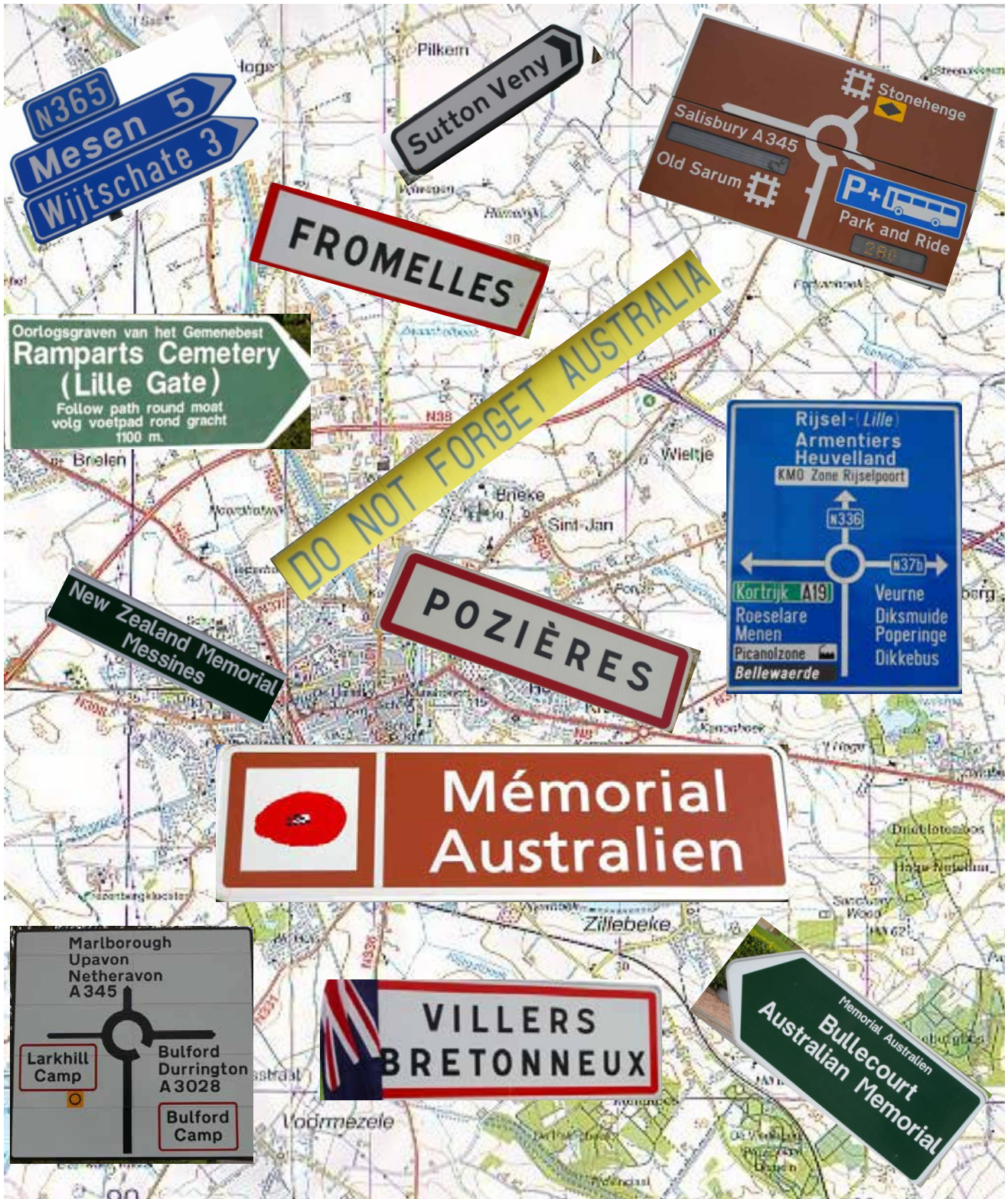


LEST WE FORGET THE WESTERN FRONT

A GUIDE TO FOLLOWING IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE FIRST AIF IN BRITAIN, BELGIUM AND FRANCE.



RON INGLIS

LEST WE FORGET THE WESTERN FRONT

A guide to following in the footsteps of the first AIF in Britain, Belgium and France.

Researched and written by Ron Inglis

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Email auburnrslsb@idx.com.au

LEST WE FORGET THE WESTERN FRONT

*They whom this roll commemorates
were numbered amongst those who answered the call of King and Country,
left all that was dear to them, endured hardships and dangers,
were prepared to pass out of the sight of man
by the path of duty and sacrifice that others may live in freedom.
Let those who come after see to it that their names be not forgotten.*

Inscription on the Soldiers Memorial Institute, Bendigo, Australia.

The names of our family ancestors who fought on the Western Front:

20478 Corporal William Inglis

Born: Montrose, Scotland 1883

Enlisted: 5 January 1915

Highland Light Infantry

City of Glasgow Regiment.

Discharged: 1 August 1919

3466 Private Abram Unicom

Born: Taree, Australia 1896

Enlisted: 29 September 1916

41st Battalion, 3rd Division, Australian Imperial Force (AIF)

Embarked from Sydney on HMAT Ayrshire: 24 January 1917

Discharged: Brisbane 8 April 1919

Foreword

Ken Inglis, AO, Emeritus Professor, Australian National University,
author of *Sacred Places: War Memorials in the Australian Landscape*.

Although Ron Inglis and I share Scottish genes, we are not, as far as we know, related to each other on this side of the water. I am delighted by the coincidence that we share an interest in the commemoration of Australians at war. Ron is generous in his comments on my book and pays me the compliment of finding it useful for his own purposes.

This guidebook is a productive labour of love. As its arresting title implies, Ron has been provoked to authorship by what strikes him as an over-emphasis on Gallipoli in Australian scholarly and popular writing about the First World War at the expense of what happened in France and Belgium. He offers the bold judgment that if the war had ended in December 1915, our history books would have given Gallipoli no more attention than they devote to the war in South Africa 1899-1902.

Ron is determined to correct that imbalance. Like much good historical writing, this book is an essay in self-education. Ron and his wife Joy discover for themselves and make accessible to others the lives and deaths of Australians who served in Belgium and France and in the United Kingdom between 1916 and 1919.

What he has learned, Ron sets out to pass on to young Australians, hoping to encourage in them the custom of making pilgrimages to sacred places other than Anzac Cove. He has made his book a guide to their journeys as well as a companion at their destinations. He acknowledges here the influence of Lonely Planet publications which 'inspired the adventure of independent travel'.

Ron has a sharp eye, a nimble pen, and a voracious curiosity. As well as placing Australian commemoration within the context of that astonishing British institution, the Imperial (later Commonwealth) War Graves Commission, he will take you on instructive detours to the memorials of other combatant countries, Allied and enemy. He will provoke you not only to take an interest in commemoration on the other side of the world but to look afresh at memorials in your own neighbourhood.

He is an alert detector of myths, observing for example that Scotland had higher per capita casualties than Australia and that our official historian Charles Bean, whose work he knows and respects, was prone to sanitise the ruffianly aspect of Australian soldiers' behaviour.

Ron is pleased to discern a recent increase in historians' and journalists' attention to the Western Front. This book is well calculated to increase the numbers of Australians who travel to Pozières and Fromelles, to Passchendaele and Ypres, to Horseferry Road and Harefeld. Ron's words and helpfully captioned photographs will equip them to return home with an enriched understanding of how, amid the carnage of a terrible war, those places on the other side of the world became sacred in Australian memory.



War memorials such as this one in the New South Wales town of Carcoar are an integral part of the physical and cultural landscape of Australia and New Zealand

Preface

I would be honoured if I could claim a family relationship to the distinguished historian Professor Kenneth Inglis who wrote *Sacred Places: War Memorials in the Australian Landscape*. Unfortunately our surname is far too common in Scotland, the homeland of our ancestors.

Reading *Sacred Places* was my inspiration to travel in Britain and along the Western Front in search of those places so significant in Australian history and so influential in the emergence of our national identity. My interest focused not so much on the First World War itself but on how both Europeans and Australians reacted to the war experience: the memorials they built, the nature and type of cemeteries they laid out, the ceremonies and rituals they established, the works of art they produced, the myths and legends they created, the heroes they placed on pedestals and the meanings they sought to fashion out of their terrible experience. Above all, I sought to understand what it all means for the young Australians I teach in 21st century Australia.

I made several independent study journeys to Britain, Belgium and France and then took my family to see the places, so sacred in our nation's history yet largely unknown to the present generation of young Australians.

We went beyond the battlefields and took in the fascinating variety of sacred places associated with the AIF. In addition we visited the sacred places of other nations as well as enjoying the variety of present day tourist attractions to be found along the Western Front. We immersed ourselves in the heritage of local communities and we looked at the Great War experience from a more international perspective.

My adult children were amazed. They couldn't believe that such fascinating places, so significant to Australia lay so close to London yet so few young Australians consider them worth a visit or even know of their existence. This guide was written to encourage Australians, both young and old to include the Western Front experience in their European travels. They will not be disappointed.

What and When

The horrific conflict that took place predominately in Europe during the second decade of the twentieth century was referred to in various ways during the 1920s and 1930s. It was the *Great War*, the *War to end all Wars*, the *Great War for Civilisation*, and the *War of 1914-1918*. All such descriptors may be found on various Australian war memorials. In everyday discourse the conflict was simply and most commonly referred to as *the War* (*La Guerre* in French).

After war raged again in Europe and elsewhere from 1939 to 1945, terms to distinguish the two conflicts were needed by journalists, historians and the general population. The terms First World War and Second World War quickly became standard, sometimes abbreviated to WWI and WWII.

In this book I have used the titles Great War (*La Grande Guerre*) and First World War (*La Première Guerre mondiale*) interchangeably.

Another area of apparent inconsistency is in the years given for the duration of the conflict. Most memorials and textbooks carry the years 1914-1918 but others display 1914-1919. The discrepancy is also seen on the medals received by Australian soldiers who served in that war. The reverse side of the British War Medal has the dates 1914-1918. The reverse side of the Victory Medal has the statement *The Great War for Civilisation* and the dates 1914-1919.

The 1918 date comes from the day the armistice took effect and the guns fell silent on the Western Front: 11am on 11 November 1918. In Britain and France 11 November (originally Armistice Day now Remembrance Day but referred to in France simply as *11 Novembre*) is still the day of solemn commemoration of the fallen from all conflicts. The 1919 date comes from the official end of the Great War, 28 June 1919 when the Treaty of Versailles was signed at the Paris Peace Conference. Most Australian First World War soldiers did not get back to Australia until well into 1919.

There was yet another 'end' to the war on 11 November 2009 when, for the first time the German Chancellor joined the French President for Remembrance Day ceremonies in Paris. Chancellor Angela Merkel and President Nicolas Sarkozy together laid wreaths on the tomb of the French Unknown Soldier beneath the Arc de Triomphe.

Acknowledgements

I owe the greatest debt to teachers **Nicolas and Valérie Goret** of Noroy, France. <http://hamelfriends.free.fr> for hospitality, translation, research direction and on-the-ground guidance.

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Avril Williams of Avril William's Guest House & Tea Rooms, Auchonvillers, France. www.avrilwilliams.com

Each of the above generously shared their extensive knowledge of local conditions and of Australia's part in the Great War.

Alan and Daphne Slator of Worthing (UK) for hospitality and guidance in finding Australia's sacred places in Wiltshire.

Maureen Annetts of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, United Kingdom for details on Australian First World War dead honoured in Britain.

Staff of the **City of Westminster Archives Centre** for maps and directories of Horseferry Road.

Anthony Staunton and **Belinda Bastiaans**, Commemorations Branch, Australian Department of Veterans Affairs for provision of the extensive range of educational materials published by the department.

Michael Richards and **David Jolliffe** of the Australian Prime Ministers Centre, Old Parliament House and **Judi Holgate**, Ceremonial and Hospitality Branch, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet for details on visits by Prime Ministers to the Western Front.

The **Unicomb family** for permission to use photographs and postcards sent by Private Abram Unicomb, 41st Battalion, 3rd Division, AIF.

Special thanks to **Kingsley Sampson, Pam Unicomb, Joy Inglis** and **Belinda Inglis** for invaluable editorial assistance. Thanks also to my students who innocently ask all the odd, difficult and embarrassing questions.

Photographs.

Unless otherwise indicated, all photographs within this book are by the author. Photographs of monuments adorned with the Australian flag were taken on a drive down Australia's section of the Western Front on Anzac Day.

References.

The full reference for any quotation in this book may be found in the bibliography.

This guidebook is promoted by the Auburn (New South Wales) Sub Branch of the Returned and Services League (RSL) as part of the LEST WE FORGET PROJECT, an initiative to inform young Australians of the contribution made to the Australian national identity by our servicemen and women.

President: Christopher Hurley Vice President: Russell Knight Secretary: Ken Triggs

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LEST WE FORGET THE WESTERN FRONT

A GUIDE TO FOLLOWING IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE FIRST AUSTRALIAN IMPERIAL FORCE IN BRITAIN, BELGIUM AND FRANCE

TO THE GLORY OF GOD
AND TO THE MEMORY OF
ONE MILLION DEAD OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE
WHO FELL IN THE GREAT WAR
1914-1918
AND OF WHOM THE GREATER PART REST IN FRANCE

Inscription on stone tablet beneath a crucifix in Bayeux Cathedral, Bayeux, France.

Gallipoli is way over rated. Even the official Great War historian Charles E. W. Bean said so. That rocky coast in far away Turkey, which saw only a fraction of the action in the First World War has been elevated to most sacred status in the consciousness of Australia while the Western Front, the main area of conflict is largely forgotten.

The courageous deeds of the Anzacs as they swept ashore at Gallipoli on 25 April 1915 on their ultimately futile mission is recalled with due solemnity every year in ceremonies right across Australia. The story of the Australians who turned back the German offensive at Villers-Bretonneux and began a series of victories along the Somme on 25 April 1918 is rarely told. Most Australians may not know quite where Gallipoli is but they do know it has a very special place, indeed the holiest of places in Australia's story. On the other hand the names Flanders, Pozières, Passchendaele and Mount St Quentin will draw only blank stares.

I recently had to review a new history textbook for teenage high school students studying a course on *Australia in the 20th century*. Quite rightly a significant proportion of the book was given over to the First World War. After all the 'Great War' or the 'Great War for Civilisation' as the 1914-1918 conflict was originally called, was the most devastating and significant turning point in Australia's history. Other key events such as the arrival of the First Fleet in 1788, the discovery of gold in 1850, Federation in 1901 and the fall of Singapore in 1942 are worthy of mention but none come anywhere near the First World War as a monumental event that changed the nation forever.

In the textbook's section on the Great War *The Gallipoli Campaign* case study takes up 17 pages while the Western Front gets just 6 sentences! The authors consider *The Home Front* worthy of 12 pages and *Indigenous Australians and the First World War* almost 2 pages but for the real war in France and Belgium, it may as well not have happened!

Around 8,000 Australians died at Gallipoli. This was horrendous enough but worse, much worse was to come. The ill-fated Gallipoli campaign that lasted only 8 months and achieved nothing from a military point of view was an initial skirmish, a mere curtain raiser for the full horror show that followed. On the Western Front the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) endured nearly three years of indescribable horror, lost almost 50,000 dead and ended up with many significant victories to its credit.

Yet Gallipoli is deemed to be Australia's most sacred place overseas and has become the focus of our national commemoration. Up to 10,000 people gather there on Anzac Day for the Dawn Service and there will be a live telecast back to Australia. Thousands of young Australians visit Anzac Cove each year as a sort of rite of passage and back home the Anzac legend has enjoyed an extraordinary revival in the celebration of our national identity.

Former Australian Prime Minister Paul Keating stirred a hornet's nest when he debunked Gallipoli as a nation defining event and declared, *I have never been to Gallipoli and never will*. He copped a bucketing for his apostasy from every shock jock in the country. In Australia you don't mess with the Gallipoli legend.

REDISCOVER THE WESTERN FRONT

There are signs that the imbalance in the commemoration of our history is being corrected. The great deeds of the Anzacs along the Western Front in France and Belgium have been brought to new generations by the recently published and hugely popular books *The Great War* by Les Carlyon and *Western Front Diaries* by Jonathan King. Australian travellers are just starting to rediscover the Western Front with its many Australian sacred places and rich European heritage.

Along the Western Front you will find relics of ancient battles, stunning memorials, awesome cemeteries, fascinating museums, great works of public art and architecture, all set amid pleasant rural fields and villages. The region is crossed by roads built in the ancient days of the mighty Roman Empire and in the towns and cities along the Front the richness of continental culture and history is there to be explored.

The Western Front is not just for battlefield tourists and military buffs. Its sacred places are there for all Australians. Travellers with limited interest in things military can enjoy great travel experiences in a region that is unquestionably significant in the history of the world.

You can stand in localities that have a place in the very soul of Australia. The names of battlefields that for so long have been emblazoned on memorials around our nation become real and specific. You can visit many sacred places and reflect on the deep impact they made on your homeland so far away. Travelling along the Western Front will help you understand what it means to be an Australian. A pilgrimage will enable you to understand the Anzac legend and what it means for Australia today.



The London Scottish Memorial was the first memorial we came across after finding our way out of Lille on our first visit to the Front.

The inscription reads:

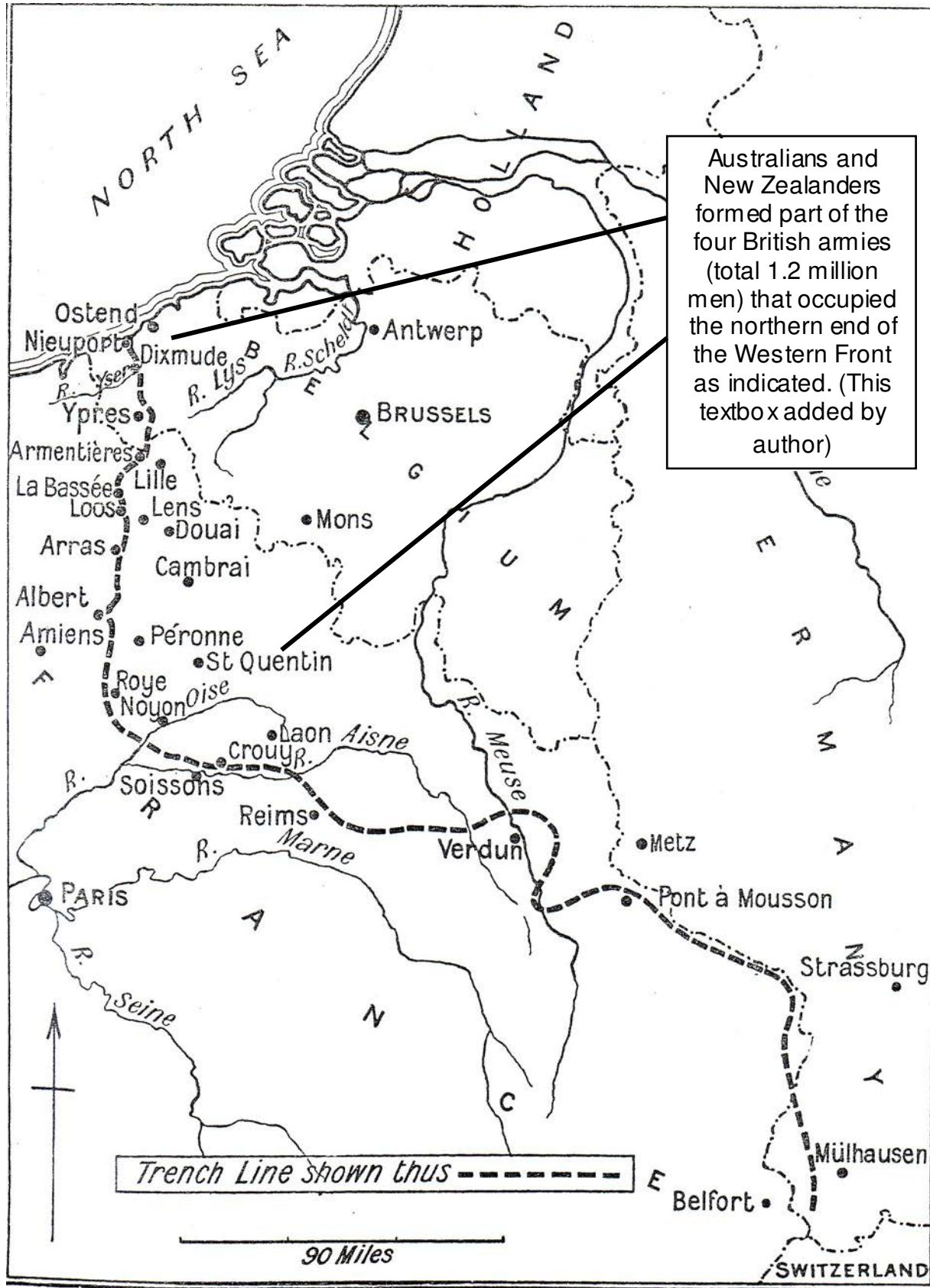
Near this spot on Halloween 1914 the London Scottish came into action being the first territorial battalion to engage the enemy

Without the Western Front the Anzac legend would not be as central to Australia's story as it has become. Indeed, if the First World War had ended in December 1915 when the British forces withdrew from the Dardanelles it is likely that Gallipoli would be in our history textbooks today in much the same way as the South African (Boer) War is recorded; a scarcely remembered excursion to defend the Empire in some land far away. It was the terrible sacrifice on the Western Front affecting almost every family in Australia that cemented the Anzac legend into the very soul of the nation and ensured that it remained part of our national consciousness to this very day. As the legendary Charles Bean always held, Pozières not Gallipoli should be Australia's most sacred place overseas.

For Australian travellers, the vast majority of whom make London their base, the Western Front is a very accessible location. A fast, modern train service can take you to Australia's sacred places in less than two hours so you can visit them by a quick three-day excursion from Paris or London or better still, incorporate them into a longer tour of Western Europe. Unlike Gallipoli the Western Front is neither barren, isolated nor remote.

Rolling agricultural countryside, pleasant towns, unique architecture, continental shops, fine food, agreeable diversions, excellent wine and cultural diversity are all there to make the journey most rewarding - not to forget the pleasant moments spent enjoying the delights of the *patisserie!*

The Western Front in 1916



THE WESTERN FRONT, APRIL 1916

The legendary war correspondent Charles E. W. Bean dedicated his life to producing the monumental *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918*. In it he included many most useful maps. The one above is in Vol III p81.

How the war is commemorated, not how it was fought

This book goes beyond the battlefields. I know there are hundreds of First World War enthusiasts, both professional and amateur whose hobby is to explore the Western Front down to the smallest detail. They consult battalion diaries, do research in the Imperial War Museum, earnestly study Major & Mrs Holts' battlefield maps and take delight in knowing which company was in what position occupying which trenches at dawn on a particular day in 1916. They also know what the soldiers were eating, what weapons they had and where they are now buried. You find these enthusiasts up and down the Front all through the year. These 'battlefield crawlers' as they proudly refer to themselves are the military equivalent of trainspotters!

Young Australians who flock to Europe in their thousands every year generally have limited interest in battlefields. Their attention span at such sites, usually now a field of wheat or potatoes, is about 15 minutes. In their eyes battlefield studies are for retirees researching the family tree and 'dodderly old' military historians. This is quite understandable for much of the published material on the first AIF by Australians is just about Australian battlefields and the deeds of Australians in those locations. Very rarely is the European perspective of what was happening considered. Rarely are the stories of other nations heard and rarely do organised battlefield tours make much connection with the lives and history of the communities that now live on the old front line.

There is so much more to the Western Front than battlefields, endless war cemeteries and monuments of stone. Certainly these places are deeply moving and they are not to be missed but it is necessary to balance the morbid feelings of loss with the delights of present day travel. It is better to balance the tears and emotions for the past with some laughter, pleasant discoveries and good company in the present.

Valuing our heritage

Until recent years the French and Belgian tourist authorities did very little to promote the Western Front and places associated with the First World War. They put up only a few signposts for tourists and made very little provision for parking. Even today, at most sites there is scarcely enough room to park a few small cars let alone large tourist coaches. Indeed a tourist coach would not be able to get near some Australian sites given the narrowness of the rural access roads. To get to the Fourth Australian Division Memorial you have to drive more than a kilometre through a farm along a narrow dirt track.

Tours to the battlefields began almost as soon as the conflict ceased but these were almost all pilgrimages by surviving veterans or grieving relatives. There was no concept of the battlefields and everything associated with the Great War being a tourist attraction as we understand the term today. Pilgrims were warmly welcomed but little effort was made to encourage foreign visitors, least of all visitors from far-away Australia and New Zealand.

The reluctance of locals to promote the area was quite understandable. The French and Belgians had little enthusiasm to revisit a time of such material destruction, personal loss and national humiliation especially while the First and later the Second World War generation was still around. If you think Australia suffered terribly in the two world wars of the 20th century, wait till you discover what happened to France and Belgium!

As time has rolled on new generations of Europeans look back more objectively and recognise the importance of the Western Front in the history of the world. Today a whole tourist industry is growing up along the Front making it much easier for travellers to get around and take in the Great War experience.

Access and road signage has been improved, several large regional museums have been established, a much wider choice of accommodation is now available, many new monuments have been erected, old trench systems have been restored, ceremonies and commemorative events have multiplied, tollways can take you quickly from one end of the Front to the other, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission has renewed all its green and white signposts and visitor friendly facilities have been provided at a number of sacred sites. The very fast train network linking London, Paris and Brussels to Lille makes getting to the Front so much easier. Add in the technologies of credit cards and the internet and you can see why Western Front tourism is really on the rise.

French and Belgian authorities, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, respective foreign governments, local committees and private citizens have all done much in recent years to open up the sacred places to visitors and the revival is just starting to catch on with Australian travellers.

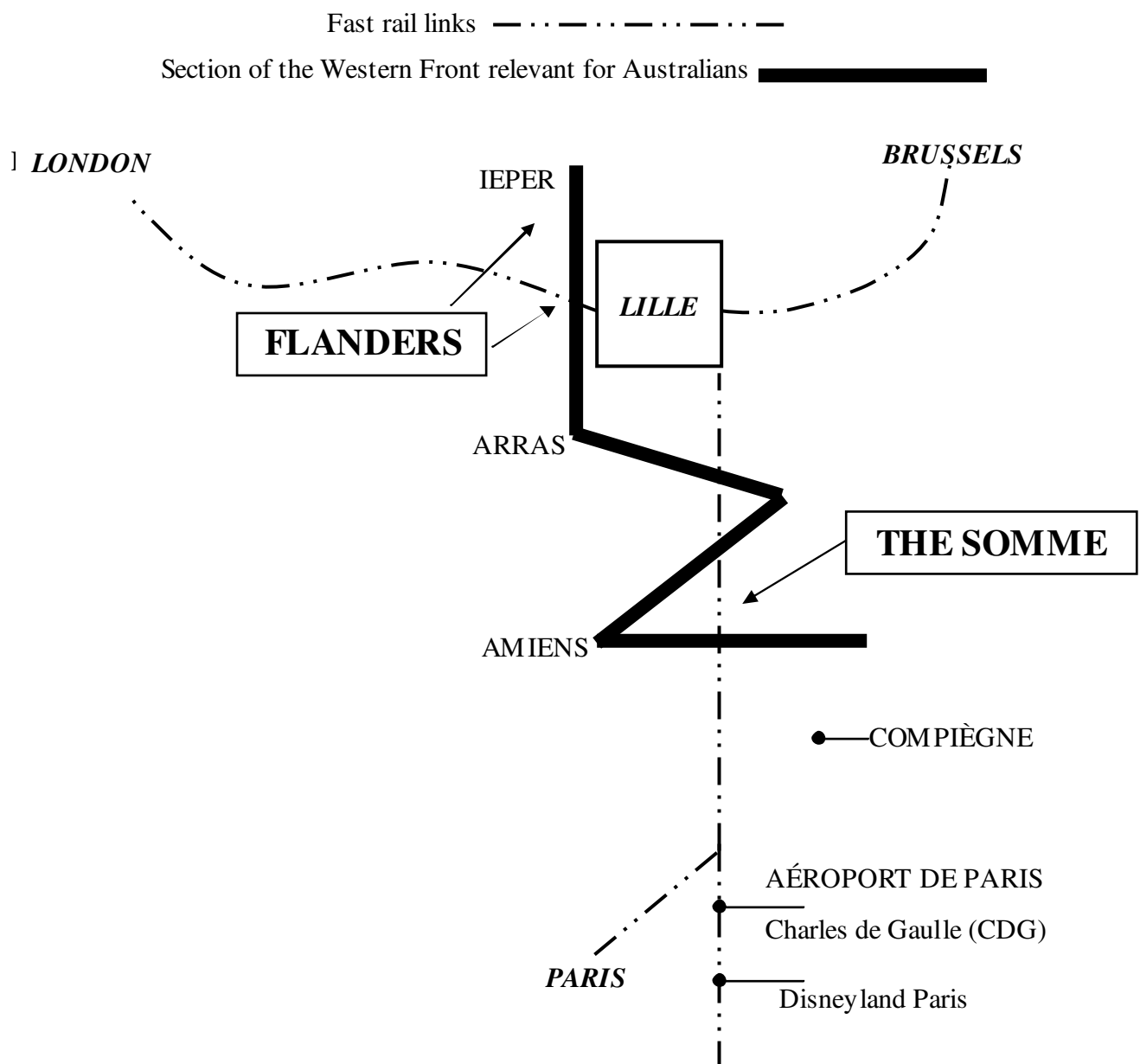
Perhaps a reason why young Australians have not yet appeared in large numbers is that this part of Belgium and France is definitely not back-packer territory. Public transport is virtually nonexistent and there are few youth hostels. Young people wanting nightlife head one way to Paris or the other to Amsterdam. And of course things are definitely more expensive in modern France and Belgium than in less affluent Turkey.

Young Australians should not be put off. As this guide will show there are many good reasons for Australians, young and old to make a pilgrimage to the Western Front and it can be done on a reasonable budget.

The diagram below shows how Australia's section of the Western Front is now at the hub of the transport networks linking London to Paris, Brussels and other major capitals of Europe.

FAST RAIL LINKS TO LILLE

(Not to scale)



INCORPORATING THE WESTERN FRONT INTO YOUR JOURNEY IN EUROPE

Get a vehicle

Whatever your itinerary you will need your own vehicle. There is hardly any public transport and Australia's sacred places are scattered over a wide area. Some are way out in the countryside on narrow local access roads. Car or campervan transport is really the only option for independent travellers.

Petrol in Europe is significantly more expensive than it is in Australia but distances travelled are much shorter. A journey down Australia's section of the Western Front will only run up a couple of hundred kilometres.

A positive point is the fact that this corner of Europe is not a tourist destination for locals. Come the summer holidays half the population of France or so it seems, packs up and heads for the coast – Atlantic, Mediterranean or over to North Africa – thus leaving inland rural places delightfully quiet and open. You can have the Western Front largely to yourself.



The intensively farmed landscape of the Western Front today. Looking south from the New Zealand Division Memorial, Mesen.

The Kiwis captured Messines and the 3rd Australian Division advanced across this land from right to left in the Battle of Messines Ridge in June 1917. It was the division's first action on the Western Front.

The slopes are gentle but even the slightest elevation gave defenders an enormous advantage.

You do need your own car but don't be mad enough to hire one in London or Paris. The traffic in these large cities is a nightmare, even for the locals. Besides, why go to the expense of car hire in cities that have fast, reliable public transport and excellent tourist travel cards to get you to anywhere you would want to go?

Renting a car in England where they drive on the left-hand side of the road as we do in Australia and then going to all the expense and hassle of getting the car over or under the Channel to the continent of Europe where they all drive on the right is not economical for either short or long holidays. Train or bus to the continent and then hiring is more economical when time, petrol and the crossing are taken into account.

Many Australians are unaware that the Channel is a rail, not a road tunnel. To get a vehicle over the English Channel you either put it on the train (at Ashford in Kent) or onto one of the many car ferry or hovercraft services to the continent. See www.aferry.com for costs and times of ferries.

Taking a train or bus from England then hiring a car on the continent is an even better option if you are going to spend several weeks touring Europe. This is because the three French car companies Peugeot, Citroen and Renault have excellent *new* car lease deals for tourists with free pick up and return at many locations throughout France. Minimum lease is 17 days. Check them out at www.globalcars.com.au/Europe/car_leasing

On the other hand if you already own a right-hand drive vehicle in Britain then taking it over the channel is no problem and more economical than hiring. Many British drivers do take their vehicles over for shopping, week-ends away and longer holidays. They say they get used to switching over to the other side of the road and they are aware of the different road rules and road signage.

For inexperienced Australians and New Zealanders, driving on the right side of the road is a little daunting at first but with a left-hand drive car it is amazing how easily you adjust. Just **exercise extra care at the start** and remember you go around roundabouts *anti* clockwise! Cars on a roundabout usually have right of way as is the case in Australia but on some roundabouts lines across the road mean that you have to **give way to any traffic coming in from the right**. Just observe the kamikaze entertainment of cars going around the Arc de Triomphe in Paris!

Hire a car at Lille

Lille, the fourth largest city in France and birthplace of the legendary French General Charles de Gaulle is the most accessible and convenient place to pick up a hire car for touring the Western Front. The Eurostar train journey to the station GARE de LILLE EUROPE (signposted GARE EUROPE) is only 35 minutes from Brussels, 60 minutes from Paris (Gare du Nord or the Paris Charles De Gaulle airport) and 1 hour 45 minutes from London (St Pancras International Station). If you are in the south east of England you can board the train at Ashford International Station in Kent. The train is much cheaper if you are prepared to go off-peak and often there are special offers on the internet. For the high speed trains see www.eurostar.com or www.tgv.co.uk Book and purchase early by credit card in Australia then take your booking number and the *same* credit card to the machine at St Pancras Station. It will print out your individual ticket with carriage and seat number. (While waiting for your train you will no doubt admire the wonderful restoration job they have done on St Pancras. That is, until you see on the concourse a huge golden statue of a 1970s couple in passionate embrace. All you can do is shake your head and wonder: Why?)

Pick up your pre-booked hire car on arrival at Lille Europe (not Lille Flanders. That's the regional station nearby) from one of several international car hire companies on the station (Avis, Europcar, Hertz, National/citer).

For hire cars and the train, check out travel agents before you leave Australia. They often have cheaper deals because of their bulk bookings.



A monument in Lille by sculptor Félix Desruelles (1929) commemorates French Resistance in the First World War. The four civilians were members of a resistance group, the **Comité Jacquet** who were executed for spying on 22 September 1915. The prone figure is an 18 year old Belgian boy executed in November 1915.

The monument was partly destroyed by the Germans in 1940 but Lille citizens hid pieces of it and rebuilt the structure after the Second World War.

Lille, under German control for almost all of the First World War has several most pleasing central squares and streetscapes. Pick up a map of the central area from your car hire company, follow the *Centre Ville* signs and wander around. At the insistence of the French, Lille was not shelled by the British during the Great War. The only bombing was a 1918 attack on Lille airfields by a British Air Force that included the Australian 2 and 4 Flying Squadrons.

It is easy to get out of Lille and the Western Front is less than 20 minutes away. Once out of Lille there is little traffic and the pace of life is easy in this area of farmland and rural villages. Having completed your pilgrimage it is easy to return the car to Gare Europe in Lille (1hr 15 mins north up the A1/E15 from Villers Bretonneux) and catch the train back to London.

With more time at your disposal you could head off to explore other regions of France. This is highly recommended as France has a great variety of regions, spectacular scenery, abundant heritage, great food

and culture. It is an easy place to drive around and you can keep the cost down by camping and catering for yourself. You can be a 'grey nomad' in France just as easily as you can be one in Australia. (You have 90 days to wander around. Longer stays require a visa purchased before arrival.)

On our first trip Joy and I added a three-day journey around Normandy including Honfleur, Caen, the Pégasus bridge, the D Day beaches and magnificent town of Bayeux before returning the car to Gare Europe station in Lille and catching the train back to London.

If your pilgrimage to the Western Front is at the end of your European holiday then it makes sense to head straight south to the **Charles de Gaulle International Airport (CDG)** at Roissy, conveniently located on the northern side of Paris, adjacent to the A1/E15 Tollway (Auto route du Nord). There is no point in driving back to Lille, paying for a train ride back to London then dragging yourself and luggage right across London to Heathrow airport just to fly back to Australia.

It is much easier to fly home from **Paris**. From the Australian National Memorial at Villers Bretonneux it is a drive of less than 2 hours down the A1/E15 tollway to the **Aéroport de Paris - Charles de Gaulle (CDG)**.

There is a pleasant toll free alternative - the often tree lined N17 [D1017], the old highway from Paris to the north. Follow the N17 [D1017] signs to ROYE then PONT-STE-MAXENCE then SENLIS then SURVILLIERS. From Survilliers join the freeway for a toll-free run to the airport. (I did this on my solo pilgrimage without a map. I just followed the airport symbol.)

Return the car at the CDG airport then either fly back to Australia or having purchased your **Carte Visite Paris** at the metro station, head into the magnificent French capital.

Ready for the road –The Basics



To drive in Europe all you need is a Passport, a current Drivers' Licence and an International Drivers' Licence issued by your local Motoring Organisation. (Nobody has ever asked to see my International Drivers' licence.) Note that almost all cars in Europe, especially small ones are manual. If you want automatic then you have to specify in advance and it will cost you more.

To hire vehicles you need a credit card as well. It is wise to make vehicle bookings before you leave Australia especially in the northern summer season. A key thing to check is the insurance excess in the standard hiring contract. The excess is what you have to pay before insurance cuts in if you make a claim. Usually at the pick-up desk they will offer you a lower excess for a higher premium so you have to weigh up the reduction in the excess against the amount of extra premium. I never thought it was worth it but then again it would have been somewhat expensive if I had had a major prang.

Another wise move is to check the car on pickup recording any dings or defects. Then get out your digital camera and do a quick sequence all round the car. This will be most useful in any dispute over damage.

Finally, have your luggage in smaller, soft bags so they can be locked out of sight in the boot of the standard, small European car. It is not very smart to have a large case sitting on the back seat advertising you are a foreign tourist. And why do you need half your wardrobe anyway? You won't be able to match the sartorial excellence of the French so why try? Remember the old rule: Halve the luggage and double the money.

Visas

Australian passport holders do not need to apply in advance for tourist visas for Britain, Belgium or France. Your passport will be stamped on entry. There are no passport checks when travelling between Belgium and France.

Driving yourself along the Front

You could drive from one end of Australia's section of the Front (Ieper, Belgium) to the other (Montebrehain, France) via the tollways in less than 3 hours but there is no point in doing so. Three full days is a basic minimum for the whole section if you want to actually drive down the front line and have unhurried time visiting memorials, finding a certain war grave, wandering through excellent museums, sampling the local cuisine and generally taking in the whole experience of Belgium and France. Another day will be needed if you want to spend time in two very popular tourist places at either end of the British sector – Bruges in Belgium and Amiens in France.

Alternatively you could break your pilgrimage into two separate excursions – one to Flanders and one to the Somme. (See supplementary section on Road Travel in Europe)

Campervans

Campervans are a very popular way to explore the Front, especially for families. Families with school-age children will find plenty to interest them and it is a great way to introduce young Australians to such significant places in our national heritage.

Buying a campervan in Britain for a holiday in Europe is still a firmly established Australian tradition. Sadly the old van market around Australia House in London of the 1970s has long since disappeared but there are plenty of companies offering hire or buy back deals – see the Sydney based www.cmccmotorhomes.com or UK based companies such as www.justgo.uk.com or www.motorhomes-buy-sell-rent.com Australian and New Zealand expatriates in London have set up a number of trading sites specifically for Aussie travellers. For example check out www.gumtree.com

If you own a camper van in Britain then taking it over or under the channel is no problem (check your insurance) and certainly cheaper than hiring one in Europe. Down the Front there are caravan parks (as we Australians would call them) at Ieper, Kemel, Albert, Amiens (Longpré), Bertangles, Corbie, Le Hamel and Peronne. These are open only spring to autumn: March/April to September/October. To get to most of these just follow the local signs with the tent symbol or the words 'Le Camping'.

Hiring a late-model motor home for just two people is fairly expensive. Hiring a small car and using bed & breakfast accommodation can be more economical. My brother-in-law, who knows how to count every cent claims that rates for car hire and B&B accommodation are such that they are a better deal than hiring a motor home for only two people. I agree that the hire car/B&B combination is more flexible, gives you more interaction with the locals and leaves more money to spend in French restaurants!

Road numbering in Europe

Don't be confused with the two systems of numbering **major** roads. There is the local system, usually with the prefix A or N, and the all-Europe system with the prefix E. Thus the freeway getting you out of Lille to the exit 8 - Armentieres is the A25 in the French system and the E42 in the Europe system. Both numbers will usually be found together on **major** road signs.

Over the last two years there has been some renumbering of **minor** roads in France to bring them into line with the European system. The new numbers are as printed in the new (light green) IGN 1:100,000 Top 100 series maps recently published to replace the old blue series. Not all road signs have yet been converted to the new numbers so in this guide both the old number and the new, if any, will be given with the new number in square brackets.

For example, the axis of advance by the Australians in 1916 from Albert through Poziers and up to Bapaume is still the D929 but the axis of advance by the Australians in 1918 eastward through Villers Bretonneux used to be numbered N29 but is now numbered D1029.

The old N17 running up from Paris to Lille has been broken up into several sections. From Paris all the way to the 2nd Australian Division Memorial in Péronne the road is now D1017 but further north through Bapaume to Arras it is now numbered D917.

Communicating with Australia

When I took my son along the Western Front we carried enough electronic gear to half fill a Dick Smith store. Laptop, digital cameras, Ipod, various species of mobile phones, spare discs, assorted battery chargers, spare batteries, double adaptors and power point adaptors. (Note that power points in France are different to those in England which are different again to those in Australia. Further, computer keyboards on the continent often have a different layout to the one you are used to.)

Yes it was most convenient to call from any where or link into the hotel's free Wifi connection and talk via computer to Australia. Certainly it was convenient to download camera pictures, update one's Facebook entry, send emails, check internet sites and continue to play the favourite computer games wherever we may be. These things seem important to Generation Y.

However the backpack weighed a ton, was always a hassle at airports and I really questioned whether my colleagues, hard at work back in Australia were really interested in my progress through Europe.

To communicate with someone back home why not do as the men of the AIF did and write a simple post card? A card from *somewhere in France* was eagerly received back in Australia during the Great War. Enterprising French women produced colourful postcard size embroidery designs on pieces of silk. These sewn postcards were extremely popular with the men of the AIF and thousands were posted back to Australia.

Why don't you take a break on your pilgrimage, find a nice boulevard café, write a few postcards and spend time watching the world go by?

Of course some diggers collected French postcards of a different type which they did not send back to Australia. These, shall we say, 'revealing' postcards were one aspect of French culture that certain Aussie diggers found to be most pleasing, if you get what I mean.



Neither Abe Unicom nor his best mate, Jim Hayes ever visited Paris but Jim sent Abe this postcard while recovering from wounds. The Moulin Rouge was, and still is, second only to the Eiffel Tower as the iconic image of Paris. The nightclub still operates and still features on tourist postcards.

