Ancestry
Stories of multicultural Anzacs
In the Hall of Memory at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra there are 15 stained-glass windows. Each shows a figure dressed in military uniform, and under each figure is a word which describes a quality displayed by Australians during wartime. One window features a sailor in a gunner’s uniform. He represents all the men and women who have crossed the sea in the service of our nation.

This window bears the word *Ancestry*. 

**Ancestry**

*Stories of multicultural Anzacs*

Written by Robyn Siers and Carlie Walker
Contents

Introduction 3
Maker of the records: Honorary Captain Charles Bean 4
Committed to service: the Coriglianos 8
A Maori Anzac: Private Karanema Pohatu 12
A family legacy: the Righettis 14
“Conspicuous bravery”: Lieutenant Leonard Keyzor 18
A service family: the Christensens 22
“Gallantry in action”: Captain Marcel Aurousseau 26
“The gentleman in gloves”: Major William Oldfield 28
“Band of brothers”: the Langtips 32
“Great bravery and dash”: Sergeant Nicholas Rodakis 38
From shopkeeper to soldier: Private Vincent Mahboub 40
Equal in service: Trooper Frank Fisher 42
The war in colour: Honorary Lieutenant Harold Septimus Power 46
What is their ancestry? 50
Glossary (words in bold) 52
References 54
Index 56

Note to the reader:
Most of these stories take place during wartime. You may feel sad after reading some of them. Teachers may wish to be sensitive to those students who have parents serving overseas in war zones.

Readers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent should be aware that this book contains images of deceased Indigenous ex-servicemen.

Introduction

People from all around the world have made Australia their home, and their stories and diverse cultures have enriched and influenced the Australian way of life.

At Federation in 1901 Australia’s population was less than five million, and most of its citizens had European heritage. The Gold Rush and various other business and employment opportunities in Australia during the 1800s had attracted people from other countries who now came to start new lives. Australia’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people however, had very few civil rights. They were excluded from voting in elections and not counted as citizens in the census.

Britain’s declaration of war on Germany in August 1914 meant that Australia, as a dominion of the British Empire, was also at war. Around the country there were displays of patriotism and loyalty, and volunteers enthusiastically rushed to enlist in the Royal Australian Navy (RAN), the Australian Imperial Force (AIF), and what would later become the Australian Flying Corps (AFC). By the end of the war in 1918 around 420,000 Australians had enlisted – almost 39 per cent of the total adult male population.

The AIF was specially raised for overseas service, and every member was a volunteer. Many had no previous military experience. Most were of British heritage, but Australians from other backgrounds also enlisted. Women also wanted to do their bit: around 3,000 nurses joined the AIF as part of the Australian Army Nursing Service, and over 88,000 joined the Red Cross to contribute to the war effort at home.

Although they were prevented from entering military service by the 1909 Commonwealth Defence Act, more than 1,300 Indigenous Australians still managed to enlist. In the AIF many experienced, for the first time, equality and freedom from discrimination.

Several hundred Chinese Australians, despite also being excluded from enlisting on racial grounds, were accepted into the AIF, many because one of their parents was European. Billy Sing, the son of a Chinese father and English mother, became the most well-known Australian sniper on Gallipoli and was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal (DCM).

Battalions of around 1,000 men each were raised all around Australia. The 47th Battalion was typical in its diversity. Raised in 1916 from volunteers from Queensland and Tasmania, most of its soldiers were of British heritage, but also included in its ranks were men like Caleb Shang, whose father was Chinese; Lauritz Hagen, from Denmark; Konrad Karelson, a Norwegian; Italian Angelo Silva; and Russian-born Nicholas Lagutin. Lagutin was one of at least 1,000 Russian Australians in the AIF.

The AIF also included men with German heritage, like South Australian Edward Mattner. His exceptional military service resulted in him being awarded the Military Cross, the DCM, and the Military Medal. However, like many German Australians at the time, his family faced discrimination and suspicion, and had their loyalty to the British Empire questioned. Some soldiers changed their names in an attempt to disguise their origins: German Heinrich Otto Zink became Frank Raynor, and Leopold Augustein, also from Germany, took the name Leo Austen.

Australians from all kinds of backgrounds served together during the Great War. For many, wartime service gave them the equality that was not available to them in Australian society either before or after the war. They became mates serving alongside each other, wearing the same uniform, and experiencing the same conditions and hardships.

Discover how the Anzac story of service and sacrifice unites Australians, regardless of their backgrounds.

A more detailed overview on multicultural Anzacs written by historian Ian Hodges is available at: www.anzacportal.dva.gov.au/teachers/resources.
Charles Bean was born in Bathurst, New South Wales, in 1879. His English-born father, Edwin, was Headmaster at All Saints’ College, and Charles and his younger brothers Jack and Montague spent their childhood surrounded by farmland, with hot, dry summers and frosty winters.

When Charles was ten years old the family relocated to England, where Charles completed his schooling. He was a quiet, observant boy, with a love of cricket and history. On family holidays in Europe, Charles was fascinated by museums and the collections of objects on display. He went on to study classics and law at Hertford College in Oxford, and then worked for a while as a teacher. In 1904 he returned to Australia, taking up a position as a lawyer. For the next two years his job took him to many towns in New South Wales, and he developed a keen interest in the stories and people of rural Australia.

With his interest in history and his love of writing stories, Charles pursued a career in journalism rather than the law. He joined the Sydney Morning Herald in 1908 as a reporter and travelled around the country, writing articles about local events and activities. Charles became fascinated by the people he met; they were resourceful and hardworking, but also looked after each other when times were tough.

In 1921 Charles married Ethel Young in Sydney. “Effie” had worked as a nurse at the Queanbeyan Hospital, and she and Charles met over a game of tennis in nearby Tuggeranong.

George Lambert, Charles E W Bean (1924, oil on canvas, 90.7 x 71.1 cm, AWM ART07545)
Artist George Lambert depicted Charles Bean with pencil and notebook at the ready in this portrait from 1924. The two men had travelled back to Gallipoli as part of the Australian Historical Mission to gather artefacts and information about the battles that had occurred there, and to check on the condition of Australian war graves.

In 1921 Charles married Ethel Young in Sydney. “Effie” had worked as a nurse at the Queanbeyan Hospital, and she and Charles met over a game of tennis in nearby Tuggeranong.
In September 1914, not long after the First World War broke out, Charles was chosen to be Australia’s first official war correspondent. His job was to travel with the AIF and report back to those at home. Although given the honorary rank of captain, Charles was not a soldier, but was armed instead with a notebook and pencil. In November 1914 he travelled to Egypt with the first contingent of Australian soldiers to head overseas. There he observed and reported on the progress of their military training as well as some of the mischief the men got up to. He went ashore on Gallipoli on 25 April 1915 and stayed until the Australians were evacuated in December. Already, he had begun to observe in the men the qualities he so admired from his time spent in the Australian bush.

From 1916 until 1918 Charles worked alongside the AIF on the Western Front in France and Belgium, sending back stories about the Australians’ involvement in the war. He became increasingly proud of the way the Australian soldiers and nurses did their jobs. They persevered and held on through horrible conditions. He later wrote about the Australian soldier as being “full of colour, entirely positive, constantly surprising those who knew him by some fresh display of qualities which even his own officers (who in most cases had been his mates) had never suspected.”

Charles noticed that the soldiers often collected souvenirs from the various battlefields where they served. He encouraged this activity, and gave the men labels to attach to the relics they collected for future cataloguing and reference. Charles had already begun to think about a possible museum back in Australia to display the objects and the battle records, but one which could also act as a memorial to the thousands who had lost their lives. The Australian War Records Section was officially set up by Charles and his colleague Captain John Treloar in May 1917.

After the war Charles returned to Australia, and with the help of some staff began to write up the official history of the Great War, using all of the notebooks and diaries he had kept so carefully during the war years. This task took more than 20 years to complete. Just before the final volume was published, Charles’ dream for a national museum and memorial was realised, with the opening of the Australian War Memorial in Canberra on 11 November 1941. Included in its vast collection are the notebooks, letters, and diaries of Charles Bean.
Committed to service: the Coriglianos

The Corigliano family were no strangers to life at sea. Sicilian-born Charles left Italy and sailed around the world, arriving in Albany, Western Australia, in 1876. Within 12 months he had moved to South Australia, settling in the coastal town of Beachport, where he worked on fishing boats. He was also sometimes called upon to carry out sea rescues as coxswain of the town’s lifeboat. In 1879 Charles married Irish immigrant Mary O’Connell, and in 1880 John Vincent Corigliano, the first of the couple’s 15 children, was born.

