as any in the First World War. It was a substantial historical success, and accordingly was celebrated as one of the great deeds done by Australians, both by the Memorial and in mainstream commemorative rhetoric. However, from the point of view of martial nationalism, it lacked a little, for it was won mainly through the application of irresistible force, especially artillery counter-battery fire which silenced German guns. 25 This was the materialschlacht, the “war of material” the Germans had written of so often and so bitterly. Even Remarque mentioned it. 26 Further, the defences at Amiens had been very weak. Enemy weakness and materialschlacht did not make the best martial nationalist propaganda, no matter how successful the attack was. The greatest such propaganda arose from battles won against strong enemies and in which one’s own side had no significant material advantage. Such battles, seen as having been won through moral virtues, were the very epitome of martial nationalism. Therefore, the seizure of Mont St Quentin was perfect material for nationalist propaganda.

The victory at Mont St Quentin had all the elements to become a martial nationalist tradition: it allowed the entire Allied advance in that sector to continue after it had been held up, and was thus historically important. The material element was minimised, with no normal barrage provided to assist the troops. Further, the hill was strongly defended. Nevertheless, the victory was total, with the enemy’s best units fleeing the field. In terms both of its importance to the war effort, and the

21 Melbourne Photograph 118; Sydney Photograph 201. Relics and Records, September 1922, p.83; April 1928, p.101; December 1931, p.102.


22 Prior and Wilson, Rawlinson, pp.320-3.

26 Remarque, All Quiet, p.186.
traditional heroic element of its achievement, this was the AIF’s crowning triumph. Accordingly it was a major focus of the early exhibitions, used as the main climax of the Memorial’s narrative. The visitor’s attention was called to the story through a larger number of representations than almost any other combat. These were vivid and very visual, including a set of action photographs, a painting and the first large picture model.

Bean saved the most triumphal passage in his 1922 guide for Mont St Quentin. The mighty Australians, martial virtues to the fore, were unstoppable:

![Image of Mont St Quentin capture]

**Figure 36: Capture of Mont St Quentin, by Frederick Leist.**
Source: Australian War Memorial Collections Database. cas.awm.gov.au. Painting ART 02929.

**AN AUDACIOUS ADVANCE**

Above the central case is a picture by Fred. Leist, showing the leading men of the 5th Australian Infantry Brigade passing a German trench during their audacious advance in which the summit of the hill was captured. The shell fire did not go before them in the form of a barrage, as was usual, but was concentrated on the summit nearly a mile ahead. The thin force of Australians had to rush every trench between, but such was their dash that, before they had gone two-thirds of the way, the whole hillside in front of them was dotted with the figures of fleeing Germans.27

This was an uncommonly excited and incomplete description from Bean, for other displays confirmed that this was only the beginning of this action. The France plan model, under the title “The Single Finest Feat of the War,” described not just “the first wonderful assault” by the 5th Brigade, but also “their magnificent defence when

27 *Relics and Records*, September 1922, pp.31-2.
beaten back" by a counter-attack. The Australians held the counter-attack, then sent the reinforcing 6th Brigade in to finish off the enemy: "the Huns fought to the last and the bodies of their dead littered the hillside."28

The image of triumphant Australians was greatly sharpened in the photograph series, which focussed tightly on small groups of men at the moment of their making history. These were no "artist's renderings," but "true" representations of the battle (and the reputation photographs enjoyed at this time as representations of the truth, of the real world "as it was," was a significant factor in the series' power). The visitor could see the real faces of the heroes, and these were, as Bean had always said, the faces of ordinary Australian men, of people who the visitor could know. The first photograph, for example, showed the men waiting to get to grips with the enemy:

Figure 37: "Waiting for the Barrage to Lift."
Source: Australian War Memorial Collections Database. cas.awm.gov.au. Photograph E03124.

WAITING FOR THE BARRAGE TO LIFT

Members of the 24th Battalion, awaiting the lifting of the artillery barrage on Mont St Quentin, on 1st September, 1918, photographed a few minutes before moving out of the trench in the renewed attack at 1:30 pm. It was this attack, following a

30-minute intense bombardment, that finally won the position.\textsuperscript{20}

The captions all included the claim that this was the charge that took the hill; the visitor was not to be under any illusions as to the historic nature of the series. The second caption went further, referring to "the final capture of this highly-important position" by the 6\textsuperscript{th} Brigade.\textsuperscript{30}

The final in this series shows the 6\textsuperscript{th} Brigade advancing to their date with destiny, in a scene which became the basis for the picture model of the action, the first such model installed into the museum in Melbourne in 1922.\textsuperscript{31} The caption for the photograph made clear the difficulties of the attack, so better to impress upon viewers the spectacular nature of its successful prosecution:

![Figure 38: "The Final Rush."]

Source: Australian War Memorial Collections Database. cas.awm.gov.au. Photograph E03104.

**THE FINAL RUSH**

The first wave of "A" Company, of the 21\textsuperscript{st} Australian Battalion, advancing in extended order towards Mont St Quentin, in France, on 1\textsuperscript{st} September, 1918, after leaving their

\textsuperscript{20} Melbourne Photograph 120; Sydney Photograph 197. Relics and Records, September 1922; p.83, April 1928, p.100; December 1931, p.101.

\textsuperscript{30} Relics and Records, September 1922; p.83, April 1928, p.100; December 1931, p.101.

\textsuperscript{31} Relics and Records, September 1922, Attached Plan of Exhibition.
trenches to join the renewed assault by the 23rd and 24th Battalions, at 1:30 pm. This magnificent assault of the 6th Brigade resulted in the capture of the strongly-defended enemy position. The German garrison consisted of Prussian Guard regiments; machine-guns were more numerous than usual; and the old wire of 1916, in thick belts on the hill slopes, was a serious obstacle to the attacking troops.\(^{32}\)

This caption places Bean’s statement in his guide in stark relief. The troops “fleeing down the hillside” were Prussian Guard regiments, the best of the enemy’s units. They had been protected by thick belts of wire and numerous machine guns, while the attackers were unable to use their usual barrage. Nevertheless, the Australians’ dash and audacity brought them a stunning victory, dramatically “proved” in the photographic series.

These were descriptions that could match Fitchett for excitement and ferocity. The enemy, though courageous and tough fighters, are destroyed by the superior Australians in a man-to-man fight. The latter’s supremacy is clear. This is the crowning moment of the Australian nationalist war history: the military virtues revealed at Gallipoli and tempered through the terrible ordeal of 1916-17 have brought them victoriously through. The flag was a most dramatic symbol of Australian supremacy over the Hun, and of Australian victory in a historically-important battle. It was thus worthy of becoming “the focus of a major national tradition.”

Amiens and Mont St Quentin were offered as new traditions for Australia, as events to inspire Australians by their historic importance and the mighty national martial virtues they embodied. However, displays relating to a battle of 1917 had reminded visitors that the history “made” by the Australians in these 1918 battles remained within the traditional Imperial framework. Thus, as well as using the images of British martial tradition, the Memorial placed Australians within this tradition—Australian national identity remained within the larger Imperial identity, albeit enjoying a special position within it. The Battle of Menin Road took place on 20 September 1917, and was a model of the step-by-step method. Following an intense barrage, the infantry advanced and were able to occupy their final objective 1500 metres away from their jumping-off trenches. A standing barrage placed around the

\(^{32}\) Melbourne Photograph 122; Sydney Photograph 199. *Relics and Records*, September 1922; p.84, April 1928, p.100; December 1931, p.101.
point attacked meant the infantry were able to operate with minimal resistance. Even this opposition, though, was enough to inflict serious casualties, with pillboxes and other strongpoints, as well as enemy artillery, responsible for most of the 5,103 casualties the Australians suffered in securing their 1500-metre gain. The battle was a local success, but nothing more.

The Memorial, however, felt that the battle had a wider significance, arguing that on that day, "the Australian troops of the 1st and 2nd Divisions, by their attacks in the vicinity of Glencorse Wood and Nonne Bosschen, 'wove a fresh and brilliant strand into the traditions of the Imperial Armies.'"34 34 Again the editorial comment was naturalised through a quotation, although its provenance remains unclear. The assertion of Anglo-Australian identity, on the other hand, is very clear, as is the deliberate invocation of British popular military propaganda and the assertion of Australian contribution to an ongoing British military tradition. In 1893 Henry Parkes had stated that "the glory, the incomparable beauty of her traditions are all ours."35 Now Australia was giving back to those traditions, adding "a fresh and brilliant" strand to the most important one, that of military glory, of ongoing British triumph on the field of honour. There were now Australian pages in the book of British racial history. As Henry Lawson had prophesied, the Australians had signed their Stormy Histories in the Book of Eternal Fate.

This sense of being "in all respects...one and the same people," in Parkes's phraseology, was promoted by another photograph related to the Menin Road battle, showing Australians under the famous ramparts of Ypres.36 This was accompanied by a short history of the town, including a reference to a famous problem faced by other British soldiers in the past: "Historians record that the English soldiers of a century ago [in the campaign against Napoleon] had as much difficulty in, and as many variations of, the pronunciation of its name as those who served in Flanders during the recent war."37 The association of the Australians of 1917 with the oft-praised heroes

31 Coulthard-Clark, Encyclopedia, p.130.
32 Sydney Photograph 162. Relics and Records, April 1928, p.93; December 1931, p.94.
of the fight against another perceived tyranny allowed them to appropriate a measure of that earlier glory. As had Wellington and the heroes of Waterloo, so too had the AIF fought the good fight against the forces of darkness. This association was, of course, an entirely typical martial nationalist manoeuvre; the evocation of a long line of triumphal and noble warriors was at the core of the Island Story.

II

As well as the national war history, supremacy was asserted in a more abstract sense through the display of the enemy’s words, possessions and bodies. The propaganda technique of using the enemy’s own words as testimony to his inferiority to Australian troops, widely utilised during the war and in “big-noting” post-war literature, was also used in the Memorial. Two variants were displayed in the 1918 courts from 1922 to at least 1929. On a pillar in the Sydney display were the following two German newspaper items, with the accompanying label text:

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The first purports to show how scared of the Australians the Germans were in 1918. According to the label, this was “a page from the German paper Jugend taken from a Hun captured in the attack on the Hindenburg Outpost Line on 18th Sept. 1918.” The two figures are Hughes and the President of the United States of America, Woodrow Wilson, who have, ironically given their real feelings for each other, agreed to act together: “In the cartoon Mr Hughes is represented as saying, ‘We Australians will slaughter one half of the German people and Mr Wilson has kindly undertaken to slaughter the other half.’” Other displays in the museum suggested that the promise had been kept. The second representation indicated the danger of insulting the mighty Allied forces, for it was, the label declared, “a cartoon to which the British, Canadian...

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38 Label AWM.4536/7: “Australia Through German Eyes.” Attachment, Bain to Treloar, 10 January 1929. AWM 265 21/4/5, Part 7.

39 “Australia Through German Eyes.” On the relationship between Hughes and Wilson, see for example Clark, The Young Tree Green, pp.111-13.
and Australian troops gave a convincing reply on the 8th August when they achieved a striking victory over the Germans. Both concepts, which appealed directly to the nation’s collective vanity, had received a wide airing during the war, and continued to do so in returned-soldier writing after it.

Perceived enemy fear of the Australians was underscored in stories that had all the verve and mockery of wartime propaganda. One such story was attached to a German machine gun taken from a captured aeroplane. Despite Bean’s assertion that “we do not believe the banal war-time jokes about our enemy always running away,” the gun’s label and caption made it clear that the plane’s occupants had not been able to match it with their Australian counterparts:

“THE BOCHE WHO WOULDN’T FIGHT”

“The [German] machine was flying east at about 2,000 feet, and was apparently trying to make for the front line. The [Australian] R.E.8 immediately intercepted it to prevent its escape, and commenced driving it towards the 3rd Squadron’s aerodrome. When the Halberstadt tried to break away, as it did several times, the R.E.8 headed it off. The Hun officers made no attempt to fight and allowed themselves to be forced to land their machine intact upon the 3rd Squadron’s aerodrome, where they were taken prisoners. From papers and maps found in the machine much valuable information was gained. This parabellum machine gun was carried on the Halberstadt machine.”

Then there was the tale of the German 184th Infantry Regiment who, one label remarked, opposed an Australian attack in France. According to the label, “The regiment apparently felt keenly the ceaseless harrying of Australian patrols and raids, and their morale was poor. One N.C.O. prisoner said that, a few nights before, the whole of his machine gun crew ran away when they heard some Australians approaching.” Other enemy troops took another option. Images such as that titled

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40 “Australia Through German Eyes.”

41 C.E.W. Bean to John Treloar, 4 December 1929. AWM 38 3DRL 6673, Item 747.

42 Bain to Treloar, 28 December 1932. AWM265 21/4/5, Part 7.

43 Label AWM.829: “The Huns Who Opposed the Australians at Ville-Sur-Ancre.” Attachment, Bain to Treloar, 28 December 1932. AWM 265 21/4/5, Part 7. This contrasted with the message of the Dernancourt picture model installed in December 1928: “German machine-gunners, with characteristic bravery, fought to the last, but the enemy infantry broke in the face of a determined advance.” AWM93 [49].
“Kamarad” offered proof of the myriad claims that the enemy had thrown up his hands in surrender at the approach of Australian troops:

![Image](https://example.com/image.jpg)

Figure 40: “Kamarad!”
Source: Australian War Memorial Collections Database. cas.awm.gov.au. Photograph EC03274.

“KAMARAD!”

A photograph showing a party of German soldiers in the act of surrendering to troops of the 45th Australian Battalion who were advancing beyond Ascension Farm, near Le Verguier, on 18th September, 1918.44

This photograph was taken after “Dealing with Running Huns,” and shows the irresistible Australians catching up to some of those very runners.

Prisoners were a consistent theme in the photographic exhibitions, covering Gallipoli, the Western Front and Palestine. Many of the images of German prisoners accompanied references in the Memorial’s narrative to battles fought in 1917 and 1918, and offered evidence that Australians had really won those widely-praised victories. The German Army, as many Australians liked to say, retained an awesome reputation, and to humble its troops was significant evidence that Australians were a

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44 Melbourne Photograph 129, Sydney Photograph 205, *Relics and Records*, September 1922, p.85; April 1928, p.102; December 1931, p.103.
“fighting race.” However, it was Palestine that provided the most spectacular success:

Figure 41: “A Great Haul.”
Source: Australian War Memorial Collections Database.
cas.awm.gov.au. Photograph B00090.

A GREAT HAUL

General view of 4,500 prisoners captured by the Anzac Mounted Division in their third expedition to the plateau of Moab and the heights of Gilead. The previous expeditions had been raids, but this time the Divisions came to stay. Altogether, it captured 11,000 Turks, of whom these are some, at a cost of a few score casualties.  

This was a signal example of triumphalism. The all-conquering Australians, after a few raids, “came to stay.” There is no mention of fighting – only a few score casualties were sustained. The Australians simply came with the determination to stay, and the Turks capitulated. The unwritten assumption was that the Australians were far superior soldiers, perhaps to the extent that the casualty discrepancy implied. As Allenby had written in his tribute, the Australians had “achieved the destruction of the Turkish army.” Here was proof, presented in a particularly Australian style, in

45 Melbourne Photograph 159; Sydney Photograph 68. Relics and Records, September 1922; p.89; April 1928, p.72; December 1931, p.73.

46 Ex Doc. 186, Australian Chivalry, Plate 24.
which the Light Horsemen, predominantly bushmen, “mustered” the Turkish prisoners like a herd of cattle in the Gulf Country.

This very story was told, in fact, in Australian Chivalry. This depicts a world in which battlefield dominance has moved beyond the excitement of “Kamarad!” and “A Great Haul,” and become simply a part of the job of being an Australian soldier:

Figure 42: The Drover, by George Benson.
Source: Australian War Memorial Collections Database.

THE CLING OF CUSTOM

Before joining the AIF, a large proportion of the men of the light horse regiments had lived on stations and farms, where driving sheep or cattle is a regular occurrence, and the habit of trailing on horseback behind a flock or a herd was far too deeply ingrained to be shed even under the changed circumstances of active service.

When detailed to take a party of prisoners to the rear, the Light Horseman instinctively “drove” them. It was a common sight to see him lazily bringing up the rear, whistling cheerily, on his slow-paced mount, with his sauntering charges strung out ahead.47

There is a pastoral air about the image, a relaxed, assured sense that all is well. A captured foe could, after all, present no more danger.