28.4.18
236 General Hospital
Rouen

Dear Abe

Just a line to let you know that I'm getting on alright. I got a bit of shrapnel in the shoulder but I think I'll be coming back in a week or so. If you see any of the lads you can let them know I'm doing alright. I wasn't lucky enough to get to Blighty but better luck next time. Hoping you are well. Your sincere chum. Jim

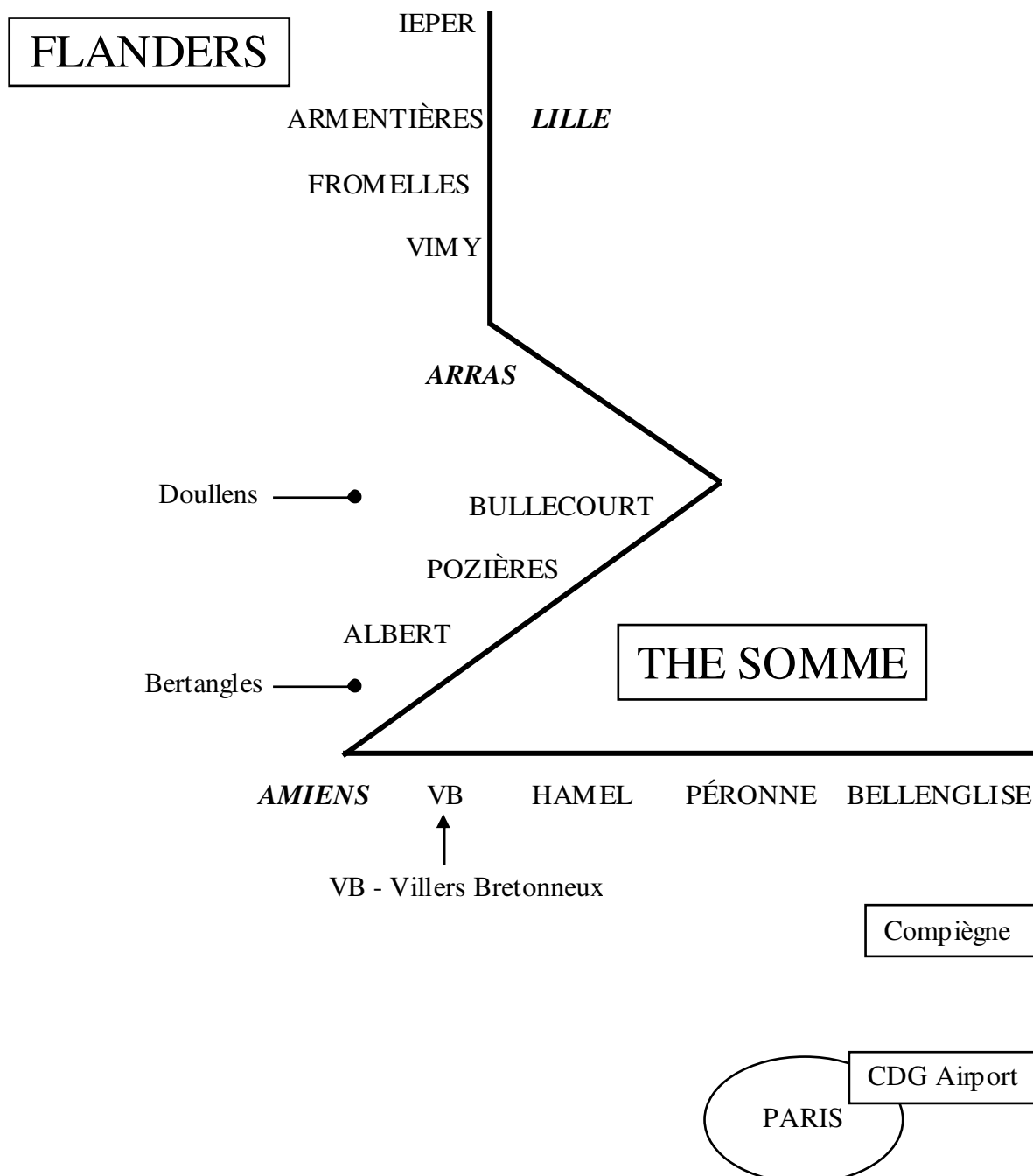
Both Flanders and the Somme

Whether you drive over from Britain or hire a car in Lille, it makes sense to do your journey along the Western Front from north to south, beginning in Flanders where the AIF had its first battle in Europe then moving down to the Somme where the Australians made very significant advances in the last year of conflict.

However going the other way is no problem. You could fly into or catch a train to Charles de Gaulle airport on the northern edge of Paris, pick up a hire car there and head north to the Somme and on up the Front. You could return the car to Gare Europe in Lille and catch the train to London.

Either way, north or south, three days at least is needed to cover both Flanders and the Somme in any meaningful way and it is highly recommended that you add on Bruges and Amiens while you are there on the continent.

BASIC LOCATION DIAGRAM COVERING BOTH FLANDERS AND THE SOMME



Getting Maps

- IGN** The best maps for actually driving yourself down the Front are the 1:100,000 series topographic maps (Carte Topographique Top 100) published by the **Institut Geographique National** of France. All the minor roads you need are there and the names on the map will exactly match the signs on the road.

Old (Blue) Series Just two maps cover all of Australia's section of the Front in both France and Belgium: Number 02 **Lille/Dunkerque** and Number 04 **Laon/Arras**. If you need a map to get you down from the Somme to the Charles de Gaulle airport (or Disneyland Paris) on the north-east edge of Paris, then order Number 09 **Paris/Laon**.

New (Light Green) Series The new series has been renumbered and renamed. The maps you need are Number 101 **Lille/Boulogne-sur-Mer** and Number 103 **Amiens/Arras**. The map coverage of the new maps has been moved west. This is no problem except that if you want to visit the 4th Division Memorial and explore the area where the AIF had its very last battles in October 1918, then you will need the western edge of Number 104 **Reims/St-Quentin**. For the run down to Paris order Number 109 **Paris/Compiègne**. (This map now covers Versailles) All these maps, at a scale of 1:100,000 (1cm to 1km) have much clearer detail than road atlases which are usually at the smaller scale of 1:200,000. Buy the IGN maps before departure from www.mapsworldwide.com or www.mapsnmc.co.uk or www.stanfords.co.uk If you prefer to order by phone then ring the National Map Centre in London +44 20 7222 2466. If you plan to visit Australian sites around Salisbury in England, include in your order the British Ordnance Survey Landranger map Number 184 **Salisbury and the Plain**. This 1:50,000 map is very clear and covers all the Australian sacred places in Wiltshire. All the maps noted here can be purchased in London at the National Map Centre, 22-24 Caxton St, Westminster. (nearest tube: St James Park) www.mapsnmc.co.uk or at Stanfords mega map store, 12-14 Long Acre, Covent Garden. (nearest tubes: Covent Garden & Leicester Square) www.stanfords.co.uk
- Michelin Atlas** Ring the Office of Australian War Graves within the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) in Canberra on 1800 026 185 (or email them at wargraves@dva.gov.au) and purchase the **Michelin Road Atlas – Cemeteries & Memorials in Belgium and Northern France** with its 1:200 000 maps overprinted with the location of war graves and monuments.
- Road Atlases** The Michelin Cemeteries Atlas noted above covers only the northern tip of France and a corner of Belgium and it has so many cemetery numbers that the road pattern is sometimes obscured. If you have the IGN maps you don't need a road atlas just for the Western Front but if you are going to explore other areas of France then a road atlas is obviously necessary. Best option is to buy the latest **AA Road Atlas of France** which you can pick up from any large bookstore or newsagent in Britain. Similarly for the UK. Buy an **AA** or **Philip's Road Atlas of Britain** from any newsagent when you get there. Maps, books, indeed any published material is generally cheaper in Britain than it is in Australia.
- www.geoportail.fr Geoportail is the net mapping service of the French Government. It is an excellent source of aerial photographs (Photographies Aériennes) and maps (IGN cartes) of France. In French (FR) or English (EN) it is easy to work out what to do. It works in much the same way as Google Maps. Under 'Ma Selection', tick maps (Cartes) or photographs (or both). You will get very clear maps and high-resolution photographs but note that the maps on all these internet map sites are not always the latest edition. Some of the more recent roads and bypasses are not shown.
- Visitors Centre of Ieper, Lakenhallen, Grote Markt 34, 8900 Ieper, Belgium.** Request the latest *Ieper – Places of Interest – Plan Map* - or pick one up when you get there or download one from their website www.ieper.be. Purchase the 1:50,000 Topografische Kaart (Topographic Map) of **Ieper** number 27-28-36. This very clear map makes it easy to get to all Australian sacred places in Belgium. Much easier to follow than a road atlas.

6. **The Somme Tourist Board**, 21, rue Ernest Cauvin – 80000 Amiens, France. Request their *Battlefields of the Somme – Visitor’s Map*. This is a good map of the Somme Battlefields area (although not all Australian sites are noted). On the reverse is a helpful smaller scale map of the Western Front. Email them accueil@somme-tourisme.com
 Web sites: www.somme-tourisme.com and www.somme-battlefields.com The Somme Tourist Board set up an *anzac2008-france* site for the 90th anniversary celebrations in 2008. Now the latest information specifically for Australians visiting the Somme for Anzac Day is found on the main site – click on the link *Welcome to Anzac Day*.
7. **Journey websites** www.live.com www.mappy.com www.Multimap.com or www.viamichelin.com
 Maps and route instructions from these sources are good for travelling between major centres but they do not always recognise tiny places like Polygon Wood or Le Hamel and they do not always send you along the Front. Once actually on the ground I found it much easier just to follow the signs on the road and have the IGN maps as my main guide.

Key words for touring Flanders

ENGLISH – Maps & Documents	FRENCH - Maps and Road Signs	FLEMISH – Maps and Road Signs
Australia	Australie	Australie
Australian	Australien	Australien
Belgium	Belgique	Belgie
Brug(g)es	Bruges	Brugge
Brussels	Bruxelles	Brussel
Centre	Centre	Centrum
Church	Église	Kerk
Dixmude	Dixmude	Diksmuide
Dunkirk	Dunkerque	Duinkerke
Exit	Sortie	Uitgang
Flanders	Flandre	Vlandren
Hills of Flanders	Monts de Flandre	Heuvelland (Land of the Hills)
Ieper, Ypres, Wipers (WWI)	Ypres	Ieper
Langemark, Langemarck (WWI)	Lan gemark	Langemark
Lille	Lille	Rijsel
Lille Gate	Porte de Lille	Rijsel Poort
Menin	Menin	Menen
Messines (WWI)	Messines	Mesen
National Geographic Institute	Institut Geographique National	Nationaal Geo grafisch Instituut
P – Parking (place)	P – Aire de stationnement	P - Parking
Paris	Paris	Parijs
Passchendaele (WWI)	Passendale	Passendale
Pharmacy/Chemist	Pharmacie	Apoteek (with green cross)
Post Office	La Poste	De Post
Roulers (WWI) Roeselare	Roulers (WWI) Roeselare	Roeselare
Station (Railway)	Gare	Station
Street	Rue	Straat
Topographic Map	Carte Topographique	Topografische Kaart
Wyschaete (WWI)	Wijtschate	Wijtschate

WAR GRAVES AND MILITARY CEMETERIES

*With proud thanksgiving, a mother for her children,
Australia mourns for her dead across the sea.
Flesh of her flesh, they were spirit of her spirit,
Fallen in the cause of the free.*

*They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old;
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them.*

*They mingle not with their laughing comrades again;
They sit no more at familiar tables at home;
They have no lot in our labour of the day-time;
They sleep beyond Australia's foam.*

The above three verses plus four other stanzas have appeared on the annual Anzac commemoration programme at my local RSL club for as long as anyone can remember. They are acknowledged as from *For the Fallen* by Laurence Binyon. No one at the club, alive or dead seems to be aware that a little cultural theft has taken place. Binyon wrote the poem in 1914, well before any Australian had fired a shot in Europe and he wrote *England not Australia*. The substitution of Australia for England doesn't seem to bother anyone and why should it? Most Australians in Edwardian times saw their nation as just a remote part of England anyway.

The middle verse above is *The Ode*, repeated every night in RSL clubs across our nation and solemnly intoned at each and every Anzac commemoration. We add to the verse the words from Kipling's *Recessional: Lest We Forget*.



There are hundreds of Commonwealth Military Cemeteries scattered along the Western Front. Some contain thousands of graves while others may contain fewer than 30. Some are in towns or along major roads while others are way out in the countryside with only pedestrian access. All are meticulously maintained by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC). The numbers are staggering. In France alone the Commission maintains 34,000 Australian and 7,500 New Zealand war graves. At most military cemeteries a roll of honour is provided along with a visitors' book in which relatives, friends and visitors may record their respects.

Without dishonouring the dead it needs be said that you can only visit so many cemeteries. Row upon row of young lives, many not much older than the students I teach, tragically cut down. Acres and acres filled with men slaughtered, many of whom could not be identified. Too much of this results in tears, melancholy and a great sadness. I can understand in part the enormous grief felt by thousands of families across Australia during the Great War.

In the years immediately after the war the cemeteries were places of pilgrimage for parents, wives and immediate family members who found great consolation in finding their loved ones in an honoured place. Only extremely wealthy Australians could afford such journeys in those times. Most Australians of the post-war generation never saw the final resting place of their loved ones.

Today these cemeteries lie as testimony to one of the greatest tragedies, one of the greatest instances of collective insanity in all European history.

Having a reason to visit a given cemetery will make the experience much more rewarding. You could take names of those who paid the supreme sacrifice from your local war memorial, research their lives and then pay your respects when finding their graves on your journey along the Front. Red Poppies are the traditional flower of respect but you can be more authentically Australian. When I found the grave of Captain Bruce Hardy Arnott in the Kemmel Chateau Military Cemetery in Belgium, I sprinkled a small bottle of eucalyptus oil that I had brought from home especially for the purpose. I had noticed a memorial to Captain Arnott in the St Anne's Anglican Church near where I live and I discovered that he was a grandson of William Arnott, the founder of that Australian icon Arnotts Biscuits. Captain Arnott was just 20 when he was killed in action in August 1917.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission web site www.cwgc.org will indicate if a soldier has an individual grave and if so, in which cemetery it is to be found. The Michelin atlas will show the general location of the cemetery. The little green and white signs maintained by the War Graves Commission will guide you once you get to the immediate area.

However actually finding the place can be a real achievement.

Your destination may be 'off the beaten track' as we Australians would say. In summer the cross of sacrifice might be the only landmark standing up above the field of corn or golden wheat! Some of the cemeteries are on tiny unmarked rural roads many of which do not register on a road atlas. On the other hand you may be lucky. You may find your cemetery first go. Either way, a purposeful pilgrimage is much more rewarding than a random visit. The main cemeteries visited by Australians are:

- Tyne Cot Cemetery, Zonnebeke is easy to find. It is 9 km east of Ieper in Belgium. Tyne Cot is the largest Commonwealth war cemetery in the world in terms of burials. It contains over 1,200 Australian graves making it our largest cemetery on the Western Front.



The Cross of Sacrifice in Tyne Cot Cemetery is mounted on a German bunker captured by the Third Australian Division in 1917. Here local Belgian soldiers, including one dressed in the uniform of the first AIF, mount a Guard of Honour for the Service of Remembrance on Anzac Day.

- Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery shown below is south of Poperinge. It contains 1131 Australians out of 10,750 burials. It is Australia's second largest on the Western Front. The squarer headstones in the first two rows are for German POWs who died in British camps and hospitals.



- Toronto Avenue Cemetery, Warneton. This is the only all Australian military cemetery in Belgium. A small cemetery with 78 graves it is tucked away in the Ploegsteert Woods (Bois de Ploegsteert in French) some 3 kms south of Mesen. (No, in spite of the name there is no connection with Canada.)



- VC Corner – North-West of Fromelles. An unusual feature of this cemetery is that there are no headstones – only rose bushes. The wall is inscribed with the names of over 1000 Australians from the battle of Fromelles who have no known grave.



VC Corner is the only all-Australian war cemetery in France. In other British military cemeteries, any Australian fallen are found, in no particular order, alongside UK dead and the fallen from various Commonwealth countries.

- Pozières British Cemetery is just south of Pozières village. It contains 690 Australians. Most fell during the battles around Pozières in 1916. The cemetery is surrounded by a massive memorial wall and sits right on the main road heading from Pozières down to Albert. You can't miss it.



- Villers-Bretonneux Military Cemetery lies in front of the Australian National Memorial, a few kilometres north of the town of Villers-Bretonneux. It is one of the larger Commonwealth military cemeteries with over 2000 graves.



- Adelaide Cemetery – Just a kilometre west of Villers-Bretonneux on the main road to Amiens. Exhumation site of the Unknown Australian Soldier in 1993. There is no evidence that this cemetery took its name from the city of Adelaide in Australia. More likely, the name came from the same source used by the founding fathers of South Australia, that is from Queen Adelaide, wife of King William IV. The cemetery today contains over 500 Australians gathered immediately after the war from a number of local battlefield burial plots.



French & German war cemeteries

On a journey down the Western Front a question naturally arises: Why are there so many Commonwealth War Cemeteries yet so few French or German ones? The answer lies in the policies on soldier burials and repatriation of bodies adopted by the respective governments at the time.



During the war some German casualties were returned to Germany for burial while most were buried in mass graves at the front. After the war little effort was made to find German bodies in temporary graves and bring them to recognised war cemeteries. The picture at left shows a German war cemetery south of Rancourt in France. There are over 11,000 burials here.

The French, like the British initially adopted a policy of no return of bodies from the battlefield but in 1920 the French Government gave in to enormous public pressure for the return of loved ones and somewhere around 40% of French casualties were exhumed by families and taken back for reburial in home towns and villages. A further reason for the low number of French war cemeteries in Australia's part of the front is the fact that the northern end of the line was mainly an area of British responsibility. French war cemeteries are much more common further south where British forces were few and Australians were not involved.



The photograph above shows part of the French section of the Poperinghe New Military Cemetery in Belgium. In it we see the standard cross adopted by France for its war dead. Note also the different headstone used for France's Islamic troops from her colonies in Africa.

Even though they used Christian crosses for their war dead, French authorities would not permit crosses on local war memorials. It was held that, since the French government was paying for most of the memorials crosses would break the doctrine of separation of church and state, a doctrine very strong in France since *La Révolution* of 1789. Separation of church and state along with freedom, democracy, liberty, republicanism and individual rights are often thought of today as uniquely American values. In fact, they all came from the French as did the Statue of Liberty in New York Harbour!

It is sobering to reflect that at least a third, possibly more of all soldiers killed on the Western Front have no known grave at all neither on the battlefield nor anywhere else in Europe. Soldiers were blown to pieces by shells, buried in tunnels and collapsed trenches, left to decompose in no man's land or drowned in mud and slush. Some were killed during the ebb and flow of battle and their bodies attacked by wild animals. Sometimes years went by between the deaths and searches of the area by burial parties. Many soldiers simply disappeared off the face of the earth.

These were all the great army of the missing. Here the British went a step further than the Germans, French and Americans in commemorating their fallen. They erected great **Memorials to the Missing**, a practice not taken up by France, Germany or the United States. The French did bury an unknown French soldier in a Tomb of the Unknown Soldier beneath the Arc de Triomphe in Paris but that was all.

Thus today there are no French or German equivalents to the Menin Gate, the Ploegsteert Memorial, Thiepval, the Australian National Memorial at Villers Bretonneux or the New Zealand Memorials to the Missing found in several cemeteries.

TO THE GLORY OF GOD

THANKS BE UNTO GOD WHO GAVE US THE VICTORY

Inscription on the 1914-1918 Memorial Arch, Burwood, Sydney, Australia

'To the Glory of God', 'To the Glory of God'. You find the phrase on Commonwealth memorials every where – in Australia, in Britain and down the Western Front. What could 'To the Glory of God' possibly mean? How could the horrors of the Great War in any way enhance the glory of God? Why did those who survived the war use the phrase so freely?

It certainly wasn't because the diggers were knights of righteousness on a religious mission like the Crusaders of old. The Australians of the AIF were a pretty rough bunch with a reputation for larrikinism, drunkenness and insubordination. Only a proportion would have got a job with Cromwell's seventeenth century Puritans!

At first glance, 'To the Glory of God' appears quite odd. You stand appalled when confronted with the death, the sorrow, the suffering and heartbreak, the sheer insanity of the human slaughterhouse. The dead, the gassed, the blinded, the wounded, the shellshocked and the insane pile up. Minds and bodies torn apart leaving behind traumatised individuals and nations. Material destruction on a scale never seen before. Could all this be 'To the Glory of God'?

As the war went on the Anzac legend evolved into something very similar to Christianity in that both were seen as stories of redemption. The central tenet of Christianity is that Christ, by the shedding of his blood atoned for our sins and reconciled us to God. In like manner, the sacrifice of the Anzacs was seen by some as the redemption of the nation. The Anzacs offering on the altar of war had atoned for us. We could now stand tall in the company of nations.

It is not without significance that the most commonly used inscription on our war memorials is John 15:13: *Greater love hath no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends.*

Those who survived the war and were inclined to metaphysical thinking certainly saw it as *To the Glory of God*. And these were the people who, in most communities were most active in Great War commemoration and memorial building.

The hymn chosen for the unveiling of the Australian War Memorial in London in 2003 makes the connection quite explicitly. *O Valiant Hearts*, written by Sir J. S. Arkwright in 1919 has long been a popular Anzac hymn. Two of the verses read:

*Still stands his cross from that dread hour to this,
Like some bright star above the dark abyss;
Still, through the veil, the Victor's pitying eyes
Look down and bless our lesser Calvaries.*

*These were his servants, in his steps they trod,
Following through death the martyred Son of God:
Victor he rose; victorious too shall rise
They who have drunk his cup of sacrifice.*

All the great religious themes – courage, suffering, death, sacrifice, atonement, martyrdom, love, redemption and resurrection are there in both Christianity and in the Anzac legend. At every Anzac service, any where in the world, hymns will be sung, prayers will be offered and reverential mention will be made of those whose *names liveth for evermore*.

You can see why some social commentators refer to Anzac as Australia's secular religion and why, for so many Australians a visit to Gallipoli or the Western Front turns out to be such an emotionally charged experience.

Yet it would be wrong to conclude that God was the only, or even a major reason for Australia going to war in 1914. Of the thousands of Great War memorials in Australia only a few mention God and very few have a Christian cross or any religious symbol. Only one, Berridale in the Snowy Mountains has a crucifix. It is clear that for the post-war generation at least, God was in third place by a long way in the trifecta of God, King and Empire.



This war memorial in Renmark, South Australia is one of the few that feature the Christian cross as the main structure of the memorial.

The lower ranking given to God by the war memorial generation should not be surprising.

Established religion was part of the British upper class and therefore had a firm place in the established order of society in Australia but it had limited appeal to the general population. The diggers always preferred a simple, practical, roll-up-your-sleeves type religion. Parsons who turned up just for church parades were parodied mercilessly by the irreverent diggers but the chaplains who shared the life of the trenches were revered.

One such chaplain was Salvation Army officer William 'Fighting Mac' McKenzie who at 44 years of age landed with the troops on Gallipoli and then shared all the horrors and privations of the men on the Western Front. His name was revered by the diggers and for years afterwards he was eagerly sought after for sermons, memorial unveilings and public appearances. He was awarded a Military Cross and later honoured with an Order of the British Empire but his only memorial is this gravestone in Sydney's Rookwood Cemetery.



Before 10.00am our chaplain, Major McKenzie, passed through our line on his way to visit men of the 4th Battalion somewhere in front of us. He returned about midday with his pockets full of personal effects he had taken from men of the 1st Brigade who had fallen that morning during the advance to the new front line. He stayed with us for a while before going back to his quarters in the rear to write letters to the next of kin of the fallen and to forward the personal effects he had collected. He was a true Christian. Hartnett, Over the Top, p218.



As you travel down devoutly Catholic rural France today you frequently see roadside crucifixes, usually much bigger than the one on the Berridale memorial. In French these are called a *Calvaire* and various soldiers of the AIF reported finding religious consolation at these *Calvaires*

The practice of roadside crucifixes dates from the Middle Ages and they were set up as places of refuge. Such was the religious fervour at the time that even robbers, war lords and jealous husbands respected the sanctity of the crucifix. Not so in the First World War. The *Calvaires* were obliterated like everything else at the front.

The *calvarie* shown at left is north of the French village of Longeval on the way to the *New Zealand Division First Battle of the Somme Memorial*.

THE WESTERN FRONT AND THE FIRST AIF

The Western Front, where the armies of France, Britain and Belgium on one side faced the German and Austrian forces on the other extended some 700 km from the North Sea in Belgium down to the border of Switzerland. Of course it was the Germans' *Western Front* but somehow the title was adopted by the allies both in official pronouncements and in public discourse. The front moved little during more than four years of trench warfare thus concentrating the carnage and the destruction in a relatively narrow band, in most areas not much more than 20 km wide.

Of course the naval war ranged far and wide on the world's oceans including the coasts of Australia. In Sydney's Hyde Park you can see a gun from the German raider Emden which ran aground on the Cocos Islands after a battle with HMAS Sydney in November 1914.

There was some aerial bombing of Britain from Zeppelins and fledgling air forces had dog fights above the trenches but overall the massive slaughter and suffering was on the ground in a narrow corridor across France and Belgium. The hundreds of cemeteries today plot a line on which more blood was spilt than anywhere else on earth at any time in all of recorded history.

Fortunately for the present day traveller Australian forces in the First World War were not spread out over the entire front but remained concentrated in a relatively short section towards the northern end of the line. Thus Australia's sacred places today are concentrated in a part of the front not much more than 100km in length and they are conveniently divided by the limestone ridges of Vimy into two distinct areas:

***Flanders* and *the Somme*.**

Flanders is an ancient region lying across the French-Belgian border. Here the places you will want to visit are all concentrated in and around the Belgian town of Ieper (Ypres). This town is the key place to start your pilgrimage to the Western Front. There are at least a dozen significant places all within a radius of 35km.

Some 100 km to the south, in northern France is an area loosely referred to as ***the Somme***. In its broadest definition ***the Somme*** means all the British sector south of Vimy Ridge. Officially La Somme is a *department* which takes in roughly the lower catchment area of La Somme River and its tributaries such as L'Ancre. On this definition several Australian sacred places, such as Pozières and Bullecourt are not in La Somme but in the adjoining *department* of Pas-de-Calais. Towards the east the Australians had their last battles in the adjoining *department* of Aisne. Yet again, La Somme also means the actual waterway of the Somme River that flows through such sacred places as Péronne, Corbie and Amiens.

Taking the broadest definition of the Somme, the places of interest to Australians are a little more spread out (mainly because the AIF made significant advances here in the last year of the war) but the distances to drive are not great. Not for Australians anyway.

The AIF journeys to France – Tel el Kebir to Croix du Bac

When Anzac forces were withdrawn from the Dardanelles they returned to Egypt and encamped at Tel el Kebir some 70 miles from Cairo. Strategically they were positioned there as part of the defence of the Suez Canal, Britain's key link to her vast empire - India, the Far East, Australia and New Zealand. However Charles Bean notes: *It was, no doubt, also considered that the distance of Tel el Kebir from Cairo – about seventy miles by railway – would to a large extent secure that city from any possible indiscipline on the part of the Anzac troops, while also shielding those troops from the known dangers of Cairo. Official History, Vol III, p4.*

What a diplomatic way of saying that Cairo would be saved from drunken Australians and those Australians would be kept from the venereal disease rife in Cairo brothels! Bean clearly knew that the wild boys from Australia had a well-deserved reputation for indiscipline and riotous behaviour and were poorly regarded by the British establishment. Supreme commander Sir Archibald Murray complained of the extreme indiscipline, poor performance and *inordinate vanity* of the Australians. This chap Murray certainly didn't like Australians. Later, when training camps in England were being established he wrote: *Special attention will have to be paid to discipline, in which the bulk of the Australians are still lacking. Official History, Vol III, p168.*

It was expected that the Australian forces would remain in Egypt for some time as there was much to be done in reorganising and re-equipping the troops. The thousands of raw recruits having arrived from Australia had to be allocated to one of now 4 Australian divisions. The 1st and 2nd Divisions plus the NZ Division made up ANZAC I Corps under General Birdwood while the 4th and 5th Divisions formed ANZAC II Corps under General Godley. These corps needed much training to make them into effective units. However the great losses in the battle at Verdun and the receding of any Ottoman threat to the Suez Canal led to the decision by the British High Command to reduce forces in the Middle East and reinforce those on the Western Front. Thus while most of the Australian Light Horse was left in Egypt the four Australian infantry divisions embarked for France arriving at the great Mediterranean port city of Marseilles over a 3 month period from 19 March 1916. By July of that year there were over 90,000 Australians and New Zealanders on the Western Front.

The sea voyage from Egypt to France was not without risk to the Australian forces. The Germans had declared unrestricted submarine warfare making both the Atlantic and the Mediterranean dangerous areas. One of the Anzacs' transport ships, the *Minneapolis* was sunk while returning empty to Egypt to pick up another load.

From Marseilles there was a 60 hour steam train journey up to Calais then back around to the rail junction of Hazebrouck in the staging area behind the front. Today you can do the Marseilles to Calais journey on the modern French TGV rail system in around 6-7 hours. By road it is around 1000 km, about the same as driving across New South Wales.

Some of the diggers had, no doubt, hoped that they would be taken 'home' to England. After all a fair proportion of the AIF had been born in the UK; some admitted later that they had only joined up anticipating a free passage to 'the old country'. In the coming years many took leave in 'Blighty' (an old slang term for Britain) or got there with serious wounds or gas inhalation.

Throughout the long train journey through France the Australian divisions were warmly greeted by the local French inhabitants, supplied with refreshments and showered with gifts and souvenirs. Bean writes:

The journey of almost all units through southern France was made in gloriously fine weather. Its course lay for a day beside the River Rhone, whence the troops looking eastward could see the horizon bordered by mountains gradually rising towards the Alps – which were visible – and the nearer lowlands scattered over with red roofed farms surrounded by orchards then in full blossom, and with fields and copses all bursting into the fresh delicate green of the European spring. To Australians, accustomed to the more sombre evergreens of the bush, and coming straight from three months in the desert, this country was a fairyland – something guessed at from the picture books of childhood, but beautiful beyond dreams.
Official History, Vol III, p74.

It is the same today. Australians, used to drought, dust and eucalypts find Europe in summer to be impossibly green and covered with a riot of colour. The south of France, just glimpsed by the AIF is worth a much closer look. The Mediterranean coast, the Rhone Valley and the French Alps all provide magnificent scenery, inviting villages, unhurried landscapes and great travel experiences.

Sad to say the AIF had no more than a glimpse of Paris. The trains turned off at Versailles so the Australians had only a hazy distant view of the Eiffel Tower and in the years following very few diggers got to see the sights of the French capital.

If only the Australians had been allowed off the train at Versailles! They could have seen the great palace of Louise XIV where, three years later the victorious allies would meet to draw up the disastrous Treaty of Versailles that sowed the seeds for another world war 20 years on. Australian Prime Minister Billy Hughes was there championing the revolutionary idea of a League of Nations and lobbying for Australia to get its fair share of the spoils such as German New Guinea.

Europe today has many opulent palaces but the Versailles Palace of Louis XIV 'The Sun King' stands supreme. (The palace is closed on Mondays when there is free entry to the gardens). Don't be like the diggers and miss Versailles! Likewise with Paris, still there in the top rank of great world cities. Very few Australians doing their 'big trip' to Europe today would miss Paris and rightly so. It is only 2 ½ hours by train from London and less than 2 hours' drive down the Autoroute Nord from Australia's battlefields along the Somme.

Keeping the AIF in perspective

Australia certainly made a great contribution to the allied effort in the First World War. Out of a population of around 5 million in 1914, less than a quarter of what it is today, over 400,000 men volunteered and over 300,000 served overseas. Over 60,000 did not return and thousands more were maimed, blinded, gassed and traumatised by the horrors they had endured. The brightest and best of a generation were slaughtered. Never before or since has Australia made such a sacrifice.

The proudly all volunteer Australian Imperial Force established a reputation far above and beyond the actual number of soldiers in the ranks. They were acknowledged as superior fighting forces and they established a glorious heritage for the then fledgling Commonwealth of Australia.

However a balanced perspective is necessary. The AIF was a valiant force in a large war. The *Official History* tells us that in 1918 the 5 Australian divisions were among 173 Allied divisions and 206 German ones along the front. Keep this in mind when wandering around the many fine museums down the Western Front today.

Following in the footsteps of the Australian Divisions

Following in the actual footsteps of any of the 1st, 2nd, 4th or 5th Australian Divisions would have you driving up and down the front like a yo-yo. This is because these divisions were moved up and down the front on numerous occasions depending on the overall British strategy which changed several times during the course of the war. The First Australian Division had the worst of it. In April 1918 the division was sent some 100 kilometres from Flanders down to the Somme to defend Amiens. On arrival they were ordered to return immediately to Flanders to defend Hazebrouck. You can imagine the men of the 1st Division had less than charitable thoughts about the British High Command! Thus rather than following a particular Australian division or soldier, making one journey up or down the front, taking in all the Australian sacred places is a much more sensible travel plan.

On arrival in France from Egypt the ANZAC I corps got off the train at Hazebrouck and encamped around Croix du Bac, west of Armentieres near the river Lys. The first ANZAC I Corps HQ in France was further back at La Motte-au-Bois. Some months later the 4th and 5th Divisions arrived and joined their fellow countrymen in the 'nursery sector'. After the disaster of Fromelles the 5th Division remained in French Flanders but the other Australians were moved south to Albert and were brought into the Battle of the Somme at Pozières in July 1916.

After a 'rest' up in Belgian Flanders (September 1916), the Australians were brought back into France for the winter of 1916-1917 ready for the next big push in the spring. This attack, so celebrated by the Canadians became known as the Battle of Arras. The Australian divisions (1st, 2nd, 4th and 5th) had their part attacking at Bullecourt (April & May 1917).

Meanwhile the 3rd Australian Division, after training on the Salisbury Plain had come over from England in late 1916 and had gone straight to the French/Belgian border region. They had their first battle just south of Mesen in the area of Ploegsteert Wood in June 1917.

After Bullecourt the ANZAC I corps moved back down to the rear areas around Albert where they enjoyed what Bean describes as *perhaps the finest rest ever given to British Empire troops in France*.

At the end of July 1917 they were moved north again, up into Flanders in readiness for Haig's next big frontal attack that became known as the Third Battle of Ypres. Thus August 1917 was the first time that all five Australian divisions were together in roughly the same geographic area though it was not until November of that year that they were administratively brought together into one Australian Army Corps and it was not until May 1918 that they were under the command of an Australian (Monash). All five Australian divisions were involved in Haig's grand scheme that ended in November 1917 in the mud and slush of Passchendaele.

The diggers were still there in Flanders in February 1918 but since German General Luddendorf's desperate drive for Paris was concentrated on the Somme, the Australian divisions were in turn rushed south to help stem the tide. The 3rd and 4th Divisions were first to go (26 March 1918) with the 1st Division

bringing up the rear (8 August 1918). From then on all divisions were under Monash advancing along the Somme to the Hindenberg line.

After the armistice the Australian divisions were not used to occupy the Rhineland but they were sent yet again up into Belgium to await the slow process of repatriation to Australia. It was not until May 1919 that the last 10,000 Australians were brought from France to England joining 70,000 of their countrymen still encamped on the Salisbury Plain. Monash himself did not get back to Melbourne till 26 December 1919.

No one division, much less one individual soldier was involved in all major Australian battles of the Western Front. Fromelles involved only the 5th. Only the 1st, 2nd and 4th were at Pozières. Only the 1st, 2nd and 5th were in the May offensive at Bullecourt. The 3rd and 4th had the battle of Messines Ridge and the defence at Dernancourt largely to themselves while the 1st Division alone defended Hazebrouck and thus was not involved in the famous actions at Villers Bretonneux and Le Hamel. Only in the battles around Zonnebeke in late 1917 (Passchendaele) and in the Somme battles in the final months of the war were all five Australian divisions involved together in one offensive.

Of course for a truly authentic pilgrimage you would have to find a farm billet or old dug out, fill your own hessian bag with straw and spend not one but two European winters surviving on bully beef and anything you could scrounge from local farmers. You might be lucky and receive a food parcel, extra socks and a knitted scarf from Australia. The only break would be a couple of weeks' leave each year in 'Blighty'.

In the end you would have to go back to the Salisbury Plain in England, attend several vocational resettlement courses and then wait for several months before a ship could be found to take you to Australia. Even then you may not be welcomed as you could be carrying the deadly Spanish flu!

Up and Down, In and Out

To all this north/south movement has to be added all the east/west movement as divisions were moved up to the line then, on relief, moved back to rest areas for reinforcements, training and re-equipping. Often these movements involved route marches of 20 kilometres or more.

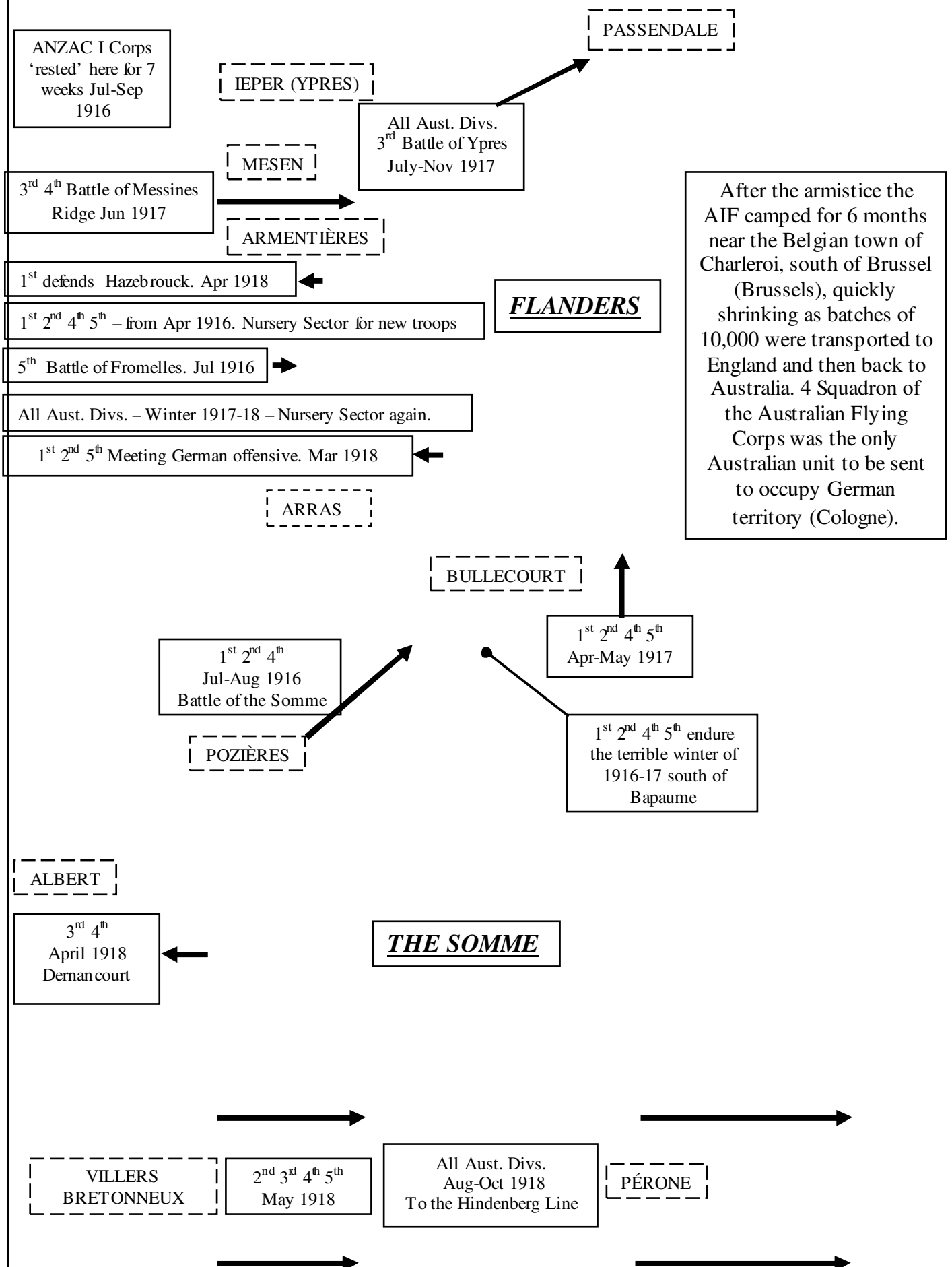
Furthermore there were thousands of Australians in various support units scattered across the land all the way from the front line back to the French and Belgian coast. Australia had a large coastal supply depot at Le Havre, there were over 70 Australian nurses at N^o 1 Australian General Hospital (AGH) in Rouen and N^o 2 AGH was just up the road from Amiens at Abbeville. A large Australian Veterinary Hospital was located in Calais and transport depots, armourers, railway companies, bakeries, casualty clearing stations, stables, engineering workshops, clothing and ration stores, mortuaries and coffin makers, along with other support services were found in dozens of towns and villages. If your ancestor was in one of these units then you would have some extra research and driving to do.

Soldiers in these back areas had more opportunity to see ordinary French towns and villages undamaged by the war. The front line troops were not so fortunate as Harry Hartnett of the 2nd battalion explains.

*The first part of our journey ended when we arrived in Rouen at 8am, and marched to a nearby rest camp. Leave for 1½ hours was granted, enabling us to have a brief look at Rouen. Although some of our critics have seen fit to describe the men of the First AIF as 'Six Bob a Day Tourists', believe me we had few opportunities to see any decent French towns or cities free from the scars of war. Large centres we did see a good deal of-Albert, Ypres, to mention two-could hardly be described as 'tourist attractions' during the war years. However Rouen was an exception, as it had not been affected by enemy action, and in the short time at our disposal we did see some very fine buildings. Hartnett, *Over the Top*, p245.*

The chart on the next page indicates the location and date of significant Australian activity by each of our 5 infantry divisions. Other front line units such as artillery, pioneers, machine gunners, tunnellers, ordnance and engineers had a roughly similar pattern of activity.

Location diagram – Major activity of the five Australian Infantry Divisions (1st 2nd 3rd 4th 5th)



The Australian Flying Corps

The heavens are their battlefields. They are the cavalry of the clouds. High above the squalor and mud ... their struggles there by day and night are like a Miltonic conflict between the winged hosts.

British Prime Minister Lloyd George 1919. Quoted on the front leaf of the *Official History* Vol VIII.

The Air Force became a front line force in the latter years of the Great War. Originally Britain had two aerial forces: The Royal Naval Air Service and the Royal Flying Corps. These were not amalgamated till 1918. Many Australians served in these two forces including Charles Kingsford-Smith and Bert Hinkler who went on to be national heroes of the skies in the inter-war period.

Four specifically Australian squadrons were formed serving initially as Numbers 67 (N^o 1), 68 (N^o 2), 69 (N^o 3) and 71 (N^o 4) of the Royal Flying Corps. 1 Squadron remained in the Middle East but Squadrons 2, 3 and 4 moved to England and then on to active service on the Western Front. The first Australian flying unit to arrive on the Western Front was 3 Squadron. They flew to St Omer on 9 September 1917 then on to their first base at Savy, west of Arras. They were soon followed by Squadrons 2 and 4.

The airfields occupied by the Australian Flying Corps were back from the front but their scouting, strafing and bombing missions took them far in advance of the infantry. Thus a present day traveller concentrating on Air Force sacred places would have to make a much wider journey than a pilgrimage going straight down the front. Any such traveller should consult the excellent maps in the *Official History* Vol VIII, especially the main map on page 179.

3 Squadron had the closest association with Australian infantry, advancing with them along the Somme in the final months of the war. Post armistice 3 Squadron followed the Australian Corps up to Charleroi in Belgium and remained with them till demobilisation. 2 and 4 Squadrons supported British forces further north towards Cambrai, Douai and Lille and were active in attack right up to the eve of the Armistice.



Members of 3 Squadron, Australian Flying Corps examine the machine guns from the wreckage of the Red Baron's Tri-plane (under cover in background). Bertangles, April 1918.

Imperial War Museum, London, N^oQQ012163.

FLANDERS SECTOR

BELGIUM – Linguistic Capital of the World

The land on which this cemetery stands is the free gift of the Belgian people for the perpetual resting place of those of the Allied armies who fell in the war of 1914-1918 and are honoured here
Inscription at the entrance to Buttes New British Cemetery, Fifth Australian Division Memorial and the New Zealand Memorial to the Missing, Polygon Wood, Zonnebeke, Belgium.

How come you Belgians speak so many languages? I asked my Belgian host. I had been mightily impressed with the check-out girl in the local supermarket who was speaking some guttural German or Dutch to a customer, then swapped to what was unmistakably French and then effortlessly switched to English when my turn came.