John, more commonly known as Jack, inherited his father’s seafaring ways, and followed him into the fishing business after leaving school. At 18 years of age Jack joined the South Australian Naval Forces and, as an able seaman aboard HMCS Protector, served in China in 1900 during the Boxer Rebellion. In 1907 Jack was selected as part of a small group from the Commonwealth Naval Forces to be sent to England for special training, during which he was promoted to mechanician. He was also given the special honour of joining the Australian naval contingent at the coronation of King George V at Westminster Abbey in London in 1911.

In 1912 Jack married English governess Gertrude Haddow in Portsmouth. By the following year he was back in Australia on board the RAN’s new battle cruiser HMAS Australia. With over 800 crew and eight 12-inch guns, it was the most powerful warship in the Pacific. Jack worked below deck in the hot and noisy engine and boiler rooms.

After war was declared in August 1914, Australia led the force that captured German New Guinea in September. This was Australia’s first campaign of the war. Jack’s ship was then tasked with hunting the ships of the German East Asia Squadron in the vast Pacific Ocean. They proved to be elusive, but in December news was received that the German fleet in the Atlantic Ocean had been defeated. Early in 1915 the Australia steamed towards Britain to join the Grand Fleet, conducting exercises and patrols in the North Sea.

Jack’s younger brother Charles had also decided on a naval career, joining the RAN in 1911, aged 20. In 1913 he joined the crew of HMAS Sydney as a stoker. He worked deep below deck shovelling coal into the ship’s furnaces in order to keep the huge steam engines running. The work was hard and the air often thick with coal dust.

Following the outbreak of war, the Sydney took part in the operations against German colonies in the Pacific, before joining the ships of the first Australian convoy gathering at Albany in Western Australia in October 1914. On board the 36 transports were more than 30,000 men of the AIF and the New Zealand Expeditionary Force (NZEF), along with around 8,000 horses, all bound for war service overseas.

Mechanician Jack Corigliano c. 1911-15. By the time he retired, Jack had given almost 37 years of his life to naval service.

AWM P03620.002

Engineers, mechanics, and artificers at work in the workshop on HMAS Australia.

AWM EN0022

What difficulties would these men have faced working in this environment?

Stokers scrape out the ash from the furnace grates in HMAS Australia. Coal was stored in the bunkers on the right. The success of naval operations was dependent on supplies of fuel.

AWM EN0588

How do you think the ships were resupplied with coal while at sea?

Ship’s bell from HMAS Australia.

AWM DELAY014469

Jack’s wife, Gertrude Corigliano, 1919.

They did not have any children of their own, but took an active interest in their many nieces and nephews.

AWM P03620.001
Less than two weeks into the voyage, on 9 November, wireless operators received signals indicating the presence of an enemy ship close by as the convoy passed the Cocos Islands. HMAS Sydney was dispatched to investigate. Within hours, a wireless message arrived from the Sydney: “Am briskly engaging enemy”, followed soon after by, “Emden beached and done for.” News of the sinking of the German light cruiser SMS Emden was met with triumph by Australians. The convoy arrived in Alexandria in Egypt four weeks later.

Back home in Beachport, the Corigliano family would have kept a close eye on newspaper reports of the war, looking particularly for news of the Australia and the Sydney. News of the action on Gallipoli during 1915 was sent to papers back in Australia by war correspondents including Charles Bean. With rising casualty rates, the need for more volunteers was increasing. Jack’s younger brothers Maurice and Peter both enlisted in the AIF on the same day: 1 September 1915.

Peter, aged 22, served as a gunner with the 2nd Field Artillery Brigade on the Western Front during 1916 and 1917. Early in 1918 he was hospitalised after being wounded in a gas attack. He recovered and returned home at the end of the war.

Maurice, aged 32, left Adelaide with the 3rd reinforcements for the 32nd Battalion in February 1916. Seven months later he was reported as missing after the battle of Fromelles in France on 20 July. At first it was thought he may have been taken prisoner by the Germans; his death was later confirmed, but his grave could not be located.

Further sadness touched the Corigliano family in 1916. Jack’s sister Clotilda was married to Arthur Hateley and they had two young daughters. Arthur enlisted in 1915 and joined the 3rd Light Horse Regiment. No sooner had he arrived in Egypt than he was hospitalised with tuberculosis. In April, while being transported home on the hospital ship Karoola, he died and was buried at sea.

At war’s end in November 1918, Jack, now serving on HMAS Melbourne, witnessed the surrender of the German fleet in Scotland. He continued to serve in the navy until retiring in 1935 with the rank of lieutenant commander. He and Gertrude eventually moved back to Beachport, where “his gentlemanly manner and keen wit made him much liked and respected by all.”

In the words of Charles Bean...


The Coronation Medal was given to the Australians who took part in the ceremonies associated with the coronation of King George V in London in 1911. George was the grandfather of Queen Elizabeth II.

AWM REL25884.004

The Coronation Medal was given to the Australians who took part in the ceremonies associated with the coronation of King George V in London in 1911. George was the grandfather of Queen Elizabeth II.

AWM REL25884.004

What animal's camouflage does the ship resemble?

What do you think was the purpose of this camouflage pattern?
A Maori Anzac: Private Karanema Pohatu

Born in Hawke’s Bay, New Zealand, Karanema was one of nine children born to Henare and Mahue Meriana Pohatu. He moved to Australia as a young man and began working as a shearer. Four years later, just two months after the First World War began in 1914, Karanema enlisted in the AIF. He was 21 years old.

There were strict measures against indigenous people enlisting in the AIF, but Karanema was not dark skinned, so was able to disguise his Maori heritage. He also changed his name to Robert Stone; “pohatu” being the Maori word for stone.

Robert was part of the 1st reinforcements for the 3rd Battalion, and landed on Gallipoli at dawn on 25 April 1915. The men who went ashore were under fire from the Turkish troops on the ridges overlooking the beach. After fighting hard all day, Robert and the other soldiers in his unit managed to take over some Turkish trenches. They dug in for the night, but remained under attack.

Things did not improve overnight, and Robert was killed in the fighting that took place the next day. His body was hastily buried, but in the chaos that followed, his grave was lost.

Communication between Robert and his family back in New Zealand had been sparse after his enlistment, and it was not until the war was over, when they tried to track down his whereabouts, that the family discovered what had happened, and Robert’s Maori heritage was revealed.

Robert’s name is listed on the memorial at Quinn’s Post Cemetery on the Gallipoli peninsula, as well as on the Australian War Memorial’s Roll of Honour.

From Schmelzkopf to South

Some volunteers wishing to enlist changed their names, hoping that this would make it easier to be accepted into the AIF.

In September 1914, at the age of 19, Albert Carl Schmelzkopf of Adelaide joined up. Even though Albert and his father, Carl, had been born in Australia, their ancestors were immigrants from Germany. In June 1915 Carl Schmelzkopf changed the family name by deed poll; “I absolutely denounce and abandon the use of my said name and assume and adopt the name of Charles George William South.”

Albert served on Gallipoli and in Palestine as part of the 3rd Light Horse Regiment before transferring to the Machine Gun Squadron of the 1st Light Horse Regiment. He was awarded the Military Medal for gallantry and devotion to duty in November 1917. In the last year of the war, Albert became a pilot in the AFC.

The remains of an entrenching tool used for digging, found on Gallipoli after the war. The wooden handle in the centre has almost completely disintegrated.

AWM REL/10073

Two unidentified soldiers beside a Maori carving in the trenches on Gallipoli. At least 2,500 Maori men served during the First World War with the NZEF.

AWM PC002357

Why do you think soldiers would make such a carving?

The word “Anzac” was used to refer to the Australians and New Zealanders who landed on Gallipoli in 1915. An Anzac would eventually mean any Australian or New Zealand soldier of the First World War, and now applies to all wars and conflicts.


In the words of Charles Bean...

The name, A. and N.Z. Army Corps was far too cumbersome for constant use, especially in radiogram, and a telegraphic address was needed... a convenient word was wanted as a code name for the Corps. One of the clerks suggested “How about An-ZAC?” Major Wagstaff proposed the word to the general, who approved of it, and “Anzacs” therefore became the code name of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps.
A family legacy: 
the Righettis

During the 1850s Alan Righetti’s grandfather, Serafino, migrated with his family from Europe to Australia to join the gold rush at the age of 15. The Righettis settled in the Victorian town of Daylesford. Nestled at the base of the Great Dividing Range, Daylesford was much like the village of Someo, their former hometown in the southern foothills of the Swiss Alps.