47 Australian Chivalry, Plate 35.
Those who did not surrender were also put on display. There were a small number of photographs of dead Germans with captions calling attention to the fact that they had been killed by Australians. The bodies of these enemies were the last word in proof of Australian military supremacy. Although few in number, their display visually confirmed the considerable number of displays that gave prominence to the killing of the enemy. More importantly, one of these photographs showed the logical conclusion of that chain of signification which took the battered hero on the cover of *The Anzac Book* and transformed him into the rampaging warrior of Bean’s guide, indicating what he did when he came to grips with his enemy. The label affirmed that the photograph depicted “the fiercely contested ground won from the enemy in the Australian attack of 4th July, 1918,” and, quite matter-of-factly, “the bodies of two dead German machine gunners bayonetted during the fighting.”

![Figure 43: “Between Pear Trench and Hamel.”](cas.awm.gov.au. Photograph E02704)

This was how the rampant Achilles of Bean’s guide cover used his bayonet. As the body of the great Hector had proved the Homeric hero’s mettle beyond doubt, so too did the corpse of this German machine gunner – the strongest foe in a mighty army – prove beyond doubt the mettle of the conquering Australians. Just as Australian

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blood sealed the sacrificial element of the national story, German blood confirmed the triumphal one. No greater or more ruthless testament to Australian strength of arms could be offered. It is worth noting that no reviewer objected to this image; indeed, no reviewer ever mentioned it.

To complete its evidence of Australian martial ability, the Memorial displayed a large number of trophies taken from vanquished enemies, and certain relics – machine guns, for example – used by Australians in valorous acts. For example, no trophy symbolised Australian military supremacy more than the colours of the Turkish 46th Regiment, referred to in Bean’s guides in terms of their historic importance and the casual military superiority that their appearance in the displays embodied:

Regimental colours are most coveted trophies, and are generally captured only after desperate fighting. In the war of 1914-18, however, few regiments took their colours into the field, and the capture of such a trophy was a unique event. As far as the AIF is concerned, the colours of the 46th Turkish Regiment were the only ones captured. They were secured by the 9th Light Horse Regiment, which encountered and completely disposed of this Turkish regiment near Khan Kusseir, near Damascus, on the 1st October, 1918.50

This “disposing of” the enemy was also asserted in the description of captured German shoulder-straps, “displayed,” Bean stated, “under the brief but apt title, ‘Huns we have met.’”51

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50 The quote used by Bean in With the Flagship of the South to introduce the “fascinating dream” of an Australian China Squadron began: “In front a good man fled, but one far better pursued him.” Homer, The Iliad, p.465.

51 Relics and Records, September 1922, p.36.
That “meeting” the Australians had been fatal for the “Huns” was implied by other displays, such as that for a cigar case, whose label stated that it had been “Taken From a Fritz Killed at Chipilly on the 9th August.” Supporting this display was one of several cups, taken during what its label referred to as “A Fine Little Stunt.” This was successful, the label elaborated, because it had seen the “killing [of] a number of Huns” and the capture of machine guns and prisoners. A final example, incorporating clear triumphalism, showed “conquerors” taking a great trophy, the enemy leader’s personal banner:

**VON FALKENHAYN’S FLAG**

During the latter portion of his service with the Turco-German army in Palestine, General von Falkenhayn established his headquarters at the Fash Hotel in Jerusalem. Upon entering the city towards the end of August, 1918, the conquerors saw

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52 See also Relics and Records, April 1928, p.29.

53 “Cigar Case Taken From a Fritz Killed at Chipilly on the 9th August.” Bain to Treloar, 23 August 1928. AWM 265 21/4/5, Part 1.


55 “A Fine Little Stunt.”
this flag flying over the Hotel. It was removed at the instigation of Corporal Coles of the AAMC, who later presented it to Major W.R.C. Mainwaring. 56

The standard of the enemy commander was an even more valuable trophy than regimental colours, and certainly proof that Australians had been “conquerors.” 57

Finally, the Memorial also depicted the actions of those who had done the killing and the capturing. The vanquished enemy provided physical proof of supremacy; so too did the official citation of a Victoria Cross, attached to a weapon used by the medal’s winner and still on display in Sydney in 1932:

HOW SERGEANT S.R. MCDougall WON THE V.C.

The Lewis gun used by Sergeant McDougall, 47th Battalion, when he won the V.C. on the 28th March, 1918. The official record of the deed is as follows:—“At Dernancourt on the morning of the 28th March, 1918, the enemy attacked our line, and his first wave succeeded in gaining an entry. Sergeant McDougall, who was at a post in a flank company, realised the situation and at once charged the enemy’s second wave single handed with rifle and bayonet, killing seven and capturing a machine gun which they held. This he turned on to them, firing from the hip, causing many casualties and routing that wave. He then turned his attention to those who had entered the trench, until his ammunition had run out, all the time firing at close quarters, when he seized a bayonet and charged again, killing three men and a German officer who was just about to kill one of our own officers. He then used a Lewis gun on the enemy, killing many and enabling us to capture 33 prisoners. His prompt action saved the line and enabled us to stop the enemy advance.” 58

The ferocity of Sergeant McDougall’s attack, “routing” waves of the enemy’s attack and killing a large number, was presented with excitement and hearty approval. Here


57 However, in a letter of 23 July 1928 from Curator Les Bain to Treloar the former mentioned that further investigation, based on the information of returned officers, had proved that the flag displayed could not, in fact, have been found in the hotel, for Falkenhayn had never used it as a headquarters. The display was removed from the memorial as a consequence. Bain to Treloar, 23 July 1928. AWM 265 21/4/5, Part 1; Relics and Records, April 1928, p.18 stated that “the German flag was found flying over Fash’s Hotel, Jerusalem, the headquarters of General von Falkenhayn, the senior German officer with the Turkish Army.” The reference had been excised by the time the December 1931 guide was printed.

was a warrior who had displayed all those martial virtues that the museum praised—courage, determination, ferocity, the will to conquer. The “magnificent dash” of Foch, the “gallantry” of Rawlinson, the “stauntness in defence” of Allenby—all can be seen in this modern-day chanson de geste relating what was, by any standard, an astonishing military accomplishment. Here was an example of Australian manhood, the Memorial suggested, a warrior who defended his nation by destroying the foe. Men like McDougall were offered to visitors as heroes of the nation, exemplars of an Australian “spirit” that could conquer any obstacle. By striving to be like him, visitors would improve themselves and their nation.

Between them, the most triumphant battle displays in the Memorial’s narrative, which formed its climax, along with displays dedicated to the fundamental task of proving Australian military supremacy had considerable success. There is little doubt, viewing these displays, that the Australians achieved a marked superiority over the Germans in 1918. In objects from the Meteren spade to the colours of the 46th Turkish Regiment, documents written by Germans or Frenchmen, and the guns used by Australians, the displays prove the point. These displays offered crucial support to the entire Anzac Legend. By proving in a popular public space that the Australians had been superior warriors, they ensured that, throughout most of the inter-war years, the main discussion on the AIF would be about why they were great soldiers, not if they were. Further, the naturalisation used in some of the displays also contributed powerfully to the debate as to why, with the entire collective portrait of the AIF presented as spiritual truth manifest in physical evidence.

The displays dedicated to Australian military supremacy also allow a test of accusations The Australian Worker made in 1925 that the Memorial glorified killing: “The present war museum serves no purpose whatever. Behind the whole of its display is the noisy claim of victory and a glorification of killing.” There can be no doubt that, in a limited number of representations, the Memorial did, indeed, glorify the extermination of the enemy. The concentration on military supremacy, and the insistence on demonstrating its validity beyond doubt, were at the heart of this phenomenon. To carry out these ends, the Memorial did not baulk at depicting the death of the enemy at the hands of Australians, nor at underlining the fact that booty had been taken from dead enemies. Representations of the dead enemy accompanied

59 The Australian Worker, 8 April 1925, p.9. This article was the only really savage attack on the Memorial.
by deliberate descriptions of killing, or of trophies take “from a Fritz killed at Chipilly,” or labels revelling in “killing a number of Huns.” were all arrayed to prove the fundamental assertion of Bean’s Anzac Legend, that Australians were superior warriors. There were, it must be emphasised, only a relatively small number of displays that glorified the killing of the enemy, yet the displays which went short of this extreme, while still offering proof of supremacy or delineating a triumphant national history, were a significant proportion.
Chapter 6: Truth in the Service of Nationalism: Defeat, death and the wounded

The Memorial covered a great many issues related to the Australian overseas war experience, going well beyond those which formed the bellicose core of the early Anzac Legend. These included such vital subjects as defeat in battle, death and the wounded. Adding to the "social" elements of the collective portrait of the AIF, these representations added much to the Memorial’s overall vision of the Australian overseas war experience. The Memorial’s treatment of these once again featured the “national” interpretation of the war. “Modern memory” and the anti-war position had a degree of influence through the display of emotions such as sadness and compassion, but each was ultimately appropriated by the Memorial’s “traditional” outlook, with the fundamental elements of shocking realism and strong criticism absent. This is made particularly clear through a comparison of the Memorial’s treatment of these issues with those of certain anti-war writers who loom large in the “modern memory” interpretation of the cultural legacy of the First World War, particularly the German Erich Maria Remarque.

The “national” interpretation continued in the Memorial’s representations of defeat, death and the wounded, and its effect meant that certain similarities existed between these and more bellicose displays. For instance, a cult of victory remained,
with both moral and military victories found within defeats. However, failures were
scrupulously acknowledged, and some were criticised. The “national” interpretation
extended to displays critical of Imperial commanders, in which the Memorial did not
so much criticise the war’s conduct as map out an Australian identity within the
Empire. Within its references to the Imperial armies and the defence of the Empire,
the Memorial envisioned Australia as now having a real history of its own – the
history that was revealed in the museum’s own displays. In references to the dead and
wounded, the influence of the norms developed by late-nineteenth-century British war
reporters was again discernible. Roger Stearn argues that “reporters’
descriptions of [the dead and wounded] were usually not specific or detailed, and
omitted or minimised agony. They wrote of wounds, mutilation and death in
expurgated, distanced and sometimes symbolic terms.”¹ The Memorial did not use
symbolism, but most certainly offered a distanced and expurgated vision of defeat,
death and the wounded. Overall, in spite of a number of moderate influences from the
“modern memory” interpretation of the war, the Memorial appropriated these,
incorporating them into a modified “tradition,” which predominated in the Memorial.²
Both issues require an investigation of the Memorial’s commitment to the truth, and
how this was reconciled with its deeper commitment to nationalist education, a
somewhat contradictory notion.

² The “modern memory” interpretation can be traced back to the 1850s and the reportage of the
Crimean War. William Howard Russell and others reported the war in a highly realistic fashion, and
advances in printing techniques allowed for great verisimilitude in newspaper illustrations, a
development that was seized upon to show the British public some of the horrible truths of an
unpopular war. The 1870s saw Elizabeth Butler, and others, depict exhaustion, emotional breakdown
and death to great acclaim, but the 1880s and beyond saw the rise of High Imperialism and the return
of a traditional heroic sentiment to battle painting, including that of Butler. The depiction of the
hardships faced by ordinary soldiers remained, and it became a major element of the democratisation
of glory. Kipling’s arch-Imperialist poems focussed on the ordinary soldier, whose image was
transformed from that of a lowlife, criminal and oppressive thug to a pure and noble rough diamond
through the magical agency of the Empire. The question in relation to realities, in the nineteenth
century as in the twentieth, was one of criticism. Russell denounced the conduct of the war in stringent
terms, while Kipling’s dead were martyrs because of the glory of their national cause. See Matthew
Lalumia, Realism and Politics in Victorian Art of the Crimean War. (Ann Arbor, Mich.: UMI Research
Press, 1984); McKenzie, Popular Imperialism and the Military; Hichberger, Images of the Army;
Ehrenreich, Blood Rites; W.J. Reader, At Duty’s Cull: a study in obsolete patriotism. (Manchester:
Manchester University Press, 1988); MacDonald, The Language of Empire.
The entire discussion of the Memorial’s treatment of defeat and realities brings into focus the institution’s commitment to the truth, illustrating the “national” limitations which were placed upon it. The decision to display images of the wounded, for instance, was a function of Bean’s commitment to truth-telling in the Memorial. However, their consistent portrayal as whole and safe reflected the deeper commitment to the unity of the nation, which in Bean encompassed a humanitarian compassion to spare the bereaved’s feelings. Thus “truth” did not include “modern memory” elements such as graphic depictions of mutilated Australians, and no image similar to that of the dead German machine gunners at Peach Trench existed. One photograph showed what may have been the bodies of two Australians, but the label makes no reference to them, referring rather to a successful advance. In relation to military defeats, the “national” limits on truth concerned the choice of subject. It was quite possible to display facts without displaying all of them, and thus displays were “the truth,” but perhaps not “the whole truth.”

The display of a selected truth was a conscious decision on the part of Bean, as indicated in his first guide. Responding to the criticisms that Lambert’s painting *The Landing at Anzac* showed too few men wearing British-style caps rather than Australian slouch hats, Bean made a clear policy statement:

> An officer of the 9th Battalion, who was one of the first ashore, and who climbed the slope shown in Lambert’s picture, after consulting brother officers, stated, “the consensus of opinion is that the men wore hats, though a percentage wore caps.” Having this foundation in fact, the artist decided to paint the men with hats, to secure a distinctive Australian feature.³

The objective was “to secure a distinct Australian feature,” taking careful cognisance of the facts of the situation as agreed by contemporary military authorities. The Memorial was to give the visitor a distinct Australian vision having its foundation in fact. It would not represent the truth of the war strictly, though, if this was to the detriment of the “Australian feature.” It was, after all, the Australian national war memorial. The note admitted that, contrary to Bean’s stated intentions, the Memorial did actually include displays which were not an “exact representation of fact,” and

that historical accuracy could at times be sacrificed to nation-building.\textsuperscript{4} This example of inaccuracy is a trifling one, but the "national" principle established by it governed the Memorial's representations. Peter Cochrane points out a more famous and serious example when he notes that Treloar was happy to have a photograph which he knew did not actually depict John Simpson Kirkpatrick, the now famous and revered "man with the donkey," acknowledged as an image of the real man throughout the 1930s and beyond because, Cochrane argues, "a legend, undisputed, was more important than the facts. It concerned a higher kind of truth."\textsuperscript{5} This "higher truth," of course, was the "national" truth. Slouch hats were one of the great symbols of the AIF, and the famous Landing painting helped make this so. The Memorial's leaders were happy to stretch the truth a little to achieve their nationalist goals. No outright misrepresentation was involved, just a small change of emphasis.

The Memorial's "national" truth contrasted to the "anti-war" truths of soldier writers such as Siegfried Sassoon, Erich Maria Remarque and Ernest Hemingway. These writers claimed reality as their province, having seen the conflict at close quarters. They rejected the vision of war promulgated by "stay-at-home" patriots, whose pronouncements they argued had no legitimacy as they were not informed by actual inspection of the conditions of the war. Bean, however, had seen the war in person, and he, too, claimed that he spoke the truth.

The "anti-war" position was expressed succinctly by the radical journalist H.W. Massingham in 1917 in a review of the newly-published poetry of Siegfried Sassoon:

Mr Sassoon has really no excuse for not writing what was expected of him, except one, and that is the excuse of the truth. And by truth we do not mean realism. Realism is not objectionable; on the contrary, it is fashionable. But truth, and truth about the actual conditions of the war, is objectionable, because of the deadly criticism that, like the dagger under the cloak, underlies it.\textsuperscript{6}

\textsuperscript{4}AWMC Minutes, 31 July 1919, Resolution 2 (d). AWM 170 1/1.

\textsuperscript{5}However, he does point out also that Treloar "got back on to the Simpson trail," as Cochrane puts it, for, in Treloar's own words, "the sake of historical accuracy," in 1950. Peter Cochrane, Simpson and the Donkey: The making of a legend, (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1992), pp.191, 193.

Massingham was the editor of the *Nation*, and used it to campaign for a negotiated peace. He was sympathetic to Sassoon and his attempt to use "truth about the actual conditions of the war" to criticise the manner in which it was being conducted. The anti-war position adopted by soldier-writers such as Sassoon could in fact be defined as "truth in the service of criticism." This "truth" involved the most gruesome realism - mutilation, horror, appalling conditions and other "actual conditions of the war" - and the criticism might be summed up in Sassoon's own line: "But he did for them both with his plan of attack." The leaders who sent the young men to die were indicted by anti-war writers. The whole political and social system, even the entire civilisation that produced the war, was called into question because of the searing power of the truth about the "realities" of war.