It's because people keep invading us, my host replied. *We've had the Romans, the Vikings, Oliver Cromwell, the Grand old Duke of York, Spaniards, Dutchmen, Frenchmen, Germans – they all came through here. The Duke of Wellington was over here for Waterloo and Corporal Adolf Hitler spent much of the First World War here in Flanders. These days we have British and American tourists. We learn to speak to them all.*

Given that Australian school courses contain very little, if any European geography it is not surprising that few young Australians have ever heard of Belgium let alone know where it is. Even the Australian Department of Veterans' Affairs in its publication *Australians on the Western Front* lumps all present day links to the Western Front in a chapter headed *French Connections*. To add insult to injury the publication has a photograph with the caption *Headstones in a war cemetery in France* when the cemetery shown is the all-Australian Toronto Avenue Cemetery in Ploegsteert Wood, definitely in Belgium. On the same page is a photograph and text about the nightly service of commemoration at the Menin Gate but no indication that the Menin Gate, along with many other Australian sacred places is in Belgium, not France.



The flags of Australia and New Zealand at the Laying of Wreaths on the Belgian War Memorial in Ieper on Anzac Day.

Every 25 April the three towns of Mesen, Zonnebeke and Ieper all arrange special commemorations to honour Australians and New Zealanders who made the supreme sacrifice in the fields of Flanders.

The relationship between the Flemish people of Belgium and the French is similar to that between the English and the Scots. Calling a Scot an Englishman is definitely not a wise thing to do late at night in a Glasgow pub or at any other time for that matter. Remember that for much the same reasons it is neither wise nor polite to call a Flemish nationalist a Frenchman!

The diggers of the AIF, even more than most British soldiers were fairly ignorant of the cultural, linguistic and political divisions of Europe. Letters home were frequently from *somewhere in France* when the letter writer was often somewhere in Belgium. Back in Australia, there was even less knowledge of the tiny nation even though 'brave little Belgium standing up to the brutal Hun' was a big theme in early war propaganda. Consider this inscription in a Tasmanian cemetery:

IN LOVING MEMORY OF
OUR DEAR MOTHER
AMELIA STEVENS
DIED JAN 14. 1921. AGED 63 YEARS
THY WILL BE DONE.
ALSO OUR DEAR BROTHER ARTHUR
KILLED IN ACTION AT PASHENDALE
FRANCE, DEC 4 1917.
AGED 26 YEARS.
SOMEWHERE IN FRANCE YOU ARE SLEEPING
ARTHUR, IN A GRAVE WE
MAY NEVER SEE. MAY SOME TENDER
HAND IN THAT DISTANT LAND LAY A
FLOWER ON YOUR GRAVE FOR ME.

Now this is a sad insight into post-war grief in Australia. Only a pedant school teacher would point out that not only is Passchendaele misspelt but it is definitely in Belgium, nowhere near France.

The heartfelt plea expressed by Arthur's relatives is fulfilled more than the family could ever have imagined. Belgians solemnly lay flowers on Australian graves and honour Australians every Anzac Day.

Belgium is a small country – it would fit into Tasmania twice over and its population of around 10 million is only half that of Australia. Yet today it is a key region, the 'Cockpit of Europe' where you will find the headquarters of the European Union and the seat of the European Parliament. After centuries of invasion and subjugation Belgium is a prosperous nation at the heart of a prosperous continent. No Australian pilgrimage to the Western Front would be complete without a visit to our many sacred places in Belgium.

BRUGGE



Brugge is the best preserved late medieval town in Western Europe. It is visited by thousands upon thousands of tourists from all over the world including many Australians. Brugge was under German occupation in the Great War but it was well back from the Front and remained undamaged in what was then a state of faded glory. Fortunately the Germans withdrew without conflict before the King and Queen of Belgium re-entered the town on 23 October 1918. A visit to Brugge is a most worthwhile 'add on' to any pilgrimage to the Western Front.

Note that English maps name the town Brugges while the road signs on the French side of the border say Bruges and those on the Belgian side say Brugge. (Pronounced Brooga with a heavy German accent.)

IEPER (YPRES)

A more sacred place for the British race does not exist in the whole world - Winston Churchill



Australian photographer Frank Hurley's evocative picture of the Grote Markt, Ieper showing the ruins of the Cloth Hall and the church of St Martin & St Nicholas. *Australian War Memorial. Negative N° EO4612*

*On 19 September we marched into the silent, deathly region that was the Ypres salient. The world of life and light was behind us. Here all was still, and we moved under the shadow of death. A subtle difference pervaded everything. The rough crosses by the road told the tale of the days. Shattered, mouldering ruins were new to us of Anzac. The chill, still stink of death pervaded everything. 'All hope abandon' seemed to be the message of that region as we marched stolidly over the cobbles in strung-out groups of ten. – Mitchell, *Backs to the Wall*, p21.*

The small town of **Ieper** in western Belgium is the central place for visiting Anzac sacred places and numerous other places of interest to Australians in Flanders. The locals pronounce the name of their town *ieep*. It used to be spelt **Ypres** (the French name) but being unable to get their tongues around continental names it was universally known to British forces as **Wipers**.

Far more than Gallipoli, Ieper is the most Australian battlefield of them all. Every one of the 60 battalions of the AIF fought on the Ypres salient at one time or other during the Great War. No other battlefield in any war has had such complete Australian participation. Even allowing for AIF soldiers who fought only on Gallipoli and for later reinforcements who saw action only on the Somme, you could still say that well over 100,000 Australians and New Zealanders served in this region of western Belgium. Families all over Australia knew loved ones resting in Flanders Fields. Few places on earth are more liberally sprinkled with Australian blood.

You need to understand that the local people are Flemish and they speak Dutch. Like most of the other small 'tribes' of Europe they are proud of their identity and culture and they foster it even as they become more integrated, economically and politically into the European Union. The most visible manifestation of this is the changing of place names back to the local language. (Check out all those dual language road signs in Wales!) It is one way the small tribes assert themselves against the big 'bullies' of Western Europe, namely France, Germany and Britain. Thus two of Australia's most

sacred places, Ypres and Messines are today known as Ieper and Mesen respectively. Note also that while the famous gate is still the Menin Gate, the town off to the east of Ieper and the famous road heading to it are now spelt Menen. Hence the slight difference in road signage.

Which ever way you say *Ieper* (note: it begins with an I not an L), the town is a most pleasant one and small enough not to intimidate a foreign driver. Like every other place of habitation along the Western Front, both small and great, Ieper was reduced to a pile of rubble in the First World War. The British held onto Ieper to the death. Such was the devastation that some British politicians wanted the ruin to be preserved as a war memorial. Understandably the locals wanted their homes back in 1919 and they started the long process of rebuilding.

A wander through the streets of the rebuilt town and along the ancient ramparts is most agreeable. (Take the ramparts walk from the car park opposite the railway station right around to the Menin Gate.) There is enough to see around Ieper to warrant a stay of several nights at least. Quite apart from the sacred places covered in this guide Ieper has several grand buildings, museums and other places of interest along with shops, restaurants and *Chocolateries* for which Belgium is famous. I am also informed by someone who just *has* to browse in every European market she comes to that the Saturday market in the Ieper main square is quite good.

Just turning up and finding whatever accommodation you can is one of the delights of independent travel. Back in the old Kombi van days of free camping around Europe my wife Joy and I stopped for the night wherever a pleasant spot presented itself. We even spent some nights parked under the Eiffel Tower in Paris and others near the grim Checkpoint Charlie in old West Berlin. Ah, those were the days!

Now that we are ‘mature age’ travellers we have gone a bit upmarket but we still make our own way and it is amazing what turns up. Following a recommendation in the *Sydney Morning Herald* we found ourselves at Camalou B&B run by Annette Linthout at www.camalou.com If you don’t mind a narrow spiral staircase, this 18th century manor house used in the Great War as the headquarters of the British 4th Brigade is a most comfortable B&B with off-street parking. Annette is a most welcoming and informative host.

On discovering that I wanted to independently visit Australian sacred places Annette was most helpful in advising of local conditions and listing the road signs I should follow. Armed with her list and suggested itinerary I was able to find all Australian places and more besides in minimum time and never got lost! Annette is a guide accredited with the local tourist authority and can give you a whole range of options depending on your interests. For details on Annette’s battlefield tours see www.visit-ypres.be

They also serve an excellent cooked breakfast at Camalou! Many B&Bs in western Europe refer to a cooked breakfast as an ‘English’ breakfast. For travellers on a budget a hearty breakfast plus a few healthy snacks from a supermarket are all you need for a day’s exploring.

B&Bs and Hotels in Ieper and surrounds

Whether you want an in-town hotel or a B&B out in the countryside www.ieper.be www.zonnebeke.be and links on www.camalou.com will give you plenty of choice. *Rubenshof* in the village of Klijte is another excellent B&B I can recommend. It is surrounded by picturesque farmland adjacent to the staging area of the 3rd Australian Division during its preparation for the attack on Messines Ridge in 1917. See www.rubenshofbb.be

Bicycles

Bicycles are an almost universal mode of transport in the towns and villages of Belgium. Everyone from small children to stately matrons can be seen riding around. There are bike lanes everywhere and motorists have to give way. Exploring Flanders by bicycle and including Australia’s sacred places would be a most rewarding excursion for bike enthusiasts.

The visitors’ centres in Ieper and Zonnebeke can supply a whole range of maps for bike rides of varying distances.

Camp and Caravan Park

For those wanting to camp or park a campervan there is the excellent **Camping Jeugdstadion** in Ieper - open from early March to mid November. It is in a very central location - within walking distance of the moat, the ramparts, the Menin Gate and the town centre. A sports centre and indoor swimming pool are adjacent to the site and bicycles can be hired. Check out www.jeugdstadion.be and click on the English version.



To get to Camping Jeugdstadion start at the Lille Gate roundabout and head east. The first roundabout you come to has a huge trick tap put there by the local water authority. Turn north following the tent symbol and the Picanolzone (Industrial Zone) signs.

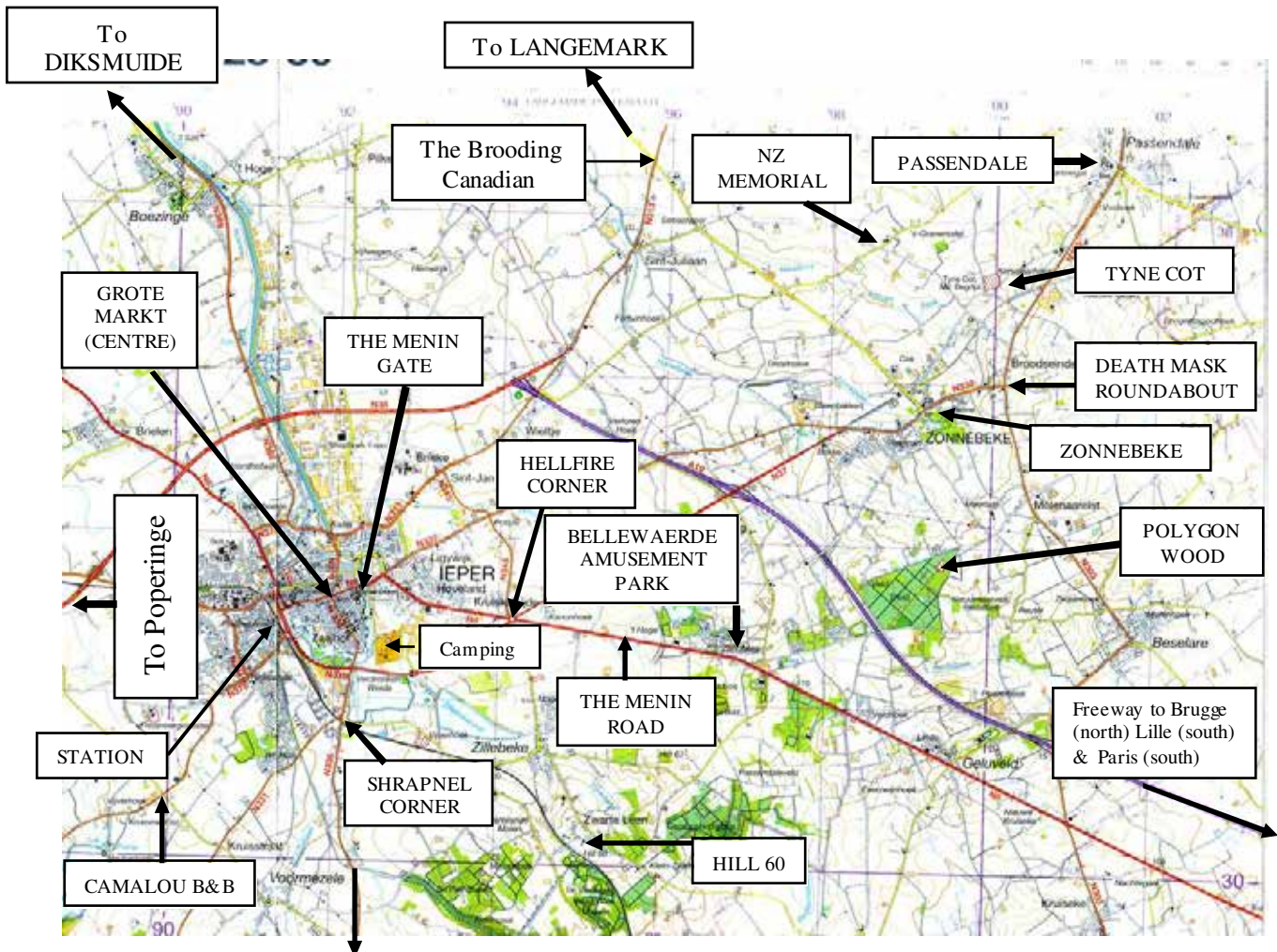


IEPER 1 :50,000 Topografische Kaart 27 28 36

Purchase the full topographic map either on line at www.ngi.be (Dutch or French only) or www.mapsworldwide.com or get one at the National Map Centre in London or at the Ieper Visitors' Centre on the Grote Markt. The full map covers all of Australia's sacred places in the region of the Ypres salient. It is very clear and is much easier to follow than a road atlas.

A small section of IEPER 1:50,000 Topografische Kaart 27 28 36 – Nationaal Geografisch Instituut

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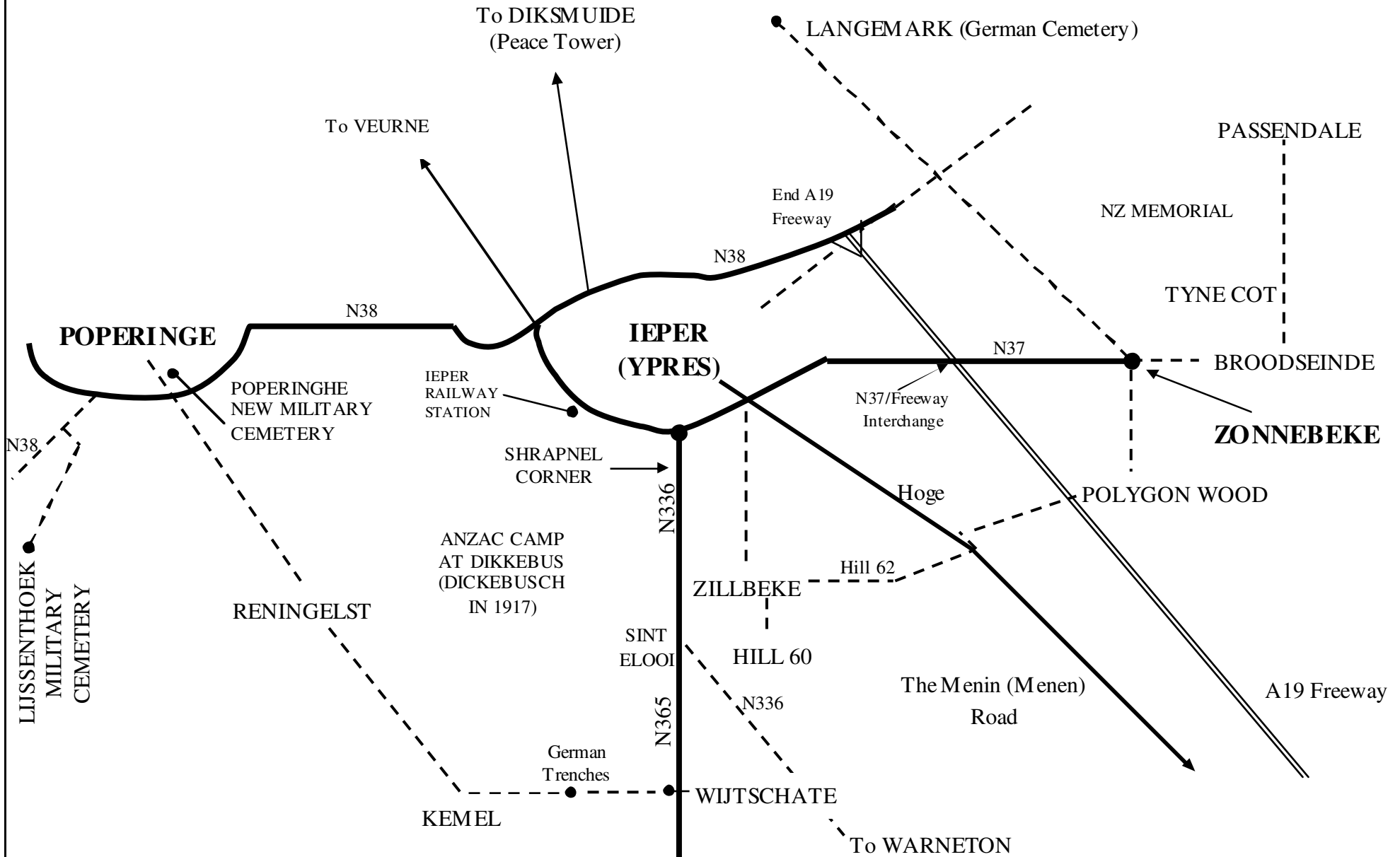
A small section of IEPER 1:50,000 Topografische Kaart 27 28 36 – Nationaal Geografisch Instituut © National Geographical Institute Belgium www.ngi.be

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This section covers the area of battles involving Australians and New Zealanders during the Passchendaele offensive of 1917.

Note: The village of Passchendaele is now Passendale (top left-hand corner of page).

AROUND IEPER – AUSTRALIAN PLACES OF MEMORY



The Menin Gate

TO THE ARMIES OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE
WHO STOOD HERE FROM 1914 TO 1918
AND TO THOSE OF THEIR DEAD
WHO HAVE NO KNOWN GRAVE

Inscription on the Menin Gate, Ieper, Belgium

The Menin Gate is a huge triumphal arch built by the British and unveiled by King George V in 1927. On it are recorded the names of 54,896 officers and men who fell in Ypres Salient but to whom the fortune of war denied the known and honoured burial given to their comrades in death. 6,176 of those names are Australian.

Except for the interruption of the Second World War a ceremony of remembrance has been held at the Menin Gate every night since 1929.

Towards 8pm hundreds, sometimes thousands of people, young and old gather as if out of nowhere.

The traffic is stopped and the crowd falls silent as local buglers march to the centre of the road and sound 'The Last Post'. There is a time of silence before representatives of visiting groups come forward and solemnly lay wreaths of red poppies or other tributes on the monument. Reveille is sounded and the ceremony concludes.

It is only a short, simple ceremony but I defy any Australian to stand in the great arch, looking up at the names of his countrymen so far from home and not be deeply moved by it all.

The Menin Gate in Ieper has another very powerful Australian connection. The Gate is the centre piece of the most famous Australian painting of the First World War, Will Longstaff's *Menin Gate at Midnight*. Longstaff was born in that famous Australian gold town of Ballarat. A South African (Boer) War veteran he joined the AIF and was wounded at Gallipoli. Having studied art in Australia, London and Paris Longstaff was commissioned by the War Records Office to travel the Western Front making drawings and sketches of military activities. He was also appointed an official Australian war artist and was an officer in a camouflage unit in the AIF. On discharge he set up a studio in Britain and remained there till his death in 1953.

Longstaff was present at the unveiling of the Menin Gate and his oil painting shows thousands of ghostly diggers rising like red poppies in Flanders Fields. Against a darkened sky the Menin Gate stands out in brilliant light.

Longstaff's creation was greeted with enormous public acclaim when it arrived in Australia in 1928. It seemed to speak to the entire war generation striking a deep spiritual chord in so many whose loved ones did not return. Hundreds of smaller prints of the work were made and today the original is on special display in the Australian War Memorial in Canberra. Longstaff did several similarly acclaimed works including *Eternal Shrine* which has the ghosts of soldiers surrounding the Cenotaph in London's Whitehall.

Speaking of the Australian War Memorial in Canberra reminds me that the two stone medieval lions that guard the entrance to that building came from Ieper. They were rescued from the rubble of the old Menin Road entrance and in 1936 were presented by the Burgomaster of Ypres (Ieper) as a gesture of friendship between the town and the people of Australia.

How to get to the Menin Gate: The Menin Gate is on the eastern side of central Ieper, only a short stroll from the central Market Square (Grote Markt). After 6pm there is plenty of free parking in the square.



In Flanders Fields Museum

*IN FLANDERS FIELDS THE POPPIES BLOW
BETWEEN THE CROSSES, ROW ON ROW
THAT MARK OUR PLACE; AND IN THE SKY
THE LARKS, STILL BRAVELY SINGING, FLY
SCARCE HEARD AMID THE GUNS BELOW.*

*WE ARE THE DEAD. SHORT DAYS AGO
WE LIVED, FELT DAWN, SAW SUNSET GLOW,
LOVED AND WERE LOVED, AND NOW WE LIE
IN FLANDERS FIELDS.*

*TAKE UP OUR QUARREL WITH THE FOE:
TO YOU FROM FAILING HANDS WE THROW
THE TORCH; BE YOURS TO HOLD IT HIGH.
IF YE BREAK FAITH WITH US WHO DIE
WE SHALL NOT SLEEP, THOUGH POPPIES GROW
IN FLANDERS FIELDS.*

Canadian Lieutenant-Colonel John McCrae – May 1915. McCrae, a veteran of the South African War was a doctor serving in the Canadian Army.

In Flanders Fields, first published in the British magazine *Punch* in December 1915 became one of the most popular pieces of poetry in Australia during the Great War and in the interwar years. Patriotic magazines and newspapers across the country carried the poem by popular demand and many a school child learnt the words by heart. Around the world patriots were stirred to write *Reply to In Flanders Fields* verses vowing to keep the faith and hold the torch high. At solemn public occasions such as Anzac Day or Remembrance Day a recitation of *In Flanders Fields* was often an item on the programme.

The years have not dimmed the popularity of the poetry. During my first Anzac pilgrimage students from a Melbourne school recited the famous words to the crowd as we gathered solemnly around the Digger Memorial in Bullecourt. For the community service at Villers Bretonneux on the 90th anniversary of the retaking of the town one of the 'Reply' poems *We Shall Keep the Faith* by Moina Michael (1918) was printed on the programme. (We could note that neither Bullecourt nor Villers Bretonneux is in the region of Flanders but let's not be too pedantic. 'Flanders' was sometimes used poetically to mean the whole of the British sector of the Western Front.)



The Cloth Hall, which houses the In Flanders Fields Museum and the Visitors Centre of Ieper is in the main central square of the town (the Grote Markt) shown here.

If you don't want to pay for parking, park in the free parking areas opposite the rail station and walk in to the central square. Alternatively, park in the eastern parts of the town and walk in through the Menin Gate.

The **In Flanders Fields Museum** in Ieper is a brilliant, engaging display of the First World War experience concentrating on the witness of people who were there. Stories of life in the trenches and the impact of the war on the local community are richly illustrated with stark photographs and a fascinating display of haunting artefacts. Explanatory texts are in excellent English as well as French and German. This museum is a must for any visitor to the Western Front. Toilet facilities are available in the Museum and at the rear of the Cloth Hall.

How to get there: The Museum is in the Cloth Hall right on the central Market Square (Grote Markt) of Ieper. Parking is restricted in the square during the day. Free parking is available in the south-west corner of the town, opposite the rail station. Leave your car there and walk the few blocks to the Grote Markt. Alternatively, having left your vehicle in the free parking area take the very pleasant pathway walk along the ancient ramparts, across the Lille Gate and right around to the Menin Gate



Every Anzac Day the citizens of Ieper honour Australians and New Zealanders who fought in the Great War. Here the flags of Australia and New Zealand lead the procession from the Menin Gate following the Anzac service of remembrance on 25 April. After the procession and the laying of wreaths on the Belgian War Memorial the Burgomaster of Ypres hosts a reception in the Cloth Hall. To be an invited guest, register beforehand with the Australian Embassy in Brussels - access through www.dfat.gov.au

St Martin & St Nicholas church

The spire of the church of St Martin & St Nicholas dominates the skyline of Ieper. Initially you think the church must be the best preserved Gothic church in Europe but like the rest of Ieper, most of it dates from the 1920s when it was rebuilt after wartime destruction. The restoration wasn't fully completed until the 1960s. Even so, the craftsmanship of the masons, carpenters and builders is to be much admired. The fine architecture of the restored building is a demonstration of the excellent skills of these 'modern' artisans. The church has a fine collection of artworks on display.

How to get to the church: The church is just off the Market Square of Ieper behind the In Flanders Fields Museum. (Just opposite the church is a useful supermarket if you need supplies.)

THE LILLE GATE ROUNDABOUT ON THE SOUTH SIDE OF IEPER

This way, through the Lille Gate to:

- Grote Markt
- Visitors' Centre
- In Flanders Fields Museum
- Menin Gate
- Ramparts Walk
- St Martin & St Nicholas Church
- Shops
- Chocolateries
- Many war cemeteries

This way (west) to:

- Petrol/Diesel
- Railway Station
- Free parking
- One end of Ramparts Walk
- Camalou B&B
- Dikkebus
- Diksmuide
- Poperinge
- Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery
- Dunkerque
- Many war cemeteries



This way (east) to:

- Camp & Caravan Park
- Hell Fire corner
- Hill 60
- Menen (Menin) Road
- Zonnebeke
- Polygon Wood
- Broodseinde
- Tyne Cot Cemetery
- Passendale
- Langemark
- Freeway (A19) to Brugge (north) Lille (south) Paris (south)
- Many war cemeteries

This way (south), down the front to:

- Shrapnel Corner
- Kemel
- German Trenches
- Mesen
- Toronto Avenue Cemetery
- Ploegsteert
- France
- Armentieres
- Freeway back to Lille Europe railway station
- Fromelles
- Vimy
- Continue down the front to the Somme
- Many war cemeteries
- On to Paris

Hill 60 and the Australian Tunnellers Memorial – Zwarte Leen

Hill 60 is one of several places on the Western Front where the land has been left in the pockmarked state produced by the Great War's savage shelling and underground explosions. Trees and grass have grown up but it is easy to imagine the site as it was in 1917 – bare earth, enormous craters, mud and slime, concrete bunkers, a terrible moonscape. The war underground was very extensive and here the Australian tunnellers fought many battles and suffered many casualties.

The main crater at Hill 60 was produced by one of 19 mines set off on 7 June 1917. The string of explosions along the Front in Flanders signalled the beginning of the British summer offensive fated to peter out by the end of the year in the rain, mud and slaughter of Passchendaele.

The 1st Australian Tunnelling Company was the only Australian specialized unit to erect a memorial on the Western Front. The first memorial was erected in April 1919 at the same time as the division memorials. The original was replaced in 1923 by the present more substantial structure.



*We filed through the sodden saps to the front line, and beyond the front line to the listening post on the top of Hill 60. The outgoing party whispered a caution that we were within five yards of the German advanced post ... For an hour we cowered against the back of the parapet. Our eighteen-pounders burst their shrapnel ten feet overhead. The pellets swept forward over the enemy positions. But portions of shell cases hissed and smacked into the earth around us. We trembled against the sodden ground, naked to the storm. The enemy guns took up the game and the earth rocked to din indescribable. White clouds of resinous smoke from our shrapnel eddied round us, billows of stinking acid smoke from the German shells.
... Demoniac shrieks of descending shells, snarling of swarms of ragged fragments, blow upon blow of concussion.*

Mitchell, *Backs to the Wall*, p25.

In the area are several memorials to British units as well as a memorial to several Belgian Second World War civilian resisters shot by the Germans in the vicinity.

How to get to the Tunnellers Memorial: From the roundabout on the south side of Ieper (just outside the Lille Gate) head east indicated by signs to ROESLARE and MENEN. A large trick tap (symbol for local water authority) sits on the first roundabout you come to. At the second roundabout (Hellfire Corner) turn south following the signs to ZILLBEKE. Around this village Australian artillery units were concentrated during the battles of 1917. Many Australian gunners lie in the numerous war cemeteries in the area. Continue south through Zillbeke and on to the next village, that of ZWARTE LEEN. In the middle of the village is the turn off to the right with signs directing you to HILL 60.

Zonnebeke

Passing Ypres I saw the Cloth Hall in ruins and most of the town in a terrible state (high explosives mostly). From there the journey up to this possie was just one mess of shell holes, and in the low lying places it is unbelievably muddy. I was bogged several times and needed to be hauled out by several lads.

*We passed many dead bodies – some khaki-clad, others in the grey-green of the enemy. They stunk abominably and as yet we have been unable to bury the fallen. It is too dangerous. To see the remains of fallen youth is a horror that cannot be put into words. Torsos, heads and limbs lying indiscriminately. It matters not that they be friend or foe. They are dead, and for their loved ones that is all that matters. Australian Eric Evans, *Diary entry, 24 September 1917. (So Far From Home, p118.)**

Seven kilometres east of Ieper is the town of Zonnebeke. Around this town and the nearby village of Passendale raged the great battles of late 1917 in which many Australians and New Zealanders were slain. Soldiers floundered in torrential rain, disappeared in mud and slush, stepped on putrid corpses of friend and foe, faced murderous fire and artillery bombardment and succumbed to numerous diseases and infections.

Passchendaele, so often inscribed on memorials around Australia was one of the most terrible places in digger memory. In fact the diggers did not quite get to the town now spelt Passendale. They were almost there but were then taken out of the line and it was left to the Canadians to take the village in November 1917.

Christmas 1917 was one of great sadness and despair for many Australian families at home. With actions in northern France and then Flanders, the AIF had suffered enormous casualties in 1917 (the worst year of the war as it turned out) yet little progress had been made and it seemed as if the war would go on forever.

The town of Zonnebeke has done much over recent years to open up the war experience to travellers and to highlight other tourist attractions in the district. See www.zonnebeke.be In the tourist office, located in the chateau we can note again that subtle difference between the Australian and European way of remembering the First World War. In Australia we always remember the heroism and tragic suffering of the diggers but we rarely reflect on the pointlessness of the operations in which they were so bravely engaged. The European approach is seen in a quote from one of the current tourist pamphlets. *Passchendaele became an international symbol of senseless military violence in its most cruel form.*

Australian sacred places of Tyne Cot Cemetery, Broodseinde, Polygon Wood, the Menin Road and the village of Passendale are all nearby. Every Anzac Day there is a special early Anzac commemoration in the town – the Burgomaster of Zonnebeke welcomes guests at a breakfast reception in the grounds of the chateau, wreaths are laid on the Belgian War Memorial then a special service is held in Tyne Cot Cemetery to honour the Australians and who paid such a price here in this part of Belgium. Each year the details are given on the website of the Australian embassy in Belgium – access through www.dfat.gov.au If you plan to attend, and I would strongly urge you to do so, register in advance with the Public Affairs Director at the embassy. A coach service from Brussels is also provided.



Buglers sound 'The Last Post' for the Anzac commemoration, Tyne Cot Cemetery, Zonnebeke, Belgium.

How to get to Zonnebeke: From the roundabout outside the Lille Gate on the south side of Ieper head east indicated by signs to ROESELARE and MENEN. This relatively new road, along the old Ypres to Roulers railway line goes through the trick tap roundabout then up to a roundabout (Hellfire Corner) on the Menen Road. Take the exit clearly signposted ZONNEBEKE. Alternatively, from the centre of Ieper just drive straight out through the Menin Gate and keep going. The N332 will take you over the freeway and on to Zonnebeke.

Memorial Museum Passchendaele 1917

(Do not be confused by the title. The museum is in the town of Zonnebeke, not the present day town of Passendale.)



Opened in 2005 this small museum concentrates on the underground war, a war as fierce and dangerous as the savagery on the surface. The Memorial Museum Passchendaele helps you understand this war underground with its eerie silences, deep darkness, dank air, cramped conditions and constant danger.

Australian historian, writer and filmmaker Will Davies has produced *Beneath Hill 60*, a book and film dealing with this underground warfare.

The Museum and the Visitors Centre in Zonnebeke are located in a chateau amid very pleasant picnic grounds (no entry fee) right in the

centre of the town. The grounds are cut off from view from the main street by a massive brick wall. Park in the free car park next to the church and the Belgian War Memorial which are on the main road and adjacent to the picnic grounds.

The Third Battle Ypres – Australians in the fields around Zonnebeke

As it was, the Ypres Battlefield just represented one gigantic slough of despond into which floundered battalions, brigades and divisions of infantry without end, to be shot to pieces or drowned, until at last and with immeasurable slaughter we had gained a few miles of liquid mud.

Charles Miller, 2nd Inniskilling Fusiliers. Inscribed at the Island of Ireland Peace Park, Mesen.

Surely after the disaster of the Somme in 1916 Haig and his generals would have learned that a dramatic breakthrough of German lines was just not going to happen and that any advance would be at the cost of thousands of lives? Not so. They still believed they could do it and they launched the massive Third Battle of Ypres on 31 July 1917. Who knows what success they may have had if the weather had remained fine? Unfortunately the heaviest rain in a century turned the battlefields into quagmires and by the time the offensive was called off on 6 November the British forces had lost around 300,000 men killed or wounded for an advance of only a few miles.

In the fields around Zonnebeke, Australians participated in four great battles of the offensive.

- Battle of Menin Road – 20 September. (1st and 2nd Divisions)
- Battle of Polygon Wood – 26 September. (4th and 5th Divisions)
- Battle of Broodseinde Ridge – 4 October. (1st, 2nd, 3rd and NZ Divisions)
- Battle of Passchendaele – 9 to 12 October. (2nd, 3rd and 4th Divisions)

In all the Australians had some 30,000 casualties before they were withdrawn from the line and the Canadians took over.

Australian Division Memorials

The earliest memorials on the Western Front were regimental rather than national. Indeed the vast majority of the hundreds of memorials on the Western Front today are for regiments, divisions, battalions, corps and even individual soldiers. These regimental memorials, initiated and sometimes paid for by the particular unit were built and dedicated long before national memorials caught the public imagination.

There were five Australian divisions in the first AIF and each soldier strongly identified with his particular division. By 1919 the 1st, 3rd, 4th and 5th Australian Divisions each had a memorial on the Western Front. These were all of identical design by the soldier and architect Sir Talbot Hobbs of Western Australia. He was commander of the 5th Division at the end of the war. Each obelisk was placed where a given division had fought major battles and all were paid for by the Australian Government. Hobbs used the same design for the Western Australia State War Memorial unveiled in 1929 in Kings Park, Perth.

Fifth Australian Division Memorial at Polygon Wood

The 5th Division was raised in Egypt in 1916. About a quarter of the original officers and men were Gallipoli veterans while the rest were recently arrived recruits from Australia. The 5th was the first division to engage the enemy in Europe in the ill-fated battle of Fromelles in France. Though the division was on the Somme under Monash at the end of the war, it's most celebrated victory was that of Polygon Wood. Hence the decision to place their memorial in this location in Belgium.



The Fifth Australian Division Memorial in Polygon Wood framed by the New Zealand Memorial to the Missing in Buttes New British Cemetery.

The Buttes New British Cemetery contains the most recent burials of identifiable Australian First World War soldiers. In 2006 Belgian gas workers unearthed the remains of five diggers overlooked in the post-war consolidation of war cemeteries. Using DNA technology matching samples from female descendents in Australia, the Belgian National Institute of Criminology was able to identify two of them, Sergeant George Calder and Private John Hunter. All five Anzacs were buried with full military honours in Buttes New British Cemetery in October 2007 in the presence of the Australian Governor General Michael Jeffreys and the New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark.

The new burials are easy to find. They are in a row by themselves at the New Zealand Memorial end of the cemetery. The family tribute on Private J. Hunter's headstone says: *Beloved son of Harry and Emily Hunter, Nanango, Qld. At rest after being lost for 90 years.*

The Fifth Australian Division Memorial here at Polygon Wood has the most dramatic setting. The grey stone obelisk sits high on an ancient mound draped with grass and flowers of Tasmanian

leatherwood. To one side of the mound is the Buttes New British Cemetery (564 Australians are buried here) and all is surrounded by a dark coniferous forest. A long corridor through the forest leads from the entrance to the Memorial. Looking down from the mound along the corridor the Cross of Sacrifice with the Sword of Valour of the Polygon Wood Cemetery stands out. (The irregular lay out of the Polygon Wood Cemetery marks it as one of the original battlefield burial plots.)

New Zealanders will also want to visit this site. In the Buttes New British Cemetery is a New Zealand Memorial to the Missing:

HERE ARE RECORDED THE NAMES OF THE OFFICERS AND MEN OF NEW ZEALAND WHO FELL IN THE POLYGON WOOD SECTOR SEPTEMBER 1917 TO MAY 1918 AND WHOSE GRAVES ARE KNOWN ONLY TO GOD. 378 names are listed.

How to get to Polygon Wood. From Ieper head east out to Zonnebeke. In the Zonnebeke urban area, between the two roundabouts each with an artwork of rusty steel, the green and white signs point south down the street GUIDO GEZELLELAAN. The green and white signs indicate **5th Australian Division Memorial**,



Buttes New British Cemetery (Number 161 in Michelin Atlas map 6) and **Polygon Wood Cemetery** (Number 160 in Michelin Atlas map 6). **The 5th Australian Division Memorial** sign was missing from the last fork in the road so keep heading for the cemeteries.

Alternatively you could come from the other end of Polygon Wood. After visiting Hill 60, return towards Zillebeke but then turn right to the east (sign: Maple Copse Cemetery). Continue across country doing a left/right dog leg at the N8 – the famous Menin Road. (right turn sign: Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry Memorial) then over the freeway and you are right there at one end of Polygon Wood. Following this route you are generally following the Australian advance of September 1917. You may wish to drive up and down the Menin Road for it was the scene of bloody battles by the Australians but today there is not much to see, just car yards and the Bellewaerde Amusement Park. Note on your map the slight change in spelling. It is now the Menen Road.

You can take a long walk right up the centre axis of Polygon Wood. The Australian Memorial is clearly seen straight in front. For closer access drive clockwise around the wood to the main entrance opposite the Polygon Wood Cemetery.



The main entrance to the Fifth Australian Division Memorial, Buttes New British Cemetery and the NZ Memorial to the Missing.

Tyne Cot Cemetery

THESE GAVE THEIR LIVES

Inscription on 1914-1918 War Memorial, Enfield, Sydney, Australia

*THE
GLORIOUS
DEAD
1914-18*

Inscription on Cenotaph, Hong Kong Island, Hong Kong

In 1917 well before the Great War had ended, the Commonwealth (originally Imperial) War Graves Commission was set up to identify, establish, and maintain graves of Commonwealth soldiers killed in the conflict. Unlike the French or the Germans, the British returned few bodies to home towns or villages but rather insisted on individual graves near the Front and where possible, a headstone inscribed with the soldier's name and unit. Hence today there are hundreds of Commonwealth Military Cemeteries, large and small meticulously maintained all along the Western Front.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission also maintains the little green and white signs directing you to a particular cemetery or monument. These however are only found in the immediate vicinity of the sacred place so you need a good map to get you into the right area in the first place.

In Australia's case, out of some 66,000 soldiers killed only two bodies were ever brought back for burial in this country. The first was General Bridges who died of wounds sustained at Gallipoli. His body was brought back in 1915 and after a massive funeral procession in Melbourne, buried in the Royal Military College, Duntroon, Canberra. The second was the *Unknown Soldier* from the Adelaide War Cemetery in Villers- Bretonneux. This body was brought back in 1993 and buried in the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in the Australian War Memorial in Canberra.

Of all the rest, if their bodies were found at all, they lie in cemeteries such as this - row upon row of headstones in neat order amid carefully tended lawns, gardens and hedges.



The staggering number of deaths meant that many were given an honoured but temporary resting place right at the front lines during a lull in the battle. Towards the end of the war many bodies were exhumed from scattered locations and brought to major cemeteries such as Tyne Cot (shown at left).

1,368 Australians are buried here. Most were killed in 1917 in the battles around Ypres such as Passchendaele and Polygon Wood.

There are five German blockhouses on site. One, captured by the 3rd Australian Division is the centrepiece. On it stands the Sword of Valour mounted on the Cross of Sacrifice – a monument you will find in virtually every Commonwealth cemetery of war graves.

At the back of Tyne Cot is a Wall of Remembrance listing yet more names of soldiers whose bodies were never found. No missing Australians are listed on the wall – they are all on the Menin

Gate but there is an alcove listing New Zealand missing. Gazing out from the wall you see beyond the cemetery pleasant, peaceful rural countryside. How could this landscape have been such a killing field?

Around 200,000 people now visit Tyne Cot Cemetery each year. Zonnebeke authorities have recently completed the provision of parking areas, a visitor centre and toilet facilities and have developed a 1.5 km 'history walk' from the town to the cemetery. This follows a now disused railway line along which Australians fought in the terrible battles of Passchendaele in 1917.

How to get to Tyne Cot Cemetery: From the roundabout outside the Lille Gate on the south side of Ieper head east. The initial signs point to ROESELARE and MENEN. This relatively new road replaces the old Ypres to Zonnebeke railway line shown clearly in all First World War maps. At the second roundabout (Hellfire Corner) follow the signs to ZONNEBEKE – about 7km away. Continue east straight through Zonnebeke to Broodseinde and the Death Mask roundabout. It is at this roundabout you turn north following the green and white signs to Tyne Cot.



The Death Mask roundabout in Broodseinde by local sculptor Johan Lievens. It was in the battle of Broodseinde in October 1917 that four ANZAC Divisions fought together in the Front Line. (1st, 2nd, 3rd, NZ) Previously they had been used sequentially in attacks.

The CWGC signs at the Death Mask Roundabout



Celtic Wood – The Great Mystery

Out on farmland, just south-east of the Death Mask roundabout there used to be a forested area known as Celtic Wood. On 9 October 1917 85 soldiers of the 1st Australian Division went out to attack German positions in Celtic Wood. 14 came back over the next two days and another 48 have been accounted for but no trace of the remaining 37 has ever been found. Searches by burial parties, archaeological digs after the war, studies of meticulously kept German prisoner of war records and regimental diaries failed to turn up a single trace of evidence as to what happened to the Australians. Their disappearance is one of the greatest unresolved mysteries of the war. The most likely explanation is that they were massacred and thrown into mass German graves.

Of course it was suggested by some that they had joined that phantom company of wild deserters said to exist out there in no man's land. Paul Fussell notes that in terms of literary invention and symbolic suggestion, the belief in the existence of such a group was one of the finest legends of the war.

The rumour was that somewhere between the lines a battalion-sized (some said regiment sized) group of half-crazed deserters from all the armies, friend and enemy alike, harboured underground in abandoned trenches and dugouts and caves, living in amity and emerging at night to pillage corpses and gather food and drink. This horde of wild men lived underground for years and finally grew so large and rapacious and unredeemable that it had to be exterminated. Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, p123.

This was but one of the thousands of rumours or 'fuphies' that swept through the ranks and even among those on the home front during the First World War as people sought meaning and significance in the horrors, the absurdities, the inexplicable, the random death. From the perspective of our age we may be inclined to be condescending and ascribe the belief in such fantasies and myths as products of a less-educated, more innocent time but the avalanche of myth emails in cyberspace today demonstrates that there are still plenty of people ready to fashion moral tales out of or ascribe significance to coincidences and chaos and no shortage of gullible people prepared to hit the 'forward' button sending it on to all and sundry.