When the search for gold proved unsuccessful, Serafino moved to the town of Heywood in the western district of Victoria, where he set up the general store Righetti and Co. He married Lucy McCord and they had five children: Edmund, Ernest, Lucy, Walter, and Leonard, all of whom grew up to work in the family business.

In 1899 Serafino’s eldest son, Edmund, farewelled his wife and children, including ten year old Alan, and set sail for the Boer War in South Africa. Well known for his adventurous spirit, horsemanship, and shooting skills, Edmund travelled three times to this war. On his last trip he was severely wounded in action. Eventually he returned home, having been promoted through the ranks to captain. He later gave his revolver to Alan as a memento of his Boer War service.

Having inherited his dad’s horsemanship, Alan attended Light Horse School and served in the Militia for two years. When Britain declared war on Germany on 4 August 1914 Alan immediately volunteered his services. Edmund, now 50 years old, enlisted three months later with the 5th Light Horse Regiment. Alan joined the 3rd reinforcements for the 2nd Light Horse Regiment, and boarded HMAT Itria in February 1915 for the long voyage to Egypt. Six months later he was sent to Gallipoli. There, his regiment defended allied positions and successfully attacked one of the most challenging positions along the Anzac line: the Turkish trenches near Quinn’s Post.
The Australians were evacuated from Gallipoli in December, and Alan was promoted to lieutenant. His regiment was then sent to Egypt to defend the Suez Canal against an expected Turkish attack.

Early on 4 August 1916 Alan was involved in the battle of Romani in the Sinai desert. When the Turkish attack was launched, the regiment was quickly outnumbered and forced back. During the battle, Alan Righetti was killed. It was exactly two years since Britain had declared war on Germany. Edmund left Egypt just three weeks after his son’s death, returning to Australia and his family.

After the war, Imperial German Army Officer Heinrich Romer Andreae returned Alan’s identity disc to his family, having received it from a Turkish officer after the battle. Andreae also wrote to Alan’s mother, Mary, describing the circumstances of Alan’s death. He wrote:

Scarcely had we looked over the top of the range when a tremendous machine gun fire was experienced by us … The (Australian troops) showed such courage as we had never seen since the beginning of the war in France – they fought without regard for … personal losses … I hope it will be a solace to you to know that your son fell as a hero and without suffering pain.

AWM P1088/173

Alan was initially buried on the battlefield at Romani, and later reinterred in the Kantara War Memorial Cemetery in Egypt, where a headstone was erected. When Mary heard that her son’s remains had been moved, she wrote to Base Records requesting a photograph of Alan’s new resting place.

In the final year of the war, Edmund’s brother Leonard and his wife had a son. They named him Alan in honour of his cousin. Young Alan inherited his uncle Edmund’s revolver and went on to serve in the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) during the Second World War. Leonard, his other three sons, Ivo, Syd, and Lloyd, and his daughter, Yvonne, also served in the Second World War.

George Lambert, Battle of Romani, 4 August 1916 (1925–27, oil on canvas, 122 x 234 cm, AWM ART09556)

What would be some of the challenges for light horsemen and their horses while serving in the desert?

The enclosure around Alan’s original grave in Romani was made by the men of the 2nd Light Horse Regiment using the hoop iron that had originally enclosed the horse feed.

AWM P01098.001

In the words of Charles Bean …

Another factor which gave the Australian countryman natural fitness … was that he was bred in a land of strong sunshine. From his birth he had been accustomed to very high summer temperatures, to dusty roads, and to the exercise of careful thought concerning water-supply … The Australian possessed, therefore, remarkable qualities, both natural and acquired, for a mounted war in a hot, dry country.


Why do you think so many members of the Righetti family chose to serve during wartime?

In 1967 the Australian government issued Anzac Medallions to Gallipoli veterans or their next of kin to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the landing at Anzac Cove. At this time, Alan’s sister Eleanor was his only surviving relative, and she requested one in recognition of her brother’s service.

AWM REL28920

What would this medallion have meant to Alan’s sister?
Leonard was born in 1885 into a well-off Jewish family in Paddington, London. Growing up, he enjoyed family holidays at Brighton on Britain's south coast. During his school years at Tonleigh Castle in Ramsgate, Leonard excelled in cricket as a bowler and fielder, skills that he would later use as a soldier on Gallipoli. After leaving school, Leonard spent ten years in Canada before migrating to Sydney in March 1914. By this time his brother Stanley and sister Margery were also living in Australia.

In August 1914 the First World War broke out and the call to arms could be heard across the country. Just two weeks later Leonard left his job as a clerk and enlisted with the 1st Battalion, the first infantry unit raised in New South Wales for the war. Boarding SS Afric in October, Leonard joined the first group of the AIF to depart on overseas service. As the ship set sail, the last he saw of Australia was the port town of Albany on the south coast of Western Australia.

Leonard trained for several months in Egypt before taking part in the landing on Gallipoli on the morning of 25 April 1915. In August he joined his unit in the attack at Lone Pine, part of a general attempt to break through Turkish lines. At dusk on 6 August the 1st Division attacked and seized the Turkish trenches at Lone Pine. This was followed by three days of heavy fighting as the Turkish troops retaliated. As bombs landed in the trench, Leonard would use either sandbags or his overcoat to smother them or, if there was time, throw the bombs back. Although wounded twice, he refused treatment and kept going for 50 hours until the fighting lessened. For his “most conspicuous bravery and devotion to duty at Lone Pine Trenches”, Leonard was awarded the Victoria Cross (VC). He was one of seven Australians awarded the VC for bravery at Lone Pine.

In October Leonard was evacuated to England with enteric fever. He re-joined his battalion in France early the following year, and by July was involved in heavy fighting at Pozieres, which saw the 1st Division lose some 5,000 men within five days. Though Leonard survived, by the end of six weeks of fighting, 23,000 Australians had become casualties, 6,800 of whom had been killed.

**“Conspicuous bravery”: Lieutenant Leonard Keyzor**

Leonard was born in 1885 into a well-off Jewish family in Paddington, London. Growing up, he enjoyed family holidays at Brighton on Britain’s south coast. During his school years at Tonleigh Castle in Ramsgate, Leonard excelled in cricket as a bowler and fielder, skills that he would later use as a soldier on Gallipoli. After leaving school, Leonard spent ten years in Canada before migrating to Sydney in March 1914. By this time his brother Stanley and sister Margery were also living in Australia.

In August 1914 the First World War broke out and the call to arms could be heard across the country. Just two weeks later Leonard left his job as a clerk and enlisted with the 1st Battalion, the first infantry unit raised in New South Wales for the war. Boarding SS Afric in October, Leonard joined the first group of the AIF to depart on overseas service. As the ship set sail, the last he saw of Australia was the port town of Albany on the south coast of Western Australia.

Leonard trained for several months in Egypt before taking part in the landing on Gallipoli on the morning of 25 April 1915. In August he joined his unit in the attack at Lone Pine, part of a general attempt to break through Turkish lines. At dusk on 6 August the 1st Division attacked and seized the Turkish trenches at Lone Pine. This was followed by three days of heavy fighting as the Turkish troops retaliated. As bombs landed in the trench, Leonard would use either sandbags or his overcoat to smother them or, if there was time, throw the bombs back. Although wounded twice, he refused treatment and kept going for 50 hours until the fighting lessened. For his “most conspicuous bravery and devotion to duty at Lone Pine Trenches”, Leonard was awarded the Victoria Cross (VC). He was one of seven Australians awarded the VC for bravery at Lone Pine.

In October Leonard was evacuated to England with enteric fever. He re-joined his battalion in France early the following year, and by July was involved in heavy fighting at Pozieres, which saw the 1st Division lose some 5,000 men within five days. Though Leonard survived, by the end of six weeks of fighting, 23,000 Australians had become casualties, 6,800 of whom had been killed.

**“Conspicuous bravery”: Lieutenant Leonard Keyzor**

Leonard was born in 1885 into a well-off Jewish family in Paddington, London. Growing up, he enjoyed family holidays at Brighton on Britain’s south coast. During his school years at Tonleigh Castle in Ramsgate, Leonard excelled in cricket as a bowler and fielder, skills that he would later use as a soldier on Gallipoli. After leaving school, Leonard spent ten years in Canada before migrating to Sydney in March 1914. By this time his brother Stanley and sister Margery were also living in Australia.