The Memorial's attitude differed. Its truth was not, as Sassoon's, in the service of criticism. Nor was it a graphic truth. Although publicly pledged to the depiction of "nothing that is not an actual representation of fact," the Memorial was an instrument of the State dedicated to martial nationalist education, and many of the cultural tools of martial nationalism - notions of noble sacrifice, glory and heroism, especially - were fundamentally incompatible with the critical anti-war position. The Memorial was seeking to enhance "emotional" nation-building, the formation of an imagined community, whereas the anti-war position questioned all such constructions. However, realism itself was perfectly compatible with martial nationalism, having been part of the "democratisation of glory" from the 1850s. Thus, the Memorial adopted a position of "truth in the service of the nation," with the "national" interpretation of the Australian overseas war experience shaping the story. The difference between these two visions arose mainly in terms of the choice of facts, the treatment of them, and the question of criticism, the "dagger under the cloak." Thus the inter-war period saw the construction of two "truths" - one bitter, angry and disillusioned, the other sombre at times but ultimately triumphal. Both had validity,

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8 In February 1918 the *Nation* argued for dissent: "Let poets and writers and artists and all other soldiers of our time be allowed freely to describe the actual truth of war as they have seen it." Quoted in Havighurst, *Massingham*, p.261. Sassoon knew Massingham personally, and in 1964 declared that he met him "often at the Reform Club and liked him very much." Havighurst, *Massingham*, p.261.
and both had political affiliations and connotations, embodying the “monumental” or the “anti-monumental” culture.

There was much more to Bean’s, and the Memorial’s, “national” work than manipulation or sleight-of-hand, though. Bean saw truth through the lens of his emotional nationalist commitment, and his presentation of verities reflected this fact. He understood the realities of death and maiming, and was deeply affected by what he saw, but put most of this information into his diaries rather than his war correspondence, the History or the Memorial. In private Bean was often a Wilfred Owen, but in public he was usually a Rupert Brooke, and this was a deliberate response, taking into consideration what he saw as the nation’s needs. He was in favour of the disclosure of as much carefully-selected information to the nation as possible as soon as it was discreet to do so. There was a hint of the rebel in him, in that he did want some of the terrible realities to be revealed. He had been very angry during the war about attacks which he thought threw away men’s lives for little gain, and was sympathetic to the notion that telling the plain truth would ultimately help stop wars. He was also a sensitive man, though, and a thoroughgoing nationalist. Therefore, he did not wish to show the war’s true horror in the public domain in the inter-war years, for memories of bereavement and trauma were still very fresh, and at that time their display was politically dangerous. As a result, the worst of the terrible truths about bombardments, mutilation and horror remained hidden until 1942, when the diaries became available for public inspection, but eventually became well known. The more graphic and shocking of Bean’s observations of the war thus came publicly to light only after a long period of time had elapsed, and many of the generation who had suffered so much grief, especially the parents, had passed on, unable to be injured by its disclosure to their descendants. Similarly, in relation to Australian defeat in battle Bean was adamant that individuals’ reputations be protected while they lived, and the Memorial followed this policy of protection throughout the 1922-35 period.

Examining the Memorial’s choice and treatment of “realities” and defeats illustrates several elements of the Memorial’s “national” work – its earnest, sincere

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9 Bean had also declared, when particularly frustrated during the war, that England would benefit from a revolution, and was willing to write positively of socialism, referring to the AIF as a “one big Socialist state.” His loyalty to Anglo-Australian ideals of the chivalrous gentleman never wavered, however. Bean Diary, 4 April 1918, quoted in Williams, Anzacs, the Media, p.214.

10 Williams, Anzacs, the Media, p.168.
and sometimes subtle attempts to help and improve its nation’s citizens. Firstly, these displays provided a continuation of the national war history’s praise for the soldiers, arguing that even in the worst situations the Australians acted with honour and courage. Equating the nation with the AIF as it did, defending the soldiers’ reputation helped Australia. The “national” work also included concern for group emotional wellbeing and social cohesion. In transcending realities and thus depicting the soldiers as generally in control of their environment the Memorial addressed an important psychological aspect of the war experience, helplessness. Many Australian civilians had endured a deep and debilitating powerlessness in being so far from the fate of their loved ones, while soldiers under prolonged bombardment had experienced a far more terrifying sense of being unable to protect themselves or control their environment. For those who had been there, and those who had waited for them, helplessness had been a significant and painful part of their war experience, and the Memorial sought to provide a kind of retrospective reassurance that the men had not really been helpless. This response was every bit as “national” as defending the AIF. Helping the nation and educating it were both parts of the Memorial’s brief. Also under the “national” rubric was the manipulation, in displays of defeats, of public opinion towards wartime commanders, both to save embarrassment and to forestall social conflict.

II

In the Memorial’s treatment of defeats on the field of battle, “traditional” martial nationalism retained primacy and the fighting reputation of the AIF was protected. Victories were discerned within defeats, and the result of this focus was to play down the extent of some military failures, especially those on Gallipoli. As in the triumphal displays, traditional forms and ideas were utilised, and once more martial virtues were perceived within battles. In terms of the AIF’s fighting reputation, military defeat did not necessarily negate a soldier’s martial qualities, for sacrifice, devotion to duty and the ability to face death with honour – all celebrated in the Memorial’s displays – were considered great virtues in traditional military discourse. For many centuries

11 See Bennett, Birth of the Museum, p.140

12 It was necessary for a nation to be able to accept defeat gracefully – but not to sustain too many, lest it go under in the competitive world of social Darwinism and martial nationalism.
they had been honoured as highly as victory itself, and with the advent of social Darwinism, which equated failure with weakness, they quickly came to be seen as victories in and of themselves. Thus all four of the battles considered in this chapter – two at Gallipoli, two in France – were at least partly redeemed through the perception within them of victories, both moral and military. Battles now considered to have been abject failures were presented in a more favourable light, much in the manner that Pozieres was branded a “complete success.” Small tactical victories were repeatedly focussed upon, and larger strategic failures generally ignored. Casualties were often acknowledged, but the objectives of many battles were never mentioned, the failure to reach them not offered as a matter for consideration. The Gallipoli displays levelled no questions at generals but the most tacit, rather claiming that some defeats were glorious and those who had been defeated remained great warriors because of their loyalty and devotion to duty. In so protecting the reputation of the men, and the officers of the State, the Memorial was doing its “national” work, striving to create that deep union of people and State under the aegis of the fallen-yet-triumphal Digger which was one of its fundamental objectives.

When criticism was seen, it was primarily for the purposes of extending this protection of the men’s reputations, but an anger towards Imperial commanders was also observable. This was more in the order of an assertion of national identity, however, rather than a denunciation of the war. The Memorial criticised the conduct of the disastrous battles of Fromelles and Second Bullecourt, fought respectively in July 1916 and May 1917, the first for faulty preparations, the second for apparent pointlessness (with a position won at great cost by Australians being subsequently ignored and left unexploited by the British). However, only these very worst blunders were criticised, and some of the accusations were almost meek, others were only implied rather than made directly, while at no time was anyone named, nor was the value of the 1918 victory nor the Imperial cause called into question.

The Gallipoli campaign was treated in full nationalist mode. For example, the failure of an Anzac attack at the tip of the peninsula was transformed from a potential shame on Australian arms into a tale of reckless disregard for safety in the national cause. It was also one of the most dramatic images of the men’s patriotism, and it was a decidedly traditional, Imperially-loyal patriotism. In early May 1915 the 2nd Australian Brigade was sent to assist in an attack against the village of Krithia being undertaken by British infantry. The attack was a poorly-planned, costly failure. The
Australians were forced to advance to the forward trenches in the open, rather than moving up communication trenches, as would later occur on the Western Front. The result was the loss of one third of the Brigade’s strength in an advance which could have been done almost without cost under cover of darkness.

A painting of a dramatic incident from the attack hung among the displays from December 1928. The *Australian Chivalry* caption for this painting, while faintly hinting at a criticism of the whole operation and its Imperial controllers, focussed most strongly on the heroic and patriotic elements of the fight.

![Painting](source: Australian War Memorial Collections Database. cas.awm.gov.au. Painting ART 09558.)

Despite... short notice, the battalions succeeded in reaching their assembly positions almost on time. Moving in steady lines across the open, they immediately came under a heavy fire which quickly grew in volume. After advancing 500 yards, they reached a trench occupied by British soldiers, which, from that moment, became known to the Australians as the “Tommies’ Trench.”

When the leading waves had rested for a few minutes, the Brigade Commander (General M‘Cay) scrambled on the parapet, periscope in hand, shouting “Now then, Australians! Come on, Australians!”

By now the fire was intense, but as the order, “Come on, Australians!,” flashed along the trench, the men hitched up their packs and again flung themselves forward into a storm of lead such as Australians seldom again encountered during the war.

They succeeded in advancing another 500 yards, but at 6.30, the line, with its flanks in the air and its numbers sadly thinned, was brought to a standstill, with the Turkish trenches still several hundred yards distant. Here they dug in, and the advance ended.
In this attack, the Australian Brigade suffered 1,056 casualties, more than one-third of its strength.13

"Come on, Australians!" is a traditional military painting which dramatises Australian courage while linking that valour explicitly with the conventional British signifying modes of coolness under fire and defiance of the enemy. The Imperial link is also explicitly depicted. The urging brigadier is waving his baton, symbol of aristocratic warfare in the early twentieth century.14 He stands at his ease, unworried by the fall of shot around him, thinking only of his duty, and that of his command. His words echo Newbolt's *Vita Lampada*: "Play up! Play up! And play the game!"15 The men respond to his encouragement, pressing on the attack with courage. They, too, are unaffected by the enemy fire, with one soldier reaching down to help his mate up out of the trench, oblivious to his own danger. Some of the Imperial troops in the trench also react to the brigadier's rallying-cry, and join the Australians. The pair of soldiers on the right, the Tommy in the cap and the Digger in the slouch hat, advance doggedly together, the former shaking his fist defiantly at the Turks. The unity of the Empire at arms is thus materialised and dramatised, with the colonials providing the lead in a thoroughly "British" manner. The viewer is encouraged to ask, "What is danger to these men?"

The whole vision of the battle, with courage and determination in the nation's cause to the fore, contrasts strikingly with the terror and pity of Bean's own account of the battle in his diary. Two men have been hit, one killed, but the former might be merely resting, and the latter stoically accepting of the fact that he is "out of action" for the immediate future. Their main task in the composition is to symbolise the danger which the force was facing rather than providing a focus for anti-war-style criticism. This was academic battle painting of the most traditional kind, steeped in the popular military culture of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

13 *Australian Chivalry*, Plate 9. Sir James Whiteside M'Cay (also spelt McCay) (1864-1930), b. Ballynure, Ireland. Commanded 2nd Brigade, AIF, at Gallipoli, being blamed for the disaster at Krithia. Commanded 5th Division at Fromelles, again being blamed for the catastrophe. He was relieved of his command in January 1917, ostensibly on the grounds of ill-health, after his staff refused to work with him and his relationship with GOCAIF, Lieutenant-General William Birdwood, deteriorated. *ADB*, vol.10, pp.224-7.


Focussing on courage and devotion to the cause (even when it was perhaps a poorly-directed cause) allowed a note of positivity to come out of the failure of the Krithia attack. The objective, and the failure to significantly threaten it, could be placed to one side to allow concentration upon moral elements, which were praised. One should admire the actions, and the “clean, high ideals” of patriotism which motivated them; the suggestion was, and draw one’s cloak over the question of whether those in command were fit to hold it. In this way, what was in reality a poorly-planned disaster could be transformed into a potential embodiment of bravery and devotion to the nation.

The attack at Krithia was a failure, but most of the men survived it. This was not the case with the more famous attack of the 3rd Light Horse Brigade at the Nek on 7 August 1915, in which more than half the force was killed or wounded. In the Memorial’s “national” interpretation, the battle was transformed from a poorly-organised, overly-ambitious disaster into a great event in Australian history, and in this transformation the traditional martial virtues of self-sacrifice and courage in the face of death were to the fore.

The Nek was a feint attack designed to draw Turkish reinforcements away from a fresh troop landing at Suvla Bay. The plan was for a Brigade of dismounted Light Horsemen to attack across the narrow, bare apex of the triangular Anzac positions. Due to a synchronisation problem, there was a seven-minute gap between the end of a naval bombardment of the Turkish positions and the start of the attack, leaving ample time for the defenders to man the many machine guns that commanded the small Nek battlefield. Four waves of men were sent out; all were annihilated, and the wounded could not be reached. The attack forms the climax of Peter Weir’s 1981 film Gallipoli, which presents the slaughter as being the result of British indifference and inflexibility: the bastard “Poms” had done for the Aussies with their plan of

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16 In his guide Bean called the attack a “famous charge,” and used a poetic allusion to the burgeoning symbol of sacrifice to dignify the bloodshed, pointing out that display case No.5 contained “one of the poppies that bravely flowered there that day” (the British Legion had begun to sell poppies for display on Armistice Day only several months before Bean wrote his first guide, in November 1921). Relics and Records, September 1922, p.12; April 1928, p.12; December 1931, p.12. Bean, of course, recognised the blood-letting of that day in his diary, so there was considerable difference between what he knew to have been the terrible truth of a hurriedly-organised, poorly-executed attack, and what was depicted in public in the Memorial. On the symbolism of poppies and other flowers, see Fussell, Great War, pp.243-54.

attack. The viewer’s horror and pity fuels rage at the foolishness and callousness of
the Imperial officers.

The 1920s treatment of the battle in the Memorial was of a completely
different order. Criticism, firstly, was entirely absent. Rather, the visitor was invited
to embrace the debacle. A physical connection with the attack existed, and Bean’s
guide transformed it into a sacred object. This was “the haversack, shot through and
through, of one of the brave men who fell in the most famous and deadly charge
Australians ever made.”\(^{18}\) The haversack was precious, Bean asserted, for it was
“almost the only relic which remains of that wonderful episode in our history.”\(^{19}\)

A military disaster, a total defeat caused by ambitious yet poor planning and
haphazard execution, had been transformed into a potential cornerstone of national
pride. This transformation occurred under the influence of the prevailing ideology of
martial nationalism, and, like the Krithia representation, illustrated its accepted codes
of conduct. The ability to remain cool in the face of imminent death was, by 1914,
one of the most important of all the virtues of a chivalrous gentleman. Novelist and
English gentleman A.E.W. Mason wrote in 1901 that “it was a simple creed.... It
amounted to no more than this: that to die decently was worth a good many years of
life.”\(^{20}\) During the war Bean argued that the men had actively embraced the idea:

The long list of casualties must daily include the names of men
of peculiarly valuable attainments who have gladly laid down
their lives for their country and the Allied cause, and a
respondent doubts whether it is wise to permit those whose
loss is admittedly irreparable to perish in leading infantry attacks.
[To] the men concerned [the] magnitude of the cause
immeasurably exceeds the possible value of any further
contribution they might have made, had they been spared, to the
sum of human knowledge. They knew the worth of a single life
lies, not in its length, but in its quality.\(^{21}\)

Martial nationalist propaganda suggested that all the “important” nations had
one or two “glorious debacles,” narratives in which a small group, doomed through no


\(^{19}\) Relics and Records, September 1922, p.13; April 1928, p.14; December 1931, p.13.

\(^{20}\) MacDonal, The Language of Empire, p.24.