The blood-bath of Passchendaele had drained our battalion. New faces replaced those of men tried and known. Men died but the battalion lived on ... The whole British Army had been shaken to its foundations by the blind fury and futility of the third Ypres offensive. The year 1917 had been one of disaster for our arms in all save the Messines attack. The Russians had caved in. The French were at a standstill. It would be many months before American troops would arrive in sufficient force to be of any importance ... Throughout the long winter nights came rumours of the coming enemy offensive, with new divisions loosed from Russia ... The cold winter dragged by. Early in the new year we took over a section at White Chateau, our left flank resting on the Ypres-Comines canal ... I lived on what had been a church. Near my possie were two aimen, covered with bricks, only their boot-toes protruding. Above them, fit Memorial, was the charred wreckage of their machine.

Mitchel, *Backs to the Wall*, p205.

The New Zealand Division Memorial – s Graventafel Crossroads

New Zealanders will want to drive out from Tyne Cot along the road to LANGEMARK to visit their memorial. This is the second New Zealand obelisk in Belgium. It recognises the New Zealanders who served in the terrible battles before Passchendaele.

New Zealanders also served in several places along the front in France – there are many Kiwis in many war cemeteries in northern France and the New Zealand Somme Memorial is north from the French village of Longeval.

POPERING(H)E

Ten kilometres west of Ieper is the ‘hops and lace’ market town of Poperinge – the nerve centre of the British forces defending the Ypres salient during the First World War. Around the town were vast military camps, supply dumps, training grounds, field hospitals, cemeteries, transport centres, firing ranges and ammunition bunkers. The town itself became the most famous recreation and rest oasis for British soldiers on the Western Front. (The towns of Roeselare and Menen performed the same functions for the Germans on the other side.)



The Belgian War Memorial at the Market Square in Poperinge. A plaque on the wall at the rear of the memorial states *Homage and recognition of the British Heroes who fell in the defence of our town 1914 -1918*

There is plenty of evidence that Australians in Poperinge were true to their larrikin reputation. At one point in 1917 the Burgomaster of Poperinge banned them from the town and built a gaol especially for them. To be fair, it is recorded that the Canadians were just as bad!

The larrikin reputation of the diggers however needs to be kept in proper proportion. After the war the behaviour and attitude of wild Australians was exaggerated and embellished in jokes, soldier tales, reminiscences, poetry and song. In Australia's national identity the ‘digger’ became a larger-than-life hero and his wild ways seen as something of which we should be proud. Charles Bean gave a whole section of the *Official History* over to justifying the larrikin digger.

Like a colt from a large paddock, he at first resented all restraint, and the true objection to the adoption of British rules as to saluting was that, even when he had been adequately tamed, over-insistence upon this practice – when, for example, he was on leave in London – seemed to him mere pin pricking. Official History, Vol III, p60.

For over 40 years after the war the Australian newspaper *Smiths Weekly* kept alive and embellished all things ‘digger’ and established in the national consciousness a stereotype ‘digger’ – a laconic larrikin, the best fighter of the war.

As with all stereotypes there is a grain of truth but exaggeration has taken it out of all proportion. There were many members of the AIF who never swore, never drank any alcohol and never visited local brothels. Many were deeply religious. They willingly attended church parades, heartily sang hymns they knew by heart, wore religious symbols and confined their recreation to ‘wholesome’ places such as Talbot House, today one of Poperinge’s tourist attractions.

Talbot House



Talbot House in Poperinge was the first 'Every man's Hut' set up for soldiers fighting in the First World War. The founder, the Reverend Phillip Clayton was quite a character turning the home of a local brewer into a haven for soldiers on leave complete with concert hall, chapel, library, basic accommodation, chaplain's office, wash house and a most attractive garden. All rank was abandoned on the premises and soldiers could write letters, contact mates from other units, attend religious services, stage concerts, participate in debates and in various other ways find relief from the absolute hell of front line trench warfare.

The experience of Talbot House led the Reverend Clayton to form the Toc H movement which is one of those quirky British, Christian-based organisations dedicated to Friendship, Service, Fair-mindedness and Spirituality or, as the aims say: To love widely, To build bravely, To think fairly and To witness humbly.

These values were held by a significant number of diggers and when they returned to Australia they joined organisations like Toc H, the Red Cross, Baden Powell Scouts, YMCA, Legacy, The Salvation Army, Dr Barnardos, the RSSAILA (RSL) and other community-based groups. Others got involved in charitable organisations and served on many hospital and school boards. Some entered religious orders. Having experienced the horrors of war first hand they had a quiet desire to make the world a better place for coming generations.

Reverend ‘Tubby’ Clayton was undoubtedly the most widely known and respected English padre of the Great War. His Talbot House and the atmosphere he created there was legendary among British forces including Australians. Fond memories of the place were so great that when the house came up for sale in the 1930s a wealthy British aristocrat was prevailed upon to purchase the property for Toc H and the original ideals established by the Reverend Clayton continue to the present day.

Talbot House at Gasthuisstraat 43, just off the main square has been restored to recreate the atmosphere of the war years. An excellent small museum – The Concert Hall – has been set up in the old hop storehouse and is well worth a visit. It focuses on welfare of the troops and medical care in the area during the war. (Entry to the museum is from the side street just left of the house). A tour of the house is included in the museum entry fee and the museum is free if you are staying at the house.

Staying in the old world accommodation of Talbot House is a most pleasant experience. For details see www.talbothouse.be The patisserie opposite has delicacies to die for and the main square nearby has an excellent selection of bars and restaurants. They advertise ‘Germanic portions, French refinement and good value prices’. (You will note that there is no reference to English cuisine. This is because on the continent, in spite of Nigella Lawson, Jamie Oliver and Gordon Ramsay or maybe because of them, English cuisine has a certain reputation. If a Frenchman says you cook like the English do not take it as a compliment. It is not!)

See www.poperinge.be for local tourist information and other accommodation options. The Visitor Centre and public toilets are in the central market square facing the Belgian War Memorial. As with every town in Belgium to get to the centre of Poperinge simply follow the signs to CENTRUM.

Shot at Dawn

A visit to Poperinge leads to consideration of a very dark chapter in a war of many dark chapters, the execution of soldiers by their own officers and men. The matter arises because local historians have made the restored holding cells and the execution post a somewhat macabre tourist attraction. To stand in the holding cells and listen to the audio is a very disturbing experience. (Several other 'museums to evil' I have visited come to mind: the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington DC, the Holocaust gallery of the Imperial War Museum in London, the gallows used to hang Ned Kelly in the Old Melbourne Gaol and the very dark Port Arthur in Tasmania.)



The Shooting Post in the Town Hall courtyard in Poperinge. The inscription is one of Rudyard Kipling's epitaphs of the War.

*THE COWARD
I could not look on death
which being known,
Men led me to him,
blindfold and alone.*

At least eight British soldiers were executed in the courtyard of the Poperinge Town Hall and at least another 70 were executed in the surrounding area. Seventeen of them lie in the Poperinge New Military Cemetery which is on the Deken De Bolaan, just inside the Poperinge Ring Road. To get to this cemetery, drive south-east from the centre of Poperinge following the signs to RENINGELST. You will drive right past the cemetery noting the distinctive crosses of the French section.

The 17 executed soldiers here were just some of over 300 British troops executed during the First World War including five New Zealanders.

Mercifully, none of the 300 were Australian. The execution of Australian 'Breaker' Morant by British authorities during the South African (Boer) War was much resented in Australia so even though over 100 Australians were convicted of desertion and cowardice on the Western Front and even though British authorities recommended the death penalty, the Australian Government to its eternal credit flatly refused. Capital punishment for men who had volunteered to go overseas and fight in a terrible war seemed quite wrong. It was totally against the Australian ethos of egalitarianism and mateship.

Therefore I found this paragraph in one of the tourist brochures available at the Visitors Centre to be quite disturbing: *However, Australian soldiers stationed near Poperinge were sometimes executed by their comrades and the number of men who were shot without trial remains unknown.*

This is a most serious claim. What evidence is there for this? Has something been lost in translation? Now I am not naïve enough to believe that no Australian ever committed an act of atrocity amid the hell and savagery of the First World War but to suggest that Australians shot some of their own men without trial is a very grave charge indeed.

The official historian notes that the AIF had its share of 'hard cases' and 'bad characters'.

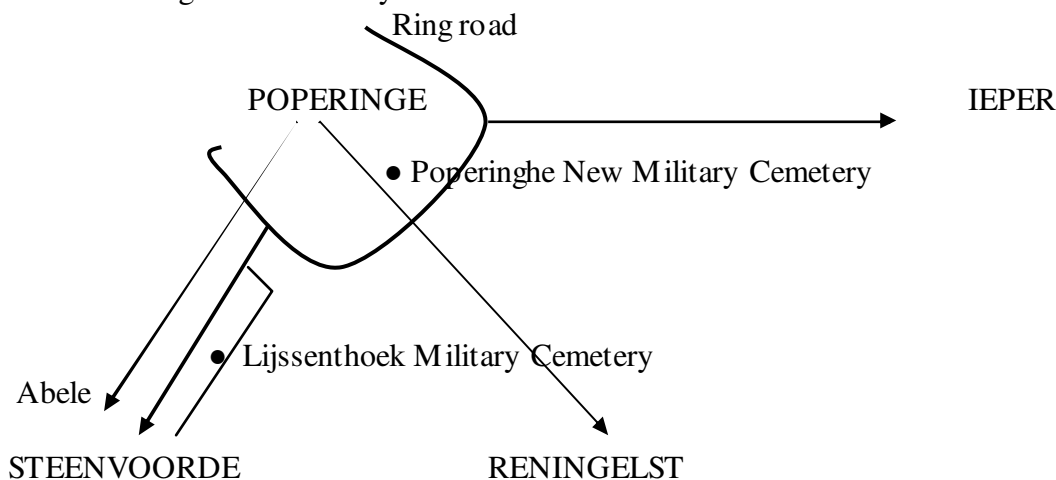
... it had become obvious that there had also been enlisted a certain number of criminals, some of whom had entered the force with the intention of running gambling 'schools' or of escaping from punishment in Australia. As time went on it was found that many of these men had no intention of reaching the firing line. ... Their presence, now first noted, was the cause of atrocities which occasionally blackened the name of Australia. ... the existence of these men afforded a problem increasing in difficulty as the war went on. Official History, Vol III, p60-61.

The truth on all these matters will probably never be known. In the building of the Anzac legend we have erased such things from our national memory.

In recent years the British 'Shot at Dawn' group put increasing pressure on the British government to issue a general pardon to those executed and to acknowledge that grave injustices were done at places like Poperinge. It was clear that many of the soldiers were severely traumatised, were not a given fair trial and in many cases the executions were carried out, not as deserving punishment for a crime but to *stiffen the resolve* of the remaining troops. Amid much controversy the British government issued a pardon in 2008.

Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery

The Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery lies just south of Poperinge. Containing over 1000 Australians, it is our second largest military cemetery on the Western Front. Almost all soldiers (including German POWs) are identified in this cemetery for almost all came through the field hospitals and dressing stations nearby.



THE BELGIAN IJZERTOWER (PEACE TOWER) – DIKSMUIDE

Peace, Freedom and Tolerance were the ambitions of the foot soldiers of the First World War who are buried in this crypt.

Inscription on the original Peace Tower, Diksmuide.



Just 25 kms north of Ieper is the town of Diksmuide. Located on the Yser river, Diksmuide is the gateway town on the edge of the massive Belgian polders. A visit to the town's 84 metre Peace Tower is highly recommended for not only will you get stunning 360° views of the surrounding countryside but you will also get a quite different perspective on the First World War.

The tourist brochure is quite blunt. *In the First World War the front army consisted mainly of Flemish soldiers, but they were commanded in French. These Flemish soldiers were thus humiliated and oppressed, just because they were Flemish. The Flemish soldiers unfolded a triple plan: autonomy (self government) for Flanders, never war again, nowhere, and peace for everyone whatever their convictions (beliefs). Today it means: Freedom, Peace, Tolerance.*

There are quite a few parallels between the Flemish perspective on the Great War and that of the Irish. Both saw themselves as small, oppressed tribes drawn into a terrible war between the big powers of Europe. Both saw themselves as doing the fighting and the dying for Britain and France when these nations were in fact their oppressors. Both came out of the war with a strong desire for self government and both developed strong peace movements which remain to this day.

Diksmuide became a centre for Flemish nationalism and in 1930 its citizens constructed a 50 metre Peace Tower, not just to remember the fallen of the Great War but more as a focus for peace, tolerance and Flemish autonomy. This tower was dynamited by French agents in 1946. (New Zealanders will immediately think about the sinking of the Rainbow Warrior in Auckland Harbour by French agents in 1985).

The present, rather ugly brick tower was built in 1965. Around the base, in four languages, is the bold proclamation 'No More War'. Inside is an excellent museum concentrating on war and Flemish nationalism. Visitors take the lift to the top for the views then work their way down the tower through the museum. See www.ijzertoren.org and click on EN for English.



How to get to Diksmuide: There are plenty of signs in and around Ieper directing you north to DIKSMUIDE. Some signs may have the old spelling of Dixmude. Once there you can't miss the tower. The town itself is your typical neat, clean, ultra tidy town of Flanders. It is a most pleasant place to go for the heritage walk around the town and along the river. Pick up a guide pamphlet at the tower entry.

View of the town of Diksmuide and the Yser River from the top of the Ijzertower.

THE GERMANS

Germans have dominated political life on the European continent for almost 200 years. Even the British Royal family is of German descent.

My friend from Bristol put it bluntly: 'There hasn't been an English King since Harold in 1066. The Normans were French, The Tudors were Welsh, the Stuarts were Scots and the present lot are Germans!' In fact the First World War monarchs, King George V of Britain and Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany were cousins!

Even at the very beginning of European settlement in Australia there were German connections. Arthur Phillip, commander of the First Fleet and first Governor of New South Wales had a German father and spoke the German language fluently. Even more ironic is the fact that Sir John Monash, Australia's great general of the First World War spoke fluent German and was of German Jewish ancestry!

In 1914 the Germans were grouped into two great empires: Germany, a strong industrialised nation dominated by Prussia and having Berlin as its capital and Austria-Hungary, an ancient decaying empire centred on Prague. It was the forces of these two empires which faced the British and the French along the Western Front. Belgium was simply a tiny nation caught in the middle.

Now the Germans brought death, havoc and destruction to Belgium twice in the first half of the 20th century so you can appreciate that the citizens of Ieper were not too keen on promoting reminders of Prussian militarism. From time to time there is some desecration of German war graves. Locally, commemorating German invasions is a touchy subject.

In recent years however, with both Belgium and Germany prosperous members of the European Union, the tourist potential of the First World War sites, both Allied and German is being recognised.



The only German First World War Memorial in Australia is found in the Arakoon State Conservation Area near the holiday town of South West Rocks on the north coast of New South Wales. Several hundred Germans, many of them leading businessmen and professionals were interned in the old Trial Bay Gaol and on a nearby hill they erected this obelisk with three graves to remember their countrymen who had died during internment. The obelisk was blown up in 1919 by 'persons unknown' and for 40 years remained a pile of rubble. Local citizens took the initiative to make amends for this wanton act of desecration and the obelisk was restored in 1960.

The Australian public was stirred with much anti-German hysteria during the First World War. Germans were referred to as 'huns', 'barbarians', 'murderers' and 'butchers'. Cartoons and recruitment posters showed them as uncivilised bullies, ferocious animals intent on rape and pillage. German shops had their windows smashed or daubed with paint and in Broken Hill an angry mob burned down the local German club. Many Australian citizens of German descent were held in 'internment camps' and many felt it was necessary to anglicise their names to hide their German connections such as Fischer into Fisher and Brantz into Brand.

Many places with German titles were renamed. Towns, buildings and streets across the country found new names to go on maps and on local signage. Those who visit Australia's National Motor Museum at Birdwood in the Adelaide Hills possibly don't want to know that the place was originally Blumberg but it was changed to the name of the British general who was the popular commander of the ANZAC I Corps (1st, 2nd and NZ Divisions) for much of the war. In a suburb near where I live the authorities in 1916 changed Hamburger Av into Victoria St. No doubt the present

residents are grateful that the change was made but I have to remind my students that a Hamburger was a citizen of the German coastal port of Hamburg long before it was an item of American fast food!

Langemark – Germany’s Gallipoli

The Schlieffen Plan anticipated a quick, anticlockwise sweep through Belgium, capture of the channel ports and an uninterrupted march down to Paris. Trench warfare was not even contemplated. Strategic use of railways would ensure rapid transport and a quick victory.

It was in the area of Langemark that the northern extremity of the sweep encountered stiff opposition and came to a halt in November 1914 in what was later called the First Battle of Ypres. The Germans advanced over open country, throwing rank after rank into the murderous fire from Belgian and allied forces. No less than the British and the French, the German generals believed in mass infantry attacks, breaking through the opposing ranks and putting the enemy to flight.

It was a massive disaster. Thousands upon thousands of young Germans were slaughtered as they advanced in tight formation as if they were on a Napoleonic battlefield. The vision of a quick victory disappeared and the stalemate of trench warfare began.

Back in Germany, was the disaster acknowledged? Was the defeat recognised? Did they accept that the whole campaign was misconceived and that thousands of young lives had been thrown away for nought? Not at all. The spin put on the events at Langemark became one of the most enduring and embellished myths of the Great War – the Massacre of the Singing Innocents at Ypres.

German newspapers, political pamphlets, patriotic speakers and later art, music and literature all made much of the innocent students bringing great glory to the Fatherland by heroically facing the enemy and bravely going into battle singing *Deutschland uber alles*. Their name would live for ever more, their sacrifice had ennobled the nation, their deeds would be an example to all future generations. The day of battle (10 November) should be a national day of commemoration.

No German wanted to know that the dead were not necessarily students. Nor did they want to know that the reservists didn’t march gloriously into battle but were foolishly ordered to attack impossible positions in the open. Nor did anyone check any evidence of the singing of *Deutschland uber alles* or any other song.

Over time the myth grew and was celebrated in verse, song, drama and political propaganda. Not surprisingly, Adolf Hitler referred to it in his book, *Mein Kampf* (My Struggle). The right wing Nazis seized on the myth and used it shamelessly as a spur to patriotism enjoining all to remember the ‘spirit of Langemark’. On the Langemark Cemetery (consecrated in 1932) was the inscription ‘Germany must live, even if we must die’.

The German War Cemetery (Deutscher Soldaten Friedhof)



The German War Cemetery at Langemark is well worth a visit for it reveals a totally different approach to commemoration of the fallen compared to Britain and the Dominions.

British Empire authorities wanted treeless, garden cemeteries following the pattern of an English country churchyard. There would be a separate grave and headstone for each soldier who had paid the supreme sacrifice. Even where the soldier could not be identified, a headstone was placed and inscribed with a phrase such as *An Australian Soldier of the Great War*. Flowers were cultivated,

as in a garden and the red poppy became the most popular British symbol of commemoration.

However in German culture trees were grown in cemeteries for trees were seen as eternal symbols of nature. Germans buried in a wood were at peace, surrounded by a natural environment unsullied by the degeneracy of man. A tree in a cemetery *draws on that popular German literary tradition in which the wood is a symbol of resurrection, of spring which follows winter. Spring and resurrection, the forest of oaks, nature symbolising the nation.* Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers*, p110.

Red poppies flourished on the German side of Flanders too but the Germans ignored them. Wood and tree, not flowers were associated in the German mind with innocence, sacrifice, redemption and resurrection. Thus a popular German form of commemorating the fallen was the *Heldenhain* or Heroes Grove – a cemetery without graves but with a stand of oaks symbolising strength, renewal, peace and nature. In or out of cemeteries, trees were a common aspect of German commemoration of war dead. Thus the arboreal nature of the Langemark Cemetery.

The German War Cemetery at Langemark contains over 44,000 Germans in mass graves. At the back is *Mourning Soldiers*, a bronze silhouette sculpture of four faceless German soldiers by Munich artist Emil Krieger. Now I can understand that some people find the whole setting to be dark, sinister and foreboding but I can tell you that on a baking hot summer's day, the shady arbour of the cemetery brings some relief from the heat.

This part of Belgium is so intensively used that there is precious little shade on public land anywhere. Don't expect shady spots beside the road as is common in Australia. You are lucky if you can find anywhere to pull off the road let alone find some shade as well.



A group of British school students having a history lesson at the Langemark German War Cemetery

How to get to the Langemark German Cemetery: From the Menin Gate head north east following the signs to ST JAN. This will take you up the 313, under the motorway to ST JULIAAN. Continue through St Juliaan then take the left turn at the 'Brooding Canadian' Memorial, following signs to LANGEMARK. Drive right through the village of Langemark. The cemetery is on the northern edge of town, on the left, right on the main road. The gates are locked after 6pm but the low walls are not much of a barrier if you want to go in and take photographs in the evening light of summer. A car park and an entrance with some audiovisual introduction has recently been provided.

Alternatively if you are out at Zonnebeke having visited Tynes Cot Cemetery and the Fifth Australian Division Memorial at Polygon Wood, then just head northwest from Zonnebeke following the clear signs to LANGEMARK.

Australian Heroes Groves

Some Australian communities took up the idea of trees and heroes groves to commemorate their fallen of the First World War. On 20 September 1918 the people of the Roma district in Queensland gathered to pay tribute to their sons who had fallen in the First World War. In their honour, a bottle tree was planted for each soldier as a living memorial to their duty to their nation. Today, a fine feature of the town of Roma is its heritage listed avenue of magnificent bottle trees.

The largest grove planted to commemorate service in the First World War is in the town of Ballarat in Victoria where local citizens erected a large triumphal arch and planted an 'Avenue of Honour' some 15 miles of trees out on the road to Adelaide. The inscription reads:

This ARCH OF VICTORY was erected and this AVENUE OF HONOUR planted by THE YOUNG LADIES OF E LUCAS & Co Pty Ltd in honour of THE SAILORS, SOLDIERS and NURSES of BALLARAT who took part in the Great War.

The arch also has the following verse:

*All ye who tread this avenue of life, Remember those who bowed beneath the strife
Each leaf a laurel, crowns with deathless flame, And every tree reveals a hero's
name.*

An even larger heroes' grove was planted in Australia after the Second World War. The *Remembrance Driveway*, a succession of irregularly spaced groves of native trees was planted along the Hume Highway all the way from Sydney to Canberra, a distance of almost 300 kilometres. The Driveway is maintained even though the old highway has been rendered obsolete by a new freeway but even here the war commemoration theme is maintained – all the rest stops on the freeway have been named after various Australian Victoria Cross winners.

The official site is www.remembrancedriveway.org.au



Two Avenues of Honour. *Left:* A section of the Remembrance Driveway in the Sydney suburb of Yagoona. *Right:* The Memorial Avenue of trees, each with a plaque honouring a local soldier who did not return, in the Victorian town of Euroa.

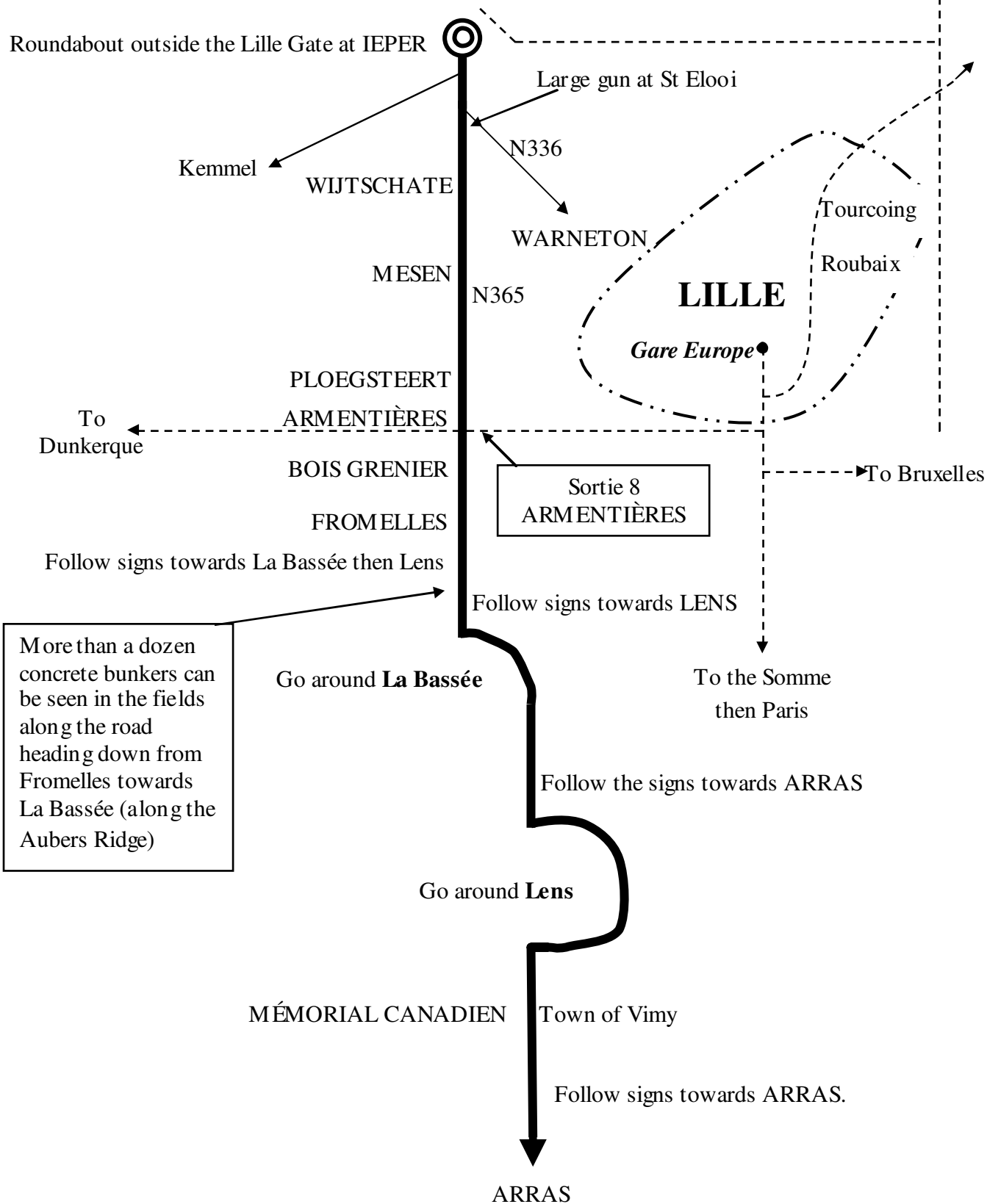
The winter (1917-1918) began with the Australians at Passchendaele and Broodseinde. Conditions were similar to Fleurs, but though the valleys were flooded, the mud in the trenches was rarely deeper than the knees. The shelling, however, was far heavier than on the Somme ... The Australian Corps was moved at the beginning of November to the sector comprising the hills on the right of Ypres and the villages of Wytschaete, Messines, Warneton and Ploegsteert.

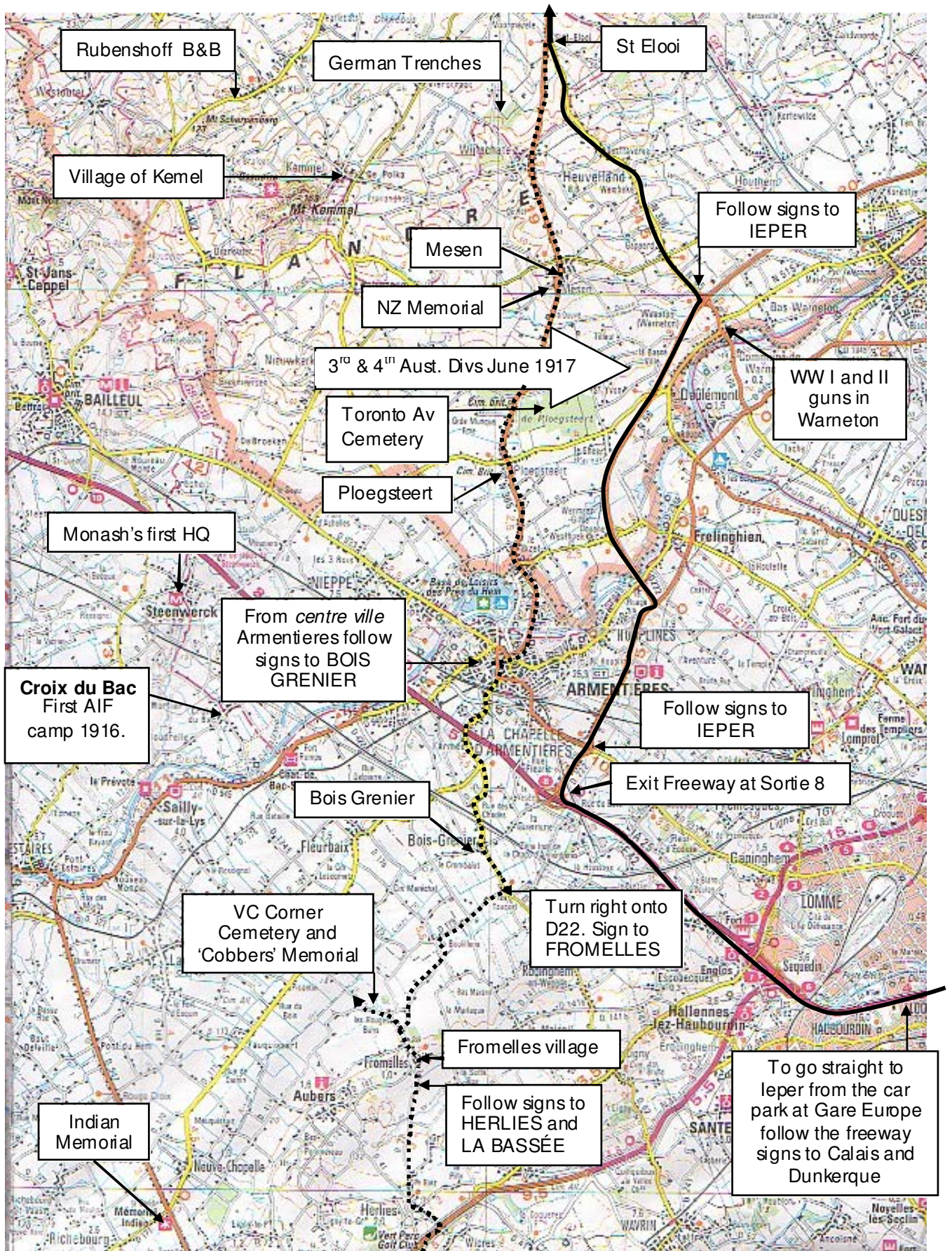
W H Downing, *To the Last Ridge*, p89.

DRIVING DOWN THE FRONT

KEY LOCATIONS DOWN THE FRONT IN FLANDERS

Freeways shown thus - - - - ->





DOWN THE FRONT IN FLANDERS

A small section of IGN 1:100,000 Carte de Promenade 02 LILLE/DUNKERQUE.

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Purchase the new series map 101 Lille/Boulogne-sur-mer at www.ign.fr or at

www.mapsnmc.co.uk

Bayernwald – Bavarian Wood. (The German Trenches)

After the First World War most of the massive system of trenches, tunnels, dug outs, shell holes and shafts was filled in, ploughed flat and once again used for growing crops – mainly wheat, corn, sugar beet and vegetables. Even today French and Belgium farmers regularly plough up metal pieces, old shells, human remains and dangerous ordnance.

In early spring you may find small piles of war debris beside the road. Be warned. It is there for collection by explosive experts, not to be souvenired by foolhardy tourists. Moreover in these days of heightened airport security you would be wise not to have even an innocent piece of barbed wire in your luggage.

In summer you gaze out from the many memorials and cemeteries and all you see is gently sloping land with pleasant fields of waving wheat! It is hard to believe that these were the killing fields, the region of the most concentrated slaughter in the history of mankind.

A few isolated sections of trenches were left untouched but over the years even these deteriorated through the normal processes of erosion, landslide, flooding and the regrowth of vegetation.

The German trenches north-west of WIJTSCHATE with their tunnels, mineshafts and underground concrete bunkers were restored by the Heuvelland Local Council and opened in 2004.



One of several blockhouses at the German Trenches



Inside there is an information area with maps and explanations in both English and German plus an excellent model of the Messines Ridge giving clear locations of various battles and towns.

A surprise is to discover that one Corporal Adolf Hitler was stationed here and earned himself an Iron Cross. Several of his water colour paintings of landscapes in the immediate vicinity are said to be still in existence. I thought of one of those hypothetical questions my history teacher at school used to give us to chew over. ‘What if Adolf Hitler had been killed in the First World War? How would the history of the 20th century be any different?’

How to get to the trenches: Tickets and the entry code have to be purchased from the Heuvelland Visitors Centre in the very pleasant little town of Kemmel, some 8 kms SW of Ieper. The ticket has a map to easily get you back to the German Trenches. The nearest town is WIJTSCHATE and the cemetery close by is the CROONAERT CHAPEL CEMETERY (Number 90 on Michelin Atlas Map 5). About 100 metres back from the entrance of the path to that cemetery is a side street on the opposite side – VORMEZE LESTRAAT. Leave your car in the parking area on the main road and walk down this street to the trenches.

New Zealand Division Memorial, Mesen



FROM THE UTTERMOST ENDS OF THE EARTH

Not only do you have to explain to Europeans that ANZAC means Australia and New Zealand Army Corps but you also have to explain that New Zealand is a separate, smaller country and is even more remote than Australia. It is indeed at the uttermost ends of the earth. The South Pole is closer to the Western Front than is New Zealand!

Of course when you relate the jokes Australians often tell about their cousins over the Tasman Sea (and when Kiwis return the compliment) you find that they are the same jokes Germans tell about Dutchmen, Canadians tell about Newfoundlanders, Englishmen tell about Scottish Highlanders and the Irish tell about their citizens from Kerry!

At Gallipoli Australians and New Zealanders fought side by side in a combined division but on returning to Egypt there was a wholesale reorganisation of troops. An all New Zealand Division was formed with the Kiwi veterans being reinforced by many volunteers who had recently arrived from the 'land of the long white cloud'.

The large white obelisk memorial here at Mesen looks over the Messines Ridge where New Zealanders were engaged in many bloody battles. The site is well tended with extensive gardens and bushland and contains two German concrete forts.

New Zealand has three obelisk memorials to her soldiers who served on the Western Front— one here at Messen, another near Passendale and a third north of Longueval in France. There is no New Zealand 'National Memorial' such as the Australian one at Villers Bretonneux. New Zealand fallen whose bodies were never found are listed on several monuments to the missing placed within several Commonwealth Military Cemeteries such as the Boetes New British Cemetery next to the Fifth Australian Division Memorial at Polygon Wood. Another is in the Caterpillar Valley Military Cemetery just south of Longueval. New Zealand missing are also named in an alcove of the wall at the back of Tyne Cot Cemetery.

How to get to the Mesen: Exit Ieper through the Lille Gate and head south on the N336 initially following the signs RIJSEL (Lille), ARMENTIERES and HEUVELLAND. At the big gun roundabout at Sint-Elooi take the N365 following the signs to WIJTSCHATE and MESEN. Mesen was known as Messines in the First World War and you will often find both names. Heading south through the town of Mesen the green and white signs to the New Zealand Memorial direct you to the right down the **Rue Des Neo-Zelandais**. The entrance to the memorial is only a short distance down on the left. Parking is very limited.

The Island of Ireland Peace Park, Mesen

A project of the Journey of Reconciliation Trust and the people of Messines

*I mean
the simple soldier man
who, when the great war
first began,
just died, stone dead
from lumps of lead
in mire.*

William Orpen

One of the inscriptions by Irish Poets of the Great War, Island of Ireland Peace Park.



Back on the N365 and on the southern edge of Mesen is the Island of Ireland Peace Park dedicated in 1998. Clearly standing out is the tower made out of stone brought over from Ireland and *dedicated to the memory of all those from the island of Ireland who fought and died in the First World War*. Like the Diksmuide Peace Tower the Irish Peace Park looks forward to peace rather than back to war as does the magnificent Peace Memorial Museum – Le Mémorial – over in Caen in Normandy.

In 1914-1918 Ireland was nowhere near as keen on fighting Britain's wars as was Australia. Indeed there were some Irish more willing to fight *against* the British rather than *for* them. How do I know this? Simply by having the most pleasant experience of a driving holiday in the Republic of Ireland.

In Australia, almost every town or suburb which existed in 1914 will have a Great War memorial, usually in the most prominent part of town. There are thousands of them across the country.

In Ireland however, such memorials are less common and if they do exist they are usually in some obscure location. In the central market place you are far more likely to find a statue of one Irish patriot or another who was executed by the 'accursed British'. The text will extol the heroism of those who fought to free Ireland from British occupation and oppression. When you take a tour of Dublin they point out the bullet marks on the Post Office, there since Easter 1916 when the British crushed an Irish uprising.



An IRA (Irish Republican Army) monument in the centre of Dungarvan, Republic of Ireland

In Cork, Ireland's second largest city, I found this First World War memorial in a tiny park right away from the city centre. The inscription reads:



Lest We Forget
Erected by public subscription under the auspices of the
Cork Independent Ex-services club
In memory of their comrades who fell in the Great War
Fighting for the freedom of small nations (my emphasis)
1914-1918

Fighting for the freedom of small nations? You won't find that inscribed on any memorial in Australia. While protecting 'little Belgium' from the 'Prussian bully' figured prominently in early war propaganda in Australia, in no sense were the diggers fighting and dying for the freedom of small nations.

Rather the catchcry in Australia in the Great War was *God, King and Empire* just as later it was to be *All the way with LBJ* in the Vietnam War. *Australia* said the Prime Minister in 1914 *will stand beside our own (Britain) to help and defend her to our last man and our last shilling*. War fever stirred in almost every heart. The Empire was threatened. Australia would answer the Motherland's call.

Monuments reveal that Ireland was far less jingoistic and today sees things rather differently. Right next to the 1914-1918 memorial in Cork is a memorial remembering the victims of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima! Now that is something you definitely will not see in Australia.

There are some memorials in Australia dedicated to innocent civilian victims of war but they are few and far between. I take my students each year to a large one that proclaims:

***IN MEMORY OF SIX MILLION JEWS KILLED
BY THE NAZIS DURING THE WAR 1939-1945
MAY THE WORLD NEVER AGAIN WITNESS
SUCH INHUMANITY OF MAN AGAINST MAN***

Around the walls are the names of the various death camps. Yet few people know about this memorial for it is not in a central, public area of the city. It is tucked away in Sydney's Rookwood Cemetery. Another example is the South African (Boer) War Memorial in the Hunter Valley town of Maitland in New South Wales. The dedication includes:

To the 56,000 Civilian Afrikaner Men, Women and Children and African Natives who died in the Concentration Camps.

Details of such 'collateral damage' as we would say today rarely finds its way into our school history textbooks.

Ireland, a land that has seen so much division, terrorism and violence is now an EU member on the rise. In spite of setbacks brought on by the global financial crisis of 2008, economic growth has been substantial in Ireland over the last 15 to 20 years as any visitor can readily observe.

In the international arena Ireland has initiated several peace and reconciliation policies and has participated in a number of UN peace-keeping missions. The Peace Park at Mesen is an example of Ireland's modern approach. The park was unveiled in 1998 by the Irish President, Mary McAleese in the presence of His Majesty King Albert of Belgium and Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II of England (and Australia!).

Central to the park is the 'Peace Pledge' which, in part, reads:

We condemn war and the futility of war. We repudiate and denounce violence, aggression, intimidation and unfriendly behaviour ... as Protestants and Catholics we apologise for the terrible deeds we have done to each other and ask forgiveness.

Again, this is something you certainly won't see on any Australian memorial. Back in the 1970s just after the Vietnam War several left-leaning local councils around my home city of Sydney established one or two 'Peace Parks' but overall peace does not have a prominent place in the Australian Anzac legend.

Right at the front entrance of the Imperial War Museum in London there is the *Tibetan Peace Garden* dedicated by none other than *His Holiness the Dalai Lama*. Now I just cannot imagine us having any peace garden and certainly not one blessed by the Dalai Lama right at the front of our Australian War Memorial in Canberra. There is a Peace Park in our national capital – dedicated on United Nations Day 1990 by the Governor General Bill Hayden but you would have a hard time finding it. It says something about our national identity that in all the voluminous material sent to all Australian schools to encourage them to visit Canberra, the Peace Park doesn't get a mention but the Australian War Memorial is top of the list.

The Toronto Avenue Cemetery – Bois de Ploegsteert (Ploegsteert Wood)

In spite of the name, the Toronto Avenue Cemetery has no direct connection with Canada. In fact it is entirely Australian. It is the only all-Australian war cemetery in Belgium. This still, quiet place deep in the woods now has vehicle access, at least in dry weather for a small vehicle.

There are 78 Australians buried here including 5 teenagers, the youngest being Private Cecil Wise who was just 18. The Roll of Honour shows that all the Australians were from the 3rd Division and almost all were from New South Wales. All were killed between 7 & 10 June 1917 in the fighting between Messines and Ploegsteert. Many Australians and New Zealanders are also found in most of the surrounding cemeteries.

On Anzac Day I draped an Australian flag on the Cross of Sacrifice and wrote my respects in the book provided. One particular grave caught my eye:

*370 Serjeant (sic) W J STEAD, 36 BN Australian Inf. 7th June 1917 Age 24
The dearly loved son of Mr & Mrs Stead of Five Dock. NSW.*

I grew up in the Sydney suburb of Five Dock. Just who were the Stead family? In which street did they live? How did they cope with the loss of a son so young? Are any descendants still living in the area? Was Sergeant Stead married and what was his occupation? Is he honoured in any way at the RSL club on the Great North Road and is his name on the band rotunda memorial in Five Dock Park?

I must find answers to these questions. I draped the Australian flag adjacent to his grave and took a photo in case my research turns up local connections.



How to get to Toronto Avenue Cemetery:

Head south from Ieper on the N336. At the big gun roundabout at Sint Elooï, take the N365 following signs to WIJTSCHATE and MESEN (Messines). About 3km south of Mesen the CWGC signs show the turn off to the left. The Prowse Point Military Cemetery is one of the oldest on the Western Front having burials from November 1914. The fiancée of *Testament of Youth* author, Vera Britten, Lt Roland Aubrey Leighton is buried in Prowse Point.

Prowse Point is also one of the few Commonwealth war cemeteries containing German graves.



Turn right onto the dirt road immediately after the Prowse Point Military Cemetery (where there are 13 Australians and 42 New Zealanders). Pause at the Mud Corner Cemetery. This is a genuine Anzac one containing only Australians and New Zealanders. Continue into the wood following the Toronto Avenue signs. Remember the old rule of the Australian bush - close the gate as you pass through. (If the gate is locked then walk in.)

The Christmas Truce 1914

On my first visit I missed the turn off after the Prowse Point Military Cemetery, continuing for a few hundred metres down the sealed road. Thus it was by accident that I came across a simple wooden cross right on the edge of the road. On the horizon is the cathedral of Mesen



The inscription reads:

1914
The Khaki Chums
Christmas truce
1999
85 years.
Lest we forget.

Was this a site where Scottish, French and German soldiers fraternised, exchanged gifts, played sport and celebrated Christmas Day 1914 as reported in letters to *The Times* newspaper?

Who are or were the Khaki chums and who thinks it important enough to place a memorial? A journey down the Western Front throws up many good mysteries like this for history students to investigate.

Ploegsteert Memorial

Back onto the N365 and continuing south following the signs to PLOEGSTEERT and ARMENTIERS you will come across a classic circular temple guarded by two stone lions right beside the road. This is the Ploegsteert Memorial listing over 11,000 British and South African soldiers who died in the surrounding area but have no known grave. No Australians are listed here as all Australians missing in Flanders are on the Menin Gate or on the wall of the VC Corner Cemetery at Fromelles. There are 181 Australians and 80 Kiwis in the adjoining cemetery (Berks Cemetery Extension) and in the Hyde Park Corner (Royal Berks) Cemetery on the opposite side of the road. Almost all were casualties of the last two months of 1917 and the early months of 1918 when all the Australian forces were still up in Flanders.

The Ploegsteert Memorial, by architect H. Charlton Bradshaw was unveiled in 1931. This location also has a regular remembrance service - on the first Friday of every month at 7pm.

It was in this area of Ploegsteert that Winston Churchill commanded a battalion of British troops in the summer of 1916.