In August 1914 the First World War broke out and the call to arms could be heard across the country. Just two weeks later Leonard left his job as a clerk and enlisted with the 1st Battalion, the first infantry unit raised in New South Wales for the war. Boarding SS Afric in October, Leonard joined the first group of the AIF to depart on overseas service. As the ship set sail, the last he saw of Australia was the port town of Albany on the south coast of Western Australia.

Leonard trained for several months in Egypt before taking part in the landing on Gallipoli on the morning of 25 April 1915. In August he joined his unit in the attack at Lone Pine, part of a general attempt to break through Turkish lines. At dusk on 6 August the 1st Division attacked and seized the Turkish trenches at Lone Pine. This was followed by three days of heavy fighting as the Turkish troops retaliated. As bombs landed in the trench, Leonard would use either sandbags or his overcoat to smother them or, if there was time, throw the bombs back. Although wounded twice, he refused treatment and kept going for 50 hours until the fighting lessened. For his “most conspicuous bravery and devotion to duty at Lone Pine Trenches”, Leonard was awarded the Victoria Cross (VC). He was one of seven Australians awarded the VC for bravery at Lone Pine.

In October Leonard was evacuated to England with enteric fever. He re-joined his battalion in France early the following year, and by July was involved in heavy fighting at Pozieres, which saw the 1st Division lose some 5,000 men within five days. Though Leonard survived, by the end of six weeks of fighting, 23,000 Australians had become casualties, 6,800 of whom had been killed.
Over the next two years Leonard participated in a number of battles on the Western Front and was twice wounded, for the last time in May 1918 after a gas bombardment near Villers-Bretonneux.

Five months later Leonard and nine other VC recipients were invited by Australian Prime Minister William Hughes to return to Australia to assist with the recruiting campaign. They returned on board HMAT Medic, the same ship that had brought Leonard to Australia four years earlier. After being discharged from the AIF in December Leonard again took up work as a clerk. He returned to London in 1920, where he married Gladys Benjamin at Hill Street Synagogue. The couple settled close to where Leonard had grown up.

Leonard was later asked to re-enact the actions for which he was awarded his VC for a silent film titled *For valour*. He was severely injured during the filming when a replica bomb exploded close to his face. Leonard volunteered for service in the Second World War but was rejected on medical grounds. He died in London in 1951, aged 65.

Why do you think VC recipients were featured on these cards? What does this suggest about how VC recipients were viewed in Australia during the First World War?

Leonard’s medals, including (left to right) the Victoria Cross, ribbon for the 1914–15 Star (medal missing), British War Medal, Victory Medal, and George VI Coronation Medal.

After the war, when Leonard was living in England, his house was robbed and his Victoria Cross was stolen. It was later returned to him in an envelope with an apology scrawled on the front.

**The Anzac Buffet**

In 1915 Leonard and five other VC recipients attended the Anzac Buffet in London. Established by Australians living in London, the Anzac Buffet provided free meals and entertainment for Australian servicemen.

**In the words of Charles Bean** ...

As they waited in the crowded bays, there was not the least sign of nervousness in face, speech, or action. The prevailing thought was: “It’s the turn of the 1st Brigade to show what it can do.”

The lush, tropical landscape of south-eastern Queensland must have seemed a world away from her homeland for 28 year old Ernestine Julianne Schwarz when she arrived in Australia in April 1886. Born in Rendsburg, in Schleswig–Holstein, northern Germany, Ernestine married Poul Christensen, a Danish migrant, one month after arriving in Australia. The couple set up home in the small timber town of Tiaro in Queensland, where Poul worked as a carpenter.

Within eight years the family had seen the birth of two daughters and three sons. After they left school, sons Andreas (known as Andrew), Poul (known as Dan), and Victor took up jobs in the local agricultural and sawmilling industries, and eldest daughter Victoria left home to train as a nurse in Brisbane. She worked in the Children’s Hospital for five years, eventually becoming a matron.

After the First World War broke out, Victoria, aged 28, was the first in the family to volunteer to serve, enlisting in the Australian Army Nursing Service in 1915. She was one of more than 3,000 Australian nurses who enlisted during the war. Nursing was then a profession just for women, and provided a way for them to directly participate in the war effort. Many of the women also saw it as a way to be closer to loved ones serving overseas.

The Christensens were a close-knit family. In the next 12 months all three sons had also enlisted. Eldest son Andrew left Australia with reinforcements for the 15th Battalion. He served in France and Belgium until he was wounded in the leg by an exploding artillery shell during an action in August 1917. Andrew was evacuated to a hospital in England before returning to Australia in December 1917. For the rest of his life he had only limited use of his damaged leg.

Middle son Dan was living in Bundaberg with Margaret, his wife of just two months, when he left Brisbane with Andrew in October 1916. Like Andrew, he also served with the 15th Battalion, but worked as a stretcher-bearer. Life in the trenches on the Western Front was hard, the men often knee-deep in cold, wet mud. Dan suffered from trench fever for much of 1917, but went on to serve with his unit for the remainder of the war. He returned home to his family in Queensland in mid-1919.
Youngest son Victor enlisted in September 1915, just three months after Victoria. Tall and fair haired, Victor was only 20 years old at the time, and working in the local saw mill. He left for Egypt in March 1916 and spent some time training before joining the 42nd Battalion and embarking for service on the Western Front.

Sickness dogged Victor for much of his time overseas. He was hospitalised several times with pneumonia, prompting his mother Ernestine to enquire after his condition in March 1917:

A little more than a month ago, I had a telegram from you advising me that my son Corporal Victor Christensen was seriously ill with bronchitis, pneumonia... since then I have heard no news. Please can you tell me anything, or what may be likely to be the reason?6

By June Victor was serving on the front line at Messines in Belgium. Just before dawn on 7 June 1917, the allies detonated 19 enormous mines under the German trenches. The explosions could be heard kilometres away. British, Australian, and New Zealand soldiers eventually recaptured the area. A few weeks later, on 31 July, while carrying out further attacks on concrete pillboxes in nearby Warneton, Victor was killed.

News of Victor’s death was reported back home in Queensland in the local paper:

The news that Private Victor Christensen had been reported killed in action somewhere in France was received at Tiaro with many expressions of regret. Private Christensen was a native of Tiaro and was well known and respected by the residents of the district.7

Victor and Victoria seem to have had a strong bond. In June 1917 Victor had nominated Victoria as the recipient of his personal belongings should he die. A package was later sent to her at No. 2 Australian Auxiliary Hospital in Southall, England. Among its contents were photos, a mirror, a scarf, a balaclava, and mittens. In August Victoria wrote to a friend, “My baby brother was killed just a month ago, and I can hardly realise it even yet.” (AWM PR03076)

Victor has no known grave, but his name is listed on the Menin Gate Memorial in Ypres, Belgium and on the Roll of Honour at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra.

For some reason the French – not only the people, but even some of the military leaders – before they knew anything of the Australians except by sight or from press reports, and certainly long before the troops had given any proof of their quality in France, accepted them as among the finest fighters in the war.

“Gallantry in action”:
Captain Marcel Aurousseau

Marcel’s grandfather Hippolyte Aurousseau emigrated to Australia from central France in 1850. Not long after, Sarah Doubleday, a French scholar and teacher, arrived in Sydney from her home in London. Hippolyte struggled to learn English and was introduced to Sarah for help. The pair fell in love and married the following year. They had two sons: Francois and George. Hippolyte was naturalised in 1874 and formally became a British subject.

George grew up to be an artist, teacher and jeweller, and had a love of the Australian landscape. He married fellow artist Kathleen Bourke, whose parents had emigrated from Ireland in the 1850s. Their son, Marcel, born in 1891, inherited his father’s love of nature. After working as an office boy at the Australian Museum, he studied a Bachelor of Science degree at the University of Sydney. He was working as a lecturer in geology at the University of Western Australia when the First World War began.

In August 1915 Marcel joined the AIF, aged 24, and was given the rank of second lieutenant. After a long sea journey, he joined the 51st Battalion on the Western Front. Marcel was promoted to lieutenant in July 1916, and the following month, during the battalion’s first major battle at Mouquet Farm, he earned a Military Cross for bravery. The citation for his medal read:

For conspicuous gallantry in action. He took command when his company commander was killed and inspired all ranks by his fine example. During a night attack he led his company forward with great dash until he was severely wounded.”