\(^{21}\) The Times, 26 July 1916. Quoted in Williams, Anzacs, the Media, p.147.
fault of their own, heroically embrace their fate. This romance was powerfully influential in Australia in the inter-war years, and the sense of Australians carrying on the tradition was an integral part of the nationalist response to the war. Gallipoli was “our Thermopylae” to Bean and others, invoking the glorious deaths of Leonidas and his Spartans.22 British martial nationalist propaganda of the Victorian era had revived such Classical heroic visions as part of the greater Victorian embrace of Ancient Greek culture.23 In the Memorial, it was again to the Victorian Imperial stalwart Tennyson that an appeal was made for an image with which to sublimate the tragedy of the Nek. Following Bean in his guide’s summary of Gallipoli, Australian Chivalry invoked the “Charge of the Light Brigade,” with its “glory that would never fade,” thus romanticising the disaster to a startling degree:

![Figure 47: The charge of the 3rd Light Horse Brigade at the Nek, 7 August 1915, by George Lambert. Source: Australian War Memorial Collections Database. cas.awm.gov.au. Painting ART07965.](image)

“AUSTRALIA’S GALLANT SIX HUNDRED”

The famous episode in the Crimean War – the charge of six hundred British cavalry against the Russian guns at Balaclava – which was immortalised in Tennyson’s stirring poem “The Charge of the Light Brigade,” had its counterpart at the Anzac “Nek” when Australian light horsemen, then serving without

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22 For example, arch-apologist for the Australian war effort, Henry Tardent, invoked Leonidas, claiming that “human actions are not judged solely on their material results” when judging the value of the Gallipoli campaign. The important issue for Tardent was that Leonidas and his countrymen had “for ever immortalised the patriotism and courage of ancient Greece.” Tardent, In Freedom’s Cause, p.26.

their horses, were called upon to make a charge in the face of terrible odds.\footnote{\textit{Australian Chivalry}, Plate 14.}

This connection with past British military "martyrs" having been asserted, the caption then described the action itself as a heroic tragedy: "As it leapt over the parapet, the first wave met fire so heavy that the report of rifle or machine gun could not be distinguished in the din, and in half-a-minute the men were swept away. Two minutes later the second wave courageously followed, to meet a similar fate."\footnote{\textit{Australian Chivalry}, Plate 14.} Again, the ideals of the men, the courage to sacrifice themselves for the cause, was the issue to focus upon. One should admire the self-sacrifice and devotion to duty of the troops, and this was further emphasised by the decision to send two more waves over:

Shortly afterwards, however, the appearance in the Turkish front line of a flag which was waved feebly for a short time suggested that some of the light horsemen had managed to reach their objective. This led to the decision to continue the attack, and the third and fourth waves unhesitatingly went on to almost certain death."\footnote{\textit{Australian Chivalry}, Plate 14.}

This sacrifice for others, similar to that urged by the \textit{Round Table} journalist, was the overall moral offered by \textit{Australian Chivalry}. The men, it summarised, "gallantly went forward rather than risk letting down their comrades engaged in other parts of the line."\footnote{\textit{Australian Chivalry}, Plate 14.} Thus the battle was redeemed, for in it the Australians had shown the virtues of chivalrous gentlemen, thereby winning a great moral victory. They had exemplified the ideals of manly behaviour Bean later outlined to Gavin Long in 1930, giving their lives just as his ideal Australian did, "because he can see a bit of movement in the mud and grass which he reckons to be one of his mates in a desperately bad place."\footnote{Bean to Long, 30 June 1930, in \textit{Bean, Making the Legend}, p.236.}

This devotion to duty, especially the assertion that the Light Horsemen had sacrificed themselves "rather than risk letting down their comrades engaged in other parts of the line," encapsulated a loyalty to the cause that did not criticise the conduct of
the battle or the war. Indeed, it did not question that conduct in the least. Bean wrote often of the troops surrendering themselves to the army, trusting that others knew better than they what had to done. This offered the sentiment of another stanza of "The Charge of the Light Brigade:"

Their's not to make reply,  
Their's not to reason why,  
Their's but to do and die:  
Into the valley of Death  
Rode the six hundred.  

The *Australian Chivalry* caption, which as always can be taken as the Memorial's last word in the 1922-35 period, provided a truly heroic mediation of an already heroic image. The painting dramatically shows the men on the left advancing to certain death, eyes steady, tread determined. Many men have already been hit; those falling in the distance have a ghostly quality. There is not a drop of blood on the whole canvas. It is tragic, without question, but it is also "traditionally" heroic, and the caption adds greatly to this sense of valour, as well as placing the battle and the AIF's actions firmly within an Imperial framework. Death was mentioned, most definitely, but there was no criticism of the timing fiasco. Nor was there an examination of the issue of the flag, as there was in the *History*, in which Bean scrutinised the point in detail, eventually questioning the wisdom of sending out the final two waves into certain death regardless of the story of the appearance of a flag. The Memorial did not enter such complications, however, for its space was limited. Furthermore, it had been constructed for a popular audience and was determined to educate that audience in "the national spirit," keeping its messages simpler.

The AIF's move to the Western Front was marked with a spectacular disaster. Just two days after the 5th Division, freshly formed from half of the 1st, reached the line in July 1916, it was hurled into one the worst-planned attacks of that year, against a German position near Fromelles. It might have gone in on the very day it arrived, if requests for a twenty-four hour postponement had not been acceded to. The plan, such as it was, was for three brigades of the 5th Division to capture a section of the enemy

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29 *Australian Chivalry*, Plate 14.

30 Ricks (ed.), *The Poems of Tennyson*, p.1036.

trench opposite, in concert with the 61st British Division. The British general commanding, Sir Hubert Gough, was a cavalry officer, a man with an aggressive spirit that Haig appreciated, but with little grasp of the requirements of success in trench warfare. Surprise was non-existent, artillery insufficient to cut the German wire, destroy strong defences or suppress artillery, and disaster ensued. As they advanced across No-Man’s Land, the Australians were caught by machine gun fire from undamaged German positions as they emerged from the remnants of an orchard, and killed in enormous numbers: in a single night the 5th Division sustained 5,553 casualties. The survivors were devastated by “numbing grief, bitterness and... deep disillusionment,” as were their senior officers. Bean wrote that the Brigadier, H.E. “Pompey” Elliot, “looked like a man who had lost his wife.” He was utterly distraught. No doubt he bitterly regretted telling his men before the battle that they would not meet a single German when they went over the top.

It was difficult to present such a disaster in terms of the “Light Brigade Romance,” in terms of glorious death. Sustaining 5,553 casualties in a magnificent and lasting victory was one thing, but to do so in an ignominious defeat was quite another matter. This was not, by any measure, a “wonderful episode in our history.” Bean, however, had no intention of equating Fromelles with the Nek. He had been greatly angered during the war by the official British communiqué, which claimed that the attack had been “an important series of trench raids,” crowned by the capture of “140 prisoners.” Bean saw this communiqué – suggesting as it did that the attack was successful – as deliberate lying, and felt it served no good purpose. He believed that the best propaganda was that which told the population as much of the truth as was consistent with military security. During the war he interpreted this to mean less than full disclosure, making “the result something of an honourable draw” in his

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34 Bean Diary. 20 July 1916, quoted in Williams, Anzacs, the Media, p.118.

35 Williams, Anzacs, the Media, p.111.

36 At the Nek there were 372 casualties.

37 Bean Diary 20 July 1916, quoted in Anzacs, the Media, p.118.
correspondence. After the war, though, in the Memorial, the true result of the action was acknowledged, and blame was assigned, even though this was only implicitly done and was not criticism of an “anti-war” variety, in which commanders were indicted for “murdering” young men. At the same time, the reputation of the AIF soldiers was protected through the insistence that their courage and determination were equal to that displayed during the great victories. The men had been let down through clearly negligent organisation, hence the failure, but they still possessed the requisite virtues for success – if given the assistance they needed (as the narrative assured visitors did later occur).

Still, the various representations on Fromelles illustrate the upper limit of the anti-war influence in the Memorial’s national war history, including confronting, even shocking descriptions of the manner in which the disaster developed and the desperate situation the Australians found themselves in when surrounded by the enemy. The troops were shown clearly as victims, and while they were “heroic” victims this was their lowest ebb in terms of the power to control their surroundings. The ability to do so was a key factor in war literature, as Fussell has shown, and this “ironic” mode was characteristic of “modern” literature. These representations also displayed the most intense sadness of any displays, utilising that fundamental anti-war theme. However, the key focussing agent of anti-war literature, the indictment of the war and its conduct which, as Massingham affirms, backed up the description of shocking truths, was absent. The result was that the Memorial was able, by surrounding these examples of the “modern memory” sensibility with strong traditional heroism, to appropriate emotionally powerful realism, the other main plank of the anti-war stance.

In Bean’s guides there was a sad, but not critical, tone. Bean’s interpretation of Fromelles was more complex, and utilised the anti-war technique of graphic realism to a greater extent than anything else in the guides, yet still found positive elements, even in this appalling disaster, particularly the heroism and determination of the Australian troops:

Of the tragic Battle of Fromelles, in which the 5th Australian and a British Division were cut up in a most gallant feint attack, intended to distract the attention of the Germans from the

38 For example, he wrote that the troops were “enabled to retire with a loss that was slight when the extraordinary difficulty of the operation is considered.” Argus. 24 July 1916, quoted in Williams, *Anzacs, the Media*, p.121.
Somme battle, few relics can ever be obtained... A few mementoes were collected, as shown (in Case No. 12); the hat of an Australian killed in the fight; the boot of a Victorian soldier of the 15th Brigade, shot through the heel; and an Australian water-bottle carrier, found several hundred yards behind the German line, along the flooded ditch in which the advance ended, and where the 14th Brigade held out for a night against the enemy, retiring only when ordered to do so in the morning.

This is a rich passage, for there was sadness, anger and pride intermixed within it. The former can be seen in the reference to the water-bottle carrier, and the reflection thereby on the likely lonely, sad death of the carrier’s owner in a muddy ditch in France. The boot, shot through the heel, was a powerful symbol of defeat, and the failure itself was carefully acknowledged, but the proud avowal of the heroism of the 14th Brigade provided a “positive exclamation,” a sudden insertion of some kind of success, or of a moral virtue displayed, that acted to soften the bleakness of a disaster like Fromelles.

The description of the action in 1933’s Australian Chivalry, from which the following account derives, was more forthright, carrying open criticism of the lack of secrecy and a vivid description of the manner in which, from this ominous beginning, the disaster developed. Allowing their enemy to comprehend their plan had lamentable results for the Australians from the very moment the attack began:

The Germans, by ordinary observation, anticipated the operation, and besides stocking their front line with bombs, brought up a reserve battalion to a position close behind the front. During the afternoon of the 19th the Germans shelled heavily the communication trenches and reserve and support lines of both divisions, causing serious loss.

Despite these problems the troops attacked, and disaster, not surprisingly, resulted: “The 15th Australian Brigade, attacking the northern face of the Sugarloaf [salient, the principal German position], was met by a murderous fire, which caused the successive waves to wither half-way across No-Man’s Land. The dead lay thick.” The situation faced by the 8th and 14th Brigades, which did enter the German lines, was

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35 Relics and Records, September 1922, p.19; April 1928, p.22; December 1931, p.25.

40 The “positive exclamation” was used throughout the Memorial.

41 Australian Chivalry, Plate 25.
also bleak, for they soon found the Germans behind them, in trenches which, according to standard practice of that period of the conflict, they had left unoccupied while advancing. In desperation, "the survivors of the 14th on the right flank at last turned round and attempted to charge the Germans, but they were met by heavy fire which broke up the attacking line." The 8th Brigade "found themselves in similar straits, and at 3.45 a.m., with machine-guns firing at them from front, flank, and rear, some 150 made a dash across the German front trench to their own lines. By 5.30 the whole of the 8th Brigade had been forced to retire."42 The bloody disaster was thus described blow-by-blow, and there was clear, albeit indirect, criticism of the lack of secrecy and the practice of leaving trenches empty. The caption leaves the reader in no doubt as to the scale of the failure, and some of the bitterness, shock and grief that the Australians, including Bean, had felt when it had happened was reprised there. However, this is the point: only some of these emotions were alluded to, and in a greatly diluted form. The heroism of the 14th Brigade was still emphasised, as it was in Bean’s guide, and that of the 8th added. The description is tragic, and angry, but its praise for the men’s heroism is as great as any seen in descriptions of the victories of 1918. The criticism was clear but did not mention any particular person, so the reputations of generals such as Gough were protected, but those who knew the truth – the soldiers, for example – would understand who was indicted by the Australian Chivalry caption. So this was criticism, certainly, but it was unsustained criticism, and it did not include an open attack on those whose lack of even the most rudimentary understanding of tactics led to "casualties [of] between five and six thousand."43 Truth was not in the service of criticism here, but rather in the service of the nation.

The failure at Bullecourt in April 1917 and the pyrrhic victory there in a second attack in May also led to criticism in the Memorial’s presentations, although again this was neither sustained nor focussed upon any individual. In fact, it was a sign of the Memorial’s nationalist focus upon Australia and the limits of its Imperial loyalty. Casualties in these battles were again high. In April, the failure of tanks led to 3,000 casualties in another single night attack, including the largest number of Australians captured during the whole war. The Somme plan model label described a

42 Australian Chivalry. Plate 25.

43 Australian Chivalry. Plate 25.
heroic yet unsuccessful first battle, in which the tanks, being used with the Australians for the first time, broke down and failed to breach the German wire, leading to the infantry, who had “with the greatest gallantry, set out unaided on their hazardous task” and actually “succeeded in reaching the second line of trenches,” being cut off from reinforcements unable to get through the wire: “some posts, cut off, fought to the death.”

The second battle’s description, following directly on from this story of determined and bloody heroism, carried the criticism. Firstly, the Australian 2nd Division “succeeded in capturing its objective,” but due to the failure of “a British Division entrusted with the capture of Bullecourt” they had no flank support. Regardless, “they held on despite numerous heavy counter-attacks.” Finally the position was won, but a bitter taste remained, for “the Australian casualties in this fighting...amounted to some 15,000 [and] the position won at such great cost was not further exploited.” The final resentful accusation gave voice to one of the AIF’s most passionately-held grievances. Many felt that their efforts and sacrifices were cast away by an Imperial general staff that had no understanding of what the Australians had done. Certainly Bean felt this had occurred at times, and that many Australians had lost their lives in attacks that were without point. By levelling the finger vaguely at the Imperial leadership, the Memorial defended the men and separated the AIF commanders from poor decisions. The Memorial was differentiating the Australian war effort from the Imperial one, asserting a distinctive Australian identity within the Empire as a whole. In success, the two were inseparable, but in failure a distinct difference was observed. Australian leaders, selected for their moral qualities as they were, would not have done this, the implication went. This was an in-house quarrel, though, for the limits and the vagueness of the criticism meant that only those cognisant with all the facts (soldiers) would understand who was being attacked. These elements were also yet more marks

44 AWM Ex Doc. 186, Sheet 5, Item 1.
45 AWM Ex Doc. 186, Sheet 5, Item 1.
46 AWM Ex Doc. 186, Sheet 5, Item 1.
47 Bean discussed Haig’s “wearing down” phase at length in The AIF in France 1916. He accepted battles of attrition in theory, but would not defend poorly planned disasters that would lead only to casualties hugely greater for his own side than his opponent’s, and ultimately felt that the whole Somme battle fell into this category. Bean, The AIF in France 1916, pp.945-7.
of the Memorial’s commitment to the “traditional” notions of heroism, used to exalt the dead and protect the State.48

These defeats complete the national war history. Victory, both military and moral, as well as martial virtues, were the prime focal points. The men’s collective portrait formed a catalogue of martial nationalism and a celebration of home-grown virtues. The latter blended with and enhanced the former, sourced from the AIF’s solid British stock. The Memorial was a celebration of Australian moral virtues, key strands of the Anzac Legend, and these virtues were those of a noble warrior people—courage, determination, devotion to duty, the willingness to sacrifice and the will to conquer, and so on. The depiction of defeat, death and the wounded showed that this noble people had been through a tremendous, testing ordeal, making their triumph all the more glorious, and all the more historic. It was a powerful popular historical cocktail.

III

Defeat, death, the wounded and other “realities” of war also had a “national” interpretation. The tension between the contradictory impulses of truth-telling and nationalism drove the Memorial’s display policy, affecting the choice of realities for display as well as the treatment of them. Thus danger was represented, for it enhanced the AIF’s reputation for courage, while the killing of prisoners, more likely to affirm French anti-war soldier-writer Henri Barbusse’s anti-war argument that “the soldier’s calling...changes men by turns into stupid victims or ignoble brutes” was excluded.49

48 Bruce Kapferer and Ken Inglis had a public disagreement over the symbolic position of the Canberra Memorial in Australian society. Kapferer argued that the Memorial represented “the People” and stood in a symbolically oppositional position to the old parliament house, representing “the State.” Inglis demurred, arguing that the Memorial was an instrument of the State throughout its existence. I feel Inglis’s argument is more in keeping with Bean’s objectives and the realities of the Memorial’s development. Although the critical stance occasionally taken by the Memorial would appear to confirm Kapferer’s contention about the existence of an anti-State element within the museum, it is important to recognise that critical displays comprised an exceptional set of representations. In the normal run of things, Inglis was right, and the Memorial served the State. The disagreement is found in K.S. Inglis, “Kapferer on Anzac and Australia,” Social Analysis, 29 (December 1990), pp.67-73 and Bruce Kapferer, “Nationalist History and the Poverty of Positivism.” Social Analysis, 29 (December 1990), pp.74-85. Inglis’s article is a review of Kapferer’s Legends of People, Myths of State, first published in 1988.