Armentières

Mademoiselle from Armentières, parlez vous?
Mademoiselle from Armentières, parlez vous?
Mademoiselle from Armentières, hasn't been kissed in 50 years
Inky pinky parlez vous.

A delightful memory of childhood is of my father sitting down to the piano or picking up an old piano accordion and playing the tunes popular with the troops in both the First and Second World Wars. As a member of the 2/14th Battalion, 2nd AIF, my father had belted out these tunes many times throughout the Middle East, Australia and Papua New Guinea as required for concerts, church parades or just for an informal sing-along with a group of Australian soldiers in some remote outpost.

I can recall heroic numbers such as *Rule Britannia*, *Land of Hope and Glory* and *Onward Christian Soldiers*. There were songs to make you homesick such as *It's a Long Way to Tipperary*, *White Cliffs of Dover* and *The Road to Gundagai*. Also tearful numbers such as *We'll meet again* and *Keep the Home Fires Burning* and rollicking sing-along tunes such as *Kiss me goodnight Sergeant Major*.

My sister and I learnt *Mademoiselle from Armentières* as a sort of nursery rhyme. Having memorised the above stanza we considered ourselves to be ever so clever and proclaimed to our friends that we could now speak French! My French has not made much progress since but I know that our pronunciation of the town name (Arm-a-tears) was hopelessly wrong. At least I know now that the 's' at the end of any French town name is silent – so especially note Ypres, Fromelles, Arras, Pozières, Amiens, Harbonnières and Paris. All pronounced with a silent 's' on the end.

It was not until many years later that I learned that the real *Mademoiselle from Armentières* was not exactly an honourable woman and that many members of the AIF were not exactly honourable men when it came to French mademoiselles. The rarely mentioned statistic that over 50,000 of the AIF were treated for venereal disease speaks for itself but some diggers were honourable. Over 15,000 of them brought a wife or fiancée back to Australia from Europe.

In National Service I learned several other verses for *Mademoiselle from Armentières* but I could not repeat any of them when home on leave!



The imposing French War Memorial in the central square of Armentières

The French town of Armentières is right up against the Belgian border. It was occupied briefly by the Germans in the very early months of the war; then the British took it back in October 1914. For most of the conflict Armentières was a popular R & R centre, to borrow a term from the Vietnam War.

The men of the AIF were not known for their reserve nor for their sobriety. Many were proud of their talents in those age old soldier activities of drinking, brawling, whoring and thieving. In their own eyes it was a badge of honour that they drank as much beer as the Belgians, used the widest vocabulary of swear words, had their way with many French maidens, failed to salute English officers and never avoided a stoush at the bar.

Subsequent myth making hushed up the riotous behaviour of the Australians and produced a much more respectable, sanitised, Aussie Digger - a larrikin, yes, and a bit of a skite but really he was a loveable rogue with a heart of gold, much like Ned Kelly, Paul Hogan and Shane Warne. Sufficient to say that the Provosts of Armentières had plenty to do whenever Australians were in town on leave from the front.

The Germans occupied the town for the last 6 months of the war and in the concluding battles, Armentières was reduced to a ruin. Thus Armentières today is yet another rebuilt medieval town having been rebuilt throughout the 1920s and 1930s. The Flemish architecture is there to enjoy but such towns lack the personality of the real thing. To be an authentic medieval town you need walls leaning at alarming angles, weathered timber and collapsing foundations. You need crumbling brick, rotting wood and skewed windows and doors. To be really authentic you need putrid drains running down the centre of rough, cobblestone streets! You need ragged children and the spectre of the Black Death!

The very clean 20th century version is a fraction too neat, straight and tidy. Armentières is small enough to have free parking in the central market square. Just follow the signs to CENTRE VILLE. Take a break when going to or from Ieper and have a bit of a wander around Armentières.

Bois-Grenier and other villages in French Flanders

From the centre of Armentières follow the road signs to BOIS GRENIER. (Road signs generally leave out the hyphen in the town name.) These will take you under the local railway, over the freeway and over the Eurostar railway tracks to the village at the centre of the 'nursery sector' in the early years of the Great War.

Arriving in early 1916, the Australian divisions from Egypt got off the train at Hazebrouck, some 30km due west of Armentières and the ANZAC I Corps had its first HQ in France in LA MOTTE-AU-BOIS, a tiny village then, as now, surrounded by the Nieppe Forest. Two years later this forest was the site of a heroic defence by the 1st Australian Division against the German offensive of 1918. The *Forêt Dom Nieppe* was also a launch site for the German V2 rocket propelled bomb that brought significant destruction to London in the final months of the Second World War.

Villages all over this area of French Flanders billeted Australian soldiers and acted as casualty clearing stations on several occasions during the First World War. The newly formed Australian Corps of all five infantry divisions spent the winter of 1917-1918 in this region. Its HQ was at Flêtre, about 5km west of Bailleul.

In his guide, *Walking with the Anzacs*, Mat McLachlan notes a number of significant Australian events and individuals in the area:

- Possibly the youngest Australian battle casualty, 16 year old Private James Young of the 55th Battalion
- Australia's first VC on the Western Front was won at Bois-Grenier by Gallipoli veteran Private Bill Jackson in June 1916. Just 19 years of age at the time of the trench raid, Jackson was also the youngest Australian VC winner of the war. He suffered severe injuries, losing an arm but he survived the war and lived on to visit London for the VC centenary in 1956.
- Australia's first casualty on the Western Front – 13 December 1915. Sgt James Batty of the Mechanical Transport Supply Column had been sent on ahead to prepare for the arrival of the Australians from Egypt and was killed disarming a British bomb.
- The Brewery Orchard Cemetery is next to a present day brewery. McLachlan comments: *There is something reassuringly appropriate about Australian soldiers lying in the shadow of a brewery.*
- The most senior Australian casualty of the Western Front, Major General William Holmes, commander of the 4th Australian Division. On 2 July 1917 Holmes was escorting the Premier of New South Wales on a battlefield inspection. They were on a supposedly safe track when German shells rained down. Tragically Homes was mortally wounded but the accompanying politicians escaped unscathed.

Unless you want to spend time searching for specific cemeteries or particular villages, there is not much point in driving around the intensively cultivated, flat region behind the front in French Flanders. If you do you will certainly need the **IGN Lille/Boulogne-sur-Mer** 1:100,000 map to find all the tiny villages mentioned in battalion diaries or in your ancestor's letters. For the next major site of Australian commemoration, continue through Bois-Grenier, turning right immediately past the White City Military Cemetery then down the D22 following the signs to FROMELLES. It is easy to miss the right hand turn onto the D22 at the eastern end of White City Cemetery.

Fromelles

The generals who commanded the troops in the early years of the war had been trained in the old theory of battle that had changed little since the time of the great Emperor Napoleon, just on 100 years before.

The standard battle plan was a simple three-stage operation: whenever opposing armies faced one another the first move was a massive artillery barrage to break fortifications, disrupt supplies, eliminate strong points and inflict as many casualties as possible. Then the infantry would go 'over the top' to destroy enemy lines with rifle shot, grenades and hand-to-hand combat. With the enemy line broken and enemy soldiers in disarray, the cavalry would be called in to pour through the gap, destroying fleeing enemy, wheeling around the flanks and capturing many of the foe from behind. According to the theory the fight would be over in a few days, surrender would be received, a peace conference held, territory and other concessions extracted, perhaps a princess offered in marriage and life could continue much as before.

All very simple and it worked well many times throughout the 19th century, especially in colonial lands where the 'enemy' had no artillery, no machine guns and only crude weapons for defence or attack. Occasionally things went wrong such as the time General Gordon got himself killed in the Sudan in 1885. We Australian colonials loyally sent 600 volunteers to avenge this dastardly act of terrorism against the British Empire but they arrived too late and were back home inside three months.

The old battle plan was still in the manual in 1915 and it was put into effect in the battle of Fromelles, the AIF's first action on the Western Front. In just two days the 5th Australian Division suffered 5533 casualties including 1299 dead and in the end was right back where it had started. Fromelles was a complete disaster. Poor preparations, limited training, unrealistic objectives, faulty communications, inadequate weapons, poor intelligence, limited artillery. You name it. The result was a monumental catastrophe.

The British had launched their main attack on the German line further south in the Somme on 1 July 1916 and the Australian action at Fromelles was merely to be a *feint*, an attack not primarily to break through the German line but one intended to deceive the enemy into thinking it was; the idea being to trick the Germans into calling on forces from the Somme thus weakening German resistance to the main attack there by British forces.

Of course the Germans were not fooled. They had heavy fortifications including concrete pillboxes manned by experienced troops with machine guns at the ready. No wonder the Australians, with less than one month's experience of the Front were decimated as they went bravely over the top on 19 and 20 July.

Today there are two very sacred Australian places out in the flat farmlands to the north west of the tiny village of Fromelles: The **VC Corner Australian Cemetery** and the **Australian Memorial Park** (widely referred to as the Cobbers Memorial).

The **VC Corner Cemetery** is unusual in a number of aspects. Even the proper identification of bodies was botched up in the battle of Fromelles so unlike almost every other Commonwealth war cemetery along the Front, there are no individual headstones. 410 unidentified Australians lie buried beneath the lawns and rose bushes and the names of another 1,299 Australians are listed on the surrounding memorial wall.

The VC Corner Cemetery is the only all-Australian Commonwealth military cemetery in France. In all the others Australians are mixed in with the fallen of Britain and those of other Commonwealth countries – evidence of the fact that in the Great War Australia had not yet achieved a strong national identity separate from their identity as loyal members of the British Empire. This is not surprising as the Commonwealth of Australia was only 15 years old at the time of the Battle of Fromelles. Imperial loyalties and identification were still paramount and would continue to be so for much of the 20th century.



The cemetery lies on what was no man's land and near a road junction where many VCs were won in other battles. The cemetery however contains no VC winners as none were awarded during the Battle of Fromelles.

Mateship and the Cobbers Memorial

The **Australian Memorial Park** nearby is a brilliant, simple space of Australian commemoration. Broken pieces of concrete from German fortifications make up several piles of debris set amid the grassy site. On one such pile is the larger than life statue of Sergeant Simon Frazer of the 57th Battalion carrying a wounded comrade to safety. The bronze sculpture, by Melbourne artist Peter Corlett must surely be regarded as the most quintessentially Australian statue anywhere. Even more than Corlett's other great work, the statue of Simpson and his donkey outside the Australian War Memorial in Canberra the 'Cobbers' statue brilliantly captures the spirit of the AIF and its true blue Aussie ethos of mateship.



From the very early days of settlement in Australia there was a strong egalitarian ethos and a clear expectation that a man would stick by his mates. The harsh environment of Australia meant that come floods or droughts, bushfires or storms, a man stuck loyally to his mates for survival. There was no place for the dog-eat-dog rugged individualism of the American wild west. In the Australian bush it wasn't good to stand out. Rather you were loyal to those sharing the same privations and hardship and the result was a society more egalitarian and less class conscious than anywhere else in the world at the time.

The men of the AIF carried this distinctive egalitarian ethos to Europe and it explains why they paid scant attention to traditional class divisions and obligations and why they were often in trouble for failing to salute or failing to pay due deference to those in traditional authority. Yet at the same time they had great loyalty to each other. A cobbler was more than a casual friend. He was a trusted companion willing to sacrifice all for the good of the other. When returned men spoke or wrote of their experiences, their greatest sadness concerned the cobbers they left behind. This strong ethic of

mateship is brilliantly portrayed by Corlett's work of art.

Significantly the word 'Cobber' is rarely heard in Australia today though the late 'crocodile man', Steve Irwin did attempt to revive it. I have to explain what 'cobber' means to many of my teenage students. The Cobbers Memorial powerfully reminds us what it means to be an Australian.

The 5th Australian Division was crippled by the fight at Fromelles, and not until the end of the summer, when it raided the German trenches frequently and successfully, did it regain its full self confidence. A particularly unfortunate, but almost inevitable, result of the fight was that, having been unwisely combined with a British division whose value for offence, in spite of the devoted gallantry of many of its members, was recognised as doubtful, the Australian soldiers tended to accept the judgement – often unjust, but already deeply impressed by the occurrences at the Suvla landing – that the "Tommies" could not be relied upon to uphold a flank in a stiff fight. Official History, Vol III, p447.

77 words in one sentence! Not unusual from the prolix Charles Bean. The quote also reveals the jaundiced view, held by so many members of the AIF of English forces and their officers!

How to get to Fromelles: Coming down the N365 from Ieper simply follow the signs to Mesen, then Armentières, then Bois Grenier, then Fromelles. Just before you get to the village of Fromelles continue onto route number D22c following the signs to Saily-la-Lys (the HQ of the 5th Division in 1916) and Laventie. If you come via the village of Fromelles first, the green and white CWG signs will direct you to VC CORNER AUSTRALIAN CEMETERY and AUSTRALIAN MEMORIAL PARK FROMELLES. The road is narrow and there is very little room to park.



The main sign in the centre of Fromelles.

Salle du Temps Libre means the village hall.

Stade literally means stadium but Australian signs would say Football field or Sports field.

Déchetterie is the local recycling depot.

How far should we go in commemoration?

It had been known for many years that Australians had been buried in mass graves both at Fromelles and elsewhere along the front. The Germans used mass graves for their own dead and Australians who were killed on land which remained in German hands after a battle (as at Fromelles) were in several instances buried with German dead.

In 2008 an archaeological dig uncovered one such mass grave and found evidence that Australians were buried there. This led to quite a controversy as to how far we ought to go in commemorating our fallen. One group, including descendents of soldiers of the battle wanted the mass grave opened up, Australian remains identified and each one given an individual grave and headstone. This group held that this was necessary to properly honour our soldiers even though the chances of identification were very low.

The opposing group, including veterans associations claimed that the graves should not be tampered with. The diggers should lie in peace. They were not nameless and forgotten. Their names are inscribed on the wall of the nearby VC corner cemetery. Digging up every mass grave along the front looking for Australians would be a costly, grisly and ultimately undignified activity.

To the amazement of French officials, the Australian Government backed the Fromelles project and a new military cemetery adjacent to the village was dedicated in 2010. Yet again things did not go according to plan. Somehow the Australian flag used in the ceremony had not been printed correctly. Some stars of the Southern Cross were out of place and the Union Jack was upside down!

BETWEEN FLANDERS AND THE SOMME

While in the region of French Flanders you may wish to make a short detour to Neuve-Chapelle where, right on the main road leading down to La Bassée you will find the impressive **Indian Memorial**. About 100 metres further down the road is the Chapel and war cemetery of **Portugal**. Just why the Portuguese were on the Western Front is a bit of a mystery but it was because they melted away in the great German offensive of March 1918 that the First Australian Division was moved into the line in this locality for several months, successfully defending the major rail centre and supply town of Hazebrouck. (Where, back in 1916 the Australian divisions from Egypt got off the train after their long journeys from Marseilles.)

South of Fromelles you could roughly follow down the 1916 front line along numerous rural roads on the western side of La Bassée and Lens but there is not much point in doing so. Australians were not much involved in this part of the Western Front. Only a few Australians lie in war cemeteries between La Bassée and Arras and there are no Australian monuments. The next major centre of Australian commemoration is Bullecourt, a tiny village south east of Arras.

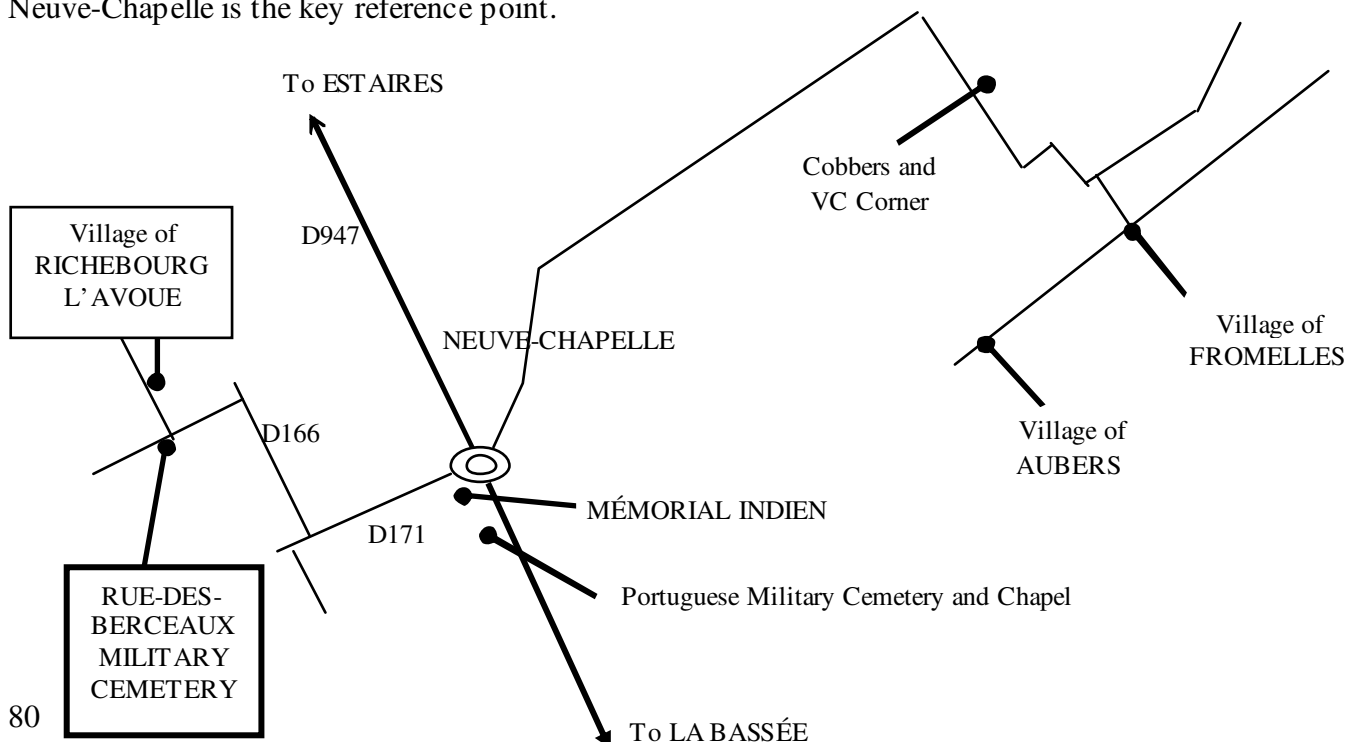
Captain Anthony Frederick Wilding - New Zealand's Tennis Great

While in the area of French Flanders New Zealanders may wish to visit the grave of one of their greatest sportsmen, tennis player Anthony Wilding who, as a captain in the Royal Marines was killed in a bombardment near Neuve-Chapelle in May 1915.

Anthony Wilding was born in Christchurch in 1883. After winning the New Zealand Tennis Championship as a teenager, Wilding left New Zealand in 1902 to attend Trinity College, Cambridge where he graduated in Arts and Law. In 1909 Wilding qualified as a barrister and solicitor of the New Zealand Supreme Court.

Anthony Wilding remains the only New Zealander to win Wimbledon. He won the singles title four times between 1910 and 1913. He was also successful many times in Wimbledon doubles and mixed doubles. Indeed his record of Wimbledon titles remained unbroken until the arrival of Pete Sampras in the 1990s. Wilding won many other tennis titles. He was a member of the successful Australasia Davis Cup team and he was an Olympic champion winning a bronze medal in tennis at the Stockholm Olympics of 1912.

Captain Wilding lies in the Rue-des-Berceaux Military Cemetery (Number 277 in the Michelin Cemeteries Road Atlas) in the French village of Richebourg L'Avoue. The grave reference is II D 37. The diagram below indicates the location of the cemetery. The **Mémorial Indien** at the roundabout at Neuve-Chapelle is the key reference point.



From Fromelles to Vimy Ridge

Today the main north-south transport routes of the region run more on the German side of the 1916 front. These routes provide quick access down to the next Australian sacred place, that of Bullecourt. It takes about an hour to drive from Fromelles to Bullecourt via Vimy Ridge.

From Fromelles drive south on the D22 following the signs to **Herlies**. Along this road at least a dozen German concrete bunkers may be observed in the intensively cultivated farmland. Join the N41 initially following the signs to **La Bassée**. Branch off onto the N47 following the signs to **Lens**, bypassing La Bassée.

Lens was in German hands for most of the war. It was a major coal producing centre and thus an important resource supplier to the German war effort. Mining continued in the region up to 1986 when the last mine closed. Mines have certainly left their mark on the region. The great 'pyramids' you see when looking out from the Canadian Memorial are piles of spoil dug up over more than a century of underground mining. As part of its urban transformation Lens now hosts an extension of the Louvre.

Bypass Lens by following the signs to **Arras**. These will take you around the city of Lens and onto the N17 heading south towards **Vimy** and Arras. The *Mémorial Canadien* may be observed high on Vimy Ridge as you head down the N17.

La Carrière Wellington – Mémorial de la Bataille d'Arras

When travelling between Flanders and the Somme, New Zealanders in particular will want to visit the Wellington Quarry Museum and the Battle of Arras Memorial opened in early 2008. This museum honours New Zealand tunnellers who played a major part in extending the chalk quarries dug during the middle ages into a vast underground tunnel system where over 20,000 soldiers could be quartered in readiness for the April 1917 Battle of Arras. The Canadians at Vimy Ridge were at one flank in this battle and the Australians at Bullecourt on the other.

The museum is open all year (except for 3 weeks after Christmas) but, like many shops, museums and other establishments in regional France there is a lunch siesta from 12.30 to 13.30. (Of course this is a good time to have a rest yourself in one of the many pleasant bars and cafés in Arras.) An excellent 1½ hour tour of the tunnels is recommended. See the web site <http://www.carriere-wellington.com> Click on the tiny Union Jack for English.

La Carrière Wellington (The Quarry Wellington) is on the southern side of Arras on the Rue Delétoile – national route number N17 [D917]. It is most easily approached by driving up the N17 [D917] from Bapaume. The memorial and museum is well inside the urban area of Arras, on your right, next to a supermarket. If you come up the N17 [D917] from the south and reach the bridge over the railway near the centre of Arras, you have gone too far!

Vimy Ridge – Canadian National Memorial

*TO THE VALOUR OF THEIR COUNTRYMEN IN THE GREAT WAR
AND IN MEMORY OF THEIR SIXTY THOUSAND DEAD,
THIS MONUMENT IS RAISED BY THE PEOPLE OF CANADA.*

Inscription on Canadian National Memorial, Vimy Ridge, France

Why would any Australian want to visit a Canadian memorial? Simple. The Canadian Memorial is the grandest monument and is in the most panoramic location of any memorial on the Western Front.



Furthermore the Canadians have shown how memorials can be made meaningful to younger generations, promoting national pride and passing on the traditions and spirit of the veterans. The Canadians have quite a few memorials in France but they have taken their three main ones and turned them into visitor friendly places.

The National Memorial at Vimy Ridge (shown at left), the Newfoundland Memorial at Beaumont Hamel and the Second World War D Day site at Juno Beach, Courseulles sur Mer over in Normandy have been developed to attract tourists and promote understanding of very significant chapters in Canada's history.

At each of these places you find ample parking, toilet facilities, pleasant picnic grounds and an interactive centre giving the history of Canada's involvement in the battles of the area. Best of all they have smartly uniformed bilingual young Canadians serving as custodians of the site and acting as guides for the many visitors. These guides are fully informed of the history and significance of their particular memorial and they are outstanding ambassadors for their country.

None of the Australian sacred places are staffed by anyone and only the Australian Corps Memorial Park at Hamel provides basic toilets, a picnic area and information on the activities of Australian soldiers in the area during the First World War.

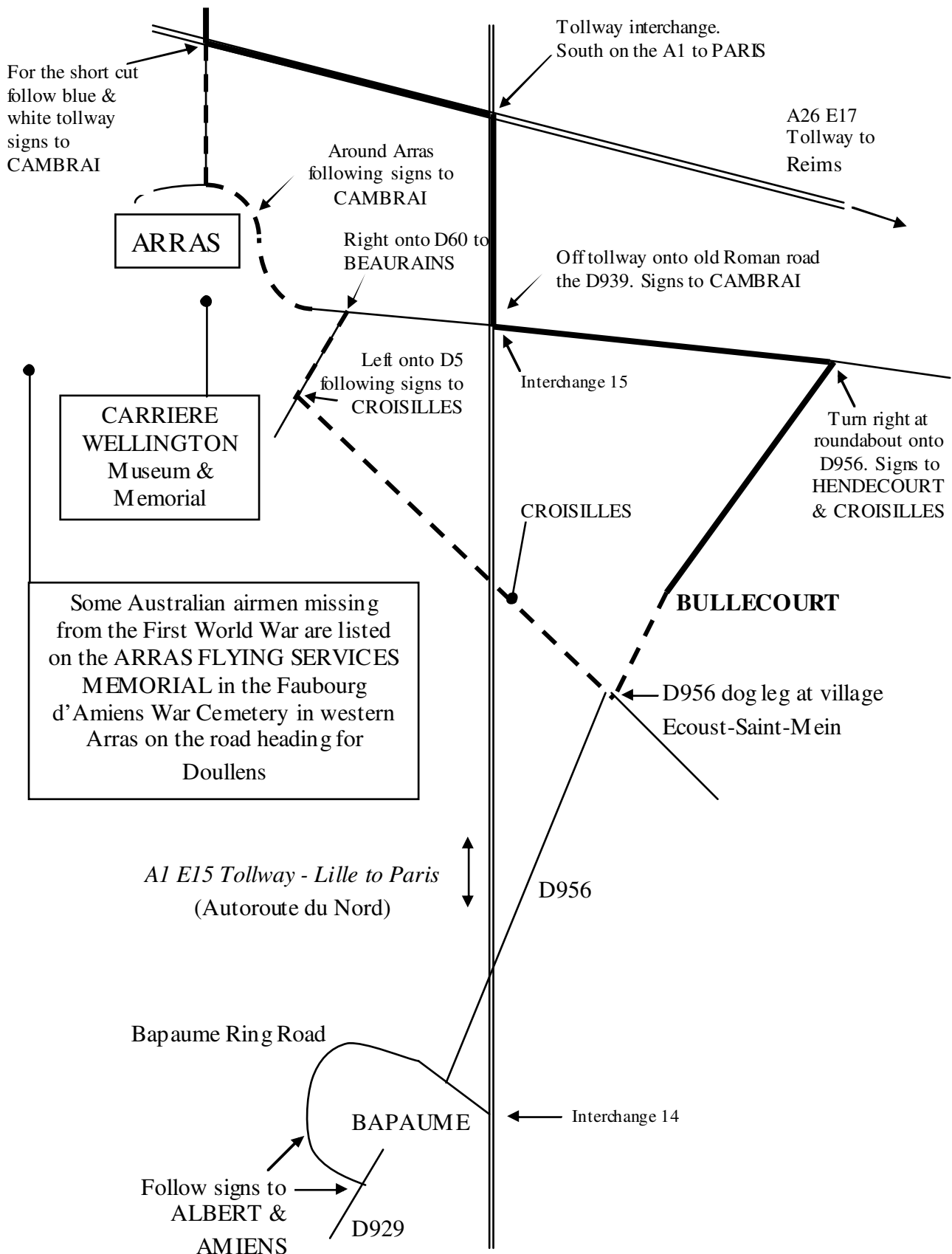
Many of Australia's sacred places on the Western Front do have a bronze plaque giving brief details of the activities of the AIF at that particular location. Usually there is an accompanying map or model of the area. These plaques are the work of Dr Ross Bastiann OAM RFD who for years has raised funds and organised the production and placement of the plaques at many Australian battle sites around the world. See Australian Bronze Commemorative Plaques at www.plaques.satlink.com.au In the last couple of years the Australian Department of Veterans Affairs has also placed explanatory plaques at some of our sacred places.

Vimy Ridge is to Canadians what Gallipoli is to Australians. Thousands upon thousands of Canadians were massacred as they wrested the heights of Vimy from the Germans. Much of the site has been left as it was with all its shell craters, trenches and tunnels. Part of the elaborate trench system has been rebuilt and guides conduct frequent tours of the tunnels (May to November).

The Canadian Memorial on Vimy Ridge, by artist Walter Allward was completely refurbished for the 90th anniversary in 2007, even to the extent of reopening the quarry in Croatia to get more of the original segal stone. The *Mèmorial Canadien* should definitely be on your itinerary as you head down from Flanders to the Somme.

GETTING FROM VIMY TO BULLECOURT – SEVERAL OPTIONS

If you stick close to the Front Line of 1916-17 then you are likely to be caught up in traffic around the eastern side of the major city of Arras. The quick way involves using the two major tollways in the region. Whichever option you chose, simply follow the signs as indicated on the diagram below.



SOMME SECTOR

France and the First World War

When it comes to national identity France does not make a great deal about the First World War. The loss of 1.3 million men was certainly the nation's greatest calamity but there are a number of 'veils' drawn across the memory of the war - subsequent experiences that suggest the conflict is best forgotten or at least seen more as a great tragedy rather than a nation building event.

Mutinies in the armed forces, conscription, the humiliation of 1940, the collaboration, betrayal of *résistant* fighters, deportation of Jews, colonial conflicts in Algeria and Indo China have all blunted French enthusiasm for war and its supposed capacity for nation building.

Besides, France has plenty of other great events in its collective memory. It doesn't need the First World War to find glory in its history. France's culture, language, history, architecture, literature, cuisine, arts and technology are there for all to see and France already has plenty of national heroes to admire and to hold up to the young as examples to follow. The French see their gifts to the world of *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity* as much more significant than the collective madness of the First World War.

Thus while Armistice Day (*11 Novembre* in French conversation) is still a solemn public holiday in France it does not rank above Bastille Day (14 July). Remembrance ceremonies are held but the French don't see the bloodshed of the First World War as the sacrifice that ennobled the nation, just the terrible slaughter of a generation. The longest surviving French veteran of the Great War, Lazare Ponticelli who died aged 110 in 2008 was emphatic; *You shoot at men who are fathers. War is completely stupid.*

French War Memorials

As you travel about France, keep an eye out for local 1914-1918 war memorials. With so many French soldiers perishing in the Great War Frenchmen, no less than Australians wanted to honour their dead and seek solace for their sorrow. There are thousands of memorials across France and a study of them reveals certain differences between Australian and French attitudes to the war and its commemoration.

In a nation with such a long and distinguished tradition of art and sculpture, you can expect to find many great works of art atop local village memorials. Immediately after the war local French communities raised funds and donated land and the French government made per capita grants for the building of such memorials whereas in Australia almost all local war memorials were paid for by public subscription. In the 1930s the Australian government introduced grants to add to local fund raising but by then most war memorials had been built.

Thus, with government funding and a long tradition of art it is not surprising to find that local French memorials are usually larger and more ornate than those in Australia.



Note the widow and child centre piece of the local war memorial in front of the Mairie (Town Hall) in the very pleasant town of Corbie, right on the Somme River.



The memorial above is in the French village of Beauval, just south of Doullens. The decoration of flags on this occasion was to commemorate the 90th anniversary of the Battle of the Somme. Flags are added to French war memorials on several occasions throughout the year such as Bastille Day (14 July) and Remembrance Day (11 November).

One of the extra tablets on this memorial remembers *Des Victimes de la Déportation. Beauval le 1 Novembre 1944*. The sending of Jews and others to the death camps is one of those 'veils' drawn over the memory of war in France.

Memorials such as the one here in Beauval are called *Soldiers'* memorials rather than *War* memorials. This is because in France they are monuments only to the dead (*monuments aux morts*) not monuments to everyone who served as is the case in Australia. If French or British war memorials have any listing of specific names at all, as does the one above they invariably list the names only of those who paid the supreme sacrifice.



Above is the war memorial in the Sydney suburb of Auburn. As with most Australian war memorials there is a full listing of *all* those from the local area who served.

Having a soldier with his arm upraised in the revolutionary position is quite rare on Australian war memorials but it is quite common in France.

The unique full listing idea by Australia indicates our slightly different perspective on the war. The ordinary French or British soldier, sailor or airman had directly defended their country and empire and had received their medals for service in yet another European war. But to the Australians who survived it was more than just another war. They had not directly defended their homeland but had participated in a grand, world shattering event, one in which, in our eyes at least, Australia had 'come of age' and 'proved itself to be a full member of the British Empire'. Those who built memorials believed that the endurance and courage of all volunteers had contributed to this achievement so their names should rightly be there for all to see.

Even those young Australians rejected on medical or other grounds wanted to avoid the public shame of 'failing to enlist in the county's hour of need'. They formed an association of 'the willing but rejected'. On the Memorial Gates in Montville, a small town inland from Queensland's Sunshine

Coast several names are listed under the heading REJECTED. Clearly they wanted posterity to know that at least they tried!

Other subtle agendas can also be detected when studying war memorials. For example on the War Memorial in the Sydney suburb of Wahroonga the names of the volunteers are grouped according to the year of enlistment. Clearly the long serving men of 1914 wanted to be distinguished from the late enlistments of 1918!



To the glorious memory of the children of Bullecourt, died for France 1914 – 1918
This memorial, outside the Municipal Chambers (Mairie) is directly opposite the Australian Slouch Hat Memorial on the main street of Bullecourt in northern France. Of course the direct translation of 'enfants' into 'children' is not meant to be literal. It is a *soldiers'* memorial. The word 'enfants' is used in the same way as we may say 'sons' of Australia or 'children' of the Empire.



Australian Service
personnel at the Anzac
commemoration in
Bullecourt

AMIENS

This Australian flag is a gift to the city of Amiens from the Government of Australia and commemorates the brotherhood in arms of the sons of Australia with those of France in the defence of the city in the year 1918.

Inscription beneath the Australian flag, hanging with those of New Zealand, Britain and the United States in a chapel of the Cathedral of Amiens.

Amiens is one of the great regional cities of France. Nestled on the River Somme, Amiens is the prosperous capital of the Picardie region and is located roughly halfway between Paris and Lille.

The city is one of Australia's sacred places on the Western Front because of the role played by the AIF in its defence against the German spring offensive of 1918. In the cathedral are tablets recognising both Australian and New Zealand forces and the flags of both countries hang in a special Memorial Chapel.

Advance patrols of German soldiers had entered the eastern edges of Amiens in the first few weeks of the war but had been driven back when the Schlieffen plan faltered. The Germans retreated back to the Hindenburg line but the city of Amiens remained one of their key objectives. In the great spring offensive of 1918 the Germans advanced to within 10 kilometres of the city but on the eastern flank they were turned back by the Australians at Villers Bretonneux on Anzac Day.

The men of the AIF frequently spent leave in Amiens and they passed through its streets going to and from the front.

Amiens then (1916) was a miniature Paris, far beyond shell range, practically undamaged, the important streets and boulevards thronged with a bright population not visibly affected by the war; hotels, shops, cafes, cabarets, and newspaper kiosks carried on a brisk trade, the light blue uniforms of the French brightening the sombre crowds of black-coated civilians and khaki clad British. From many of the rolling hill-slopes on which the Australians drilled, the faint blue-grey shape of the cathedral could be seen rising high above the mists of the valley. Official History, Vol III, page 448.

The tablets in the cathedral were unveiled on 7 November 1920 in the presence of supreme commander Marshall Foch, the Bishop of Amiens Pierre Florent Andre and the former Australian Prime Minister Andrew Fisher. At this ceremony there was a symbolic burial of an unknown Australian soldier and an unknown French soldier. On the occasion the Bishop of Amiens stated:

We bow to you Messieurs les Australiens, for the magnificent deeds you did in those days, now happily at an end, for your country and for France ... The soil of France is transfigured to a new divinity by your sacrifices.

Quite apart from the AIF connection Amiens is well worth a visit. Not only does it have some world renowned buildings and treasures but the city is a most convenient base for exploring the Somme region and for visiting the many places sacred to Australians.

Today, as in 1916 the unbelievably magnificent Amiens Cathedral, unquestionably one of the greatest buildings on earth looms large on the city skyline. To observe this building, realising that it was built without any modern technology and to note that it has been here in all its glory for 800 years is a staggering experience. In summer and over Christmas there is a spectacular sound and light show on the front of the cathedral each evening.

Also standing out on the skyline of Amiens is the slim Tour Perret (Perret Tower) in the Rail Station district. Nobody seems to know why this unremarkable block of apartments was built so out of proportion to the urban profile of the city or why the buildings around Railway Square look as if they came from Stalin's Moscow. Fortunately the whole district is undergoing redevelopment.

In addition to the Cathedral several other places in Amiens are popular with Australian travellers:

- The Museum of Picardie. This was the first purpose-built museum in France and it contains great collections of ancient artefacts and classic works of art.
- The House of Jules Verne. An excellent small museum with rooms set out in period style along with documents and background on Jules Verne, one of the great men of letters of the 19th century.

- A boat ride on Les Hortillonnages, the old agricultural allotments on the wetlands of the Somme being turned into a conservation area.

Parking charges in the centre of Amiens are reasonable (street parking free on Sunday). Follow the signs to *Centre Ville* - or you can catch the number 1 bus in from the shopping mall at Glisy. For tourist information check out www.amiens.com/tourisme. The Amiens tourist office (Office de Tourisme d'Amiens) is now on the square immediately in front of the cathedral. It used to be on Rue Dusevel, directly facing a clock tower and statue known locally as *Mary without a shirt*.



The pleasant waterways of the Somme in Amiens. *Left:* Les Hortillonnages Conservation Area. *Right:* The gentrified area of Saint Leu. What were formerly weavers' cottages are now mainly university student and professional accommodation.

Longueau and Glisy

Right on the eastern end of Amiens, most conveniently located for the exploration of Australia's places in the Somme Valley, are the two suburbs of Longueau and Glisy. Here, right on the ring road is a whole new hotel district plus an area of bulk warehouses and a mega shopping plaza.

There is a wide choice of accommodation ranging from the budget class hotels such as B&B Hotels, Premier Classe and Formulae1, up to 3 and 4 star places such as Novotel. Those in budget class are particularly economical if you have a room with 3 or 4 people. For example check out www.b&bhotels.fr (when selecting a city on this site enter Amiens.)

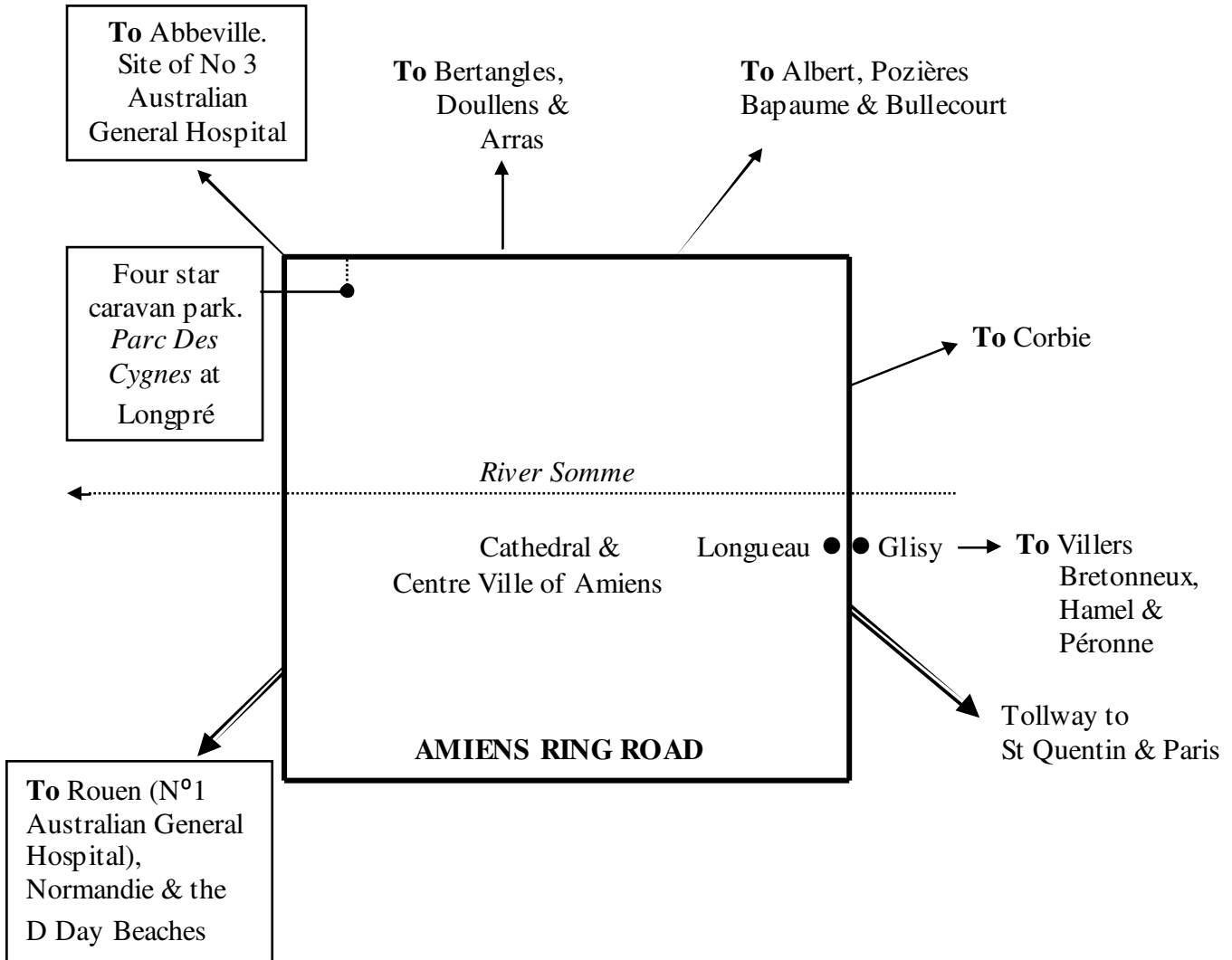
The huge Géant shopping centre at Glisy is within easy walking distance. (Don't be confused by the 'Casino' signs. That's the name of the company. The place is a shopping mall not a casino.) There are plenty of places to eat including the good value *Flunch* chain where you pay for food and drinks as you go in, take your docket to the grill for your meat to be cooked and then it is all-you-can-eat vegetables. It is clearly a very popular place with local families.

The whole complex is right on the Amiens ring road so it is easy to get out to all places of interest in the local area. (See the diagram on the next page.)

If you are planning to have a few days on the Somme out of Paris, book one of the hotels in Longueau/Glisy then take the train from Gare du Nord in Paris to LONGUEAU, the last station before Amiens. Arrange for your hire car to be there. (Avis has a tie in with the French SNCF rail system and Europcar has a depot within walking distance.) From Longueau you can be on your way to Australia's sacred places without any traffic hassles and you will be easily able to find your way back to your accommodation. Alternatively you could take the TGV train from Paris CDG airport to Gare Haute Picardie and you would be right in the centre of *Les Champs de Bataille de La Somme (The Fields of Battle of the Somme)* of 1918.

If you prefer accommodation in smaller towns or at some B & B in a rural village, check out the options at www.somme-tourisme.com Click on the tiny Union Jack for the English version. Or get Somme Tourisme to send you their *Visitor's Map* of the battlefields. It contains a comprehensive list of hotels and B&Bs, all in the battlefields area.

KEY LOCATIONS FROM AMIENS



We climbed the crest of a hill where the road rose high, and far on our right was Amiens Cathedral, touched with fire in the glory of the morning, outlined against a pale green sky. Here was surely something to fight for, a symbol of France, the strong pillar of our Alliance. Over a hillside close at hand a squadron of French cavalry came trotting in a long line, two abreast, in sky-blue cloaks and blue enamelled helmets.

Downing, *To the Last Ridge*, p103.

Le Chateau de Bertangles

The chateau at Bertangles was the headquarters of the AIF and the base of 3 Squadron Australian Flying Corps for much of 1918. It was at Bertangles that the Red Baron was buried with full military honours and it was here that Monash took command of the Australian Army Corps in May 1918. On the steps of the chateau King George V knighted Monash on 12 August 1918. The next day the HQ moved out to keep up with the rapid eastward advance. 3 Squadron later also moved east.