Marcel was evacuated to England. Between August and September, approximately one-third of his battalion became casualties. After several months in hospital, Marcel returned to France and was soon promoted to captain. In 1917 he was transferred to the 13th Training Battalion in England, where he served until June 1918. He rejoined the 51st Battalion in France, and two months later, as the allies launched their August Offensive, Marcel was again wounded in action and hospitalised.

Marcel recovered from his wounds and returned to Australia in June 1919. For conspicuous service Marcel was Mentioned in Despatches by Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig, Commander in Chief of the British Expeditionary Forces in France and Belgium, and was awarded the French Croix de Guerre.

Marcel returned to his job at the University of Western Australia, continuing his work as a well-known geologist and scientist in England and Washington DC. During the Second World War Marcel helped produce geographical dictionaries on foreign countries for the Allied forces in London. He retired to Australia in 1956, having been awarded the Victoria Medal of the Royal Geographical Society. Marcel passed away in 1983, aged 92.

Lieutenant Marcel Aurousseau, 51st Battalion, AIF.

AWM E04946

The French Croix de Guerre (left, shown here with an oak leaf) was introduced in April 1915 by the French government. It recognised acts of bravery against the enemy that were Mentioned in Despatches. All allied soldiers, sailors and airmen were eligible for the award.

AWM E15566

Captain Marcel Aurousseau, 51st Battalion, AIF. (AWM P00088.004)

AWM E43446

What would the white flag have symbolised?

The Military Cross (right).

AWM E205447

The words of Charles Bean ...

Brought in on the night of August 4th, the 4th Division (of which the 51st Battalion was a part) had in nine days not only borne the brunt of the German countermeasures against Pozières heights, but in six successive night attacks – with only one night’s interval – had brought the line within striking distance of Munster Farm. Its losses were considerably lighter than those of its two predecessors, 4,649 in all.

William Oldfield, known to his family and friends as Bert, was a keen cricketer. Born in 1894 to Englishman John Oldfield and his wife, Mary, Bert grew up with his six older brothers and sisters in the inner-city suburbs of Sydney. He was known as a calm and polite boy, and first learnt to play cricket at Cleveland Street School. He showed great potential as a bowler and batsman, and went on to play with the Newtown Methodist Church team in the Churches Cricket Union (CCU) competition. Early in the twentieth century, cricket was believed to be a game played by men of high moral standards, and the CCU was established to encourage understanding between religious denominations.

Taking up work as a tramways clerk when he finished school, Bert also played for Glebe Cricket Club. There, his finest cricketing skill was revealed when the regular wicket-keeper failed to show up for a game. Bert took over the position and was so impressive in the role that he became the club’s permanent wicket-keeper. By 1915 he had also become club secretary, and twice played for the first-grade side.

In 1915, however, Bert’s life changed forever. He, like other young Australians, had heard the stories of the Anzacs on Gallipoli, and on 7 September, at 20 years of age, Bert enlisted in the AIF at Victoria Barracks in Sydney.

“The gentleman in gloves”:
Major William Oldfield

William Oldfield (back row, far right) with other members of the AIF cricket team, at Lord's Cricket Ground, London, May 1919.

Why would a cricket competition have been created so soon after the end of the First World War?

What is Bert wearing?
Just three days before Christmas that year Bert bid farewell to his family. On board HMAT Ascanius, he set sail for Egypt to undergo training as a medical attendant in Cairo. He went on to England and then France, joining the 15th Field Ambulance as a stretcher-bearer, helping to treat wounded soldiers close to the battlefields.

The war on the Western Front was raging by 1917. On 26 September Bert was wounded in action and evacuated to the Voluntary Aid Hospital in Cheltenham, London. He recuperated, but remained in England until the end of the war, at times working at the 3rd Australian Auxiliary Hospital.

After the Armistice in November 1918 many Australians began to be repatriated. Others, like Bert, stayed on in Europe. Still in England in early 1919, Bert heard rumours that a new first-class cricket season was being planned. The AIF Cricket Team was established, and having played a trial game Bert was selected after well-known wicket-keeper Ted Long resigned his position. The team played over 40 matches in Great Britain and South Africa, and another three back home in Australia, before disbanding in 1920.

Just a few months later Bert was selected to play cricket for Australia in three Test matches of the 1920–21 Ashes series against England. Known as the “gentleman in gloves”, he played over 50 Tests for Australia and was considered by many to be the world’s leading wicket-keeper of his time.

Bert eventually opened his own sports store on Pitt Street in Sydney. He married his sweetheart, Ruth Hunter, in 1929 and they had two daughters. Bert served again during the Second World War, this time as a major, and was involved in the Bougainville campaign in 1945.

Remembering his connection to the church from his early years playing for the CCU, Bert spent his later life assisting the congregation at Saint Martin’s Anglican Church in Killara. In 1970 Bert became a Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) for his services to cricket.

**Did you know?**

Of the Australians who served overseas in the AIF during the First World War, around 35 per cent had been born in the British Isles.10

---

**Families farewell loved ones as they board HMAT Ascanius, 1916.**

*AWM PB0135*

How would you feel if one of your family members was leaving for war on board the Ascanius? How might those leaving feel?

---

**In the Words of Charles Bean**...

The sight of the wounded lying ... helpless in No-Man’s Land, within a stone’s throw of safety but apparently without hope of it, made a strong appeal that more than one Australian, taking his life in his hands, were out to tend them.

“Band of brothers”:
the Langtips

In 1856, at 19 years of age, Chin Lang Tip farewelled his family in China and set sail for Australia. Once he arrived in Victoria Chin quickly made his way to the goldfields, hoping, like thousands of others, to strike it rich. Though unsuccessful, Chin stayed on in Victoria, and changed his surname to “Langtip”. He married and settled in the tiny town of Tarra ville, where he leased a house and some land, and established a successful market garden. Chin became well known and highly regarded in his community, and went on to have a large family whose members helped run the family business.

In January 1916 six of Chin’s sons volunteered to serve during the First World War. Two of them did not pass the medical test, but the other four, Henry, Ernest, Leslie, and Bertie, were accepted into the AIF and served in the 4th Light Horse Regiment. Henry was 27, Ernest 21, Leslie 20, and Bertie just 18 years old. On Ernest’s enlistment form the words “of substantial European origin” were written. This referred to the 1909 Defence Act, which prevented those considered not of substantial European descent from enlisting in the armed forces.1

Leslie Langtip, c. 1916–17.
Photograph from the private collection of Dorothy Langtip.

Henry Langtip, c. 1916–17.
Photograph from the private collection of Dorothy Langtip.

Ernest Langtip, c. 1916–17.
Photograph from the private collection of Dorothy Langtip.

Bertie Langtip, c. 1916–17.
Photograph from the private collection of Dorothy Langtip.

The Distinguished Conduct Medal. Leslie was one of 19 Chinese-Australians decorated for bravery during the First World War.
AWM REL/06428
After some time spent training in Australia, it was time to say goodbye. In March the local community gathered to wish the boys well. The Gippsland Standard reported that the Langtip brothers were admired for their “manly qualities” and they were each presented with a wristwatch as a gift from the town. Henry took some time to say a private goodbye to his sweetheart, Eileen.12

The following month, the four boys boarded HMAT Itria at Port Melbourne Pier. Many of their family and friends came to bid them farewell. Their sister Lily threw four paper parcels up to them – each had one of the boys’ initials written on the front. As the ship pulled away from the pier Henry looked back at his family. He later wrote in his diary:

Ruth and Lily kept a straight face with an effort. Didn’t think I would feel it so much, never forget it, could see Ruth and Lily after all others were lost to sight as they were standing together on end of pier ...

AWM PR00053

In Egypt the boys were issued with rations and blankets and taken to their camp. For the next year they served in a Light Horse squadron before being transferred to the Imperial Camel Corps, where they trained and performed guard duty along the Suez Canal. During their spare time, the boys watched and participated in football, cricket, and boxing matches, attended concerts, went sightseeing to the pyramids, and swam in the canal. They also wrote letters and waited for news and packages from home. Soon after arriving in Egypt, Henry wrote:

Received the first mail from home, postcard from Ruth and 1 letter from Eileen. It takes a long time to get a letter from home. Tonight I don’t know why but I feel as if I was sick of the whole job. East, West, home’s best.

AWM PR00053

Christmas billy tins

The Langtip brothers were among those who received Christmas billy tins in 1916.