49 Henri Barbusse, Under Fire, p.257, quoted in Gerster, Big-noting, p.7. The Memorial utterly rejected a Barbussean vision of the AIF, and thus rejected the display of these realities which might have had a deleterious effect on the reputation of the AIF. Self-inflicted wounds, cowardice, drunkenness and
The Australian medical system was defended in representations referring to the wounded that coupled realism to careful selection. The conditions of battle were part of the ordeal overcome by the Australians, and were shown in considerable detail. In a manner similar to the insistence that the enemy conquered at Mont St Quentin were formidable Prussian Guard units, the Memorial showed the danger and difficulty of the front lines to have been formidable. All were then transcended, with the exception of the wounded, over whom the cloak of the discreet propagandist fell. First danger, then the guns, and finally death were transformed into positive national forces. Danger was transcended through stories of lucky escapes, the guns through both social Darwinism and a kitsch trivialisation of shells, and death through several definitive representations wedding sacrifice to either national martyrdom or triumph. In fact, the most fundamental symbolic display in the 1922-35 Memorial – which incorporated a painting of the death of Lieutenant John Turnour in 1917 – organically fused triumph and sacrifice.

Before they could be transcended, the dangers of the battlefields had to be depicted. Thus civilians might understand what the AIF had faced, and better appreciate the scale of their victory in mastering such a dangerous battlefield. Depicted they were, then, and in no uncertain terms. Several photographic displays left the viewer in little doubt that the AIF had been in hazardous parts of the line, and that their lives had been in jeopardy even when undertaking the most routine of tasks. The sombreness of their mood is evident from the fact that the image of the Australians ignoring shellfire, commonly seen in Bean’s war correspondence and diary during the war, was absent from the Memorial. This was a significant omission, for it meant that the Memorial depicted a grave public recognition of the dangers faced by the men. Instead there were photographs in which the troops were shown wisely seeking to minimise their exposure to a danger which is all too evident:

desertion, as well as the killing of prisoners – all of which could attract the label of brutish or ignoble behaviour – were given no place in the Memorial.

50 James Wieland points out that the analogous mixed image/text medium of wartime postcards also negotiated “that fine line between providing access to the excitement, even the agony, of combat without revealing the grim reality of torn, dismembered bodies.” Wieland, “What do you think of this card?,” p.143.

51 During the war Bean had, for instance, written about men walking through barrages “exactly as if they were going home to tea,” and “as you would go through a summer shower.” Sun 27 July 1916, quoted in Williams, Anzacs, the Media, p.148; Bean, Letters From France, p.108.
Figure 48: "No Place to Linger."
Source: Australian War Memorial Collections Database.
cas.awm.gov.au. Photograph E00649.

NO PLACE TO LINGER

An Australian motor lorry speeding along the road toward Hill 63, on 5th June, 1917, during the shelling of the Anzac batteries concentrated in the sector to take part in the battle of Messines two days later. A shell can be seen bursting over the battery position in the wood.52

Figure 49: “Death’s Messenger.”

52 Melbourne Photograph 48; Sydney Photograph 125. Relics and Records, September 1922, p.70; April 1928, p.85; December 1931, p.86.
DEATH’S MESSENGER

Taking shelter from a heavy shell-burst at Glencorse Wood, in the Ypres Salient, on 20th September, 1917. Some diggers are dropping into shell holes, and others running to shelter ahead, not to avoid the shell which is shown bursting (it was too late then!) but the further shells they knew would follow, or perhaps could hear on their way.53

It was not fear so much as good sense that drove the men to cover, the second caption assured civilian visitors, who at least in the early years in Melbourne still had little real understanding of the situation at the front. These photographs brought them close up against the face of battle. The realities of the danger endured daily by the AIF were graphically illustrated without pushing audiences over the edge into direct contemplation of the war’s true horror – the result of a direct hit by the artillery, for example. Much could be inferred, though, and little imagination was needed to bring powerful feelings away from the contemplation that one’s own people had been subjected to such indiscriminate menace. Bean was hoping to provoke awe, and the first image, especially, in which the men speed towards the shelling, provokes that emotion. This was truth-telling in the name of the nation: no criticism of the war was implied in these captions, so the emotions which remain are awe and admiration for the bravery of anyone who could withstand, and then conquer, such an environment. Other displays assured visitors that the men had indeed done these things (compare the insouciant 29th Battalion), and thus the representation of such menace helped authenticate the Memorial’s narratives while leaving the cloak over the image of those who had not run quickly enough.

Danger could also be exciting, though, and true to the pre-opening advertising in Sydney, stories of narrow escapes existed in the Memorial. Two examples suffice to illustrate the theme. Firstly there was the story, told by Bean in his first guide, entitled “A Marvellous Escape.” This recounted the tale of “Lieut. C.E. Steadman, 51st Battalion, who was blown up by a shell on the 22nd August [1918]. His revolvers were smashed to pieces, and his equipment peppered with holes, but he himself

53 Melbourne Photograph 72; Sydney Photograph 152. Relics and Records, September 1922, p.75; April 1928, p.92; December 1931, p.93.
escaped with nothing worse than concussion.”\textsuperscript{54} For people who had spent years hoping their man would be so lucky, here was a story to warm the heart a little: a man surviving the terrible guns to fight another day. Secondly, there was an adventure story that could have come straight out of the Boy’s Own Paper or Chums.\textsuperscript{55} This was the tale of two pilots in the desert, who escape from the Turks in death-defying fashion. As Australian Chivalry put it:

![Image of a plane in the desert]

*Figure 50: Incident for which Lt. McNamara Won the VC, by H. Septimus Power. Source: Australian War Memorial Collections Database. cas.awm.gov.au. Painting ART08007.*

**COURAGEOUS AIRMAN’S FEAT**

The margin between freedom and capture for two Australian airmen was literally a matter of seconds. The two concerned were Lieutenant F.H. McNamara and Captain D.W. Rutherford, of No. 1 Squadron, AFC.

On the 20\textsuperscript{th} of [March 1917], while returned from [a] raid, heavy anti-aircraft fire was encountered. Rutherford’s machine was hit, and he was forced to land in enemy territory, at no great distance from some Turkish cavalry, which immediately bore down on him at full gallop. McNamara, though himself seriously wounded in the

\textsuperscript{54} Relics and Records, September 1922, p.29; April 1928, p.36; December 1931, p.37.

thigh, without hesitation dropped to the rescue of his comrade, landing about 200 yards from the damaged plane. Rutherford promptly climbed into the machine, but McNamara now found himself handicapped by his damaged leg, and in attempting to take off again he crashed his plane badly. Meanwhile the enemy horsemen were rapidly drawing nearer. The two Australians, however, were full of resource and pluck, and determined to make a strong bid for liberty. Hurriedly extricating themselves they set fire to the machine, and made the best pace they could to Rutherford’s. Luckily they succeeded in starting the engine, and, in spite of some damage to the struts and fuselage, McNamara flew the machine back to the Australian aerodrome, a distance of seventy miles, with Rutherford as passenger. For this courageous action McNamara was awarded the V.C. 56

This was a truly remarkable escape, with more than a touch of romance about it, reminiscent of nineteenth-century military tales of derring-do. 57 The display itself was one of the most “traditional” of all representations in the Memorial, telling audiences of the continuing excitement and friendship seen in war, thus transcending its danger.

The largest part of the danger of the battlefield was caused by artillery, and this pre-eminent fact of the Western Front was treated in several ways, all designed to acknowledge yet sublimate and transcend its shattering truth, with the prevailing social Darwinist ideology to the fore. 58 In his diary Bean had written of an “insatiable factory of ghastly wounds,” where each shell brought “a promise to each man, instantaneous: I will tear you into ghastly wounds, I will rend your flesh and pulp an arm or a leg, fling you half a gaping quivering man (like these that you see smashed around you one by one) to lie there rotting and blackening like all the things you saw by the awful roadside, or in that sickening dusty crater.” 59 Bean was in awe of anyone who could simply abide in the hell of bombardments, but realities such as these were not for the Memorial. Still, this overriding fact of AIF existence had to be acknowledged, not least so that the public would better appreciate the magnitude of

56 Australian Chivalry, Plate 19.

57 This display speaks to the entertainment role of the Memorial, having neither the tone nor the content of an architectural war memorial of any kind, anywhere.

58 Of all the dangers and horrors of the war, the bombardments had had the greatest and most long-lasting impact on the sensibilities of the men who had fought in the trenches. See Gammage, The Broken Years, pp. 158, 161, 168, 186; Thomson, Anzac Memories, pp. 95-6; Andrews, Anzac Illusion, p. 98.

59 Bean Diary 4 August 1916, in Bean, Making the Legend, pp. 100-1.
the Anzac achievement as he saw it. His answer for public consumption during the war and into the inter-war period was to describe the effects of the guns on the earth, first and foremost, and on inanimate objects such as buildings or other guns.

The destruction of the earth was shown through image, word and object. Throughout the period, the following stark pictorial example hung in Memorial displays:

![Image: Figure 51: “Once a Beautiful Wood.”
Source: Australian War Memorial Collections Database. cas.awm.gov.au. Photograph E01220.]

The caption stated simply that the picture showed “Australians passing along a duckboard track through the devastated Château Wood during the fighting for Passchendaele.”  This image added to the Memorial’s object display, which, Bean informed visitors in his guide, contained physical evidence of the destructiveness of the guns:

Near the corner of the case are fragments shovelled at random from the site of the village of Pozieres, showing the condition to which the whole area was reduced – literally a desert of hummocks and hollows. Portions of a house, tree and tile can be seen in the heap. It is doubtful if any village was more completely destroyed than this one, it being almost the only hamlet in which there were no bricks left even to mend the roads with when the battle ended.

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60 Sydney Photograph 187. Relics and Records, April 1928, p.88; December 1931, p.89.
Portion of the railway line taken from near Pozieres Copse bears evidence of the fury of the same bombardment.61

The display was more than a mere verbal description; it contained physical evidence of the bombardments, and thus intensified their reality for visitors. They were once more brought close to the “truth of the war,” but spared the truly gruesome realities.

The bombardments were sublimated through the sale in Sydney of “Souvenirs from the Battlefields” – German shell cases which had been made into various decorative items, such as vases.62 This continued the Memorial’s “national” work, for in transforming these objects associated with death and maiming into decorative home ornaments, the Memorial was allowing people to symbolically conquer them, and brisk sales suggest that many Australians appreciated being able to strike a blow – however post factum and purely symbolic – against the Teutonic barbarians.63 The women’s magazine Society gave the practice its approval in May 1925 in an article entitled “The War Museum From a Woman’s Perspective,” which noted that “German howitzer shells that hurled death at the British Armies have been converted into handsome and durable jardinières.”64 The sale of these items was another turn away from the political elements of truth-telling, yet retained the strong sense of national service that pervaded the Memorial project. These objects might help Australians deal with their loss and grief, and the nation would be stronger as a result.65 This was one of the main reasons for the Memorial’s wide popular support – it served people’s

61 Relics and Records, April 1928, p.21, December 1931, p.24. Bean was following a practice he had developed as a correspondent, concentrating on the suffering of the earth, with not a man to be seen: “Imagine a gigantic ash heap, a place where dust and rubbish have been cast for years outside some dry, derelict, God-forsaken up-country township. Imagine some broken-down creek bed in the driest of our dry central Australian districts, abandoned for a generation to the goats, in which the hens have been scratching as long as men can remember. Then take away the hens and the goats and all traces of any living or moving thing. You must not even leave a spider. Put there, in evidence of some old tumbled roof, a few roof beams and tiles sticking edgeways from the ground, and the low faded ochre stump of the windmill peeping over the top of the hill, and there you have Pozieres.” Bean, Letters from France, pp.113-14.

62 See the advertisements in Relics and Records, April 1928, pp.53-4; December 1931, p.54.

63 Mark Clayton points out that the large number of trophies displayed in public spaces in Australia in the early post-war years served the same purpose. Clayton, “To the Victor,” Part 3, pp.3-26.

64 AWM 265 17/2/3.

65 This “war kitsch,” and the “process of trivialisation” has been examined in relation to Germany by George Mosse in Fallen Soldiers, pp.126-56. See also the pictorial evidence in Barbara Jones and Bill Howell, Popular Arts of the First World War, (New York: McGraw-Hill. 1972)
needs, as McKernan has pointed out in relation to the provision of information to the bereaved about the action in which their loved one was killed.

Other displays asserted that the bombardments had in fact had a positive side, in that they had tested the "race" and not found it wanting. For example, Bean's commentary for Frank Crozier's painting *Sausage Valley* (an area on the Somme battlefield), which hung in the 1916-17 court, put the idea succinctly: "Before the war, flower-decked fields surrounded the peaceful village [Pozieres] where Australia's sons proved their worth under the searching test of war."\(^\text{66}\) Bean believed in the notion of war as test of character in the early 1920s, and he had many like-minded compatriots. The apocalyptic turn of mind observable in Australians in the early years of the century, manifest in fears of Asian invasion and the inevitability of race war, had not disappeared, and here Bean appealed to it. Bean's ultimate question for the *History*, which demonstrably pervaded the Memorial as well, was "How did the Australian people — and the Australian character, if there is one — come through the universally recognised test of this, their first great war?" As Joan Beaumont points out, "his answer predictably was that they excelled themselves," and such excellence was never more evident than when they were under fire.\(^\text{67}\) The idea that war was the greatest test of national character was an efficient way to find positives in negatives, and thus could be used to justify huge loss of life.\(^\text{68}\) The influence of the idea, though, was predicated on an acceptance of the notion that the cause in whose name the test was undergone was sufficiently just and righteous. This was one of the strongest connections between commemorative institutions such as the Memorial and formal politics in Australia, for as the peace won in 1918 became more perilous the "test" was called into question.

As images in public discourse, those of wounded men were much more hazardous from a political point of view than those simply showing men in danger. Those who had been wounded had often suffered in appalling ways, and the Memorial's visitors could see permanently disabled returned servicemen in the streets every day. To

\(^{66}\) Relics and Records, September 1922, p.18.


\(^{68}\) Bean's question itself, of course, had a denial of the anti-war position built deeply into it, for if war constituted a test, it could not be pointless or dehumanising, but rather affirming of the virility of the "race."
depict the wounded was to invite the chain of logic put together by Erich Maria Remarque, which begins with a catalogue of the horrors of a hospital and becomes a bitter indictment of the war and the civilisation that produced it:

Two fellows die of tetanus. Their skin turns pale, their limbs stiffen, at last only their eyes live – stubbornly. Many of the wounded have their shattered limbs hanging free in the air from a gallows; underneath the wound a basin is placed into which drips the pus. Every two or three hours the vessel is emptied. Other men lie in stretching bandages with heavy weights hanging from the end of the bed. I see intestine wounds that are constantly full of excreta. The surgeon’s clerk shows me X-ray photographs of completely smashed up hip-bones, knees and shoulders.

A man cannot realise that above such shattered bodies there are still human faces in which life goes its daily round. And this is only one hospital, one single station; there are hundreds of thousands in Germany, hundreds of thousands in France, hundreds of thousands in Russia. How senseless is everything that can ever be written, done, or thought, when such things are possible. It must all be lies and of no account when the culture of a thousand years could not prevent this stream of blood being poured out, these torture-chambers in their hundreds of thousands.69

When local leftist newspaper the *Australian Worker* attacked the Memorial, it was on similar grounds. The paper sardonically insisted that “enlarged pictures of all war diseases” and “surgical instruments, as used, should fill a number of cases – all shown with fresh blood and fragments of bone to give a vivid idea of their part in the general glory.”70 The political currency of this opposition to the Memorial was made clear by the jeer that “a few live specimens of more seriously crippled veterans could pose in the centre of the room, and hold out their military hats for coppers.”71 The returned men had been left to fend for themselves after the war, the *Worker* claimed, as they had been mutilated by uncaring quacks during it. Displaying images of the treatment of the wounded during the war would remind audiences of the poignant circumstances of some returned men, bringing the Memorial onto the *Worker*’s rhetorical ground. It was a dangerous practice from the point of view of “emotional” nation-building.