How to get to Bertangles: From the ring road on the northern side of Amiens (rocade nord) head north up the N25 following the signs to DOULLENS and ARRAS. About 4 km up the road there are clear signs to the left directing you to BERTANGLES, a quaint little village with origins going back to the eighteenth century when it housed the peasants serving the lord of the manor's estate. Once at the village follow the CAMPING signs to arrive at the 2 star CAMPING DE CHATEAU caravan park beside the chateau wall or follow the GRILLE DU CHATEAU signs for the front entrance to the chateau. Continue north from the front entrance to rejoin the N25 and on to DOULLENS.



The Chateau was built between 1730 and 1734 by Louis-Joseph de Clermont-Tonnerre and it has been the private residence of one family ever since. The grille (entrance gate) is the work of Jean-Baptiste Veyren, a noted 18th century iron worker and locksmith of Corbie. It was along the pathway shown here that the Australians lined up captured weapons for inspection by King George V when he arrived for the investiture of Monash. There is no indication in the tourist information that the place has any Australian connection. The sign says that groups may arrange tours of the chateau by contacting the tourist office in Amiens.

Doullens

If you continue up the N25 you will come to the behind-the-front town of DOULLENS. A walk around the town is quite pleasant. You realise now that the rebuilt towns along the Front, such as Albert and Villers Bretonneux never really regained their former atmosphere and old world charm.

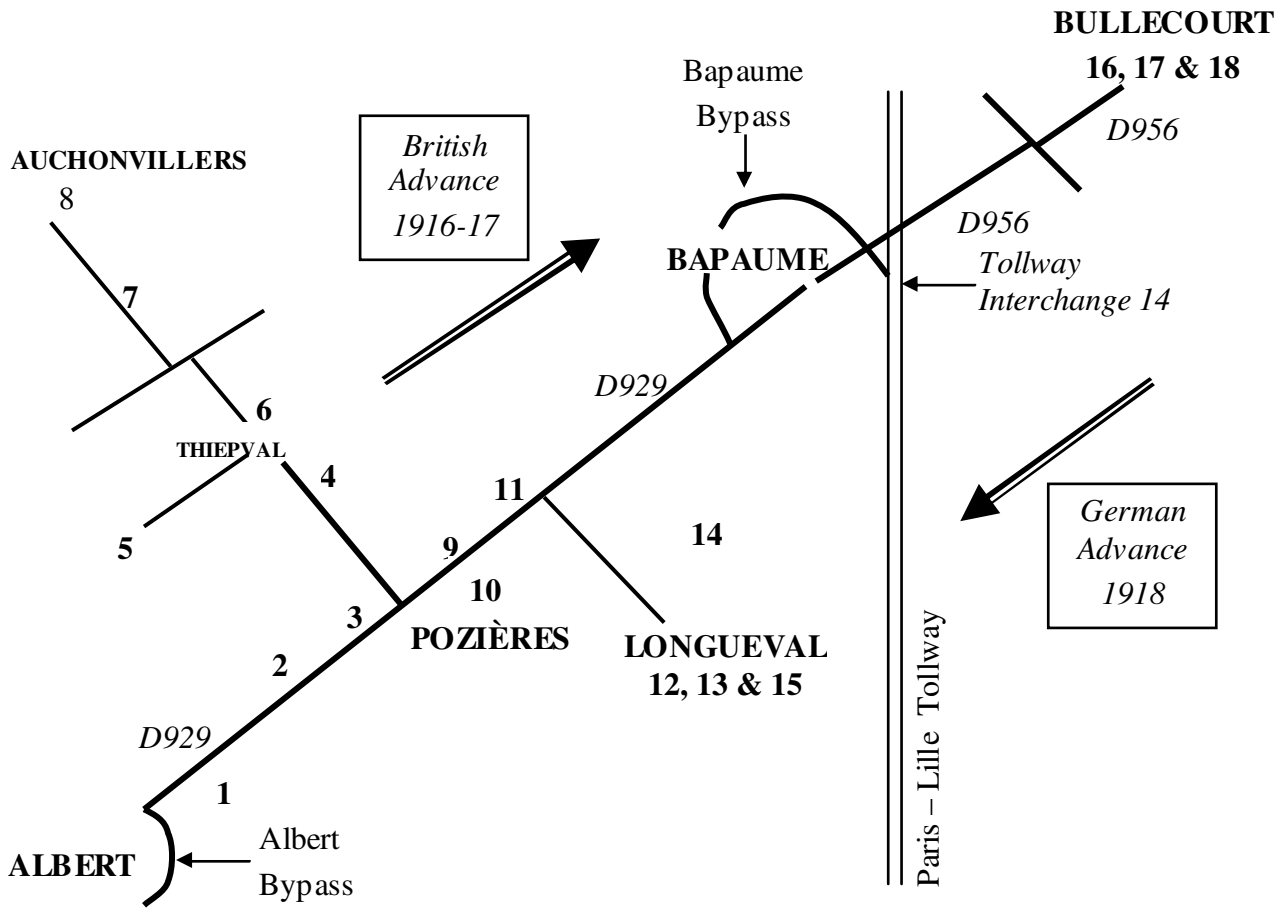
The imposing *Hotel de Ville* (Town Hall) in Doullens, like so many town halls in France boldly proclaims the key words of the Revolution: *LIBERTE - EGALITE - FRATENITE*. In the Hotel de Ville local historians have set up the *Salle du Commandement Unique* (room of one command), the room in which the allies gathered on 26 March 1918 and agreed to a unified command under the supreme command of Marshal Foch.

Coincidentally this was the very day that the Third Australian Division under Monash arrived in Doullens. The Third was the first of the Australian divisions to be hastily brought down from Flanders in early 1918 to help halt the great German spring offensive towards Amiens and Paris.

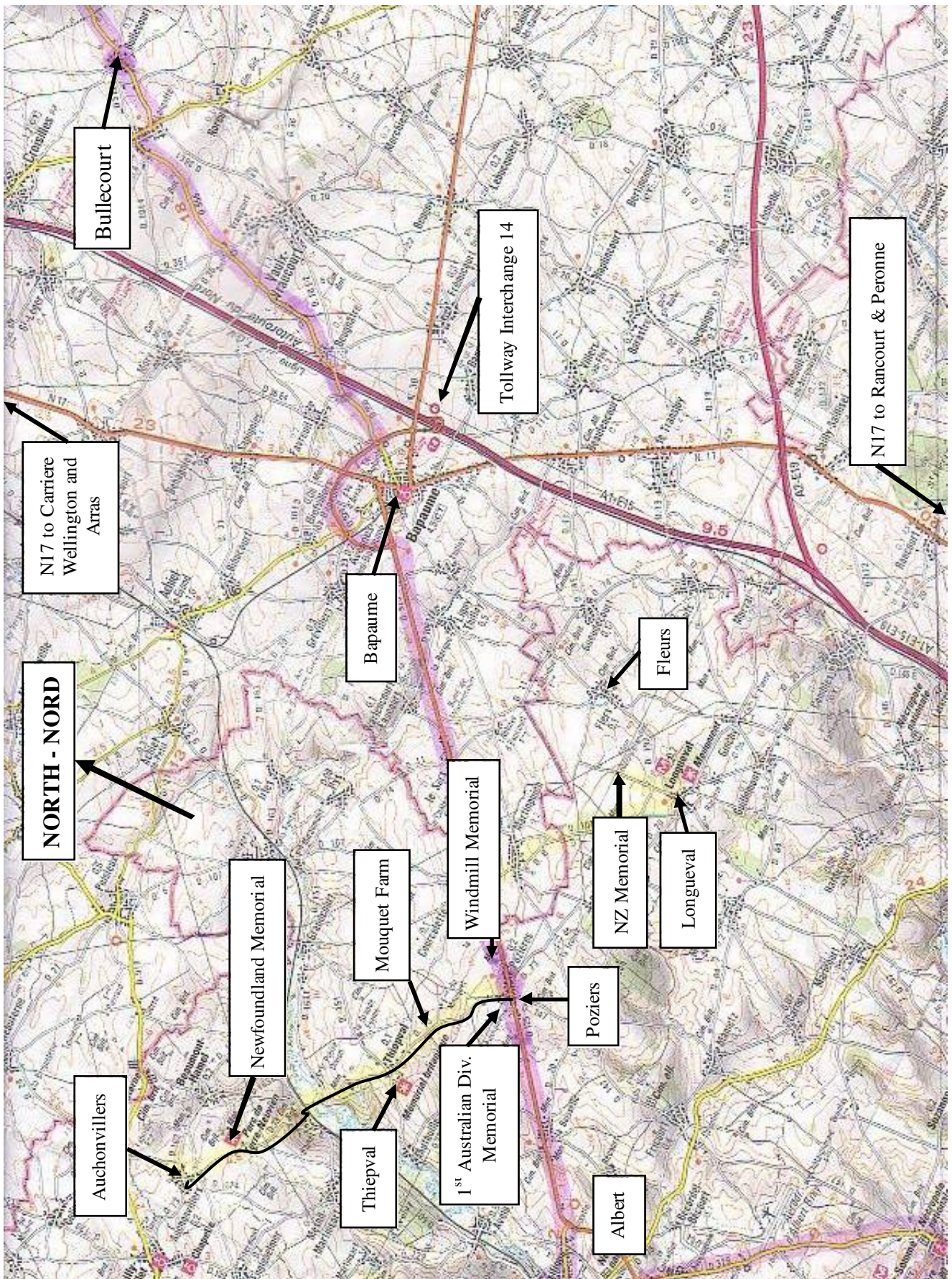
The Citadel in Doullens, originally built as one of many across northern France to keep out Spanish invaders and now a low security prison, is open for guided tours each afternoon during the summer months.

If you continue up the N25 towards ARRAS you will pass through the tiny village of La Bellevue. 2 Squadron Australian Flying Corps was based here for a period in 1917-1918.

ADVANCING WITH THE BRITISH FORCES UP THE D929 – 1916-1917



1. la Boisselle crater
2. Pozières Military Cemetery
3. First Australian Division Memorial
4. Mouquet Farm site
5. British Memorial to the Missing
6. Ulster Tower (Northern Ireland)
7. Canadian Newfoundland Memorial
8. Avril's Tea Rooms and Hawthorne crater
9. Windmill Site Memorial
10. British Tank Memorial
11. Canadian Memorial – Courcelette
12. Scottish Piper Memorial
13. South African Memorial
14. New Zealand Somme Memorial
15. Caterpillar Valley Cemetery and NZ Memorial
16. Slouch Hat Memorial
17. Digger Memorial
18. Bullecourt Memorial to the Missing



PRINCIPAL BATTLE AREA FOR THE AIF AUGUST 1916 TO APRIL 1917

A small section of IGN 1:100,000 Carte de Promenade 04 LAON/ARRAS.

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Purchase the new series 103 **Amiens/Arras** at www.ign.fr or www.mapsnmc.co.uk

ALBERT

Albert is the most central small town for exploring Australian sacred places associated with the Battle of the Somme and other actions in the years 1916–1917. During these years, Albert, (pronounced with the t silent), was a busy gateway for British forces until it was overrun by the Germans in their great advance of early 1918.

There are a number of accommodation options in the town including **La Velodrome** for camping and campervans. (Drive straight up the right side of the Basilica and keep going). Albert also has the services of banks, ATMs, La Posté, petrol, supermarket, shops and fast food outlets.

A narrow corridor of farmland some 20 miles long stretching west from Albert was allocated on arrival to the ANZAC I Corps for Rest, Supplies and Training and the town itself was well known to Australian forces as they moved through on their way to and from the Front, firstly at Pozières and then slowly all the way up the old Roman road, the D929 to Bapaume and Bullecourt.

Writing in 1975 Paul Fussell stated: *Albert today is one of the saddest places in France. It has all been restored to its original ugliness. The red brick Basilica is as it was before the war, with the gilded virgin back up on top of the tower, quite erect. But despite an appearance of adequacy, everything human in Albert seems to have been permanently defeated. The inhabitants are dour. Everywhere there is an air of bitterness about being passed over by the modernity, sophistication and affluence of modern France. Everywhere one senses a quiet fury at being condemned to live in this boneyard and backwater, where even the crops contend with soil once ruined by gas.* Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, p70.

More than 30 years on, Albert is still a bit of a cheerless place but modernity is slowly catching up. The war generations are passing away and younger people, brought up knowing only EU prosperity do not carry the burden of history. Indeed they, like numerous other communities along the Front are starting to exploit their history for economic and cultural gain.

Albert – The Basilica and Le Musée Somme 1916



The Germans occupied Albert in the early advances in 1914 but were driven out by British Forces. In the battles there was much damage including the gold Madonna and Child which sat atop the local basilica. The statue hung down at a precarious angle as shown in the mural in the present day town.

Few objects in the Great War were as productive of myths, legends and ‘furphies’ as the precarious Madonna of Albert. Some said that once the Madonna fell, the war would end. Others were certain that whoever shot down the golden statue would lose the war. Still others looked for mystical and sacrificial significance – the Madonna was a sign from God grieving over the slaughter or it was an inspiring miracle amid chaos.

Albert was again occupied by Germans in the great offensive of early 1918. It was shell fire from British forces which

actually brought down the Madonna as they retook the town but the war went on. The restored statue can be seen at the top of the photograph.

Follow the usual *Centre Ville* signs to get to the Basilica, right at the central square of the town. Immediately beside the Basilica is the entrance to the **Musée Somme 1916 – The Somme Trench Museum**. This collection concentrates on battlefield equipment and debris and is housed

underground in air raid tunnels built in the 1930s – such was the fear of another war among the local inhabitants at the time. Then and now, Albert has a large aircraft industry nearby. The museum is well worth a visit. The exit comes out in a most pleasant garden with a stream – a pleasing contrast to the carnage just observed.

From Albert head north east up the D929 following the signs: BAPAUME.

1. Lochnagar crater - La Boisselle Cratère de mine

One strategy adopted by both sides in trench warfare was to tunnel under opposing trenches and set up massive explosions to be triggered immediately before a frontal assault. At the war's end there were thousands of craters of various sizes up and down the front. Most were filled in but Lochnagar, the biggest of them all was left to the elements. Recently purchased by a British businessman, the crater is awesome evidence of the explosive power employed in trench warfare.

2. Pozières Military Cemetery

This cemetery is distinguished by a massive stone wall on which are recorded the names of hundreds of British troops missing in action. There are no Australian names on the wall (all our missing in the Somme are on our Villers Bretonneux Memorial) but there are over 600 Australian graves in the enclosed cemetery.

3. First Australian Division Memorial

The massive Battle of the Somme was launched on 1 July 1916. It was Haig's offensive designed to break through the German lines and put the enemy to flight – the standard battle plan unchanged since the middle ages. The slaughter was horrific. Thousands upon thousands were slain or wounded on the first day, the blackest day in the history of the British Army.

The Germans had heavily fortified their line so the British made only very limited gains. The main objective, Thiepval had scarcely been scratched so a plan was devised to attack around from the south in an encircling movement. Australians were selected for the attack through Pozières while South African and other British units would attack further east around Delville Wood and Longueval.

**BRITISH ON THE ROAD
TOWARDS BAPAUME**

*Terrific Hand-to-Hand Fighting
in Pozières Narrow Street.*

CITIZEN SOLDIER HEROES.

*Paris, Wednesday – Pozières is now
definitely in our hands, and the
Australians and Territorials have
advanced along the road towards
Bapaume.*

*... Cases of individual heroism on the
part of the Anzacs and the soldiers of
Britain's citizen army are too
numerous to mention.*

From an article on page 3 of the Sydney newspaper, *The Daily Mirror*, 27 July, 1916. After reading a report such as this, it comes as something of a surprise to find that Pozières is such a tiny place.

The battle of the Somme was a cauldron of screaming shells, searing pain, hand-to-hand combat, machine gunfire and agonising death. Heroism, exhaustion, fear, madness, thirst, savagery, comradeship, blood lust and shell shock were all there. Gallipoli was a mere skirmish compared to this. Into the appalling hell, the Australians were sent on 24 July and alone among the British units gained all their objectives on the first day. The fearful battle went on and on, inch by inch. The Australians took and held the village and advanced at the Windmill site and out towards Mouquet Farm but at terrible cost. In July 1916, at Pozières and Fromelles Australia suffered over 10,000 dead, wounded or missing. We cannot hope to understand the impact on Australian homes as local clergymen arrived with the fateful telegrams.

The newspaper report at left is a good example of the positive 'spin' put on the progress of battles. The advance of the Australians was only a few hundred metres. Bapaume was, and still is more than 10 kilometres up the road!



Above is the present day First Australian Division Memorial at Pozières with the top of the Thiepval Memorial visible on the right horizon.

At left is the original 1st Division Memorial dedicated on 8 July 1917 just on a year after the battle by the men of the 1st Division.

Australian War Memorial. Negative N^o C00841



*They told of Pozières, of men blown to pieces before their eyes, of a landscape decorated by heads, arms and legs of the freshly killed, of men smothered to death, dying of gas. Of fearfully wounded men making their way to the dressing station with a joke on their lips and passing out in their tracks. Mitchell, *Backs to the Wall*, p106.*

Pozières set the standard by which enemy shellfire was ever afterwards measured by the A.I.F., subsequent experiences being described as "better (or worse) than Pozières." No village in the parts of the Somme area afterwards known to the Australians – not even Gueudecourt – was so completely erased by shell-fire. Strangers who visited the battlefield during the following years were much impressed by the ruins of Le Sars and Flers, of which the wreckage could be seen, but not by Pozières, the reason being that at Pozières no ruins above ground remained – not even enough for mending the roads, which was the fate of most of the Somme villages. The place had become an open moorland, and the visitor passed through it without suspecting that a village had ever existed there. Official History, Vol III, p869.

Surely, thought front line historian Charles Bean, the tiny village of Pozières would be Australia's most sacred place but somehow the Anzac legend did not evolve that way. While resting here after the battles of Bullecourt the men of the 1st Division erected a memorial to their comrades on 8 July 1917.

The original memorial was overrun by the German advance of 1918 when they retook Pozières and Albert but it was replaced in 1919 with the standard Hobbs designed obelisk shown above. A viewing platform has been constructed opposite and the top of the Thiepval Memorial is seen on the horizon. The green and white CWG signs will direct you to the site, just off the D929 on the southern side of the village.

4. Mouquet Farm

Referred to as 'Moo Cow' farm by Australians, this was the scene of bitter fighting by the 1st and 4th Australian Divisions in August 1916. Artillery had reduced the farm buildings to rubble but the Germans had fortified and extended the cellars making the commanding site a formidable strong point. Thiepval had still not fallen to the British and Mouquet Farm was an obstacle in the encircling strategy. Today's farm is not quite on the site of the original.



It was very windy on the Anzac Day I visited the site so I needed to use pieces of local limestone to keep the Australian flag in place on Dr Ross Bastiaan's commemorative plaque. Australian farmers touring the Somme today comment on the small scale of agriculture in the region. How can a family survive on such small scale properties? Actually they don't but they remain because of the massive subsidies paid under the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) of the European Union. No French politician is game to suggest doing away with the subsidies and restructuring agriculture for fear of the electoral backlash. Thus in world forums such as the World Trade Organisation, France defends tariff barriers which keep Australian agricultural products out of the EU. Thus when in France remember the rule of diplomacy: Don't mention nuclear testing in the South Pacific and don't mention the war, the trade war that is!

5. Thiepval British Memorial to the Missing on the Somme

The Somme was the bloodiest battle in all of world history. By the time the battle petered out in November 1916 there lay around a million dead on all sides. The Thiepval Memorial, the largest on the Western Front was designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens. It lists the many thousands of British soldiers whose remains were never found. Though there are no missing Australians on this memorial such an awesome monument is worth a visit. A visitor centre was opened in 2004 providing parking, toilets and an attractive museum giving the gruesome details of the Battle of the Somme.

6. Northern Ireland – The Ulster Tower

Return to the village of Thiepval and head northwest following the Canadian maple leaf signs to the Newfoundland Memorial site. You will pass between the Mill Road Cemetery and the Ulster Tower. This tower built from stones brought over from Northern Ireland was the first 'national' memorial on the Western Front having been dedicated in 1922. Unlike the Irish of the south, the protestant loyalists of the north were just as gung ho for the war as were Australians.

7. The Newfoundland Memorial Site (Parc de Terre-Neuvien)

Until 1929 Newfoundland was a British Dominion, separate from the rest of Canada. Hence the separate memorial. Like Vimy Ridge this is a large site with the land left in its war time battered shape. Here you will find plenty of parking, toilet facilities, an interactive centre explaining Newfoundland's role in the war plus young Canadians acting as guides and custodians. The address is given as Beaumont-Hamel but don't head for that village. Rather from Thiepval just follow the maple leaf signs down the hill past the Ulster Tower. Once over the railway line take a sharp left, then a right through another village called Hamel.

8. Avril's Tea Rooms and B&B - Auchonvillers

It was early afternoon at Vimy Ridge on our first visit to the Front that I started to inquire about accommodation 'somewhere in the Somme valley' for the night. I had heard that Albert was a central town but I hadn't booked anything. *There is an English lady who runs a B & B in a village called Auchonvillers. She is an encyclopaedia on the Battle of the Somme* said one of the Canadian

guides. *She has tours of her original cellar used as a dressing station plus a restored trench system. We were taken there on our orientation course. Would you like me to call her and see if she has a room vacant?* You can see why I say these young Canadians are great ambassadors for their country.

And so it was that we arrived at Avril's Tea Rooms and met the legendary hostess herself. Avril's Tea Rooms and B & B is one of those special places where Western Front enthusiasts gather from all over the world and converse on all manner of topics associated with the Great War. There was a retired military man from South Africa, an English couple who liked to spend their weekends walking the battlefields and a young British public servant who knew everything you would want to know about the Lancashire regiments. Or maybe it was Yorkshire, I can't remember.

In such a crowd you have to be ready for some colonial rivalry. I made the mistake of claiming that our higher casualty rate proved that Australians were the bravest fighters of the war. *Rubbish* snorted Hans. *The South Africans were far better. The Australian high casualty rate only proves they weren't terribly good at trench warfare.* And so the friendly banter went on. (Fortunately this exchange took place before South Africa won the Rugby World Cup or I would never have heard the end of it!)

The Hawthorne crater at Auchonvillers marks one of the jumping off points of the Battle of the Somme of 1 July 1916. Australians were not involved on this side of Thiepval but Avril does have one Australian treasure. In her library is a copy of John Laffin's *Guide to Australian Battlefields of the Western Front* personally signed by the author.

British soldiers could not get their tongues around the French *Auchonvillers* calling the place *Ocean Villa*, hence the name of the tea rooms. See www.avrilwilliams.com

9. The Windmill site – Original Second Australian Division Memorial



On the northern side of Pozières is the Windmill site where the 2nd Australian Division fought fiercely during the Pozières attack. The inscription on the stone draped by my Australian flag does not specifically mention the 2nd Division. Rather it records that the site was captured on 4 August 1916 by Australian troops *who fell more thickly on this ridge than on any other battlefield of the war.* In less than 7 weeks the three Australian divisions engaged at Pozières had lost 23,000 officers and men.

The 2nd Division erected a monument to their comrades here in 1917 but it too was overrun by the Germans the following year. At the end of the war the monument was not restored, the 2nd Division preferring to erect a monument on the site of their later great victory, Mont St Quentin in Péronne.

At the windmill site the D929 is a busy, fairly narrow road and there is hardly any room on the verge to park so exercise a great deal of care.

10. The British Tank Memorial

Directly opposite the Windmill site (again be careful of the busy road) is the British Tank Memorial. Australians had their first experience with tanks in the battles of Bullecourt in 1917. It wasn't a good experience as the first models sank in mud, got lost, self destructed or broke down. It wasn't until the following year that tanks became reliable and Monash was able to use them to great effect in his advance along the Somme.

11. The Canadian Memorial at Courcelette

A small Canadian Memorial in the village of Courcelette. In 1916-1917 the Canadians were also involved in the advance up the D929.

The savage winter of 1916-1917

The winter of 1916-1917 in northern France was the coldest in over 40 years. Heavy snow fell, the ground froze and bitterly cold winds lashed the region. The 1st, 2nd, 4th and 5th Divisions of the AIF endured the savage winter in this area south of Bapaume – across such villages as Martinpuich, Longueval, Guillemont, Flers and Gueudecourt (all of which have good village B&B options today). Two kilometres further up the D929 from the Windmill site is an intersection clearly marked Courcelette to the *left* (for Canadians) and Martinpuich/Longueval on the D6 to the *right*. Follow the signs to LONGUEVAL, about 5 kilometres away. On the way you will pass between High Wood and the London War Cemetery containing some 300 Australians.

The crowded huts had no chimneys, the windows did not open and any discovered crack was stuffed with paper. Men massed around the braziers. Hoar-frost would form on the backs of the greatcoats of those men who were not immediately against the brazier. Men slept in pairs to get the greatest benefit from the pooled blankets. ... In the morning it was useless to try to drink from the water bottle that had been a pillow. The water inside was always frozen. Mitchell, Backs to the Wall, p71.

12. The Scottish Piper Memorial - Longueval



Right in the centre of Longueval, opposite the French War Memorial is a relatively new monument. The Scottish Piper monument was unveiled in 2002. Though there is no explanatory plaque it is obvious that the memorial is to the Scottish Pipers who served in many British units including the AIF. The regimental badges of such units are set in a stone wall around the monument. Evidently a local pipe band called the Somme Battlefield Band spearheaded the project, raised the funds and erected the memorial. (What? You mean that they have Frenchmen playing Scottish bagpipes? Mon Dieu! Is nothing sacred?) Some may find artist Andy DeComyn's inclusion of a skull in the sandbags under the piper to be rather bad taste but realism rather than symbolism is the trend with most modern memorials.

Trust the Scots to come up with a great lament for the fallen warrior. The text on the Piper Memorial reads:

*The pipes in the street
were marching bravely
The marching lads went by
With merry hearts
and voices singing
my friends marched out
to die
But I was hearing
a lonely Pibroch
out of an older war
Farewell
Farewell
Farewell MacCrimmon
MacCrimmon comes no more.*

13. South African Memorial – Delville Wood

From the centre of Longueval follow the clear signs to the South African Memorial at Delville Wood.

In wind and rain we slept the whole night through. Evening and on our way again. No building save a few newly erected Nissen huts existed in this shell blasted zone. No trees remained standing. No grass grew in the churned fields. But only signs of death more and more numerous as we went forward. Off the road on each side was a morass dotted with bogged wagons and occasionally a wrecked gun. Now a duckboard track led off to the left through Delville Wood. Here was ruin and desolation beyond all compare. Mitchell, Backs to the Wall, p33.

In terms of architecture and overall landscape setting the South African Memorial is one of the finest on the Western Front. Parking, toilets and a visitor centre are provided and behind the memorial is a small museum concentrating on South Africa's contribution to the Great War. Surrounding the memorial is the magnificently regrown Delville Wood. The paths in the wood follow the street pattern of the utterly destroyed village.

Directly opposite the memorial is the Delville Wood War Cemetery containing 5,523 burials, 65% of which are unidentified. There are over 80 Australians and more than 20 New Zealanders here. Just down the road is the local French cemetery affording a good opportunity to observe French funerary art.

14. New Zealand Somme Memorial



New Zealanders will want to follow the clear signs MEMORIAL DES NEO ZELANDAIS out of Longueval to their division memorial, 1.5 kilometres north way out in the wide agricultural farmlands.

IN HONOUR OF THE MEN OF
THE NEW ZEALAND DIVISION
-
FIRST BATTLE OF THE SOMME 1916

15. Caterpillar Valley Cemetery and New Zealand Memorial to the Missing

New Zealanders will also want to visit the Caterpillar Valley War Cemetery only a couple of kilometres south west of Longueval on the road to Contalmaison. From this huge cemetery (over 5,500 burials) the remains of a New Zealand unknown soldier were exhumed and returned home in 2004. Directly adjacent to the cemetery is a New Zealand memorial commemorating over 1000 New Zealand officers and men lost in the Battle of the Somme who have no known grave.

Bapaume

Even though they didn't have to fight for it, the taking of Bapaume on 17 March 1917 was a great morale boost to the Australian forces who had endured terrible winter conditions. The Germans had abandoned the town for a stronger defensive line to the north. They adopted a scorched earth policy and laid several mines and booby traps leading to the deaths of more than 30 Australians.

Several diggers recorded that in the vault under the ruined cathedral of Bapaume hundreds of skulls were discovered. It was presumed that they were victims of the French Revolution more than 100 years before. Just what happened to the skulls post war is a bit of a mystery. Perhaps they are still there!

Today Bapaume has all urban services such as ATM, La Posté, petrol, shops and fast food but there are no special tourist attractions or sites of Australian commemoration. If you don't need to stop then take the ring road when going up or down the Front.

16. Slouch Hat Memorial – Bullecourt

Of all the villages in the Bapaume area Bullecourt is the one that established close links with the Australian forces and maintained those close links over the succeeding decades. The 4th Australian Division fought a one day battle (officially termed an ‘action’) on 11 April 1917 and then the 1st, 2nd and 5th Australian Divisions launched a massive assault on the German lines from 3 to 17 May. The action by the 4th Division was the result of yet another bungle by the military hierarchy. They had the idea that since the new tanks would spearhead the attack, no covering artillery barrage would be necessary. Even though the tanks broke down or failed to show up, the attack was still ordered resulting in massive Australian casualties.

The second battle of Bullecourt was part of the British Arras offensive which included the Canadian attack on Vimy Ridge. The Australians were very successful in breaching the heavily fortified German line but at great cost. Over 10,000 Australians were casualties of the battles of Bullecourt. For those wanting to walk the battlefields and visit numerous cemeteries containing Australians, see the suggested tours in Mat McLachlan’s *Walking with the Anzacs*.

The citizens of Bullecourt have kept alive the Australian connection by hosting Anzac commemorations every year and now maintaining three monuments in and around their tiny village. The most central monument, directly opposite the village Town Hall (Mairie) is the ‘Slouch Hat’ Memorial. This monument, originally without the hat was unveiled 1981. The locals financed and built the monument in honour of British and Australian units that fought in the battles of Bullecourt. Later that year the Director of the Australian War Memorial presented the bronze hat, by artist Roy McPherson and it was added to the structure in 1982 to commemorate the 65th anniversary of the battles of Bullecourt.

There is also a small private museum of the battles of Bullecourt in the village. Ask in the pub, Le Canberra on the main street.



Australian Servicemen and women form a guard of honour and French veterans mount their colours at the ANZAC commemoration in the centre of Bullecourt. Wreaths are laid on the Slouch Hat Memorial and on the French War Memorial opposite. The parties then proceed to the Digger Memorial for further Anzac commemoration including the laying of crosses and red poppies on the memorial by French school children.

17. The Bullecourt Digger

Follow the green and white signs to the east of the village (easy walking distance) to the Bullecourt Digger Memorial. This memorial was unveiled on Anzac Day 1992 to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the battles of Bullecourt.

Here artist Peter Corlett has again produced something brilliantly Australian. The Bullecourt digger is the larrikin digger. He stands there ready for action but no dramatics. His slouch hat is pushed back on his head and he isn't taking anything too seriously. You expect he would be having a quiet smoke, ready for a game of two up like those diggers in the old *Smiths Weekly* cartoons. You can almost hear him saying, 'She'll be right mate. I'm Australian'.



*Sacred to the memory of the Australian Imperial Force who were killed or wounded in the two battles of Bullecourt April – May 1917 and the Australian dead and their comrades in arms who lie here forever in the soil of France.
Lest we forget.*

Inscription on the Digger Memorial

Photo left: Australian service personnel form a guard of honour for the Anzac commemoration at the Digger Memorial, Bullecourt.

After the battles of Bullecourt, the ANZAC I corps was given a two month rest before being moved up into Flanders to join the recently arrived 3rd Australian Division in readiness for the next great allied offensive – the Third Battle of Ypres.

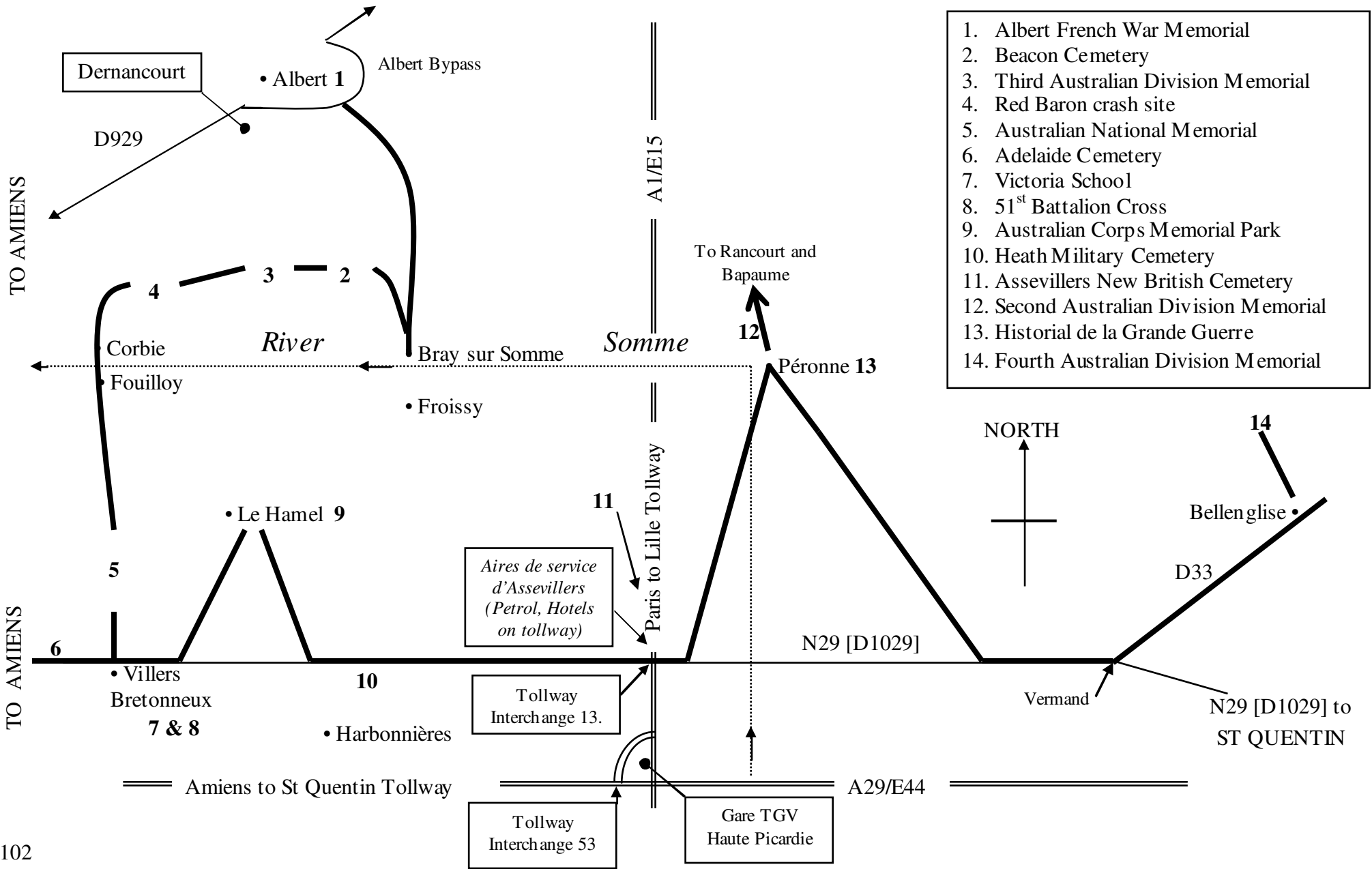
18. Bullecourt Memorial to the Missing



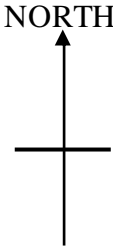
Continuing just a short distance beyond the Bullecourt Digger, on the road to RIENCOURT is a small memorial dedicated to 2,423 Australian officers and men lost in the battles of Bullecourt and who have no known grave. This private memorial, right in the centre of the Australian attack was dedicated in 1969 by veterans and family members of diggers lost. Various plaques remembering fallen loved ones have been added by families. The cross on the top is *In memory of Lance Corporal William Charles Madden from his wife and children.*

At every Anzac commemoration in Bullecourt wreaths and red poppies are also laid on this memorial but as there is no space for a large public gathering, it is usually only the official party and descendants of missing diggers who are involved.

PLACES OF MEMORY - AUSTRALIANS ADVANCING ALONG THE SOMME IN 1918



1. Albert French War Memorial
2. Beacon Cemetery
3. Third Australian Division Memorial
4. Red Baron crash site
5. Australian National Memorial
6. Adelaide Cemetery
7. Victoria School
8. 51st Battalion Cross
9. Australian Corps Memorial Park
10. Heath Military Cemetery
11. Assevillers New British Cemetery
12. Second Australian Division Memorial
13. Historial de la Grande Guerre
14. Fourth Australian Division Memorial



ADVANCING WITH THE AUSTRALIANS ALONG THE SOMME 1918

The Comité du Tourisme de la Somme (21 rue Ernest-Cauvin, 80000, Amiens, France) runs the web site www.somme-battlefields.com and provides three very useful documents:

- The Visitors Guide to the Battlefields – a brief summary of sacred places of all nations.
- Practical Information – containing addresses, opening hours etc of places of interest.
- Visitors Map – A good map but it does not have all Australian places. It concentrates more on British places which are slightly north of the Australian area of 1918. The map also has a comprehensive list of hotels and B&Bs with prices and contact details.

Rather than follow the ‘Circuit of Remembrance’ (Le Circuit du Souvenir) suggested on the tourist map, Australians need to make a journey closer to the Somme River if they wish to follow the 1918 advance of the AIF.

1. The ‘Grieving Family’ War Memorial Albert



Just a block south of the square in front of the Basilica in Albert is the local French War Memorial. (Get walking directions from the Museum entrance.) The French Memorial (*Albert a ses morts* – all the dead from Albert) has a ‘grieving widow’ theme, much more common in France than in Australia. On the left we see the family farewelling the soldier going to war and on the right we see the widow and her children visiting their father’s grave.



In Australia, among the thousands of local war memorials none has the ‘fatherless family’ theme. The closest is the tiny ‘Widow and Children’ statue (photo left) in the Legacy Garden of Appreciation outside Melbourne’s Shrine of Remembrance. Only two Australian Great War Memorials dwell on the grief and sorrow of women left behind. There is the ‘weeping mother’ sitting atop the memorial in Gatton, Queensland and the ‘sighing widow’ on the memorial in the Victorian River Murray town of Mildura. (photo right)



Bray-sur-Somme

Head south east out of Albert past the huge European Aerospace factories and hangers following the signs to BRAY-SUR-SOMME. This village, captured by the Third Australian Division in August 1918 is a convenient starting point for a 1918 places of memory tour. The Germans left behind a large supply dump which the Australians put to good use. From this village head back up along the D1 following the signs to CORBIE and AMIENS. There are three significant places along this ridge top road, a line of advance in early 1918.

2. The Beacon Cemetery



This cemetery, designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens holds 43 Australians including Lt James McConnell who, at 48 years of age was believed by John Laffin to be the oldest casualty among Australians engaged in front line fighting. (Grave ref. VJ1)

3. The Third Australian Division Memorial

The address of the Third Australian Division Memorial is given as Sailly-le-Sec but the obelisk is not down in the village beside the Somme River. It is more than a kilometre north of the village, high on the ridge right on the D1 road. The location is not a major Third Division battle site. Rather it looks over the broad valley of the Somme where the division fought many battles from March 1918 to the end of the war.

The Third Australian Division was raised in Australia and England and was sent to train on the Salisbury Plain in 1916. Thus it did not see service in the Middle East and had only a handful of Gallipoli veterans in its ranks. One such veteran was the commanding officer John Monash.

Such were the heavy casualties at Fromelles and Pozières that there was some move to break up the division and use the men as reinforcements for the others. This was resisted and the division arrived intact on the Western Front in November 1916 going into the line near Armentières.



4. The Red Baron Crash Site

Further along the ridge, just as the D1 starts to descend into Corbie is the derelict brick chimney of a long since disused brickworks. It was in this vicinity that the German air ace Manfred von Richthofen, famously known as the Red Baron crashed to earth on Sunday 21 April 1918.

The flamboyant von Richthofen brought down more enemy aircraft than any other flyer of the First World War. He had some eighty kills to his name including one Australian – 2nd Lieutenant Jack Hay of the Royal Flying Corps shot down by the Baron in January 1917. By 1918 the dashing 26 year old airman had already established an awesome reputation and he had a string of German awards and citations to add to his aristocratic family title granted in 1741 to the Richthofens by Frederick the Great.

As with many airmen in the fledgling Flying Corps on both sides, von Richthofen came out of a cavalry regiment. In those days the ability to ride a horse well was considered to be an essential skill for air pilots! The dashing, handsome young officer had great ‘media presence’ as we would say today and he was feted as a hero throughout Germany.

On the fateful day, in his bright red Fokker Tri-plane the Baron pursued Canadian novice, Lieutenant Wilfred May low along the Somme well over British lines. He was fired upon by both the Canadian airman Captain Roy Brown and Australian soldiers on the ground. Since the fatal shot was fired from beneath, the bullet exiting von Richthofen’s chest the Australians, specifically Sergeant Cedric Popkin of the 24th Machine Gun Company and Private Robert Buie of the 53rd Battery believed they had shot him down.



Private Abram Unicom

There is another possibility. On my pilgrimage down the Front I had with me the bugle of 3466 Private Abram Unicom, 41st Battalion, AIF and I intended to find an isolated spot on this hill above Corbie and play the Last Post on the bugle that had last sounded out over the Somme in 1918. The reason being that Abe Unicom, a very reserved, righteous man believed that he had shot down the Baron and it had weighed on his conscience throughout his life.

Abe Unicom was a runner, more often shot at than returning fire and on 21 April 1918 he was taking a message to a Colonel Herron located in the direction of Sailly-le-Sec when the Baron’s distinctive tri-plane came overhead. Abe, an excellent marksman from his days hunting in the bush of the Manning River Valley fired a single shot at close range which he was certain had found its mark. The plane crashed out of sight over the brow of the hill and Abe continued on with his duty. Abe Unicom had been involved in general fire from trenches on several occasions but at no time did he know for certain that he had personally killed any specific enemy soldier. The Red Baron was the only kill for which he believed he was personally responsible.

Like so many returned men Abram Unicom rarely spoke of his war experiences. His war ended on 28 August 1918 with what is officially recorded as a *gunshot wound to the head*. There were in fact several pieces of metal still in his head when he died in 1988.

Back home in Australia Abe devoted himself to religion and charitable works taking a commission in the Salvation Army and raising a family in the poverty days of the great depression. Unlike many returned men Abe was not bitter that the wonderful ‘Land fit for Heroes’ promised to them overseas failed to materialise.

Late in life he shared his burden with his children asking them not to think any less of him because he had killed a man.

Of course Abram Unicom may have carried life-long guilt quite unnecessarily. Without ballistic evidence the identity of the one who brought down the Red Baron will forever be unknown.

The Australians souvenired parts of the plane and buried von Richthofen with full military honours at Bertangles on 22 April. This was not to be his final resting place. The local French, perhaps understandably did not want to give German airmen who had been strafing their villages any honours and they desecrated the Baron's grave. Von Richthofen's body was moved to the Fricourt German cemetery near Albert and then, in 1925 taken back to Berlin with great ceremony. The Germans saw this as the great warrior returned to the Fatherland. This rite was virtually identical to the 1920 interment of the 'Unknown Soldier' in Westminster Abbey and the bringing home of the unknown Australian soldier in 1993.



The funeral of Rittmeister Baron von Richthofen led by Padre George Marshall. The firing party presents arms as the coffin passes, borne on the shoulders of six pilot officers of 3 Squadron, Australian Flying Corps, Bertangles, 22 April, 1918. *Imperial War Museum, London. Q10918*

The Baron's tomb became a national shrine until Germany was overwhelmed by defeat and disillusionment in 1945. The nationalism of the Nazis, of which the Baron's tomb was an icon proved to be hollow and disastrous. Von Richthofen's remains were finally interred in the family vault in Weisbaden in 1975.