The iconic Australian billy tin was used early in the First World War to send some “Christmas cheer” to Australian servicemen overseas. Each billy was filled with gifts by members of the Australian public and sent to a soldier for Christmas. These billies could be filled with things like plum pudding, chewing gum, pencils, paper and envelopes, handkerchiefs, clothing, insect powder, and bootlaces.

What would this gift have meant to Australians serving overseas?

Why?

A Christmas billy tin put together by the Melbourne Alexandra Club for soldiers on Gallipoli, 1915.

AWM P09871.001

What can you see depicted in the illustration on the billy tin?

What story does it tell?
In February 1917 the Langtip brothers were transferred back to the 4th Light Horse Regiment, and on 31 October participated in their first major battle at Beersheba. In one day the regiment forced its way through Turkish defences and successfully took the strategically important town. This victory enabled allied forces to advance into Palestine. 

Henry described his experiences that day in his diary:

```
We rode all night to get right around Beersheba, 32 miles in all. It is 9.30 am and we are all standing to. Our horses ready to go into the line to attack within the next few minutes. It was a terrible ride in heavy dust all the way … The attack started at 4.30 pm and within half an hour the first trenches were cleared and then they never stopped till they got Beersheba. Our casualties were fairly light considering the ground was as level as a table.
```

Over the next year the brothers were involved in several other battles, and during this time Leslie was wounded in the left thigh and evacuated for treatment. He soon re-joined the regiment and they were trained in traditional cavalry tactics with swords for the advance towards Damascus on 30 September 1918. During this battle, Leslie was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal for bravery. Part of the citation for his award read:

```
… this non-commissioned officer gave valuable assistance in the capture of a field gun, and showed great initiative and courage.
```

The war ended on 11 November 1918 and all four brothers began to think about returning home. They left Egypt together in June 1919 on board HMAT Essex. Henry married Eileen the following year. Ernest also married, and his twin sons, David and Graeme, went on to serve in the Second World War. Leslie married in 1929 and the following year he changed his surname to “Langton”.

George Lambert, The Charge of the Australian Light Horse at Beersheba, 1917 (1920, oil on canvas, 139.5 x 261.7 x 10 cm, AWM ART02811)
“Great bravery and dash”: Sergeant Nicholas Rodakis

Greek-born Nicholas Rodakis started work as a ship’s fireman while still a teenager. His seafaring job took him to many countries, including Australia, where he arrived in 1902. He settled in Melbourne, married Lydia, and continued to work on various ships up and down the Australian coast. In 1909, Nicholas, now aged 30, applied to become a naturalised citizen of the Commonwealth of Australia. The police report attached to his application showed him to be “of good character”.

Like thousands of other men in Australia during the First World War, Nicholas enlisted in the AIF. He left his job as an engine driver, farewelled his wife and young son, and departed from Melbourne as part of the 17th reinforcements for the 4th Battalion on 4 April 1916. By the end of July he was stationed in France with the 4th Machine Gun Company.

Despite recurring bouts of severe tonsillitis, Nicholas proved to be a tough and skilful soldier. He was promoted to lance corporal in May 1917, and was awarded a Military Medal “for conspicuous gallantry and skill as a machine gunner” on 27 September 1917. His citation read:

... he proved himself of distinctive value near Zonnebeke on the afternoon of 27th September 1917, when a heavy counter attack was impending and our parapet was being swept by enemy snipers and machine guns in addition to artillery barrage. He mounted his gun in a very exposed position ... although his tripod was hit several times, and his tunic ripped, he fearlessly stood to his post ... The work done by this NCO was of considerable value in repulsing a determined counter attack by the enemy.

In 1918, the last year of the war, Nicholas was promoted to corporal and then to sergeant. Along with members of his battalion he was attached to the 105th United States Infantry. In an action near Ronsoy, France, on 29 September Nicholas again showed “extraordinary heroism”, for which he was awarded the United States Distinguished Service Cross (Army) by the President of the United States. The citation read: “Organising troops from different units, Sergeant Rodakis exhibited great bravery and dash in leading them into effective combat, inspiring all by his courage and fearlessness.”

As well as a medal, this award entitled Nicholas to a pension of £25 per year, and a free pass for the American Railways. Nicholas returned home to Melbourne in June 1919. He died in 1961 at the age of 83.

In the words of Charles Bean...
From shopkeeper to soldier:

Private Vincent Mahboub

Vincent Mahboub was just a baby when his parents, Michael and Rose, brought him and his older sister, Elizabeth, to Australia in 1900.

Leaving their home in the Ottoman province of Syria (now Lebanon), the Mahboubs came, like many migrants, in search of a better life and new opportunities. Many of the early Syrian and Lebanese settlers opened clothing shops, some even travelling around to country towns selling fabric and accessories such as shoes and handbags.

Michael Mahboub became a shopkeeper in the small village of Capertee, west of Lithgow in New South Wales. The railway line through the Blue Mountains had not long been open, connecting Sydney with western New South Wales. Small towns like Capertee sprung up and caught the passing trade. By 1909 four more children had been born to Michael and Rose; Mary, Ada, Gabriel, and Eileen.

Vincent attended school in nearby Lithgow, after which he started work as a shop assistant. When the First World War broke out, Vincent was 15 years of age and too young to enlist. Men had to be 21 years old, but could be accepted at 18 if their parents gave permission. In June 1917 Vincent signed up. By the following March he was on his way overseas on board the troopship HMAT Nestor. Tall and well-built, Vincent often took part in boxing matches organised by the men to pass the time on the long voyage.

In July 1918 Vincent joined the 35th Battalion and by early August moved on to the Western Front in Rouelles, France. The war had dragged on for four long years, with victories gained by both sides in the trenches of France and Belgium. Plans were underway for the Australians, led by Lieutenant General Sir John Monash, to assist in a huge combined attack designed to push through the German front lines once and for all. Tanks, infantry, and aircraft were all organised to work together in the area around Amiens and Villers-Bretonneux.

The attack began at first light on 8 August. Thick foggy conditions concealed the Australians as they moved forward. Vincent set off with his platoon, but his time as a soldier was to be short lived. As he emerged from a trench in Accroche Wood, Vincent was killed instantly by an exploding shell. He was just 18 years old, and had been on the front line for a little over a week.

In an Australian Red Cross Society inquiry into the circumstances of his death, eyewitnesses recorded that Vincent Mahboub was buried in a French cemetery near Bray, and that his battalion colours were attached to the small cross on his grave. Private Madden of the same platoon noted that “he was well liked” (AWM 1DRL/0428).

Private Vincent Mahboub, 1918.

Two months after Vincent’s death, his mother gave birth to another boy. He was named Vincent Michael, in honour of her son that had died. Three years later, baby Arthur was born. Both boys were still teenagers when their parents died within a week of each other in June 1937. During the Second World War, Vincent Michael served with the 2/18th Infantry Battalion and was captured by the Japanese in Malaya in 1942. He was held as a prisoner of war at Keijo camp in Korea until the end of the war. Arthur joined 3 Field Survey Company and served in New Guinea and Bougainville during 1944–45. This unit produced and distributed maps to be used by the soldiers in the field. Despite suffering from various bouts of illness and enduring difficult conditions, both brothers returned home safely at the end of the war.

How do you think the soldiers were feeling?
Equal in service:
Trooper Frank Fisher

Born in 1880 into the Wangan and Jagalingou Aboriginal communities in the town of Clermont, Queensland, Frank Fisher grew up under the watchful eye of his elders. He spent much of his time with friends and family, playing sport and swimming in the local Hoods Lagoon. As a young man Frank moved to the coastal town of Ayr in northern Queensland. There he married his first wife, Rosie Shilling, and the couple had three children: Willie, Frank Junior, and Dorris.

In 1911 Frank and his family were removed from Ayr and sent to Barambah Aboriginal Settlement, north-west of Brisbane. Barambah was a government-run reserve, and the authorities there controlled many aspects of the inhabitants’ lives, from their finances, work, and marriages to their language and the practice of traditional customs. Residents received a rudimentary education with an emphasis on manual activities, but often did not learn to read and write.

Frank was still living at the reserve with his children and his second wife, Esme Haywood, working as a labourer, at the time of the First World War. The 1909 Defence Act stated that individuals who were “not substantially of European origin or descent” were excluded from training and service in the armed forces.17 This policy prevented many Indigenous Australians from enlisting during the First World War. Regardless, more than 1,300 managed to join up. One of them was Frank Fisher, who enlisted in the AIF on 16 August 1917, at almost 38 years of age. Unable to write, he signed his enlistment form with an “x”.