69 Remarque, *All Quiet on the Western Front*, pp.172-3.

70 *The Australian Worker*, 8 April 1925, p.9.

Nevertheless, Bean and Treloar had the courage and integrity to display the wounded to a significant degree.72

Unsurprisingly, the Memorial rejected the Worker’s vision of the wounded, arguing that during the war the men had not been abandoned nor butchered, but taken care of with tender professionalism within the national medical system. One caption reminded visitors that victory had been the reward for the sacrifices, a fair demonstration of the feelings of Bean, Treloar, Pearce and Gullett, who all rejected Remarque’s logic outright as well. While far from unmoved by the slaughter, they felt, at least in 1922, that the victory had been worth the cost. The nation had secured immediate physical security within the Empire, and it had revealed the character of its men, which augured well for the future, turbulent as that looked.73 Further, Neville Howse, the AIF’s Chief Medical Officer, was also a significant member of the AWMC, being one of the main advocates for the museum at the Public Works Committee, as he was Chairman at the time.74 It seems inconceivable that an institution governed by such an officer would attack his system of medical assistance. In addition, the British handling – or more accurately, mishandling – of medical arrangements at the Gallipoli landing had been a major scandal within the Australian officer corps and political leadership. This had led to one of the first assertions of Australian identity within the British Army system and Empire, and the resultant Australian system was a source of pride.75 Lastly, the Memorial was committed to the Australian State and the Imperially-loyal, right-wing nationalist ideology that was consolidating its grip upon that State in 1922, and thus never sought to impart Remarque’s dangerous understanding of the past to its audience, but rather to fend off any such suggestion.

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72 For example, ten out of 174 photographic prints in Melbourne were of the wounded.

73 It is a measure of the depth of the nationalist response to the war that nationalism was able to override the deaths of 60,000 men in the hearts of sensitive men who had seen the slaughter at close range.

74 Howse summed up his own attitude to the war when in 1926 he told an Anzac Day gathering that the AIF had won “life, liberty and justice, and without those blessings their lives would be worse than death.” Quoted in Inglis, Sacred Places, p.217.

75 Howse told the Dardanelles Commission in January 1916 that “I personally will recommend my Government when this war is over, that under no conceivable circumstances ought they ever to trust to the medical arrangements that may be made by Imperial authorities, for the care of their sick and wounded.” Quoted in Andrews, Anzac Illusion, p.54.
The Memorial’s treatment of the wounded corresponded with that of the *History*. Ken Inglis points out that in *The Story of Anzac I*, “the reader is given no help...to imagine what bullets, shrapnel and bayonets do to flesh and blood and bone; and the only photograph of wounded men shows them in need of a helping hand, but whole.”\(^7^6\) The Memorial followed a similar strategy. No Australians were shown, either in picture or word, as other than out of harm’s way, calm and relaxed, taken care of by their mates and the army, in whom they have placed their trust.

Images of the wounded in the photographic exhibition followed the evacuation of soldiers from the battlefield through several medical posts. There was also a diorama, installed in 1924, showing the evacuation of wounded.\(^7^7\) The journey depicted was one of increasing safety and control within a system of professional care. Although some of the images included confronting locations, they never showed men in need of more than a helping hand, and indeed, the helping hand was always there. The dedication, courage and professionalism of the medical personnel were consistently praised. All the Aid Posts and other medical facilities were shown as calm, healing places, in which caring staff tenderly and professionally ministered to the wounded. This contrasted sharply with Remarque, whose narrator tells of his determination not to put his trust in his doctors when he is wounded:

> In the evening we are hauled on to the chopping-block. I am frightened and think quickly what I ought to do; for everyone knows that the surgeons in the dressing stations amputate on the slightest provocation. Under the great business that is much simpler than complicated patching. I think of Kemmerich. Whatever happens I will not let them chloroform me, even if I have to crack a couple of their skulls.\(^7^8\)

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77 Press Release, December 1924. AWM 93 20/1/1A.

78 Remarque, *All Quiet on the Western Front*, p.159. Kemmerich, a soldier from Baümer’s platoon, dies in the first scene of the book, described in searing detail: “We look at his bed covering. His leg lies under a wire basket. The bed covering arches over it. I kick Muller on the shin, for he is just about to tell Kemmerich what the orderlies told us outside: that Kemmerich has lost his foot. The leg is amputated. He looks ghastly, yellow and wan. In his face there are already strained lines that we know so well, we have seen them now hundreds of times. They are not so much lines as marks. Under the skin the life no longer pulses, it has already pressed out the boundaries of the body. Death is working through from within. It already has command in the eyes. Here lies our comrade, Kemmerich, who a little while ago was roasting horse flesh with us and squatting in the shell-holes. He it is still and yet it is not he any longer. His features have become uncertain and faint, like a photographic plate from
Refuting this vision of the medical realities of the war, the Memorial presented the medical organisation of the AIF as well-staffed, clean and efficient. Nothing exemplified this more than the following photograph of a casualty clearing station:

![Figure 52: "A Field Operating Theatre."]

Source: Australian War Memorial Collections Database. cas.awm.gov.au. Photograph E01304. 79

Even an image which was visually confronting, showing men lying in stretchers in a desolate landscape on the Western Front, had its impact softened by its caption:

which two pictures have been taken. Even his voice sounds like ashes." Remarque, All Quiet on the Western Front, p.15.

79 Melbourne Photograph 84; Sydney Photograph 170. Relics and Records. September 1922, p.76; April 1928, 95; December 1931, p.96.
Figure 53: "An R.A.P."
Source: Australian War Memorial Collections Database.
cas.awm.gov.au. Photograph E01202_2.

AN R.A.P.

An advanced aid post in a pill-box, near Zonnebeke Station, to which the wounded were carried from the Battle of Passchendaele on 12th October, 1917. The captured pill-boxes made admirable shelters for the wounded.80

The first stage of the medical chain, the evacuation of the wounded from the battlefield, was depicted through a very confronting display showing conditions so bad as to leave no doubt in the viewer’s mind that the war had been a terrible ordeal. However, the caption defended the Australian troops, if not the powers-that-were, for they had done their duty as ordered:

80 Melbourne Photograph 59; Sydney Photograph 175. Relics and Records, September 1922, p.73; April 1928, p.96; December 1931, p.97. The photograph was title “The R.A.P.” in Sydney.
A FLANDERS BATTLEFIELD

Stretcher-bearers coming back with wounded, and troops moving up to the front line over a duckboard track running across Anzac Ridge, near Garter Point, in the Ypres Sector, on the 10th October, 1917, when the attack upon the enemy’s position was being pressed, in spite of adverse weather conditions prevailing and stubborn resistance by the enemy.

This is the clearest criticism in the Memorial of the widespread practice of continuing attacks in impossible conditions, something which Bean especially detested, and criticised in the History. This representation was a sharp rebuke to those unnamed officers who had ordered an attack in these conditions; the result could be seen starkly here. This was no mere Wine of Victory, no mere work of imagination. Rather, it was something much more damning – a true representation of the wounded themselves. At the same time, it was a passionate and proud avowal of the determination and courage of the troops in attacking regardless of the conditions, and above all an affirmation of the work of the stretcher-bearers. The viewer was invited

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81 Melbourne Photograph 53; Sydney Photograph 144. Relics and Records, September 1922, p.72; April 1928, p.90; December 1931, p.91.

82 The Wine of Victory is the title of a famous drawing by Will Dyson showing German prisoners, wounded and defeated, staggering to the rear. It has a great deal of sympathy for its subjects.

83 Bean stated that the dioramas had to represent actual situations so that visitors would feel that the “War Memorial is giving him the truth from which he can form his own impressions.” C.E.W. Bean to John Treloar, 10 November 1937. AWM 93 13/1/37. As powerful as Dyson’s painting The Wine of Victory was, its status as art meant that it might simply depict the front as the artist would like people to think it was, as Bean had warned Treloar in the same letter. This photograph had no such defects.
to applaud the devotion and courage of these medics in going out in such conditions to fetch in men from the muddy, waterlogged hollows. It is clear from the conditions that any badly wounded man left on his own would likely drown, and thus the life-saving work of the stretcher-bearers, as well as the dangers which they had faced, were clearly perceptible. These ideas were developed more fully in *Australian Chivalry*.

![Figure 55: Stretcher Bearers, by H. Septimus Power. Source: Australian War Memorial Collections Database. cas.awm.gov.au. Painting ART03645.](image)

**SONS OF CHIVALRY**

During the long course of the war, from the day of the Landing until the Armistice, the Australian stretcher-bearers pursued with superb heroism their errands of mercy, and their utter disregard for personal safety won for them the confidence and unstinted admiration of the fighting services.... The hottest fire could not stop them, and on more than one occasion (as Mr Power has shown in his painting) they were known to have rested the stretcher on the ground while with their own bodies they sheltered the stricken soldier lying on it.\(^4\)

In thus utilising an Imperial motif, the medic as hero, the Memorial was simultaneously eulogising the stretcher-bearers and defending Howse's medical system.

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\(^4\) *Australian Chivalry*, Plate 37. The painting was first hung in Melbourne in March 1924. See Press Release 2 April 1924. AWM 93 20/1/1A.
Other images of casualties had captions seeking to redeem the situations through positive exclamations. In one example, the redemption surrounded the power to act. This was a shot of men lying on the side of the Menin Road, having made it off the battlefield. The sense of desolation and helplessness of the photograph is very striking, but there are no really badly injured men depicted, and some retained the ability to take action:

![Image of Menin Road near Hooge](cas.awm.gov.au/Photograph E00711)

Figure 56: "On the Menin Road, Near Hooge."
Source: Australian War Memorial Collections Database.
cas.awm.gov.au. Photograph E00711.

**ON THE MENIN ROAD, NEAR HOOG E**

A scene on the Menin Road, near Hooge, looking towards Birr Cross Roads, during the battle on 20th September, 1917. The wounded on the stretchers are waiting to be taken to the clearing station; others able to walk are making their way along the road as far as possible.  

In fact, the caption suggested, some of these men are not really victims: they walk as far as they can. They do not need help. At the same time, the stoicism and endurance of the wounded was affirmed, as those in the stretchers wait patiently to be taken care of by their mates. The mediation of the image by the label is considerable, for this image has since become an icon of anti-war literature, seen as symbolic of the

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85 Melbourne Photograph 61; Sydney Photograph 133. *Relics and Records*, September 1922, p.73; April 1928, p.87; December 1931, p.88.
disorganisation endemic on the Western Front. Here Bean was resisting irony (which many historians and literary critics insist was the natural response to the war). He disliked modernist art, and thus held the line against it.

Even in depictions of Australian casualties the message of Australian military supremacy could be promoted. The photograph of Kandahar Farm Dressing Station near Messines combined reassurance about the wounded with an attack on the Germans, who, the caption asserted, had petulantly resorted to the material when beaten in the trenches man-to-man: “The Australian casualties for the battle [of Messines] and the remainder of the month were 8,999, but the majority occurred after the capture of the position when the Germans deluged the whole area with high explosive and shrapnel shells.”86 Audiences who might feel angry at the sight of so many of their men lying low knew who to blame – the unsporting “Hun” who had resorted to artillery to punish those who had beaten him.

Another display took the invocation of success further, offering the small advance at the Battle of Menin Road as compensation for its casualties, for “on this day [20th September, 1917] the 1st and 2nd Australian and some British divisions made a notable advance, in the course of which were wounded the men receiving treatment in this dressing station.”87 According to this display, casualties were a stern necessity of such an advance, but were taken care of as well as they could possibly be. The national medical system dealt efficiently with the inevitable casualties of the successful advance. Wounds were thus depicted, and depoliticised, but the argument was predicated largely on the notion that the cause of the war had been just. The national medical system was defended, and social unity promoted through the reassurance that the powers-that-were had the people’s best interests at heart.

The guns killed many, but according to the Memorial did not always conquer them. Death, of course, was the key image of the whole Memorial, for the institution was publicly dedicated to the memory of the dead. There were a range of representations directly dealing with death, and they help illustrate the parameters of the Memorial’s commemorative scheme. A small number of displays were pervaded

86 Melbourne Photograph 52; Sydney Photograph 127. Relics and Records, September 1922, p.72; April 1928, p.85; December 1931, p.86. The Flanders plan model label agreed. See Treloar to Bean 15 May 1922. A 7702 566 003/005.

87 Melbourne Photograph 71; Sydney Photograph 160. Relics and Records, September 1922, p.74; April 1928, p.93; December 1931, p.94.
with sadness and irony, indicating that the anti-war position did have a measure of influence on the Memorial, small and deeply subordinated as it was. More prominent displays showed the Australian dead in terms of sacrifice for the good of others, or sacrifice for victory. The former was a subset of the latter, for both were subsumed within the Memorial’s narrative and its logic of test, ordeal and triumph. Of course, large numbers of deaths were part of the ordeal the AIF had endured, and the structure of these displays reflected that idea. Sacrifice for the good of others showed the ordeal as it was being undergone, while the more triumphal sacrifice for victory offered the sweetness of triumph in a terrible struggle, rather than simply respected martial virtues, as recompense.

Discussions of death were also pervaded by sadness. There were a small number of displays of an intense and poignant melancholy in the Memorial, and reviews suggest these resonated with visitors. One of the most poignant displays was a message from a Gallipoli signaller, cut off in mid-sentence by the death of the author. Another message, written by Major Quinn at the then unnamed Quinn’s Post “where he afterwards lost his life,” brought visitors in direct contact with a famous national martyr. This sadness, seldom seen in the triumphal displays examined in Chapters Four and Five, connected the museum emotionally with the large number of its visitors who were bereaved. Again here the museum did “national” work; this was, perhaps, “national” sadness. Sadness was not the main emotion offered, however, for the Memorial was dedicated to “a praise that never ages,” and it was reverence, not sorrow, which the Memorial was attempting to elicit.

Irony, the fundamental “modernist” rhetorical mode, was rare in the Memorial, and thus striking when it was observable. Bean recounted a story in his guides of two unlucky Australian airmen who died when a bullet “passed through the lungs of one and lodged in the other’s heart.” The two airmen were killed, yet their plane continued to fly straight and level until its fuel ran out, whereupon it landed quite safely. It was only then that the death of the men was discovered. As with other negative stories, this was told in a matter-of-fact manner, left undeveloped.

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89 Relics and Records, September 1922, p.23; April 1928, p.25; December 1931, p.27.
90 Relics and Records, September 1922, p.23; April 1928, p.25; December 1931, p.27.
The Light Horsemen at the Nek were the archetypal example of soldiers sacrificing themselves for their comrades and their nation. *Australian Chivalry* declared that the men “gallantly went forward rather than risk letting down their comrades engaged in other parts of the line.” They were transformed under this logic into national martyrs, embodying the greatest ideals of martial nationalism. They were shown, not as “half a gaping quivering man,” but as heroic warriors, fallen on the field of honour. It is notable, and somewhat ominous, that the unquestioning discipline of the third and fourth waves in going into certain death was yoked to this nationalist message.

Sacrifice for victory was the key image of the whole Memorial, summarising its method of commemoration and underlining once more its “traditional” nature. Alan Borg points out that depictions of the death of heroes were a relatively late development in Western commemorative discourse, beginning only in the eighteenth century, but confirms that the emphasis was on victory:

*It was of course essential, if the hero was to remain (or become) a hero, that he should die in triumph, the battle won. The moral of history must remain and the hero’s life could not be seen to have been pointless or wasted. Thus, in those cases where the hero does stand alone, the battle lost, the viewer knows from subsequent history that defeat was to turn into victory.*

This is precisely the manner in which the Memorial operated.

The fusion of death and victory was explicitly made in representations surrounding the painting of an incident at Polygon Wood in 1917, in which Lieutenant John Turnour risked and sacrificed his life so that his section might overcome an obstacle that threatened to hold up the Australian advance. The painting itself does not depict any clear success. In fact, it would be a simple matter to read the image as depicting sacrifice alone, or even futility and foolishness, as the officer’s comrade appears to be attempting to prevent his suicidal advance across the open. However, the men on each flank advance with deliberate intent, raising the martial element of the image. Further, in his guide of April 1928 Bean made it plain that this was an image of victory, and highlighted the role of Turnour in securing it:

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91 *Australian Chivalry*, Plate 14.