And yes, I did play the Last Post overlooking the valley of the Somme on Anzac Day. Had there been anyone around they would have no doubt considered me to be completely crazy – standing in the middle of nowhere, protected from the chill wind in a Drizabone, an Australian flag over my shoulder and playing that haunting tune, unfamiliar to the French on a bugle.

Crazy maybe but I wasn't going to carry the bugle all the way from Australia for nothing. It seemed to me quite an appropriate way to pay my respects to Abram Unicomb and all the other brave Australians who went to war with him.



Abram Unicomb among buglers in training at the Frasers Hill Camp, Queensland, 23 November 1916. Photo: Unicomb family

5. The Australian National Memorial

*TO THE GLORY OF GOD AND IN MEMORY OF THE AUSTRALIAN IMPERIAL FORCE
IN FRANCE AND FLANDERS 1916-1918 AND OF ELEVEN THOUSAND WHO FELL IN
FRANCE AND HAVE NO KNOWN GRAVE*

Inscription on the Australian National Memorial, Villers Bretonneux

As early as the Versailles Peace Conference Australian Prime Minister William Morris Hughes (known affectionately to Australian soldiers as *the little digger*) proposed a grand monument *worthy of our great soldiers, their sacrifice, heroism, endurance*. The site, just north of the village of Villers Bretonneux, was suggested by Major-General Sir Talbot Hobbs, architect of the obelisk divisional memorials on the Western Front and of the State Memorial in Perth, who had led his 5th Division attacking this very hill on Anzac Day 1918.



Hughes persuaded the Federal Parliament (then meeting in Melbourne as Canberra was still largely sheep paddocks) to spend one hundred thousand pounds on a memorial in France.

Not everyone was enthusiastic. Both veterans and ordinary citizens joined the chorus of criticism. Why spend such a sum on a memorial that few grieving relatives will ever see? Why locate it in a place that few Australians will ever visit? Why add to the division

memorials? Why not spend the money on wounded diggers and returned men who had been promised a hero's reward?

Of course Hughes and others wanted a memorial 'over there' not just to commemorate the fallen. After all, there were plenty of memorials going up in Australia to do that. For further commemoration we used the British Menin Gate in Ieper for our missing in Flanders and we regarded the British 'unknown soldier' in Westminster Abbey as representing our own unknown dead.

What Billy Hughes and super-patriots like him really wanted was a memorial to make a statement to the rest of the world – the structure would be a visible sign that Australia had 'arrived' on the world stage, that it had 'proved itself' to be a worthy member of the British Empire. This view that Australia had 'proved itself' by sacrificing thousands of its best young men in the First World War was very strong in our nation in the interwar years and it is the central theme of the Anzac legend to this very day.

No one suggested a massive monument at Gallipoli. The rest of the world would not take any notice of any structure there and you can be certain the Turks at that time would never have agreed. Our memorial had to be in the region that really mattered in the world at that time. It had to be in the heart of Europe.

Things moved very slowly. In 1925 a competition was organised and in 1927 William Lucas of Melbourne was announced the winner. Approval from France didn't come until 1929 as the French were becoming a little reluctant to approve all these massive 'British' memorials when they themselves were satisfied with memorials in home villages and one major memorial at Verdun.

Then came the great depression and the slashing of government spending. The Lucas designed memorial was abandoned altogether.

In 1935 the Lyons government commissioned Sir Edwin Lutyens, who had completed the cemetery in front of the chosen site to design a memorial less expensive and less dramatic than the Lucas one. Lutyens' original design had cloisters around the walls but these had to be abandoned on cost grounds in favour of a tower *so all could see the battlefields on which such great victories had been won.*

The Australian National Memorial was finally dedicated in July 1938 almost 20 years after the conflict ceased. It was unveiled by King George VI in the presence of French President Lebrun. There was a large official party from Australia headed by former Prime Minister and war hero Stanley Bruce along with 400 returned soldiers and eight nurses.

Sad to say, few Australian leaders have been back since. Visits by our prime ministers have been few and far between and the memorial only occasionally gets a mention in the media or in commemorative discourse. In the last 70 years there have been only two official visits to this memorial by Australian prime ministers in office (Hawke in 1989 and Keating in 1993) and neither of them was on Anzac Day. John Howard in his 11 years in office managed to spend three Anzac Days at Gallipoli but not one on the Western Front.

It is most significant that the Australian prime minister of the day made a special trip to France to commemorate the D Day landings (Keating for the 50th anniversary in 1994 and Howard for the 60th in 2004) but on neither occasion did the Australian leader go anywhere near our National Memorial at Villers Bretonneux.

Now Australia's part in D Day was microscopic. No Australian ground forces were involved, no Australian ships sailed the Channel and only a handful of Australian airmen were in the air above. Only a few Australians lie in Normandy war cemeteries while thousands upon thousands lie in those of the Somme. Yet both Australian leaders made a special trip to France specifically for the D Day commemorative occasion and ignored our National Memorial. The explanation is simple. In our age of media image and photo opportunities, lining up with the great and powerful of this world means much more 'political capital' in Australia than does visiting our memorials on the Western Front.

Anzac Commemoration at Villers Bretonneux



Australians at the Anzac Commemoration, Australian National Memorial, Villers Bretonneux

For many years the main Anzac Service of Commemoration in France was held at our National Memorial, usually in the morning of the Saturday closest to 25 April. (Services at Bullecourt were held in the afternoon). In 2008, to commemorate the 90th anniversary of the armistice and the 70th anniversary of the unveiling of our memorial a first ever Anzac Day Dawn Service was held at the memorial in addition to the Saturday commemoration.

The Dawn Service proved to be so popular that local and Australian officials decided to make it an annual event, replacing the Community Service in 2009. Whether the Community Service on Saturday resumes in years when 25 April is not on or adjacent to a weekend remains to be seen.

At the Anzac commemoration I attended, along with the usual speeches and tributes, the playing of the Last Post and the laying of wreaths by the official party, opportunity was given for any member of the public to lay tributes on the memorial. Tributes are usually floral wreaths or arrangements of red poppies or small wooden crosses. Sometimes people place messages of remembrance or a small Australian flag. This I had observed many times at Anzac services in Australia and noted the same formalities on Anzac Day up in Belgium. For the official opening of our National Memorial in 1938 ribbons from commemorative wreaths were collected from all over Australia, burned to ashes and then taken by pilgrims to scatter in the military cemetery on the way up to the memorial.

So it occurred to me that on my pilgrimage I ought to make some appropriate tribute. I had with me Abe Unicom's bugle that had been passed down from Abram to his son. Having received permission from the major in charge of the ceremony, I temporarily placed the bugle on the memorial as a special act of respect and remembrance. My small act brought much favourable comment and an interview on the evening news of a local French TV channel!

Later in the year, when I took my family on a visit it was the middle of the duck shooting season and local farmers were out walking the fields with their retriever dogs. It was kind of surreal to be wandering around our National Memorial to the sound of occasional gunfire echoing along the Somme.

Visiting our National Memorial

Our National Memorial at Villers Bretonneux was damaged in the Second World War (chips off the tower from bullets and shrapnel can still be seen) but it was repaired in the 1950s and since then it has been kept meticulously neat and tidy by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

Unfortunately for many years the place was something of a white elephant, getting few visitors and very little attention from the Australian media. The memorial was rarely visited by our political leaders and virtually nothing was done to make the place more informative and visitor friendly.

Parking is very limited and on a dangerous bend in the road and it is a long walk from the village of Villers Bretonneux. There are no picnic areas or toilet facilities. No seats are provided for elderly visitors to rest and very little information about the site or the memorial is provided. We spent millions on a memorial in London in 2003 and more again for road works at Gallipoli in 2005 but a visitor centre at our National Memorial at Villers Bretonneux was still at just the feasibility stage in 2008, the memorial's 70th birthday.

There is no protection from the sun or rain so providing some seating and putting on the cloisters according to Lutyens' original design would make a visit a much more pleasant experience.

Most important of all, what about following the Canadian example and have young Australians serving as custodians of the site? Teams could be rotated through three Australian sacred places in close proximity: The National Memorial, The Australian Corps Memorial Park at Le Hamel and the village of Villers Bretonneux. It would be an honour to serve and a fantastic experience for Australian youth who flock to Europe in their thousands every year.



Abram Unicom's bugle among the tributes at the Anzac commemoration, Australian National Memorial, Villers Bretonneux

6. Adelaide War Cemetery and the Unknown Australian Soldier

Situated on the western edge of Villers Bretonneux on the main road to Amiens, the Adelaide War Cemetery is the exhumation site of the Unknown Australian Soldier (1993). The cemetery today contains over 500 Australians gathered immediately after the war from a number of local battlefield burial plots. There is no evidence that this cemetery was named after the capital of the State of South Australia. Rather it appears to have come from the same source used by the founding fathers of South Australia, namely Queen Adelaide, wife of King William IV.

The Unknown Soldier honours the memory of all those men and women who laid down their lives for Australia. His tomb is a reminder of what we have lost in war and what we have gained. We have lost more than 100,000 lives, and with them all their love of this country, and all their hope and energy. We have gained a legend: a story of bravery and sacrifice, and with it a deeper faith in ourselves and our democracy, and a deeper understanding of what it means to be Australian.

Extract from the speech written by Don Watson and delivered by the Australian Prime Minister, the Rt Hon Paul Keating at the interment of the Australian Unknown Soldier in the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Remembrance Day 1993.

Villers Bretonneux

You couldn't say that Villers Bretonneux was the most attractive town in France. Like most of the small, rebuilt towns and villages along the Front today Villers Bretonneux has a bland, cheerless appearance arising from the limited resources available in the heartbreaking years of rebuilding. Today it is basically a small rural service settlement with many inhabitants commuting daily to work in Amiens.

Moreover, a French farmer usually does not live out on his property with homestead and sheds around as is the case in Australia. When driving through the intensively cultivated landscape of the Somme Valley a striking feature is the almost complete absence of any farm structures.

French farmers tend to live in local villages with their barns and workshops in front of their homes. Thus you can find yourself driving through a village seeing nothing much apart from high brick walls and huge wooden barn doors on either side.



The architecture may be plain and it is only a small town but Villers Bretonneux is one of the most famous and justly sacred places in Australian memory. We could plagiarise Winston Churchill's statement about El Alamein and say: *Before Villers Bretonneux we never had a victory. After Villers Bretonneux we never had a defeat.*

Well that's not quite accurate. Up to 24 April 1918 Australian forces had won many battles and had pushed the enemy back over many miles of ground but all gains were wiped out in the great German spring offensive of 1918. The German forces, bolstered by divisions released from the Eastern Front due to the capitulation of the Russians launched a

massive attack in northern France with the aim of reaching Paris before the recently arrived American forces could be deployed to any great effect.

The Australians had the task of holding the line east of Amiens and this they did at Villers Bretonneux, retaking the town on Anzac Day 1918. From then on they pushed the Germans back along the Somme all the way to Montbrehain and were breaching the Hindenburg line when relieved by the Americans just before the Armistice. The victory at Villers Bretonneux was certainly the turning point of the war as far as the AIF was concerned. From then on they never took a backward step, advancing steadily eastward till the war came to an end.

Yet it was not this battle which established Villers Bretonneux firmly in the hearts and minds of Australians of the post war generation. Rather it was the personal links established between members of the AIF and local citizens during and immediately after the war that gave Villers Bretonneux such a hallowed place in Australia's story. Even before the conflict had ended diggers had been involved in helping returning villagers rebuild their shattered town, re-lay shell-damaged roads and restart farming production. A start was also made on rebuilding the local school. Most importantly in the eyes of the diggers the people of Villers Bretonneux promised to care for the graves of the thousands of Australians in the local area. Our returning soldiers were proud of their battle honours but they never forgot their coppers who would never return to their homeland so far away.

Back in Australia various groups set up charitable trusts to assist communities damaged by the war. Towns and organisations in Australia 'adopted' villages in France or provided assistance to specific groups such as widows and orphans. Melbourne, Australia's largest and wealthiest city at the time adopted Villers Bretonneux and set up a patriotic trust with none other than Monash, Elliot and Gellibrand as patrons. The slogan *By diggers defended, by Victorians mended* caught the public's attention and donations were received from business houses, churches, sporting clubs, cultural groups, ex digger associations and private citizens from all over Australia.

Fund raising activities, firmly established during the war years continued into the 1920s directing their energies to the rehabilitation of wounded soldiers and to assisting 'our grand allies' recover from the devastation of war. In 1921 Melbourne staged a 'French Week' culminating in a massive 'button day' with a variety of money raising attractions: Many bands played on street corners, a recently burnt out building was set up as an exhibit of a 'ruined village', returned soldiers urged passers-by to build up 'a mile of pennies', hundreds of volunteers sold commemorative badges, manned street stalls selling donated goods and rattled collection boxes.

To finish the job of rebuilding the school at Villers Bretonneux the Victorian Education Department contributed £10,000 from its substantial patriotic fund built up over the war years by children in Victoria's schools.

7. The Victoria School



Places of Education - the most productive type of war memorial of them all.

Left: The Victoria School in Villers Bretonneux, France, opened in 1927.

Right: The Hay War Memorial High School established in the western New South Wales town of Hay in 1923.

Victoria School, Villers Bretonneux's central primary school was opened by the Agent General for Victoria Sir George Fairbairn. Inside the school today is the **Franco – Australian Museum**, a small collection of personal items and war artefacts celebrating the role of the AIF and the continuing links between Villers Bretonneux and Australia. You get the heartfelt link and you can understand why Villers Bretonneux is such a special place in Australian memory. See the web site <http://museeaustralien.com>

The museum can give you information on flights over the battlefields from the Glisy airfield on the eastern edge of Amiens or you can study high resolution aerial photos at www.geoportail.fr Either way you can observe the intense patchwork of small fields of the Somme Valley.



Each day the children at the Victoria School see this sign in their playground. Features of Australian history, geography and culture are included in the curriculum so the link forged by the AIF is handed down from generation to generation. Villers Bretonneux has not forgotten Australia but a disturbing question arises: In the current revival of the Anzac legend in Australia has Australia forgotten Villers Bretonneux? How many Australian school children know as much about Villers Bretonneux as they do about Gallipoli? How many Australian children know as much about France as the children of Villers Bretonneux know about Australia?

Villers Bretonneux has always been the main centre in France for Anzac commemoration and the personal links between Australians and the town, established by the AIF have continued to grow and flourish in spite of the ups and downs in the Franco-Australian political relationship over the years: veteran return visits, school excursions, local 'Australia Week' activities, visits by Australian dignitaries, study scholarships, the 'twinning' of the town with Robinvale, Victoria, visits by Australian bands and musical combinations, a local 'La Kangourou' restaurant, and an ever open welcome to visiting Australians.

8. The 51st Battalion Cross

RIP. To the memory of the Officers, NCOs and men of the 51st Battalion, AIF who fell in the counter attack on Villers Bretonneux 24-25th April, 1918

Two members of the predominately West Australian 51st battalion, Horatio Julian and Walter Rich fashioned a rough wooden cross, inscribed it with the above text and installed it on the battlefield shortly after the liberation of the village. After the war the cross was brought back to Australia and spent some years laid up in St Anne's Anglican Church in the Sydney suburb of Ryde. Since it had Western Australian connections it was moved to St Georges Cathedral in Perth.

For Anzac Day 2008 the Anglican Dean of Perth, John Sheppard took both the cross and a sandstone replica (complete with the original misspelling) back to Villers Bretonneux for the 90th anniversary celebrations. The sandstone cross was presented to the St Jean Baptiste village church, a huge brick structure built in 1929.

The cross was dedicated and installed in the grilled forecourt of the church. Thus it may be observed even when the church is closed.

One day I was wandering in Villers (Bretonneux). There was great sound of revelry in a chateau. The big ballroom was crowded with officers and men. Self appointed barmen were serving wine faster than any barmen ever worked in a six-o'clock rush. The piano was being played furiously.

Two officers were step dancing on top of the piano. One jumped down via the keys. The other leaped over the heads of others, and clung to the swinging chandelier. The chandelier came down with a crash, and he was pulled from under the glass pile, unconscious. Another went out cold from accidental contact with a high kicker. The casualties were dragged aside, and left to recover at leisure.

Mitchell, *Backs to the Wall*, p270.

9. Monash and the Australian Corps Memorial Park – Le Hamel

The Australian Corps Memorial Park is a much more recent monument having been unveiled on 4 July 1998, the 80th anniversary of what John Laffin describes as *the Australians' finest victory*.

Monash had been advancing along the Somme since April 1918 using much more creative tactics than the frontal infantry assaults that produced such appalling casualty lists. Monash's skilful use of aircraft and tanks, his coordination of artillery and infantry and his meticulous planning all contributed to a string of Australian victories along the Somme in the latter part of 1918. The element of surprise meant that the Battle of Hamel was over in just 90 minutes!

In all the war, the Australians fought no more finished and successful fight than the attack at Hamel. The Corps command gave much of the credit for that success to the airmen. It is not too much to say that Hamel first showed many soldiers a vision of the days to come when battles might be directed chiefly from the skies. Official History, Vol VIII (Australian Flying Corps), p274.



A mounted John Monash by artist Raymond Ewers (1950) in Melbourne's Kings Domain.

Being a citizen soldier Monash was never fully accepted into the British establishment and even in Australia he received less recognition than he deserved. Unlike Haig in Britain, Monash received no honours nor payments from his own government and he went quietly back to civilian life running the Victorian Electricity Authority. Monash is one of the most underrated great Australians in our history.

Of course his German-Jewish background did not help. I teach my students that anti-Semitism was around in both Australian and European societies long before Adolph Hitler came on the scene.

Historians find a delightful irony here. Part of Nazi propaganda was to say that Germany was 'stabbed in the back' by German Jews in 1918. You could say that in the case of Monash it was the one time Hitler told the truth!

Monash's most enduring memorial is Monash University established in Melbourne in 1961.

The Australian Memorial Park at Le Hamel had its origin way back in the early 1990s when Australian Army Officer, Kevin O'Brien made a documentary on the Battle of Hamel using John Laffin, then resident in France as presenter. Back in Australia O'Brien piloted the memorial idea through the various parts of the defence establishment, not an easy task given the then breakdown in relationships between France and Australia over nuclear testing in the Pacific!



The bugle of Private Abram Unicomb at the old Australian Corps Memorial Park at Le Hamel. Severe weather, building defects and vandalism have not been kind to this memorial. For some years webbing was placed over the panels to stop the black tiles falling off. In 2008 the memorial was completely rebuilt.



The flags of the 5 nations involved in the 1918 Somme offensive were clearly displayed on a windy Anzac Day at Le Hamel

The Australian Corps Memorial Park at Le Hamel was designed by D. M. Taylor Landscape Architects of Sydney and sculptor Colin Anderson. These same architects designed the Kokoda Memorial Walkway in Sydney, certainly one of the finest landscape memorials anywhere in the world. You can see a similarity in the design concepts at both locations.

Both memorials have visitor facilities then paths leading to a semi circular wall of remembrance, the focus of the sacred place. On these walls are etched images taken from photographs from the respective conflicts. Along the paths are 'stations' of information about the role of Australian forces in the area.

The Australian Memorial Park at Le Hamel is the only Australian sacred place to have some visitor friendly features. There is a small picnic area, a toilet block and many explanatory plaques on the actions of the AIF in the region.

10. Heath Cemetery near Harbonnières and Indigenous Australians

Harbonnières is the village where the Australians captured the massive German railway gun, our largest land war trophy in August 1918. The Heath Cemetery is north of the town back on the N29 [D1029]. With over 900 Australian graves the Heath Cemetery is our largest military cemetery in France and our third largest on the Western Front. The cemetery was designed by Sir Reginald Bloomfield, the same architect who designed the Menin Gate in Belgium.

Buried in this cemetery are two Australian Aboriginal soldiers, both of whom were decorated for bravery with the Military Medal. By tragic coincidence they died on the same day, 9 August 1918. 5459 Corporal Harry Thorpe MM of the 7th Battalion and veteran of Pozières had been decorated for bravery the previous year for actions at Broodseinde, Belgium. (*By his splendid example and disregard of all danger he inspired those under him.*) His grave reference is IVJ15.

The second decorated aboriginal soldier is 3603 Private William Reginald Rawlings MM of the 29th Battalion. He was decorated for action at Morlancourt just a few days prior to his death. (*Private Rawlings displayed rare bravery in the performance of his duty killing many of the enemy, brushing aside all opposition and clearing the way effectively for the bombers of his team.*) His grave reference is IA19. His family from Purnim, Victoria chose the inscription *The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away. Deeply regretted.*

There were no Aboriginal officers in the first AIF. Best estimates suggest that around 400 indigenous Australians enlisted in the forces during the First World War. They seem to have been accepted much more readily within the ranks than they were when they returned home to civilian life.

Back home Aborigines, or Indigenous persons as we would say today were referred to as 'abos', a term as derogatory as 'nigger' for American blacks. Aborigines had no citizenship rights and were not counted in the census. Indigenous returned men were frequently refused entry to hotels and were refused most of the repatriation benefits available to white diggers. Some RSL clubs refused membership to Aboriginal diggers.

Only one Great War memorial in Australia (Herberton, Queensland) identifies a serviceman as 'aboriginal'. I direct my students to ask the question: Why was the Aboriginal descriptor added to William Perrott's name? Was it because he was proud of his heritage or was it because the good white folk who built the memorial wanted it known that William Perrott was not one of them? We may be embarrassed about it now but we can't ignore the fact that preserving white Australia was a key war aim according to Prime Minister Billy Hughes.

An ironic twist in the story is that an aboriginal family may well have the distinction of making the largest contribution to Australia's military forces of any family in the nation. The Lovetts were Gunditjmara people from Victoria's western districts. Five Lovett brothers fought in the First World War and five signed up for the Second, as did two female Lovetts, who joined the WAAF in 1941. Subsequent generations of the family have served in Japan (British Commonwealth Occupation Force), Korea, Vietnam and East Timor.

Le P'tit Train de la Haute Somme (The Little Train of the Upper Somme)

If you want to continue to follow in the steps of Monash and the AIF from Hamel you can return to the N29 [D1029] and head straight east following the signs to ST QUENTIN and PÉRONNE. Alternatively it is a pleasant, slow drive on narrow rural access roads along the winding Somme River through tiny villages such as Cerisy, Morcourt, Méricourt and Froissy, all taken by Australian forces in their eastward advance.

At Froissy railway enthusiasts have built up a museum and restored some track of the narrow gauge railway originally developed as part of France's defences in the late 19th century. The system was designed to be easily dismantled and then re-laid as military needs demanded.

The restored track takes you on a very pleasant ride right along the bank of the Somme and the museum has a good collection of locomotives and rolling stock used by the various armies. The place is open on weekends from May to September and during the week as well during July and August. See details at www.appeva.org



Small gauge railway was used extensively by both sides on the Western Front and there were several Light Railway Operating Companies in both Australian and New Zealand forces.

The plaque at left was originally fixed to a steam engine of the New Zealand Railways. Just as streets were named after famous battles so the locomotive was christened PASSCHENDAELE. The plaque is now located at the entrance of the Dunedin Station. It is *IN MEMORY OF THOSE MEMBERS OF THE NEW ZEALAND RAILWAYS WHO FELL IN THE GREAT WAR.* (Photo: Kingsley Sampson)

The longest surviving Western Front digger was a sapper in a railway company. Peter Casserly of Western Australia, who died in June 2005 aged 107 served on the military railways, always a target for long range shells and the occasional air attack. Casserly regarded the war as madness, a senseless waste of good men. He lived a very private life participating in only one Anzac Day march (1920) before he was persuaded to be the honoured guest in the Perth march of 2004.

11. Sport and War – Assevillers New British Cemetery

In both British and Australian culture there has always been a strong connection between sport and war. The same virtues were said to be fostered by both – courage, determination, teamwork, endurance, following the captain, playing by the rules, magnanimity in defeat. The old British quote *Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton* sums up this attitude precisely. Sport was preparation for war and war was a more serious form of sport. Note this example from the *Official History*. *The star airmen of the opposing armies regarded each other with a curious mixture of personal esteem and deadly hostility. The Royal Air Force while thirsting, so to speak, for Richthofen's blood, frequently drank his health at celebration feasts in London. With British men air fighting, though deadly enough, was still in general observance a form of sport. The best German pilots seemed to possess some of the same spirit.* *Official History*, Vol. VIII, pxviii.

In Australian history soldiers and athletes have had an identical role. Their task is to go overseas and bring Australia glory and international recognition. Both groups 'prove us' to the rest of the world. It is significant that at every Olympic Games Australians are obsessed with the medal tally. Often the individual athletes who win the medals get just passing mention while we anxiously count up *our* tally of gold, silver and bronze. The rest of the world cares not a jot how many medals Australia wins but it matters to us. National honour is at stake!

Nations have long used the Olympic Games to make a statement of arrival to the rest of the world. Hitler's 1936 games in Berlin and the Chinese 2008 games in Beijing are stand out examples. Australians see *every* Olympics as an opportunity to make a statement.

The Assevillers New British Cemetery, lying right next to the TGV train tracks contains the only Australian Olympian to die in war. Lieutenant Cecil Healy (grave ref. II F6) of the 19th Battalion had represented Australia and won medals in swimming at the unofficial intercalated Athens games of 1906 and at the Stockholm games of 1912. (He could not afford to go to the London games of 1908!) Healy had toured Europe demonstrating the new 'freestyle' swimming, then known as the 'Australian crawl'.

How to get to the Assevillers New British Cemetery. The cemetery is number 655 in the Commonwealth War Graves Commission's Michelin Road Atlas of War Cemeteries. It lies on the eastern side of the village of Assevillers captured by the 5th Australian Division in August 1918. When heading east from Villers Bretonneux along the N29 [D1029] turn north just before the TGV tracks and the A1/E15 toll road following the sign to ASSEVILLERS. From the cemetery there is a direct route to Péronne via the village of BARLEUX.

PÉRONNE

Péronne is a large town located on the north bank of the River Somme. You would not know that this has been one of the most trashed towns in France. The Spanish destroyed it in the 15th century. It was flattened again in the Franco-Prussian war of 1870. The First World War reduced Péronne to rubble and it was extensively bombed in the Second. Yet now Péronne is a most pleasant place. There is a good range of shops, eating places and hotels plus a couple of camping/caravan parks. My wife had her hair done by a suave young Frenchman in a salon in Péronne. She says it was the most stylish hair job she has ever had. See the site <http://www.ville-peronne.fr> for tourist information. Around Anzac Day the place is festooned with Australian flags and signs welcoming Australian visitors.

12. The Second Australian Division Memorial on Mont Saint-Quentin



On the northern side of Péronne is the high point Mont St-Quentin (not to be confused with the large town of St Quentin some 25 kms to the south east). This strong point was captured by the 2nd Australian Division in September 1918 and today the 2nd Division Memorial stands on the *Avenue des Australiens*, on the northern edge of the town.

Not only is this the only Australian divisional memorial in an urban location, it is the one with the most colourful history and the only one to differ from the standard obelisk style of the other four. Being somewhat independently minded, the 2nd Division rejected the standard design of Talbot Hobbs, raised funds to add to the government grant and commissioned Charles Web-Gilbert to produce a sculpture to commemorate the seizure of the summit. The memorial was finally completed and unveiled in 1925, only a few days before Web-Gilbert's death in Melbourne.

Web-Gilbert's work was certainly the most aggressive commemorative statue made by an Australian – a determined digger standing over and skewering a German eagle with his bayonet! Not surprisingly, when they came through in 1940 the Germans took great exception to the statue and it was removed, never to be seen again.

Perhaps it was fortunate that Web-Gilbert was already in his grave for he would suffer the same indignity again in 1956 when his brilliant Anzac Light Horse Division Memorial in Egypt would be destroyed by a mob during the Suez crisis. Now we only have the Broken Hill 'bomb thrower' as the remaining example of Web-Gilbert's aggressive work.

The present 'at ease' digger with rifle discreetly slung on his shoulder by sculptor Stanley Hammond was placed in position in 1971. The original bas-reliefs by May Butler George remain on the memorial. Copies using the original moulds were made and have been placed outside the Australian War Memorial in Canberra.



Above is the present 2nd Division Memorial in Péronne. At right is the plaster model of Web-Gilbert's original artwork for the top of the 2nd Division Memorial. The model was photographed in the artist's studio in Fitzroy, Melbourne.

Australian War Memorial Negative No H15606

The top photograph on the next page shows one of the bas-reliefs on the 2nd Division Memorial on Mont St-Quentin.



How to get to the 2nd Division Memorial. From the centre of Péronne simply follow the signs to BAPAUME. This will start you on the N17 [D1017] but before the end of the town the memorial is on the left. Advance notice is given with signs MÉMORIAL AUSTRALIEN.

Foch and the Second Division Memorial



If you travel just a few kilometres from the 2nd Division Memorial up the N17 [D1017] towards Bapaume you will come across a large statue of Ferdinand Foch, the French general who unveiled the Australian monument. It is on the left as you pass the village of Bouchavesnes-Bergen.

Foch was made supreme commander of all allied forces in March 1918 and in November of that year he dictated the military terms of the armistice and received the German plenipotentiaries in the railway carriage at Compiègne.

In the ranks of French generals of great renown, Foch is right up there with the greats: Charlemagne, Joan of Arc, Napoleon, de Gaulle and LeClerc. The statue shown at left, by artist Firmin Michelet stands where Foch, then commander of French forces faced the Germans during the Battle of the Somme in 1916. The statue was unveiled by Foch himself in 1926 and refurbished in 1996.

There are a number statues in France honouring Foch (Paris, Compiègne, Cassel) and yet another over in Britain. In London's Grosvenor Gardens, just a stone's throw from Victoria Station sits a mounted Foch with the inscription: *I AM CONSCIOUS OF HAVING SERVED ENGLAND AS I SERVED MY OWN COUNTRY.*

Foch had a very high opinion of the Australian fighting forces. As well as unveiling the 2nd Division Memorial in 1925 he was present at the unveiling of the Australian and New Zealand commemorative tablets in Amiens Cathedral in 1920, making a speech praising the Anzac forces.

After the war the citizens of Bergen in Sweden adopted the completely flattened village of Bouchavesnes and contributed much to rebuilding. Hence the hyphenated name. One of Bergen's wealthy citizens was Norwegian ship owner and industrialist Wallem Haackon. He paid for the statue of Foch.

Continuing up the N17 [D1017 then D917] following the signs to BAPAUME you will come to Rancourt, the village with the sad distinction of having a tri-nation of military cemeteries in its area – French, German and British.

**HOMMAGE
AU MARÉCHAL FOCH
Commandment en chef
DES ARMÉES ALLIÉES
DEFENSER et LIBÉRATEUR
de la VILLE d'AMIENS
GUERRE 1914-1918**

-
You don't have to know much French to read this tribute to Foch on a marble tablet in Amiens Cathedral.

13. Historial de La Grande Guerre – History of the Great War

(Musée international et culturel de la Première Guerre mondiale 1914-1918)
(International Cultural Museum of the First World War 1914-1918)



This museum is easy to find. Signs indicating HISTORIAL DE LA GRANDE GUERRE are found well out on all roads leading to Péronne. Just follow them and you will arrive in the *Place André Audinot* where there is parking right outside the old restored fort housing the museum. The web site for the museum www.historial.org is useful for information on a number of significant First World War places in the region. If you visit the town around Anzac Day signs such as the one at left will welcome you. (Photo: Brenda Inglis-Powell)

The Historial de la Grande Guerre is a welcome change from most other Western Front museums. The others all tend to concentrate on the battlefield experience with recreations of trenches and tunnels, examples of weapons, scenes of death and destruction, letters and photos of soldiers and generals, an array of battlefield debris, the horrors of gas, all the gore, blood and mud that was truly the Western Front experience.

The museum in Péronne is a more traditional museum with the major collections arranged chronologically. It covers the wider political and social aspects of the war and sets the war in the overall context of European history. The displays are well organised and they are accompanied by excellent explanatory texts. Whoever wrote the English texts clearly knows both English and History. The Historial de la Grande Guerre is a place where you can actually learn something in a systematic way rather than just being bombarded with dramatic and shocking images.

In the collection is a large, untitled work by William Longstaff, the Australian soldier/artist famous for his *Menin Gate at Midnight*. Longstaff's work in Péronne shows a group of battle weary soldiers in a ruined building facing Christ standing before the cross. At his feet a woman bows weeping. The painting is one of many allegorical and mystical works produced by Longstaff.

Even though he claimed he wasn't a spiritualist, the enormous popularity of Longstaff's works is partly explained by the significant growth of interest in spiritualism among the war generation both in Europe and Australia. Many survivors and relatives attended séances and turned to mediums and psychics in their sorrow and grieving. Books on paranormal experiences sold very well both during and after the war. Even some notable figures in society dabbled in psychic experiences and claimed to communicate with the dead.

One such figure was Conan Doyle, the creator of *Sherlock Holmes*, who lost his son, brother and brother-in-law in the war. He became deeply involved in psychic studies, claimed to have gained solace from communicating with the dead in his own household and in 1919 addressed packed audiences during lecture tours of Australia and the United States.

Rudyard Kipling, who also lost a son in the war (and who spent many fruitless years trying to find his grave) also explored gentle spiritualism and found a ready audience for his stories among the sad and grieving. It was Kipling who gave us the verses of the *Recessional* so widely used in Anzac commemorations in Australia. Kipling also composed the heroic statement on the Menin Gate and chose the phrase from the Apocrypha, *Their name liveth for evermore* now found in almost every Commonwealth war cemetery around the world.

The Historial de la Grande Guerre in Péronne also has a striking work similar in theme to Longstaff's painting – *Le Pensee aux absents* by André Davambez together with several works by the noted German anti-war artist, war veteran Otto von Dix.

14. The Fourth Australian Division Memorial – Bellinglise

The memorial to the Fourth Australian Division is the furthest east and most isolated of all our memorials on the Western Front. From the memorial it is a drive of about an hour back to Villers Bretonneux. The memorial is of the standard Hobbs design so unless you had some ancestor in the division you may not want to make the journey beyond Péronne, especially if you were short on time.



The 4th Division, raised in Egypt in 1916 with some Gallipoli veterans had a higher representation of volunteers from the ‘outer States’ as Charles Bean called them. There were battalions from NSW and Victoria but the bulk of the men were from Queensland, Tasmania, South Australia and Western Australia.

(Note that of the 16 battle sites listed here, 8 did not make it onto the 2003 Australian War Memorial in London.) Albert Jacka VC, one of the most highly decorated Australians of the war was a member of the 4th Division. Jacka was a classic example of that great Aussie tradition of the laconic larrikin. Back in Australia he was feted by the general public as the greatest hero of the AIF. He became Mayor of St Kilda but his business crashed in the great depression and he died in 1932 at the age of only 39. For many years afterwards an annual service of remembrance was held at his graveside in Melbourne Cemetery.



How to get to the Fourth Division Memorial: From Péronne head east following the signs to ST QUENTIN. At the town of VERMAND turn left up the D33 following the signs to BELLENGLISE. Pass under the tollway and the memorial access road is off to the left just before the St Quentin canal. The sign at the turn off is shown above. If you cross the canal and enter the village of Bellinglise you have gone too far. The access road looks like the private entrance to a farm which in fact it is. The dirt track is more than a kilometre in length, reaching a high point overlooking the A26/E17 tollway.

The Americans – over here

If you drive through the village of Bellinglise and on up the N44 [D1044] (towards CAMBRAI) for some 6 kilometres you will come to an American memorial on the Western Front. The USA did not declare war until 6 April 1917 and it was well into 1918 before their presence started to be felt in Europe. It is sometimes forgotten that in 1917 the USA had virtually no army and very few weapons. The British and the French had to supply rifles to the Americans, not the other way around. No American tanks and hardly any aircraft ever reached the Western Front.

If you journey around north-east United States today First World War monuments are hard to find but almost every town has a Civil War memorial. It is clear which conflict means more in national identity.

Several American units trained with the Australians and participated in some of Monash's battles in the Somme. The Americans relieved the Australians just before the armistice.

COMPIÈGNE – CLAIRIÈ DE ARMISTICE (THE GLADE OF THE ARMISTICE)

When travelling between Paris and the Somme you may wish to make a slight detour off the Autoroute du Nord into COMPIÈGNE and then follow the signs to the CLAIRIÈ DE ARMISTICE on the eastern side of the town. This is one of France's most sacred war sites. It was here that the German plenipotentiaries met with General Foch in the general's own dining car railway carriage and agreed to the armistice terms leading to the guns falling silent at 11am on 11 November 1918.

The glade, or clearing as we Australians would say, in the *Forêt de Compiègne* (a large National Park today) was designed by M. Magès and opened on Armistice Day 1922. The centre piece was a large flagstone on which was written in French *Here on 11 November 1918 perished the criminal pride of the German Empire defeated by the free people whom it set out to enslave*. On each side of the circular glade, flagstones between rails indicated the positions of Foch's carriage and the carriage provided for *Les Plenipotentiaires Allemands* (The German officials). The *Alsaciens-Lorrains* monument, featuring a very dead eagle struck down with a sword was erected at the entrance to the avenue leading to the glade.

Foch's carriage, which had been on display for several years in Paris, was brought back to Compiègne in 1927 and a small museum was established around it. A decade on, in 1937 a fine statue of Foch by the sculptor Michelet was erected on the edge of the glade. In the interwar years the Clairiè de Armistice was a most sacred place, visited by millions of French veterans and their families. On every 11 November from 1922 to 1938 a flame was rekindled at the site then carried by relay runners to the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Paris. (Did this ceremony give the Nazis the idea of an Olympic torch and relay which they introduced for the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin?)

When the Germans invaded France in 1940 it was with great glee that they forced the French officials to come to Compiègne and sign the surrender in the same railway carriage in the same position. Then they proceeded to desecrate the site completely. The *Alsaciens-Lorrains* monument was packed up into boxes and sent to Germany, the glade and its flagstones were ripped up and the carriage itself was carted off to Berlin as a war trophy. Only the statue of Foch was left to survey the desolation.

After the Second World War the monument boxes were retrieved and everything was restored except that a substitute carriage of the same class had to stand in for the original which had been destroyed by fire in the forest of Thuringe.

Today the forest glade and the museum incorporating the carriage is a major tourist attraction and sacred site. The glade is open all the time but the museum, like the Louvre in Paris is closed on Tuesdays. There is only a donated slouch hat to suggest that Australia had any part in the Great War and most of the descriptions and explanations in the museum are only in French.

One of the early novels by Australian author Thomas Keneally (of *Schindler's List* fame) is based on the people and events surrounding the signing of the Armistice. *Gossip from the Forest* is a work of fiction but it is absorbing history, a great insight into the bitter end of the Great War.



The loss of the provinces of Alsace and Lorraine to Germany in 1870 was keenly felt by the French. National pride meant that their return was one of the first conditions dictated by Foch into the terms of the armistice. In spite of the depiction of a very dead German eagle, the invaders of 1940 did not destroy this *Alsaciens-Lorrains* monument but packed it all up in boxes and carried it off to Germany.

All this raises a tantalising question: Is Web Gilbert's original statue on the 2nd Australian Division Memorial lying buried in some German warehouse? Nice thought but no evidence has ever turned up.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION ON ROAD TRAVEL IN EUROPE

Getting out of Lille from the car park at Lille Europe railway station (Gare Europe)

EXIT LILLE

- The car hire sign on the station is: LOCATION de VOITURES/Car Hire/Auto verhuur
- Pick up your keys from the relevant car hire company on the station concourse. Enter the car park and descend to level 3 (the lowest level according to the French way of numbering floors underground). Check out your hire car and mentally prepare yourself for driving on the **right**.

To the Front

- Take the SORTIE (Exit) - BOULEVARD PERIPHERIQUE. (Not Sortie – Lille Centre). This will send you straight onto the Boulevard Peripherique heading south.
- Simply follow all the DUNKERQUE and CALAIS signs till you get to SORTIE 8 – exit to ARMENTIERES. No toll is payable.
- Come off the freeway. Ignore the Armentieres – Centre signs. Just keep following the IEPER signs and you will arrive straight into the South (Lille) Gate in the ancient ramparts of the town.
- The entire journey will take about 45 minutes (except in afternoon peak hour traffic).

To Bruges/Brugge from Lille Europe carpark

- Take the SORTIE (Exit) – FIVES ST MAURICE. Head north following the ROUBAIX/TOURCOING signs. Turn left onto the first freeway you come to following the signs to BRUGES. The journey to Bruges takes about 50 minutes. No tolls.

Returning the car to Gare Europe

- Railway station in French is GARE. Hence GARES de LILLE is Railway Stations of Lille.
- Returning back down the A25/E42 freeway from Armentieres, ignore all signs to Lille – Centre.
- Get into the AUTRES DIRECTIONS (Other Directions) lanes with signs to GENT, TORCONING, LILLE, ROBAIX.
- This will swing you around to be heading north onto the Boulevard Peripherique and the lanes to get into are signposted GARES EURO LILLE and GARE LILLE EUROPE.
- Take exit **right** number 5 with the sign GARES, LA MADELEINE ROMARIN and MARCQ en BAROEUL
- Swing around the roundabout all the time following GARES and the signs will take you back to P (parking) GARE EUROPE and then down to level 3.

Don't miss the train

Afternoon peak hour traffic around Lille can be horrendous so give yourself plenty of time to return the car and be on time for the train back to London. It is a good idea to arrive 2 or 3 hours early and spend some time pleasantly wandering around the central squares of Lille only a short distance from Gare Europe. For shopaholics there is the EUROLILLE complex right at the station. Also visit the Citadel where some Australian prisoners of war were held in the First World War. Pick up a map of central Lille from your car hire company.

Global Positioning Systems (GPS)

A GPS device is of limited use when making your way along the Western Front. Like internet route instructions, a car GPS does not always recognise the names of tiny places and any route given may not follow the front line or a particular battle advance line you may be interested in. Even if you have a good GPS the experts say always have paper maps as a back-up. The two IGN 1:100,000 maps you need for the Western Front cost less than \$40 even with postage to Australia.

Money

It is wise to have money or access to funds in 4 basic forms:

Cash: Both France and Belgium use Euros. Have around €100 in cash in a secure purse or wallet before you leave home. Cash is always useful especially when electronic means fail.

Travellers Cheques: These are rather old fashioned these days but it doesn't hurt to have a small amount in Euro travellers' cheques for security and in the event of card failure. Euro travellers' cheques can be cashed at any French Post Office (*La Poste*) with no charge or commission.

Debit card: There are ATMs in all the major towns along the Front giving you access to your funds in Australia. Make sure you have a card with the Maestro/Cirrus label and remember your PIN.

Credit card: Widely accepted for accommodation, petrol, museum entry, parking stations, restaurants and many supermarkets. As in Australia, Mastercard and Visa are more widely accepted than American Express and Diners Club. Some Australian banks offer one account with two cards: one of the more popular cards with one of the more exclusive. I found this combination covered most situations. If, on returning home you find from your credit card statement that you went way over budget, consider Australia's position at the end of the Great War. The *Official History*, Vol. I, p33 informs us: *by 30th June 1920 the war debt of Australia was £385,760,402!* This government debt was about 50% of the Gross Domestic Product of Australia at the time so if your credit card debt is less than 50% of your annual income, consider yourself fortunate!

When to go

July and August is high summer in Europe and it can get very hot. Fine if you want to camp out but the high temperatures and humidity can be exhausting and they dampen your enthusiasm to wander around. One consolation is the long hours of daylight.

July/August is the tourist season when major tourist destinations are wall to wall people. Remember France is the most visited country on earth. Over 60 million people pour across its borders every year and most of them will arrive in summer.

Mid April through May and June is cool but one warm coat is all you need and all indoor places are heated. It is quite pleasant to travel down the Western Front at this time of the year. All the museums and other attractions are open, children are still in school, parking is easy and you won't face long queues any where. I am informed that it is a good time for end-of-season sales of excellent European winter clothes.

Best of all, you can take in the deeply moving Anzac ceremonies in Belgium and France on or near 25 April. September/October is another good window of opportunity. In these months it is not too hot and not yet very cold and all students are back in school!

McDrive and Le Camping

Now here is a research project for my junior history students. How many McDonalds' restaurants are there in the world built on land on which Australian soldiers fought and died? The one in north Péronne on the slopes of Mont St Quentin certainly qualifies while the ones in Glisy, Albert and Amentières come very close. Any others?