Four months later, Frank set sail from Sydney with a reinforcement group for the 11th Light Horse Regiment on board the troopship Ulysses, bound for Egypt. After training, Frank placed an emu plume in his slouch hat to distinguish himself as a light horseman, and served with the 11th Light Horse Regiment until the end of the war. Many Indigenous Australians recalled that their time spent serving in the AIF during the First World War was the first time they felt they had been treated as equals.

Did you know?

More than one-quarter of the 1,300 Indigenous Australians who served in the AIF during the First World War did so with mounted units, including the Light Horse. There were rigid requirements for service with mounted units: a man had to be a good shot, a good horseman, and a bushman, able to find his way in unfamiliar territory.18 Many Indigenous Australians who volunteered to enlist easily met these requirements due to their pre-existing skills and rural occupations.

Trooper Frank Fisher dressed in the uniform of the Light Horse Regiment.

AWM F00888/015

Why do you think some Indigenous Australians were denied enlistment into the AIF?

A soldier feeding officers’ horses on board HMMAT Ulysses, c. 1915.

AWM A01234

Why would thousands of Australian horses or “walers” have been sent overseas for use during the First World War?

HMMAT Ulysses at Port Melbourne Pier, December 1914.

AWM PB1083
Boomerangs are commonly presented to an individual or crew before their departure for war service to symbolise their safe return home. This boomerang was presented to First World War soldier Captain Ambrose Campbell Carmichael. It is inscribed with the Aboriginal word Thynulungatha, translated from the Aboriginal dialect of the Brewarrina district of New South Wales as “come back here.”

Boomerangs have also been used in designs for sweetheart badges. These were worn by female relatives of men serving in wartime as a symbol of hope for the safe return of their loved ones.

A light horseman tending to the horses at Mena Camp, Egypt, c. 1915.

Catherine Freeman, 1993.

In the words of Charles Bean ...

The Australian Light Horse ... was in body and spirit the true product of the wide Australian countryside ... Some of the regiments, whose recruiting areas were close to cities and towns, included a small number of townsfolk, but the light horse as a whole was essentially a force of countrymen, most of whom actually bred and owned the horses on which they did their few weeks of compulsory annual training.

The war in colour:
Honorary Lieutenant Harold Septimus Power

Harold Septimus Power was born in Dunedin, New Zealand, in 1877. After gold was discovered near the town in 1861 its population quickly grew, attracting immigrants from Britain, Europe, and Asia. Harold’s parents, Englishman Peter Power and his Scottish wife, Jane, settled in Dunedin as a young couple. The family moved to Victoria when Harold was a small boy, and he and his seven brothers and sisters grew up there. Suffering from an unusual form of deafness, Harold did not excel at school; instead he spent hours illustrating his books. Though his father was a painter and art teacher himself, he discouraged Harold from pursuing a career in art. But Harold ignored his father’s advice, and at the age of 14 he ran away to the bush to paint the Australian countryside and animals.

After moving to Melbourne, Harold took a job painting animals on the sides of butchers’ vans. He also worked as a veterinarian’s assistant. Harold did some formal art training and exhibited his work with the Melbourne Art Club, where he won the animal and landscape sections and drew the attention of his peers. Well-known artist Walter Withers convinced Harold’s father that his son had the talent needed to become a successful artist.

In 1900 Harold moved to Adelaide. There he worked as a political cartoonist for various newspapers, including the Observer, the Register, and the Critic, producing amusing sketches of politicians, local people and events. Four years later Harold married Isabel Butterworth and the young couple moved to Europe. Their first stop was Paris – the art centre of the world – where Harold attended the Académie Julian, a modern school which taught the newest developments and techniques in art. In London he continued his art studies and exhibited at the prestigious Royal Academy of Arts.

In 1914 Harold Power, while working as an official war artist during the First World War.

As a young artist, he began signing his name as H. Septimus Power, hoping the new name would impress art dealers.

Harold Power, Soldier’s head (1918, oil on canvas, 57.4 x 46.8 x 6.2 cm, AWM ART50024)

This soldier is wearing an “A” badge on his sleeve. Australians who had served during the Gallipoli campaign in 1915 were authorised to wear this on their unit colour patch to identify them as “Anzacs”.

Why would it have been considered important that veterans of Gallipoli be recognised in this way?

H. Septimus Power, Battle of Menin Road (1917, watercolour, charcoal, white gouache on paper mounted on board, 54.2 x 76 cm, AWM ART03327)

This scene shows the action on 20 September 1917 during the battle of Menin Road on the Western Front.

Examine the painting. Describe what you can see happening.

What does this scene suggest about the nature of fighting on the Western Front during the First World War? What were conditions like? What technology was used?
Between 1913 and 1914 Harold travelled between England and Australia, and was living in London when the First World War began. For the next three years he followed news of the Australians on Gallipoli and on the Western Front battlefields. On 3 September 1917 Harold, now 40 years old and an established artist, was appointed an official war artist. He was attached to the 1st Division, AIF, given the honorary rank of lieutenant, and provided with the necessary art supplies. His role was to capture the Australian experience of war.

Harold made the first of two trips to France at the end of September 1917 alongside fellow artist Fred Leist and Australia’s official war correspondent, Charles Bean. Their first night in France was a memorable one – the three men were forced to shelter together in the cellar of a house in Hazebrouck while the town was being shelled by German artillery.

For three months Harold closely observed the daily life of the Australian soldiers in France. Some of his sketches captured Australians in the midst of battle, struggling to cope with the freezing winter conditions, while others showed them resting and sharing stories with their mates. These works of art were considered so impressive that Harold was invited to produce some large-scale paintings for Australia’s planned national museum and memorial. These paintings were to depict significant military personalities and events that had occurred during the First World War. Harold returned to France between August 1918 and March 1920 to conduct research. This, along with Charles Bean’s guidance, provided Harold with an understanding of the environment and enough historical knowledge to recreate the battle scenes. Many of these paintings still hang in the galleries of the Australian War Memorial.

Harold returned to Australia after his wife passed away in May 1935. After remarrying he settled in Melbourne and continued to paint into his later life. By the time of his death in 1951, Harold was one of Australia’s most well-known and popular artists. Fellow Australian artist Louis McCubbin said:

His abilities particularly fitted him to be a painter of war subjects such as charging horses... He was outstanding as an animal painter – the most important Australia has produced in this field.

---

Did you know?

Official war artists are employed under the Australian Official War Art Scheme, which was introduced in 1916 and still runs today. Under this scheme, artists accompany military units on conflict or peacekeeping missions to record their impressions of the mission and the experiences of those serving within it.
What is their ancestry?

Each location on the map indicates the heritage of the individuals or families whose stories are told in this book.

1. Charles Bean
2. The Coriglianos
3. Karanema Pohatu
4. The Righettis
5. Leonard Keyzor
6. The Christensens
7. Marcel Aurousseau
8. Bert Oldfield
9. The Langtips
10. Nicholas Rodakis
11. Vincent Mahboub
12. Frank Fisher
13. Harold Septimus Power
Glossary

able seaman
The rank of a sailor in the Royal Navy and Royal Australian Navy, above ordinary seaman and below leading seaman.

Aboriginal protector
Under the Aboriginal Protection Act 1886, individuals were appointed to act on behalf of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in legal matters.

affinity
A natural understanding for or liking of something or someone.

allies
Countries that work together towards a common goal.

artificers
A skilled mechanic who works in the armed forces, especially in the navy.

artillery
Guns that fire large-calibre shells over long distances. They can be moveable or stationary and range from light to heavy pieces. Also refers to the units as a whole, such as “Royal Australian Artillery”.

Australian Soldiers’ Repatriation Act
The Australian Soldiers’ Repatriation Act 1920. Under this act soldiers were able to apply for a pension for wounds sustained during the First World War.

balaclava
A close-fitting garment worn for warmth over the head and face, which typically exposes only the eyes and mouth.

Boxer Rebellion
A violent movement in China against foreigners (including the British) and Christians, which took place between 1898 and 1900.

brassard
A band, usually cloth, worn on the upper arm over the uniform. Used to temporarily denote unit, role, and/or rank.

bonza
A slang term meaning “excellent”.

British subject
A citizen of Britain or her dominions.

casualties
People listed as sick, wounded, missing, or killed in action during war.

citation
A brief official statement explaining why a medal was awarded.

classics
A school or university subject involving the study of ancient Greek and Latin literature, philosophy, and history.

conspicuous service
Remarkable service that attracts the attention of officers and can often result in the award of a decoration.

coxswain
The person who steers a boat.

cumbrous
Difficult to handle, particularly due to size, weight, or shape.

denominations
Recognised branches of the Christian church (e.g. Presbyterian, Catholic Church).