92 Borg, *War Memorials*, p.47.
F. Leist’s “Attacking a Pill-box” depicts an incident which took place during the fighting at Polygon Wood, when a platoon of the 57th Battalion commanded by Lieut. Turnour was held up by a machine gun in a pill-box. Turnour divided his men in two parties, and sent them round either flank while he drew the machine gunner’s fire upon himself. He was killed, but his men were able by his sacrifice to capture the pill-box.94

Turnour is depicted as victorious in death, and his behaviour provides the most public of examples to future generations of how an Australian man should act. The image of him risking his life, choosing to carry out the most dangerous aspect of the attack himself so that the attack might succeed, and thus putting the cause above his own safety, was in fact an archetypal materialisation of the ideal of leadership which Bean had cherished from his school days.95 Here was true remembrance in the Bean style: although Turnour had been killed, he was remembered as a victor and a role model in the national war memorial. In this way, he lived on, or at least, as the motto promised, his fame did. Future generations would know his name and his deeds, boys yet unborn would look upon the painting with awe. If they then decided, as Bean put it in In Your

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93 The names of many paintings given in Bean’s guides are different to those now listed in the Australian War Memorial Collections Database. I have used the latter for figure identification.

94 Relics and Records. April 1928, p.27. This action was also made into a technical diorama, without the death of Lieutenant Turnour, the label text of which, re-written in February 1932, is at AWM 93 13/1/37.

95 The Memorial’s attitude to Australian officers was exemplified by a press release of 18 December 1923: “Probably the Company officers were more responsible than any other section of the AIF for its splendid record of achievement.” AWM 93 20/1/1A.
Hands, to dedicate their lives to their country in the spirit that Turnour had given his, Australia would be the better for it. Thus the officer, honoured in the telling of his tale, would continue to give to his nation. It was in such ways that the Memorial fulfilled Bean’s promises to honour the men while inspiring future generations to unselfish dedication to the nation. Again “national” work was being undertaken. In fact, by providing such close-up images of named individuals sacrificing themselves for their cause, personalising and dramatising these notions, the Memorial performed several nationalist services. It flattered the national ego, for, as Archbishop Weddy stated in a dramatic Anzac Day sermon in 1922, the nation had created such men; it provided role models of ideal citizenship for later generations to follow, and it promoted the integrity of the nation-state by buttressing the cause and the State in whose name the war was fought and such sacrifices made.96

The image of a named soldier laying down his life so that victory might be obtained had both cultural and political connections. The trope had enjoyed wide popularity in British martial nationalist tradition. In so dying victoriously, Turnour upheld what Robert MacDonald calls an Imperial “Deed of Glory,” specifically, The Sacrificial Death, the type specimen of which he gives as an action from the Indian Mutiny.97 The most famous example, though, was Admiral Nelson, who was consistently depicted as a dying conqueror. In terms of Australian inter-war politics, victory had been the stated goal of the Nationalists and other loyalist groups, and when it came it was claimed as the justification for all the pain and loss of the war. The conflict was still conceived in the 1920s by loyalists as having been a vital national struggle for existence, or at least for the existence of the British Empire, which amounted to the same thing. Death which brought victory in such a struggle closer was therefore the most glorious possible death. The Memorial strongly endorsed this position. All of the leaders of the Memorial had been conscriptionists, and many adhered to a victory-at-any-cost position.

96 The Archbishop had declared: “[The war] was the first great test of these young nations [Australia and New Zealand], and showed that they were not afraid, and were not going to run away from the tasks set before them. It gave them confidence to look forward to the future. They were ready to face the future because they proudly felt that the countries that bred the men who faced the test of Gallipoli would be able to breed men to face any test God put before them.” Argus. 27 April 1922, p.7.

97 MacDonald, The Language of Empire, p.90: “Lieutenants Salkeld and Home lead the powder-party to blow up the Cashmere Gate at Delhi; they die in the attempt, but the gate is breached: 1857.”
Crosses served two important symbolic purposes in the Memorial. Firstly, there was the Will Dyson drawing adopted in 1928 as the new cover image for Bean’s guides. Superficially at least, the difference with its predecessor could hardly have been greater:

![Figure 58: The Mate (in memory of W..., Machine Gun Company, Messines Ridge), by Will Dyson. Source: Australian War Memorial Collections Database. cas.awm.gov.au. Painting ART02231.]

Dyson’s *The Mate* indicated a change in direction for the Memorial’s “introductory” message, from asserting the Digger’s prowess to symbolising the nation’s reverence for the dead. As we have seen, though, this was not accompanied by a change in the triumphalism seen in many displays.\(^98\) The drawing symbolised reverence, and was entirely compatible with triumphalism, and indeed the Memorial did more for its “mates” than Dyson’s – it recorded their names, yes, but it also recounted their deeds, showing them as triumphant in life and, like Turnour, as victorious in death.

Secondly, and simultaneously, the fusion of triumph and death could be seen in the use of crosses as symbols of victory rather than of death or remembrance alone:

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\(^98\) Although Bean’s favourite artist, Dyson did not play a prominent role in the Melbourne exhibitions. Bean only mentioned Dyson in 1922 in relation to the amusing drawing *The Barber*. “Who’s cutting this hair, me or you?” asks the distinctly amateur barber of his unhappy customer. The drawing was part of the Memorial’s display of “Humour of the AIF.” *Relics and Records*, September 1922, p.34.
ERECTED TO THE MEMORY OF SOME OF THE MEN OF THE TWENTY FIRST KILLED IN THE CAPTURE OF MONT ST QUENTIN

At 1:30 p.m on the 1st September after half an hour’s hurricane bombardment of the hill top, the 21st Battalion reinforced the fighting line, and with the 23rd and 24th Battalions completed the capture of the position. The 21st Battalion alone captured 58 machine guns. This will suggest the number of guns the Huns employed in the defence of the hill. Between the 31st August and the 4th September the battalion lost 23 killed and 79 wounded. This cross was erected to some of the fallen and later was replaced by one of a more permanent nature.99

Once again victory was the ultimate justification for casualties.

There was only one representation that appeared to represent a dead Australian, and this very fact demands its being examined. It was a strange representation, being both a searing illustration of the cost of war and one of the strongest examples of the substitution of success for sorrow or criticism in the representation of death. The photograph itself is extremely confronting and disturbing, clearly showing two dead men, and had a caption insisting that Australians had passed through the area depicted just before the image was taken. They are thus probably Australians, and if so are the only two dead Australians in the photographic exhibition. If one simply looks at the photograph, the loss, sadness, and futility of war are immediately apparent.

99 “Erected to the Memory of Some of the Men of the Twenty First Killed in the Capture of Mont St Quentin.” Attachment, Bain to Treloar 28 December 1932. AWM 265 21/4/5, Part 7.
However, the caption does not even mention the men, and instead speaks of advancing, albeit under fire, and then turns its attention elsewhere:

A photograph, taken at Anvil Wood, near Péronne, in France, on September 2, 1918, showing the gap in the tangled wire through which some of the 53rd Battalion advanced the day before, in the face of heavy machine-gun fire. In the background a shell is bursting over an old casualty clearing station, near Quinconce, between Péronne and Mont St Quentin.¹⁰⁰

As confronting as the photograph is, there is no mention of the bodies of the men. The elements of sadness and loss, so clear in the image, were all but ignored in the caption. The facts are blandly stated but left to speak for themselves, while an advance is mentioned: the Australians forged ahead once more on 2 September 1918. The very display of such an image indicates that the “modern memory” dedication to showing the cost of war influenced the Memorial, as Peter Stanley argues it did.¹⁰¹

However, the entire representation, caption and all, indicates the severe limitations, particularly of selection, which the martial nationalist desire to perceive success

¹⁰⁰ Melbourne Photograph 124; Sydney Photograph 200. Relics and Records, September 1922, p.84; April 1928, p.101; December 1931, p.102.

¹⁰¹ Stanley, “Gallipoli and Pozieres.”
placed upon the Memorial’s use of that realism. Still, it remains an odd representation, taking an overtly anti-war image and entirely ignoring its most significant feature, the dead Australians. This was not a justification, but an acknowledgement of realities utterly undeveloped, and thus depoliticised.

All the “realities of war” examined in this chapter were sublimated to a considerable degree by their placement within the national war history and its triumphal narrative. Further, the depiction of many of the realities, especially the appalling conditions on the Western Front, enhanced rather than detracted from the national story, for it enabled the Memorial to emphasise endurance and other martial virtues. Overall, the Memorial’s treatment of its selected realities of war gave the impression whenever possible that, despite the dangers of the battlefield, the Australians were generally in control of what was happening on it. With the Memorial’s national war history simultaneously asserting that the AIF had overcome all obstacles, the overall suggestion was that the experience of the war for Australian soldiers was generally positive, despite considerable dangers and discomforts.

In many representations of defeat, death and other realities, war was shown as a stern necessity, in which men were killed and wounded, but which still retained honour and nobility. Endurance, stoicism, sacrifice to one’s duty – these were the virtues of traditional military heroes. Ultimately, the ability to “die well” was considered the very essence of gentlemanly behaviour. These issues could be and were dealt with in traditional terms, using traditional motifs, as the displays related to the Nek illustrate. Beyond this – the sacrifice for one’s country – was the sacrifice for the victory of one’s country. The image of Lieutenant Turnour giving his life so his platoon might capture a pill-box was the epitome of the sacrifice for victory, and of the Memorial’s commemoration. Men had died in the war, the Memorial argued, and that was a horrible truth, but those men would be remembered, whenever they could be, as great warriors, as triumphal Bayards who protected the weak from tyrants. Often, even in their death they would be seen so. Their lives would be depicted as F.M. Cutlack had said: “before all but death they were invincible.”

It was in these displays on defeats and realities that the Memorial incorporated anti-war ideas and sentiments, appropriating them in the process. These included sadness and a great compassion for those who had been in the trenches, enduring danger and the conditions of the front lines. These ideas, treated so as to depoliticise
them, then served the nation, and moreover, allowed the museum to appropriate some of the anti-war literature’s realist authenticity. The Memorial was able to depict death and the wounded in a relatively realistic manner, yet remain firmly within the mainstream of Australian commemoration, war literature and nationalist propaganda, which had taken a “realist” turn in the 1850s. It was the graphic depiction of mutilation, madness, and horror, and the criticism, that truly marked off the anti-war.

Thus, the Memorial’s approach to realities should still be called “traditional,” despite the inclusion of a significant amount of “modern” imagery and interpretation. The Memorial’s overall approach could never be considered anti-war or “modern,” because the notions of glory, honour and sacrifice rang as stridently and as proudly within it as they had within the pages of Tennyson, Fitchett and Kipling. These words had not lost their meaning, according to the Memorial. The tone remained as upbeat as possible, with little of the “numbing grief, bitterness and...deep disillusionment” that many of the soldiers had felt when the battles had actually been fought.  

These representations do, however, also illustrate the broader commemorative shift from triumph to sacrifice that was taking place during the inter-war years, which influenced the Memorial to a degree in the late 1920s. This led, among other developments, to a greater prominence being given to the artwork of Will Dyson in Sydney than had been the case in Melbourne, culminating in the adoption of a Dyson drawing for a symbolic change of the cover of Bean’s guides in 1928. This was not as radical a development as it might appear. The display of realities, even sublimated by the victorious narrative, was a turn away from triumphalism, but it was not an embrace of the anti-war position. It was still powerfully national, for the new image was intimate and reassuring, showing a Digger carving his mate’s name onto a cross, symbolised the nation honouring its dead through the operation of the Memorial itself. It was a melancholy image, a romantic image. Further, crosses were symbols of victory as much as death in the Memorial. Lastly, and intriguingly, by the time of the switch it was less important to emphasise prowess in any case, since the idea was widely accepted as fact in Australia by 1928, something the issue of the ADCC’s Anzac Day from that year illustrates.


103 Pacifism, by contrast, was international. See Ramussen, The Lesser Evil?, pp.6-18.
Finally, the Memorial’s attempt to spare and salve the feelings of its visitors illustrates a fundamental fact about the institution, the depth and integrity of its identification with its nation. The manipulation of memory inherent in much of the triumphal display material was for the nation’s own good, designed to create goodwill between Australians based on a united acknowledgement of the achievements of the AIF and the sacrifices made for those achievements. The imagined community served by the Memorial was one for which the institution had a great deal of affection, for this was the affection of its creator, Charles Edwin Woodrow Bean.
The Memorial contributed strongly to the Anzac Legend, providing a public narrative and other displays which affected to prove – and were taken by many Australians as having proved – the most important assertion of the Legend – that Australian soldiers were superior. The Memorial’s displays, governed by a strict and overt realism, were unique contributors to the Legend. No other agency could muster such a potent combination of physical objects and authoritative text, appealing simultaneously to the senses, the intellect and the emotions of visitors. The realistic presentation supported two vital assertions: firstly that the Australians had, indeed, won the battles they were said to have won, and secondly that the moral virtues which were used throughout the Memorial’s displays to explain such success were not interpretations, but statements of fact. The symbolic meanings which the Memorial held were backed up by this realist logic and took on the stature of natural truth. The AIF, the Memorial argued, had been an army of great men who had done great military deeds.
The Memorial offered its audiences a complex array of displays, but one overarching idea united them. This was the "national" interpretation of the war, the interpretation offered by those, such as Bean, who were dedicated to educating the Australian nation about what, in their opinion, that nation had experienced and done during the war. "National" interpreters sought out national lessons from the incidents of the war, locating Australian excellence and displaying it to a national audience in the hope of inspiring future generations. In the Memorial during the inter-war years, as I have demonstrated, excellence was expressed principally in terms of military success and superior martial virtues.

The Memorial was dedicated to the protection of the fighting reputation of the AIF as the basis for a new national tradition. The major ways in which this was done consisted of a narrative of the Australian overseas war experience, a collective portrait of the AIF, and displays offering direct evidence, such as trophies. The greater part of the dissertation is concerned with these issues; Chapters Four and Five explore them directly, while Chapters One to Three provide background and context.

The Memorial's narrative of the war showed a "test" at Gallipoli, an "ordeal" especially in France in 1916 and 1917, and a "triumph" in both France and Palestine in 1918. The test, as presented by the Memorial, was to successfully storm the cliffs and establish strong trench lines there, a test which, the museum argued, the AIF had passed with flying colours. This proved Australian military manhood. Bean argued that Australian men exhibited most of the traits of the English gentleman, which he saw as the model for correct behaviour. These traits included courage, nobility (often described in terms such as "clean" and "straight"), and a will to conquer and rule. At the same time, part of being a gentleman (and therefore a good citizen, and a good nation by extension) was the ability to lose well, which redeemed failure with moral victory. The "ordeal" phase of the war narrative, in which the AIF suffered terrible casualties in defeats at Fromelles and First Bullecourt, and in pyrrhic victories at Pozieres and Second Bullecourt, proved that Australians could do so. The gentleman – and the plebeian gentlemen which Bean felt the Australians were – also had to be able to win, though. Gentlemen ruled, and they had to find a way to enforce that rule if necessary. The triumphal phase of the war narrative proved that they could do this, showing in the process the Australians weaving "a fresh and brilliant strand into the
traditions of the Imperial Armies." Here the Australians showed that they could match any nation for strength of arms, and thus proved their martial nationalist mettle beyond doubt.

The collective portrait of the AIF, which interpreted the primary assertion of military supremacy, depicted a group of men who were mighty, ruthless warriors, yet noble in victory and kind to the defeated. The moral virtues of the gentleman – ferocity in battle, kindness in victory, endurance, nobility of heart, loyalty – were ascribed to the men, and, importantly, both linked to their military victories and to the future of the Australian nation. These were the virtues which the Memorial argued ought to be permanently remembered and made the basis of national traditions. These "British" virtues were supplemented, to the improvement of all, as the Memorial argued, by home-grown "Australian" traits such as initiative and free thinking, the ability to make decisions, ingenuity, humour and light-heartedness. This collective portrait was the model for future generations of Australian men.

To ensure that the national mettle was truly proved, the Memorial mixed into the narrative a number of displays which offered physical, incontestable evidence of Australian military supremacy. These included photographs of dead enemy soldiers, trophies labelled so as to focus on the killing of "Fritzes" and the seizing of their property, and a number of other somewhat dubious displays. The brutality of a terrible war was never more evident than in these displays, as the Memorial’s anti-German displays reflected ongoing bitterness towards the former enemy in the early 1920s.

The Memorial went well beyond triumphalism, however, as Chapter Six explores. The manner in which issues such as Australian defeat, death and wounding were treated is extremely instructive, for these were not hidden from the public or ignored by what was in other ways a triumphal institution. Indeed, the "national" interpretation of the war which governed the displays argued that such ordeals made the Australians’ final victory all the more praiseworthy. Truth was the key issue here, and as I demonstrate, the Memorial’s truth was not that of anti-war writers. Two "cultures" existed, one "monumental," the other "anti-monumental," and each had a different "truth." The war experience had seen horror, victory, compassion and heroism, along with numerous other emotions and aspects of human nature, and it was

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1 Sydney Photograph 162. Relics and Records, April 1928, p.93; December 1931, p.94.
possible for activists to select and treat incidents and anecdotes in such a way that the public memories so constructed were wholly or almost wholly made up of verifiable facts. The question was one of interpretation and selection rather than one version being true and the other false. The monumental culture expressed itself through cultural forms which have been labelled "traditional" and others labelled "high diction," while the anti-monumental did so through "modern memory" cultural forms. The "tradition" thesis, promoted by Jay Winter and other scholars, asserts that memories of the war included images and ideas which had prevailed in the pre-war era, used primarily in mourning rituals for the relief of bereavement. Tradition, Winter argues, while being reworked by post-war citizens, provided a great deal of solace and comfort, and was thus widespread. The "high diction" thesis concentrates on the creation and usage of propaganda. George Mosse was a leading scholar in this school, and Samuel Hynes has written on the topic also. In contrast to these two interpretations of the war, "modern memory" emphasised the memory of horror, pointlessness and death on an enormous scale. Disjunction was the key notion, with a decisive break identified between the pre-war period and the post-war era.

The question of where the Memorial fits into these wider theories of cultural legacy of the First World War has concerned scholars. The Memorial has been placed in the "modern memory" interpretation by writers such as Michael McKernan and Peter Stanley. I demur, seeing the Memorial's inter-war displays as offering a combination of tradition and high diction, based on the former but going further than offering simply solace and using certain triumphal elements of European traditions which were being used less in post-war Europe itself. The Memorial offered propaganda at times, while at other times it sought to salve the grief of the bereaved. At all times, however, it sought to praise the dead, and to glorify the AIF in terms of its military performance. Whilst the "realities" of the war were, as Chapter Six explores, depicted in realistic ways, the "national" interpretation of the war ensured that the criticism of the conduct of the war, which was a vital characteristic of "modern memory" agencies, was absent from the Memorial, with the exception of extremely mild criticism of British authorities which cannot be considered sufficient to label the Memorial "anti-monumental" or "modern memory," rather being in the nature of an assertion of independence within the British Empire.

Chapter Six demonstrates conclusively that, so far from being an anti-monumental "modern memory" institution recalling the horror of the war, the
Memorial was a monumental “traditional” agency, being very little, if at all, influenced by the anti-war position. The Memorial dealt sensitively and carefully with the “realities” of war, such as wounding, but always added important national caveats. In the example of wounded men, the Memorial defended the national military system, and when depicting death, promoted the heroic notion of sacrifice for victory as a means of symbolically conquering death on behalf of the Australian war dead. This was the Memorial’s most important gift to the AIF, to whom it was ultimately dedicated – the fallen would not be remembered publicly as “fallen,” but as heroic warriors who had done great things in life. They would be remembered forever, the Memorial promised, through “a praise that never ages.”

A further thesis, related to Winter’s “traditional” thesis, is Ken Inglis’s “sacred” thesis. He sees commemoration as a “civil” religion, and argues his case persuasively. As examined in the introduction, I feel that his interpretation is more appropriate to the later, Canberra-based, Memorial, than to the interim exhibitions which are the topic of this dissertation. The truly “sacred” elements of the Memorial – the Hall of Memory, the Pool of Reflection, the Cloisters, the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, whose very names are redolent of religiosity – did not yet exist. Certainly there were sacred elements within the displays, emanating from the objects themselves, and, as Chapter Three explores, accepted as sacred by some of the Memorial’s most prominent supporters. However, as indicated, the historical, rather than the sacred, aspects of the objects were predominant.

Inter-war Australian public memories were equally or even more triumphal than the Memorial’s displays. This was particularly true of soldier-writers’ literature concerning the war, which was replete with “big-noting,” as Robin Gerster has demonstrated. The principal influence on Australian commemoration which led to this triumphalism was martial nationalism. In addition, the ferocity and exultation in the destruction of the enemy that were inherent in many triumphal displays inside the Memorial were products of wartime and survived long into the peace.

Martial nationalism was the more fundamental influence, however. The fact that Australians were concerned with constructing a new national tradition, based upon their troops’ war experiences, was vital. Searching as they were for a national past which might compete with British history, martial nationalism – in which military success proved a nation’s mettle – served them admirably, offering a path to parity with the ancient cultures of the Old World. Australia was unable to compete in
terms of artistic, literary or intellectual achievements, but it could claim to have
outdone Britain – Australians’ main yardstick for a successful nation – militarily
during the war. Martial nationalism claimed that military actions were far more
important, ultimately, than artistic or intellectual endeavour in any case, so its
adoption gave Australians reason for confidence in themselves.

The Memorial thus tells us much about nationalism in Australia in the inter-
war period. It was focussed upon memories of the war to a great degree; indeed,
within the realm of war commemoration, nationalism thrrove in inter-war Australia.
There was a significant level of what was “true” Australian national sentiment
involved, according to contemporary definitions of the expression. It may not have
been of the “independent,” pre-1900 variety, but it was nonetheless very strong, and
not purely Imperial as some have argued. Many nationalists, such as Bean, had an
independent idea of Australia which, while incorporating the Empire, did not do so in
a manner which was purely, or even mainly, deferential. A national sentiment
definitely existed in many areas, although beyond the focussing intensity of war
commemoration this national feeling was not so strong. Australians were proud of
their soldiers, though, and the Memorial was the ultimate embodiment of the fact, its
popularity testament to it.

The whole Memorial was oriented toward the future of its nation. It assured
Australians that they had the virtues to face anything. It was a strong affirmation of
Australia and its future, an optimistic statement. It is interesting to speculate that part
of this message for the nation concerned the perceived danger of the so-called Yellow
Peril, particularly Japan. After the First World War many Australians began to see
Japan as a likely antagonist, and part of the message of the Memorial and the Anzac
Legend generally may have served to reassure the country that any attack would be
met by a military force which had destroyed the Germans, previously the greatest
army in the world, and which would therefore surely defeat the lowly Japanese. The
country was safe.

II

I have attempted to provide a new interpretation of the Memorial through the use of a
new perspective, one which brings the Memorial’s displays to the foreground, as
befits Australia’s first truly national museum. The sources I have used in the
dissertation, including display and diorama labels, guidebooks, photographs and their
labels and architectural plans, have allowed insight into the Memorial which cannot
be gained in any other way. This has been the main point of difference between my
approach and that of previous scholars, and has led to conclusions considerably
different from, yet also in places complementary to, earlier studies.

The conclusions that may be drawn from the Memorial’s significant number
of ferocious and triumphal displays have led me to part ways with most previous
scholars of the Memorial on a number of fundamental points concerning the
institution’s objectives and their realisation. The latter, realisation of objectives, is a
particular point of difference between my work and that of other writers: I have
sought to understand the Memorial’s messages to its audience before answering the
question as to what the institution’s nature was; C.E.W. Bean’s public relations
statements must not be accepted as complete and accurate enunciations of what his
Memorial did. This they were not — they were carefully tailored statements
concentrating on such elements of the Memorial as appeared most useful from time to
time in promoting Bean’s mission of getting an expensive and complex project
completed. They thus need to be treated with care and interrogated in light of other
evidence, a practice I have endeavoured to follow.

The appeal to the displays has assisted my pursuit of the key insights into the
Memorial which scholars such as Michael McKernan, Tony Bennett, Kimberley
Webber, Jenny Bell and Ken Inglis have made. Webber, for instance, raises the issue
of symbolic meanings, begging the detailed examination of them which I have
undertaken. Bell and others have pointed out that the Memorial was dedicated to
nation-building, yet have had insufficient space in short articles to explore its nature.
To examine this nation-building in detail requires extensive investigation of
Australian “emotional” nation-building in the pre-war era, all the war through to the
late 1930s, which I have done in Chapters One and Two. The final three chapters,
examining the displays, outline the manner in which martial nation-building
imperatives were implemented.

I agree with Michael McKernan that the Memorial’s mission included
commemoration of service and sacrifice, but argue that this was neither the first nor
the strongest of the Memorial’s objectives, as Chapter Three demonstrates. This does
not make his insight invalid, however, for certainly service and sacrifice were
commemorated in the Memorial. However, such an interpretation must remain partial,
needing the complementary triumphal understanding which I have added to our vision of the Memorial in the inter-war period.

The question of militarism in the Memorial again benefits from examination of the displays. There has been a tendency in Australian historical scholarship to argue, although not normally in the same breath, that the Anzac Legend was militarist but the Memorial was not, and thus a temptation might exist to separate the two. This likelihood is scotched by recourse to what the Memorial said, for this was clearly and unambiguously militarist, as I have demonstrated. The argument that Australian commemoration was militarist, which scholars have addressed but which requires more examination, receives support from my reading of the Memorial’s displays and, in Chapter Two, of Armistice Day and Anzac Day rhetoric. As I have reiterated, this militarism was a home-grown Australian brand, not to be confused with Prussian militarism, in which certain additional civic and social rights were gained by those who had served. In addition, members of the Digger-Nationalist commemorative complex enjoyed control of vital platforms at which national identity was enunciated and defined, and the ideal Australian which many former officers, as well as the Memorial, defined, was based very strongly on moral virtues which had origins in British and European military traditions.

III

The ways in which national identities are presented in public spaces is important, for public control is affective control, and can be politically co-opted. In the political climate of 2004, where “values” are the political coin of choice, public memories are more important than ever. Many of the elements of the ideal Australian which the Memorial of 1922-35 embodied retain their relevance today. Certainly the control of public history has never been a more hotly contested issue, with conservatives showing a strong desire to present a national history that embodies their economic and political sensibilities. Never has interrogation of our national institutions been more necessary, as political correctness is drummed out and replaced with “affirmative orthodoxy.”\(^2\) It is all the more important to subject public institutions and public representations to a searching test, seeking to illuminate their messages – in their roots, objectives, composition, and political and social affiliations, so that we might

\(^2\) Macintyre, The History Wars, p.198.
better understand what we are saying about ourselves and our ancestors – who we are, what they have done. By coming to grips with the details of public stories, we come to a better appreciation of what it is that national institutions are telling us about ourselves, what meanings of the past they have produced in public spaces.

Finally, one major objective of my elaboration of “Australian militarism” is to illuminate the extraordinary degree to which our Australian nationalism is based on war and the military. Our nationalism, as is common to many modern nations, is at its most strident, its most passionately-felt, when focussed by war or its memory. It is a commonplace to say that the First World War made Australia a nation, but it is less common to infer from this that some of the values and virtues of the warrior, such as ferocity, determination and ruthlessness, have become infused into the very fibre of our collective identity, at least in its dominant forms. Certainly many Australians exist who wholly reject Bean’s Anzac legacy and all it stands for, but I feel it is reasonable to argue that such people stand outside the mainstream of Australian social life. To be Australian normally involves an acceptance, however tacit, of the Legend.

This said, the manner in which we commemorate the First World War has changed considerably in Australia, and few would deny that it has been for the better. Sacrifice of life is now the primary message, and the conquest of Palestine in 1917-18 or the rout of the German army in 1918 are remembered only by military historians and some enthusiasts. The nature of our understanding of Gallipoli has also changed radically, with the actual storming of the cliffs less important than the lives lost.

The change from triumph to sacrifice has been gradual, and it is still possible to observe many echoes of past commemorative forms. In particular, the pride in Australian military ability has remained undiminished, although the method of its expression has changed. As war has followed war, Australians have come to accept that their soldiers in each one “followed in the footsteps” of the Anzacs, “upholding the tradition.” Thus today pride in military ability is often unstated, except in situations such as that surrounding the InterFET intervention in East Timor in 1999, in which Australian soldiers’ professionalism and determination saved many lives and established the security needed for a new State to emerge on the island. That we did not feel the need to display the bodies of West Timorese militiamen killed by the Australians or trophies taken from them indicates both a national moral growth and, perhaps, the internalisation of pride in Australian martial abilities, for the satisfaction
in some quarters that our men had defeated these dangerous and unlawful groups was as strong as that embodied in the Memorial’s inter-war displays.

Triumph, then, remains observable in modern Australia, transformed and largely sublimated to service and sacrifice, but nonetheless alive and influential. The many developments in commemoration, the media, literature, the arts and politics, to name but a few factors, since the mid-1930s, have altered triumphalism, but not destroyed it. Placing the creation of meaning in the inter-war Memorial under scrutiny also reminds us that such production is occurring today, and to a much greater degree. It reminds us to seek out the details in what official myths tell us we are, or should do, or should believe. Thus, in a spirit of self-improvement which Bean might have argued for, it may be time to examine this element of our collective psyche more closely, in an endeavour to learn more about who we are as a group, and where we wish to go.
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Appendix 1: Statistical Evidence

In the Memorial in the inter-war period, not only were representations of victory common, but that military success was the dominant theme. The surviving display material certainly suggests this. The photographic exhibitions and the guides, which are extant, gave the same relative amount of space to images of success, victory and supremacy, compared to those of failure, defeat and inferiority, as did the surviving labels. For instance, in the 1922 guide, military success in some form was referred to on 45 of its 92 pages. Having references to military success on 49% of pages compares with death, 23%, defeat, 11%, and irony, 2%. Of these figures, 4% combined death and defeat. The photographic exhibition had less concentration on victory, with much greater element of technical instruction, but it was still very significant as a theme. Of the 174 prints, twenty-nine (16.7%) specifically depicted victory. This compares with twelve images of defeat, ten of wounded men, six of danger and three specifically mentioning death (although two of these were the deaths of British troops, not Australians) – respectively 6.8%, 5.7%, 3.5% and 1.7%. In the Palestine section, with 37 images, the proportion of images of victory and supremacy increased to 30%, while defeat fell to 8.1%, death and the wounded to 2.7% (one image each), and danger was not shown at all. France merited 104 pictures, with 16 specifically related to victory (almost all of these in the 1918 section) or 15.4%. This compares with seven for defeat (6.7%), one of British death (1%), six of danger (5.7%) and nine of wounded men (8.7%). Victory was, therefore, at least twice as prevalent as defeat.

Further, the amount of display space that was allocated to the various campaigns suggests emphasis. In Melbourne in 1922, nine of the twenty-one campaign display cases were devoted to the successes of 1918. Thus, 43% of these display cases were devoted to a period of 7 months out of the 43 months the Australians were in the field (16%), its seven most successful months. The space allocated to the July 1916 to June 1917 period, full of failure as it was, was the same – one full “court” of three cases – as that given to August 1918, the month which came to symbolise the Allied victory. This trend continued in Sydney, but not to the same extent as in Melbourne. In Sydney, France 1916 and 1917 were allocated seven display cases, with an additional two plan models, both of which had extensive labels, and the Gueudecourt diorama, which showed the terrible conditions endured by the
troops. At the same time, France March-October 1918 also had seven full cases, supplemented by two plan models and the Mont St Quentin picture model. Thus, while this layout was more balanced, it retained an emphasis on successful actions and campaigns.

A further suggestion of emphasis comes from a terminological distinction made between locations which had seen victory and those which had seen defeat. In Bean’s 1928 and 1931 guides Broodseinde in Flanders is called a place of “heroic memory.” In contrast, in the script for a plan model the Somme battlefield is deemed a locality of “evil memory;” a photograph caption read “Flers – Of Evil Memory.” Both places saw huge loss of Australian life, but Broodseinde was the site of a tactical victory, whereas Flers was a failure and the Somme the site of the most pyrrhic of victories – Pozieres. “Heroic memory,” it would thus seem, issued from victory or success, and “evil memory” from defeat or failure. Such a distinction again points to the high value placed on military victory in the 1920s. Although the endurance of the men at Pozieres became legend, and is now widely rehearsed, in the early inter-war years the search was always for victories as the primary basis on which to construct a military tradition.

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3 Pozieres was attacked in July and August, and Flers in November 1916; Broodseinde was taken in October 1917. See Coulthard-Clark, Encyclopedia, pp.117-8, 120-2, 132-3.