Distinguished Conduct Medal
A medal awarded for distinguished conduct in the field. Initially, only members of the army could be awarded this medal, but from 1942 members of the navy and air force were also eligible. It is only open to non-commissioned officers and other ranks.

dominion
A country which is part of an empire.

enteric fever
An infectious disease spread by drinking water or eating food that contains bacteria. It causes high fever, as well as stomach swelling and ulcers.

governess
A female who is employed to teach children in a private household.

Grand Fleet
The main fleet of the British Royal Navy in the First World War.

HMCS
Her Majesty’s Colonial Ship.

honorary
An honour or title given without the usual requirements, as a mark of respect.

mechanician
A person who designs or constructs machinery. It is also a naval rank.

memento
An object serving as a reminder of an event or person.

Military Cross
A British and Commonwealth decoration instituted in 1914 and awarded to officers for brave and distinguished active service on land.

Military Medal
A British medal introduced during the First World War, awarded to military personnel who were not officers for bravery and devotion to duty under fire.

Militia
A military force consisting of civilians, designed to supplement a regular army in an emergency.

naturalised
The process by which an individual who was born in one country becomes a citizen of another country.

NCO
Non-Commissioned Officer (e.g. sergeant, corporal).

Nominal Roll
A list of all who served in a military unit.

pillboxes
Small, low forts positioned on a battlefield, made of concrete, steel, logs, or filled sandbags and housing machine-guns and anti-tank weapons.

repatriated
A person who has been returned to their home country.

Royal Academy of Arts
An academy established in the eighteenth century to promote the arts.

sentries
Soldiers whose job it is to keep guard or control access to an area.

shell
An artillery projectile or bomb containing high explosive or shrapnel.

stoker
Someone who tends and fuels a furnace on a steamship or steam train.

telegrams
Written messages transmitted by using an electric device. The message was carried along wires, and the text was written or typed, then delivered.

trench fever
A disease contracted by soldiers in the trenches during the First World War, particularly in the warmer areas. It was transmitted through the bites of lice, and symptoms included headaches, rashes, swollen eyes, and limb pain.

très bon
A French term meaning “very good”.

tripod
A three-legged stand that supports a camera or other apparatus. Also used to support a machine-gun.

tuberculosis
An infectious and potentially deadly disease caused by bacteria entering the body, commonly occurring in the lungs. The patient can suffer from a bad cough, chest pain, weakness, and weight loss.

Victoria Cross
The highest award for bravery in battle, awarded to members of the British and Commonwealth forces during wartime.

war correspondent
A journalist who reports directly from a war zone.

Western Front
The central area of operations for allied forces in Western Europe during the First World War. It ran from the English Channel in Belgium through France to Belfort on the Swiss border, a distance of some 750 kilometres.
References


Each story contains a quote from the *Official history of Australia in the war of 1914–1918*, written by Charles Bean after the war. This publication can be found in full at: www.awm.gov.au/histories/first_world_war.

Useful websites

Australian Dictionary of Biography online
www.adb.anu.edu.au

Australian War Memorial collection data
www.awm.gov.au/search/collections

Australian War Memorial education

Australian War Memorial honours and awards
http://www.awm.gov.au/research/people/honours_and_awards

Department of Veterans’ Affairs
www.anzacportal.dva.gov.au

www.anzacsites.gov.au

www.wwiwesternfront.gov.au

www.australiansatwarfilmarchive.gov.au

National Archives of Australia
www.discoveringanzacs.naa.gov.au

National Library of Australia
http://trove.nla.gov.au

Department of Defence
http://www.defence.gov.au
Index

A
Aborigines, 3, 42–45
America, 38–39
Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC), 13
Anzac badge, 47
The Anzac book, 7
Anzac Buffet, 21
Anzac Commemorative Medallion, 17
Aurousseau, Marcel, 26–27
Australian Army Nursing Service, 3, 22
Australian Flying Corps, 3, 13
Australian Imperial Force, 3–49
Australian Light Horse regiments
1st, 37
2nd, 14–15
4th, 32, 36
5th, 14
11th, 42–45
Australian Red Cross, 3, 40
Australian War Memorial, 1, 6, 12, 15, 24, 29, 48
B
battalions (AIF)
1st, 18
3rd, 12
15th, 22–23
32nd, 10
35th, 40
42nd, 24–25
47th, 3
51st, 26–27
Beersheba, 36
Bean, Charles, 4–7, 10, 48
Bean, Jack, 5
billy tins, 35
Boer War, 14
boomerang, 45
Britain, 3, 8, 14, 16, 18, 28–31, 46
C
China, 3, 32–33
Christensen family, 22–25
colour patch, 15, 25, 39, 41
Corigliano family, 8–11
Coronation Medal, 11
cricket, 18, 28–31
D
Defence Act 1909, 3, 32, 42
Denmark, 22
Distinguished Conduct Medal, 3, 33, 36
E
Egypt, 16, 34–37, 42–44
entrenching tool, 13
F
Federation, 3
Field Ambulance, 30
Fisher, Frank, 42–45
football, 43–44
Freeman, Catherine, 44–45
French Croix de Guerre, 26–27
G
Gallipoli, 3, 6, 12–13, 14, 18–19, 21
Germany, 3, 13, 22, 40, 48
goldfields, 3, 32
Greece, 38
H
Haig, Douglas, 26
Hughes, William “Billy”, 20
J
Jewish Anzacs, 18
K
Keyzor, Maurice, 18–21
L
Lambert, George, 5, 17, 36
Langtip family, 32–37
Lone Pine, 18–21
M
4th Machine Gun Company, 38
Mattner, Edward, 3
Mahboub, Vincent, 40–41
Maori, 12–13
MBE, 30
McCubbin, Louis, 19, 41, 48
McNamara, Francis, 49
Mentioned in Despatches, 26
Messines, 24–25
migration, 3, 8, 14, 18, 22, 26, 40, 46
Military Cross, 3, 26–27
Military Medal, 3, 13, 38–39
Monash, John, 40
Mouquet Farm, 26–27
N
New Zealand, 8, 12–13, 24, 46
O
official war artist, 46–49
Oldfield, William, 28–31
P
pillbox, 24
Pohatu, Karanema, 12–13
Power, H. Septimus, 46–49
Pozieres, 18, 27
R
repatriation, 30, 36
Righetti family, 14–17
“rising sun” badge, 23
Rodakis, Nicholas, 38–39
Romani, 16–17
Royal Australian Navy, 3, 8–11
Russia, 3
S
Schmelzkopf, Albert, 13
Second World War, 16–17, 20, 26, 30–31, 36, 41, 44
Shang, Caleb, 3
ships
SS Afric, 18
HMAT Ascanius, 30
HMAS Australia, 8–9
HMAT Itria, 14, 34
HMAT Medic, 20
HMAS Melbourne, 10–11
HMAT Nestor, 40
HMAT Orsova, 22
HMCs Protector, 8
HMAS Sydney, 8–10
HMAT Ulysses, 43
SMS Emden, 10
Sicily, 8
Sing, Billy, 3
stretcher-bearer, 22–23, 27, 30
Switzerland, 14
Syria, 40
T
Treloar, John, 6
U
United States Distinguished Service Cross, 38–39
Victoria Cross, 20–21, 49
V
war correspondent, 4–7
weapons
jam tin bomb, 19
machine-gun, 38–39
Webley Mark IV revolver, 15
Western Front, 6–7, 10, 20, 22–27, 30–31, 38–39, 40–41, 47–49
Wheeler, Charles, 25
Recreation of a sample of the entries in the Nominal Roll for the Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force (ANMEF), showing the multicultural diversity of those who enlisted. This force was raised at the outbreak of war to seize German New Guinea and surrounding territories, and destroy wireless stations there. Members of the ANMEF continued to be stationed in garrisons there until 1921.

Nominal Roll of Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force to New Guinea, 1914–18 War: [Military Component] [Complete original roll], Australian War Memorial, AWM190 [4].
Every Australian wore on his collar an oxidised badge with the rising sun, and on each shoulder-strap the single word “Australia” … from the first they largely wore the felt hat, with its wide brim looped up on the left side which was already traditional with Australian soldiers. This hat, with its badge of the rising sun on the looped side, came to be the mark of the Australian throughout the world.