Sad to report, the décor theme of the Macas at north Péronne has not a hint of Australia. Only 1950s colours with pictures of gas guzzling American cars with big fins and white wall tyres! Incidentally, they don't use the word *drive-thru* in France. You just follow the signs: *McDrive*.

We English speakers don't seem to mind this American bastardisation of our language but French purists are appalled. The French are very proud of their cultured language. They simply cannot understand how a contradictory and illogical language called English, originally spoken only by a few primitives on some off-shore islands could now be conquering the world!

In spite of their antipathy towards the English language the French do occasionally import an English word and use it in a strange way. It looks odd when you see a road sign and tent symbol indicating *Le Camping*. In English we never use 'camping' as a noun but it is not too hard to work out what the sign means!

Breaking your pilgrimage into two journeys

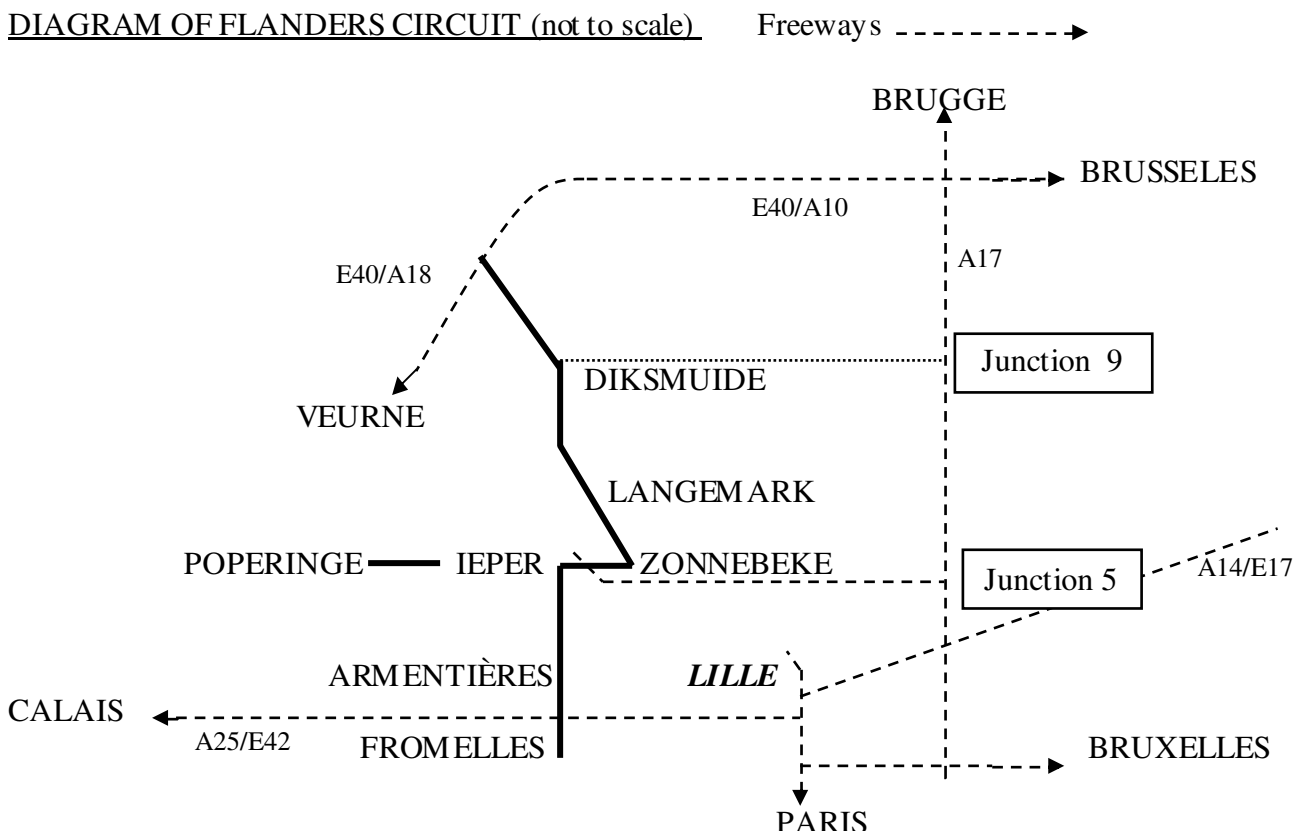
1. Flanders Only

Getting the very early train from St Pancras Station in London and driving from Lille, you can do a very pleasant two day circuit of Flanders. The diagram below shows several possibilities.

- To head straight to Ieper, take the SORTIE (Exit) - BOULEVARD PERIPHERIQUE. (Not Sortie – Lille Centre). This will send you straight onto the Boulevard Peripherique heading south.
- Follow the signs to CALAIS and DUNKEQUE then come off the freeway at junction 8 – ARMENTIERES. Follow the IEPER signs.
- Day 1. Visit the sites in and around POPPERINGE, IEPER and ZONNEBEKE
- (If you are returning south from Brugge, the easiest route is to come back down the A17, come off at junction 9 and journey across to DIKSMUIDE.)
- Overnight in Ieper including the Menin Gate at 8pm.
- Day 2: Visit further sites of interest then head south through WIJSCHATE, MESEN, PLOEGSTEERT, ARMENTIÈRES and FROMELLES.
- Depending on how much time you have left you could journey as far south as Vimy Ridge.
- Back to Lille, return the car to *P Gare Europe* and catch the train back to London. If you have some spare time you can enjoy excellent cafes in Lille or wander through the parks and ponds around the Citadel.

This circuit could also be done out of Paris. It is a long drive to Lille and mostly tollways so the train to Lille (1 hour from Paris by TGV to Gare Lille Flanders) is recommended.

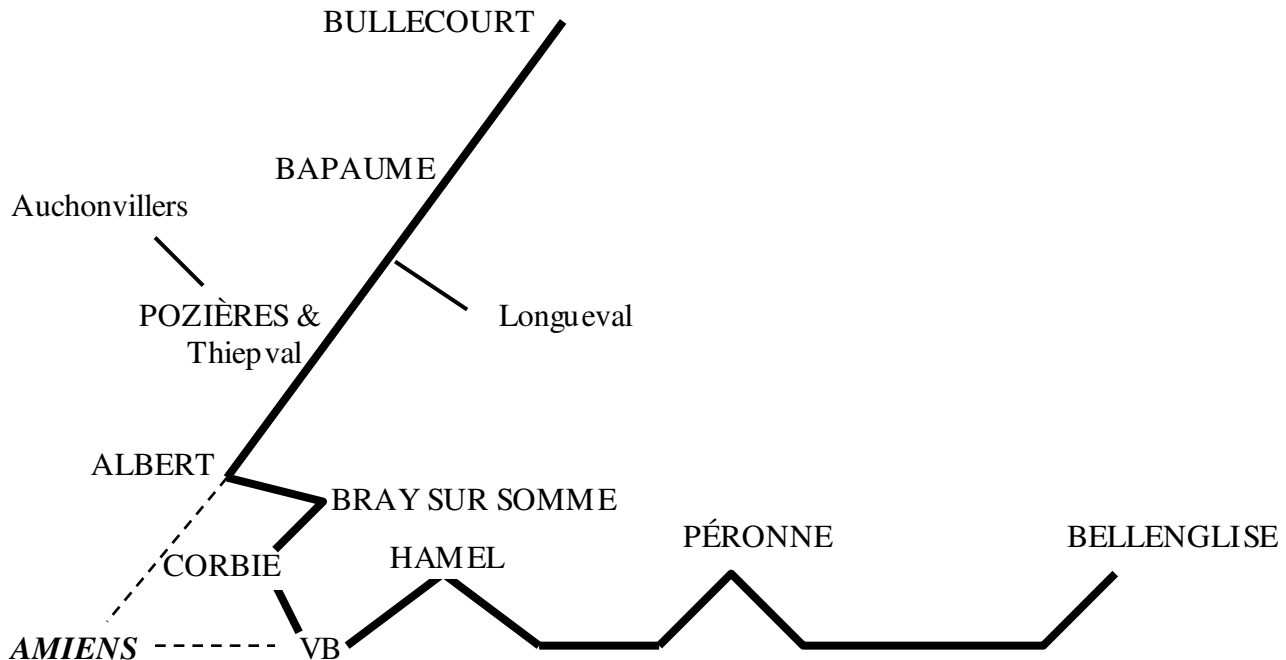
DIAGRAM OF FLANDERS CIRCUIT (not to scale)



2. Somme Only

As the Somme battlefields are only two hours drive north of Paris they are most conveniently visited going to or coming from the French capital. However a weekend circuit out of London is quite possible. In this case train from London to Lille and then hiring a car is still the best way to go.

Australia's sacred places in the Somme are conveniently located in a V shaped pattern as shown in the diagram below.



- From the car park at Gare Europe take the SORTIE (Exit) - BOULEVARD PERIPHERIQUE. (Not Sortie – Lille Centre). This will send you straight onto the Boulevard Peripherique heading south with signs saying PARIS and DUNKERQUE .
- Ignore the CALAIS/DUNKERQUE turn off and keep following the PARIS signs taking you south on the A1/E15 tollway
- Come off the tollway at Junction 14 following the signs to BAPAUME
- Backtrack north up the D956 to BULLECOURT
- Return to Bapaume (or go around the ring road) following the signs to AMIENS and ALBERT down the D929. Drive down to POZIÈRES.
- Next destination is ALBERT then down to BRAY SUR SOMME and back to CORBIE.
- Then follows the easy sequence VILLERS BRETONNEUX, Le HAMEL, PÉRONNE and finally the 4th Division Memorial just before BELLINGLISE.
- Return to Péronne, head up the N17[D1017] past the 2nd Australian Div Memorial, join the tollway to the north, return car to Gare Europe in Lille and then train back to London.

This circuit of Australian sacred places in the Somme could be done in a weekend but you would have to keep moving and most likely would have to leave out the Fourth Division Memorial. If at all possible take at least three days for this circuit. With more time you could take in more of the local scene, visit several excellent museums, spend a day in the city of Amiens and take a few side trips such as to LONGUEVAL (especially New Zealanders, South Africans and Scots) and to AUCHONVILLERS (British and Canadian Newfoundlanders and anyone else ready to enjoy the delights of an excellent English Tea Room in a picturesque French village).

WEB SITES

There must be hundreds, maybe thousands of web sites dedicated to the First World War (see a massive list at www.worldwar1.nl) and new ones are put up almost daily but surprisingly few are of much help to any Australians wanting to go and tour the Western Front for themselves. The vast majority of sites are military history and only a few concentrate on the memorials and the significant places as they are today. Few have clear maps or any detailed instructions on how to actually drive around France and Belgium. Many of the villages, cemeteries and monuments you will want to see are tiny places scattered way out in the countryside amid a great mesh of narrow, rural roads. You could spend a lifetime researching First World War websites but it would not be much help in actually getting around the Western Front.

Your Family Ancestors and the First World War

Australian War Memorial (awm), Canberra. www.awm.gov.au There is a nominal roll, an embarkation roll, an Honour Roll and a roll of Awards and Medals. Follow the link to the National Archives and you can view the service record of almost every Australian First World War serviceman. Many of the memorial's photographs are available on line.

Department of Veterans Affairs www.westernfront.gov.au This site, launched in 2008 has a comprehensive list of the battles in which Australians fought and some nearby war cemeteries. It has excellent background detail on many Australian sacred places. There are links to Google Maps, multimap and Geoportail but these are only helpful when you are near the site. When it comes to guidance for a pilgrimage there is little to assist you putting the various places together. The site is growing all the time and is starting to include Allied sacred places such as Vimy Ridge.

Australian Department of Veterans Affairs (dva), Canberra www.dva.gov.au The Office of Australian War Graves within the Department has useful information on war cemeteries containing Australians and on overseas war memorials. Go to Commemorations then War Graves.

Commonwealth War Graves Commission based in UK www.cwgc.org Particularly good for background on the hundreds of cemeteries. Use this site to locate the grave (or listing on a Memorial to the Missing) of any soldier killed in the First World War.

Some sites helpful for planning your own trip down the Western Front

Visitor Centre of Ieper. www.ieper.be

Visitor Centre of Zonnebeke. www.zonnebeke.be

Westhoek Region. www.greatwar.be

Westhoek Tourism www.toerismewesthoek.be

Camalou B & B www.camalou.com

Somme Tourist Board, Amiens www.somme-tourisme.com and www.somme-battlefields.com These sites have much information useful for the independent traveller.

Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade www.dfat.gov.au leads you to the sites of the Australian embassies in France and Belgium. These have the details of Anzac commemorations and other events relevant to visiting Australians.

Canadian Department of Veterans Affairs www.vac-acc.gc.ca/remembers Mainly for detail and directions on the Canadian sites: the main one at Vimy Ridge and the Newfoundland one at Beaumont-Hamel. The Newfoundland site actually isn't in the village of Beaumont-Hamel but is just beyond another village called Hamel, north west of Pozières on the way to Auchonvillers.

<http://hamelfriends.free.fr> This is an informative site for visiting Le Hamel and the Australian Corps Memorial Park. Extensive information on the town, the memorial and the close Australian connection. Good maps. Site is run by Nicolas Goret, a French teacher of History and Geography.

BOOKLETS - Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA)

In recent years the Department of Veterans Affairs in Canberra has been turning out excellent educational material on Australia's war history and commemoration. When you purchase the Michelin Atlas get them to send you the three DVA booklets:

- Guide to Australian Memorials on the Western Front, in France and Belgium
- The Australian Memorial Park, Fromelles
- The Australian National Memorial, Villers Bretonneux

These are excellent short summaries of various Australian sacred places. The maps however are very general and are of little use when you are out there on the road in unfamiliar territory. Also they only cover sites for which the War Graves Commission is responsible. There are many other interesting places you will want to visit such as museums and the monuments of other nations.

BOOKS – The Classics

Out of the thousands upon thousands of books that have been written about the First World War, a few have stood the test of time to be acclaimed as classics of English literature. They get to the tortured soul of the matter and were written by people who were there.

All Quiet on the Western Front by Erich Maria Remarque. Based on the author's own experiences, *All Quiet on the Western Front* is one of the greatest works of fiction to come out of the war. Significantly the book was banned in Australia for many years as it was deemed to be anti-war and unpatriotic. For the same reasons the Nazis didn't like it either! Forget the movie and the dozens of web sites. Just read the book. It is not very long. You could finish it before your plane reaches Singapore.

Storm of Steel by Great War officer Ernst Jünger is another classic from the German side.

Good Bye to All That by Robert Graves. This powerful autobiography from the British side is regarded by many to be the finest memoir of the war. Robert Graves went on to a distinguished academic and literary career. He lived most of his long life in exile in Spain.

Testament of Youth by Vera Brittain. In this great work of literature Vera Brittain laments her lost generation. The author went on to be a life-long peace activist. Her daughter, Shirley Williams served as a cabinet minister in the British Parliament.

PACKAGE TOURS

Finding out things for yourself and taking all the surprises that come is half the fun of travel in Europe. You get to learn local customs and meet interesting local people. You have delightful experiences of discovery. The journey becomes as rewarding as the destination. By travelling independently you can see far more at a fraction of the cost and you will go home with a much more comprehensive experience of the Western Front.

For those more comfortable with fixed itineraries a search on the internet will throw up many Battlefield Tour companies but not all know much about Australian places and their significance. Also decide whether you really are interested in going over old battlefields with all the details of troop movements and arcs of fire or whether you are more interested in the present day attractions in the area. Tours can also be arranged at the respective tourist bureau.

FLANDERS

- Visitors Centre of Ieper www.ieper.be and Camalou B&B www.camalou.com For those without a vehicle these places will organise pick up at Ieper railway station.

THE SOMME

- Somme Tourist Board at 21 rue Ernest-Cauvin, Amiens www.somme-tourisme.com and various private companies. Usually Amiens railway station is the pick-up point.

SACRED PLACES IN BRITAIN

A further advantage (of the Western Front), unheard of in Gallipoli, was that of periodic leave - at about yearly intervals - to Great Britain. This home of most of their ancestors, to which nearly all Australians had longed to make a pilgrimage, was now only seventy miles behind them. Bean, Anzac to Amiens, p203.

Thousands of Australians visit Britain every year for Britain is the ancestral homeland for the overwhelming majority of the Australian population. Even though the United Kingdom is half a world away, only New Zealand outranks it as a destination for Australian travellers. In addition to the tourists there are somewhere around a quarter of a million Australians living and working in the UK at any given time either as temporary workers or as part of the long established Australian expatriate community.

Britain is the home of Australian language, culture, religion, politics and law. The vast majority of place names in Australia are of British origin. Australian architecture, education systems, dress and sport are all unmistakably British. In spite of the evolution of a recognisable Australian identity and in spite of waves of multiculturalism over the years, Australia remains overwhelmingly a British country in culture, much more so than its distant cousins Canada and the United States. The Union Jack is still on our flag and the Queen of England is still a much respected Queen of Australia. Indeed, all Australians have a day off work each year to celebrate the monarch's birthday. The unfortunate British are not so lucky.

Best of all for a motoring holiday, the Brits drive on the same side of the road as we do. Motoring around Britain is very easy (well, outside large cities that is) and a great experience of discovery. Destinations are well signposted, major tourist towns have park & ride facilities, there is an abundance of accommodation at all price levels, route numbers are clearly shown and, unlike on the continent, the numbers of the routes coming up are shown in brackets. Petrol is sold in metric litres (but road distances are still in imperial miles). Most motorways in the UK are free and the locals speak some form of English. Well, in some places such as Scotland, Wales, Ireland and the north of England, you may have to listen twice to figure out the meaning but the experience will teach you how incomprehensible the Australian drawl is to foreigners!

For Australians planning their own holiday, www.i-uk.com, www.britaus.net and www.visitbritain.com are good places to start.

There are quite a few Australian sacred places in Britain associated with the First World War. Over 2,000 Australians involved in the Great War lie buried in dozens of cemeteries right across Britain, some as far north as Aberdeen in Scotland and there are numerous monuments commemorating various aspects of Australia's sacrifice for Britain in the 'War To End All Wars'. Fortunately for the present day traveller most of our sacred places are clustered in just two areas:

- in the City of Westminster within London and
- on the Salisbury Plain in Wiltshire.

Our sacred places can be easily incorporated into your itinerary of visits to well known tourist attractions and to places of great historical significance. As on the Western Front you need your own wheels to get to most of Australia's sacred places outside London.

If you want to camp out and do a lot of outdoors activity then the high summer of June, July and August is recommended but if you want to avoid baking heat (yes, it can get mighty hot in summer in Europe), there is a lot to recommend the early spring time of April and May. Sure it is cool outside but houses, museums, theatres, galleries, cathedrals and trains are all well heated and you can enjoy all the attractions before the ravenous hordes of tourists descend on the place.

Moving around in the off season is so much easier. You can get better deals on accommodation and you need much less luggage than you do for the long sweaty days of summer. With trees bare of leaves and crops in early stages, you can see much more of the landscape as you drive from place to place. Best of all, you can be on the Western Front to take in the deeply moving Anzac ceremonies in Belgium and France.

COMMEMORATION OF AUSTRALIAN FIRST WORLD WAR CASUALTIES IN BRITAIN

Cemeteries – Brookwood

The deaths of thousands of Australian service personnel in Britain during and immediately after the Great War had a number of causes. Many died of wounds or gassing sustained on the Western Front. Some died of infections or of the now easily treated conditions such as influenza, pneumonia and appendicitis. A few died in accidents while in training, especially in the fledgling flying corps and many of the later ones succumbed to the epidemic of Spanish flu that swept the world in 1918-19. A few of our war graves in Britain contain older men who were tradesmen or munitions workers and who died of natural causes or in accidents while on duty in England. There are also graves of a few service women, mainly nurses who died while on duty in Britain or when serving in the field hospitals in France.

The largest Commonwealth military cemetery in Britain is **Brookwood**, south west of London just a few kilometres beyond the M25 ring road. It has over 5,000 burials, almost half of which are Canadians from the Second World War. Brookwood is also Australia's largest military cemetery in Britain: 352 burials from the First World War and 95 from the Second World War - grouped together in two plots. New Zealand also has a large plot – 148 from WW I and 82 from WW II.



The cemetery contains striking memorials and distinctive grave plots for several allied nations plus the graves of some German POWs. The fine Brookwood Memorial lists nearly 3,500 Missing of the Second World War but only one of these is Australian.

Certainly you would not want to spend much of your holiday in Britain wandering around cemeteries but a quick detour to Brookwood to pay your respects and observe the beautifully maintained gardens and the fine architecture of various monuments is certainly worthwhile.

My British hosts were amazed that such a beautiful cemetery existed in the UK. Ordinary cemeteries in Britain are not always maintained and can be quite a jungle of weeds, vines and dense vegetation. Take for example the Abney Park Cemetery in London (where there is just one Australian First World War grave). This cemetery is such a jungle that they have a sign at the entrance saying the cemetery is an urban oasis protecting endangered species and enhancing biodiversity! It is not a place to go on your own.

How to get to Brookwood Military Cemetery: While heading south-west out of London down the M3 to the south coast, come off at Junction 3, the first exit beyond the M25 London Ring Road. The exit is clearly marked A322 and BAGSHOT. This is the same exit you will take if you are taking the grandkids to Legoland or you want to be seen at Royal Ascot. Off the motorway turn south (away from Bagshot) down the A322 for some 7 km following the signs to KNAPHILL, GUILFORD and BROOKWOOD. Before you cross the railway line, turn right into Connaught St and the Commonwealth War Graves Commission signs (as shown above) will direct you around, under the railway to the cemetery. There is also a train service from Waterloo station.

The Missing

In addition to those buried in cemeteries there are several hundred First World War Australian casualties whose bodies were never found or who were buried at sea. These are commemorated on several **Memorials to the Missing** in Britain. These soldiers, sailors and airmen perished away from the Western Front and therefore are not listed among the missing on the Menin Gate, the Australian National Memorial at Villers Bretonneux or the wall of the VC Corner Cemetery at Fromelles.

For example, on the **Plymouth Naval Memorial** for those lost at sea, 74 Australians from the First World War are listed including 34 who would be about the first casualties suffered by Australia in the conflict. The 34 *drowned in accidental loss of vessel near New Guinea, 14 September 1914* aboard the submarine AE1, part of the Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force sent to seize the German colony of New Guinea. The loss occurred just six weeks after the declaration of war.

There are five Australians listed from H.M.A.S. Tingira. Since the ship was a naval training vessel for boys anchored in Sydney's Rose Bay from 1912 to 1927, the five Tingira boys are the only servicemen with their names inscribed on an overseas memorial yet they never left Australia.

One was Boy 2nd class John Eden McPherson who accidentally drowned on 16 March 1919 age 14. We cannot know with certainty because a number of diggers put their age up on enlistment but at 14 McPherson could well be the youngest Australian service casualty of the First World War. In total some 1500 boys who trained on the Tingira served with the fleet during the war.

The **Hollybrook Memorial** at Southampton lists those soldiers who died in international waters and were buried at sea. 162 Australians from the First World War are listed here, almost all having died from sickness or wounds.

Just up from the entrance plaza of the Tower of London is the **Tower Hill Memorial** (one of many memorials designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens, architect for our National Memorial at Villers Bretonneux). The Tower Hill Memorial honours members of the Merchant Navy and Fishing Fleets who perished from enemy action in both world wars. Three members of the Australian Mercantile Service are listed for the Great War, all having drowned as a result of attacks by enemy submarines.

The Lonely Anzac at Peterborough

In many cases there is only one Australian from the First World War in a given cemetery. This is usually because British families whose loved ones died in Britain were permitted to take the body for burial in a graveyard close to the family home town or village. Given that many Australians of the AIF had immediate family members still in the UK, the geographic dispersal of Australian war graves in Britain is not surprising. A special example is the *Lonely Anzac* at Peterborough.

Many Australian travellers make a visit to the great university town of Cambridge (where those Aussie expatriate stirrers Germaine Greer and Clive James live). A little further north is Peterborough where, every Anzac Day locals honour Sergeant Thomas Hunter from Kurri Kurri in the Hunter Valley of New South Wales.

Sergeant Hunter had emigrated to Australia from the north of England about the turn of the century. He worked in mines at Broken Hill and Kurri Kurri then joined the AIF becoming one of the first to land at Gallipoli. He was severely wounded on the Western Front and was being transported on a hospital train heading for Hartlepool. His condition deteriorated and he was taken off at Peterborough where he died on 31 July 1916.

By public subscription, the locals erected a large headstone on his grave.



IN GRATITUDE
TO A LONELY ANZAC
SGT HUNTER
10TH AUSTRALIAN CORPS
OF KURRI KURRI NSW.
MORTALLY WOUNDED IN FRANCE
FIGHTING FOR THE ALLIES.
DIED IN THIS CITY
31ST JULY 1916, AGED 36,
BORN AT NEWCASTLE, ENGLAND.

Inscription on the grave of Sergeant Hunter, Peterborough (Photo: John Harvey)

SACRED PLACES IN LONDON

*At about 4.00 pm the hospital ship tied up at a wharf in Southampton. How we looked forward to being amongst people who spoke our own language! Hearts beat fast as the gangways were lowered ... A secret hope of long standing – that we might one day see England – was realised at last. Hartnett, *Over the Top*, p62.*

Australians visiting London today continue to enjoy the places and sites much frequented by members of the AIF: The Thames, Trafalgar Square, Westminster Abbey, Houses of Parliament, Whitehall, The Strand, Hyde Park, the Royal Albert Hall, Buckingham Palace, Piccadilly Circus, Oxford St, Soho, St Paul's, the Tower of London and much, much more. Add on attractions established in more recent times and the list of things to do and see in London is almost endless. You have to be selective. Checking out a few of Australia's sacred places will make your time in London just a little more memorable.

What we Australians call London is a large urban agglomeration of cities, towns, villages, parishes and hamlets extending over much the same area as Sydney yet containing three times the population. The British generally do not use the word 'suburb' as we do but the higher density of population in the 'suburbs' explains why London can afford a public transport system so much better than ours!

Check it all out at the transport for London website www.tfl.gov.uk The flat rate day BUS PASS (purchased at almost any newsagent or corner shop) is the best value. Travel is unlimited on the red buses and you can start as early in the day as you like. By contrast the bus/tube TRAVEL PASSES get dearer the further you are away from central London (there are 6 zones) and they are only relatively cheap after 9.30am.

All the locals in London pay their fares with funds stored up on OYSTER CARDS. (On rail or the tube you pay according to distance travelled but on the bus it is one standard charge per journey, no matter what the distance. Also there is a daily cap on bus fares. Only a certain amount will be deducted from your Oyster Card no matter how many bus journeys you take.) The tube is certainly the quick way to get around but you don't see much underground and with the congestion tax on cars in the centre of London, getting around on buses is quicker than it used to be. Moreover London is not a city of skyscrapers. As in Paris the best view is from the pavements. I suggest you get out and walk.

There are two distinct types of Australians in London: The well-heeled and affluent and the proletariat working class. The affluent ones are often found in newly gentrified suburbs in the inner east. They are mainly high income earning professionals, many in senior executive positions with global companies. These Australians tend to keep quiet about their colonial origins for they find the old Aussie stereotype exemplified by Kath and Kim or Crocodile Dundee to be downright embarrassing. They work on removing the harsh nasal accent from their speech so they won't be identified as simple minded beer drinking barbarians from a cultural wasteland on the other side of the earth, a view of Australia not uncommon in Britain. Comedian Barry Humphries knew he would get a laugh from his British audience when he quipped *Australia is the Brisbane of the world*.

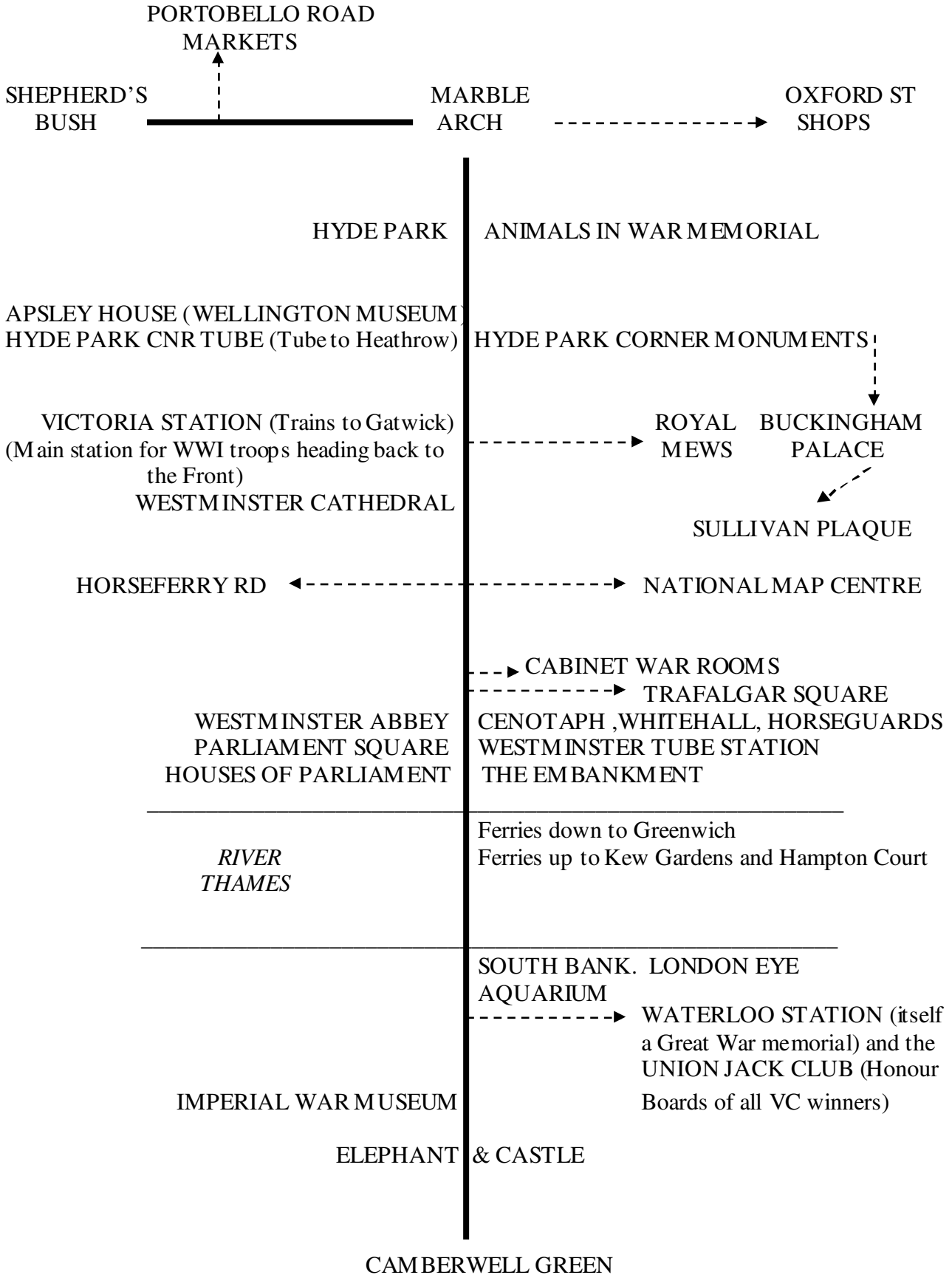
More towards the west of London, around traditional Aussie haunts such as Earl's Court and Shepherd's Bush you find Australian backpackers and younger short term travellers, many of whom take up part time jobs courtesy of ancestry visas. These are the true cultural descendents of the larrikins of the AIF. They are there in London to see the world and have fun. Their earnings from generally low paid temporary jobs are primarily to pay for the next holiday, usually including the running of the bulls at Pamplona and the beer festival in Munich. These Aussies are the ones who have turned the dawn service at Gallipoli into a mass tribal gathering. In Britain these Australians are about as welcome as the Barmy Army is in Australia.

Of course identifying yourself as Australian has certain advantages, especially on the continent. Europeans will be much friendlier and helpful once they know that you are neither English nor American. (This explains why Canadians plaster themselves with their flag!) Sure, they will generally consider you to be an innocent abroad but here the national stereotype of being friendly, open and innocent works in your favour. I always put my Australian flag on the back window shelf when driving around France and Belgium, never when driving around Britain!

THROUGH THE HEART OF WESTMINSTER - BUS ROUTE 148 (24 hr service)

Not to scale

Short Walk ----->



City of Westminster

The City of Westminster is a city within Greater London. Here you will find an abundance of historic buildings, great museums, ancient cathedrals, world class shopping, the palaces of Royalty, the seat of government, tourist attractions, monuments galore and Australia's sacred places.

The Union Jack Club

If you want accommodation in London with a direct link to the AIF then check out the UNION JACK CLUB in Sandell Street which runs off Waterloo Road on the eastern side of Waterloo station. Many members of the AIF stayed at the Union Jack Club when on leave or on special duties in London. This club, originally for serving soldiers below commissioned rank was set up in 1907 by Mrs Ethel McCaul, a Royal Red Cross nurse from the South African War. Mrs McCaul believed that ordinary soldiers should have a clean, secure place to stay when in transit from home barracks to postings in the far flung corners of the empire. It would be a haven from the *temptations and debauchery* of the rough area around Waterloo station at the time.

A new building replaced the old structure in 1975 and the club now provides accommodation of various grades to many Australian tourists connecting with the AIF. Many of the rooms have excellent views over the Thames and central London.

A very English club atmosphere prevails. The Union Jack Club is definitely not back-packer territory. The public foyer is large and comfortable with wood panelled walls hung with various regimental badges and framed photos of some Victoria Cross winners. The foyer also has a souvenir shop and honour boards with a complete listing of all VC winners. The one I was particularly looking for was Lieutenant William Dartnell, an Australian who joined British forces in Africa and won his VC on the border of Kenya (then British) and Tanzania (then German).

Actual membership of the club used to be open only to serving soldiers but now membership is open to serving and former members of a whole range of defence, emergency, public service and security organisations. Indeed, membership of virtually any Australian service organisation usually qualifies for temporary, honorary membership and hence access to reception rooms, a members bar and a small library.

The Union Jack Club is very centrally located. It is an easy walk to the South Bank, London Eye, Westminster Bridge, Houses of Parliament and all the other attractions in Westminster. Check it out at www.ujclub.co.uk The club is only about 100m from Waterloo Station, the departure point of South West Trains for several destinations of interest to Australian travellers:

- Hampton Court. (You may like to go up by train and return by ferry on the River Thames.)
- Windsor Castle and the Air Force Memorial at Runnymede.
- Brookwood War Cemetery – the largest war cemetery in Britain and the cemetery in Britain containing the largest number of Australian service casualties.
- Salisbury – Historic city well known to members of the AIF.
- Portsmouth – Departure point of the First Fleet in 1787, fine maritime museum with Henry VIII's favourite ship, the Mary Rose and great views from the Spinnaker Tower.

The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, Westminster Abbey

Throughout British history it was common practice to bring home kings, generals and conquering heroes and bury them with great ceremony in the sepulchres of the mighty (as we Australians did with General Bridges in 1915). At the same time the lowly common soldier, nameless and forgotten was just left where he lay on the battlefield.

The First World War saw a complete break with this tradition. The slaughter had been on such a scale and the experience for the war generation so traumatic that the common soldier was now elevated to an honoured place. Though the British 'no return of bodies from the battlefield' policy remained, all of the fallen, whatever their rank, would be honoured with a military burial and a standard headstone containing name, rank and unit. Moreover the cemeteries created would be maintained in perpetuity as those who lay therein would be remembered for ever more.

British chaplain the Reverend David Railton (whose father had been one of the founders of The Salvation Army) drew attention to the vast numbers of fallen whose bodies were never found or

who could not be identified. These, he suggested should have a place in Westminster Abbey, the abbey of kings.

Thus an unidentified British soldier was reverently brought back in solemn procession across France and Britain. The body was placed in a 16th century patterned oak coffin made from a tree grown in Hampton Court. On the coffin lay a sword from the Crusades. The tomb was unveiled in Westminster Abbey by King George V on Armistice Day 1920.

Australia did not take up the idea of a tomb of the unknown soldier of its own until 1993 when the remains of an unknown Australian soldier were brought back from the Adelaide War Cemetery in Villers Bretonneux in France and buried in the Australian War Memorial in Canberra. Up to that time we had been quite content to have the Westminster Abbey Unknown British Soldier as representing our own unknown dead. The inevitable question arises from my students. Why did we take 73 years to get around to it? New Zealand took even longer. Their Unknown Soldier was brought back in 2004.

As with other major tourist attractions in London such as the Tower, St Paul's and Hampton Court, there is a substantial charge to get into Westminster Abbey. Fortunately the great museums of London including the Imperial War Museum are free of charge.

The Cenotaph in Whitehall



The distinguished architect Sir Edwin Lutyens designed a temporary cenotaph (an empty tomb) in Whitehall as the focus of saluting for the great victory parade in London in 1919, a parade in which a large number of diggers awaiting repatriation to Australia took part. The cenotaph was such a striking feature and the concept of a cenotaph as a focus for remembering fallen comrades so popular that Lutyens was commissioned to turn his structure into a permanent one of stone.

Lutyens' cenotaph is a work of genius largely because of its simplicity. It says so much because it says so little. It is a form on which anyone could inscribe his or her own thoughts, reveries, sadnesses ... Lutyens' cenotaph leapt over the mundane into myth, and by doing so provided a focus for collective mourning of a kind unknown before or since in Britain.

Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning*, p104.

Hitherto kings, emperors and conquering generals took the salute from triumphant returned soldiers. Now sober honouring of those who paid the supreme sacrifice seemed to be the more appropriate response to the horrific slaughter of the Great War.

What is known in Australia as the 'RSL salute', the tradition of veterans placing their right hand over their medals during a march past or wreath laying ceremony had its origins here in Whitehall. On Armistice Day 1920 the funeral procession accompanying the remains of the 'unknown soldier' halted at the Cenotaph before proceeding to Westminster Abbey. The Regimental Sergeant Major of the Guards Regiment conducting the ceremony decreed that all in the following procession would cover their medals as they passed by signifying that *No matter what honours we may have been awarded, they are as nothing compared with the honour due to those who paid the supreme sacrifice.*

Cenotaphs in Sydney, Singapore and Hong Kong

A number of communities around the world took up the idea of a cenotaph as the focal point for military commemorative events. Sydney is the most notable Australian example. Its cenotaph, by Sir Bertram MacKenna, was unveiled in the city's Martin Place in 1927 and like the one in London has been the location of almost every veteran commemorative event ever since. Apart from the Menin Gate in Ieper where it is played every night, few places on earth outside military barracks have heard the Last Post as often as Sydney's Martin Place.

*GREATER LOVE HATH NO MAN THAN THIS,
THAT A MAN LAY DOWN HIS LIFE FOR HIS FRIENDS.*

These words, from John 15:13 are found on many memorials around the world but only on the Singapore cenotaph, shown at left, will you find it in Arabic script, Devanagari script, Chinese script and Roman alphabet English!



Singapore must have been quite multicultural back then when the island was a jewel in the British Crown!

Singapore provided many members of the Chinese Labour Corps that did much manual work along the Western Front including the gruesome task of collecting bodies and establishing many of the Commonwealth War Cemeteries we see today. At the end of the war there were over 100,000 members of the Chinese Labour Corps working on the Western Front.

On the right is a replica of Lutyens's London cenotaph found in fast rising Hong Kong.



Haig and Horses



Just up from the Cenotaph in London's Whitehall is the statue of *FIELD MARSHALL EARL HAIG, COMMANDER OF THE BRITISH ARMIES IN FRANCE*

Haig, a Scot, remains a controversial figure. He was devoutly religious claiming divine assistance but his critics were many. They claimed that by persisting with futile mass attacks, Haig was responsible for a greater loss of his own men (including many Australians) than any general in all of world history. Haig rarely visited the Front and he had a fairly low opinion of colonial troops, including Australians.

When so called victory finally came, Haig was made an Earl and was awarded a staggering £100,000 by a grateful British Parliament.

Several statues of Haig were erected in Britain including one at his alma mater, Clifford College in Bristol. Many years later another pupil of the school, John Cleese enraged the headmaster with a schoolboy prank. He painted footprints from the statue of Haig to the nearest lavatory. The diggers of the AIF, who had no love for the aloof general would have roared with laughter.

Statues of leaders on horseback were popular before the First World War as the cavalry was considered to be the elite corps. The medieval knights of old were of far higher rank and status than the common foot soldier. In the 1914-1918 conflict however, horses proved to be fairly useless for actual fighting in the age of machine gun and barbed wire. The British maintained around 100,000 horses in France and Belgium throughout the war but few were ever used in mounted attacks.



Very few Great War memorials in either Australia or Britain feature horses. There is a mounted Sir John Monash in Melbourne's Kings Domain and over in Albany, Western Australia there is the magnificent horse statue commemorating the role of the Light Horse units in the First World War. With the Light Horse being such a famous force, it is surprising that there are so few equine commemorative monuments in Australia. In 2005 Sydney gave the Light Horse some belated recognition. A massive motorway interchange in the city's west, built on land where the Light Horse had trained was designated the *Light Horse Interchange* and along each axis is a work of art symbolising the plumes worn in the slouch hats of the Light Horsemen.

A fine British example of the use of a horse on a First World War memorial is the one shown here in the town of Paisley in Scotland. This magnificent sculpture is of a medieval knight in full armour surrounded by four infantrymen.

Other Animals

Just down from London's Marble Arch is the unique ANIMALS IN WAR MEMORIAL. The inscription reads: *This monument is dedicated to all the animals that served and died alongside British and Allied Forces in wars and campaigns throughout time.* The memorial was designed by David Backhouse and unveiled by Princess Anne in 2004.

Simpson and his donkey, with statues outside the Melbourne Shrine and outside the Australian War Memorial in Canberra would be the most widely known Australian use of an animal in a statue related to war but these statues are not dedicated to the donkey. Rather, as the inscription on the Melbourne statue says, *In commemoration of the valour and compassion of the Australian soldier.*

Over in France a number of French First World War memorials (including the one at Pozières) have a rooster, the national animal of France standing atop an obelisk representing a new day, new life and resurrection. Also in France, in the city of Lille is a large monument remembering the corps of pigeons that, in the days before wireless played a very significant role in communication in the Great War. Several of their owners were executed by the Germans for communicating with the enemy. Carrier pigeons were used by many of the signals units of the AIF.



If you know anything about rugby or have ever been to London's Trafalgar Square, you will know that Britain uses lions extensively in sport and commemorative art to express national identity. Lions feature on a number of British war memorials such as this one in the centre of Glasgow. (Is it only me or is this lion straight out of *The Lion King*?) This memorial exalts in the fact that the city raised 200,000 men to serve in the First World War. Stone lions also guard the British Ploegsteert Memorial on the Western Front.

Significantly, kangaroos, emus, koalas and other uniquely Australian animals are rarely found on our Great War memorials. Clearly, at the time of post war memorial building a strong Australian national identity was still in the making.

HYDE PARK CORNER - Britain's Best Collection of Controversial Monuments

The Australian War Memorial - Hyde Park Corner.

The Australian War Memorial in London was unveiled on Remembrance Day 2003 by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. It is a late memorial in the heart of the empire for which thousands of Australian sons and some daughters had given their lives. The official website www.awmlondon.gov.au does not mention that it cost Australian taxpayers at least nine million dollars!



A boomerang? A crocodile? A traffic barrier? No. It is meant to symbolise the sweeping expanse of the Australian landscape and the openness of its people.

The Australian War Memorial in London from the top of the Wellington Arch

2003? Why so late? inquired one of my more astute students. *It has been over 50 years since any Australian died fighting for the British Empire. Why did they take so long?* Well, yes, a difficult question. I suggest to my students that there are really two factors to be considered. One is simple nostalgia and the other is the pushing of a political agenda by politicians.

On the one hand we put up memorials to remember past events and close relationships in much the same way as we get more nostalgic for our old school or the home we grew up in many years after we have left. The older we get the more we value our roots and the more we treasure tangible reminders of a long distant past. This perhaps explains why we took so long. We didn't think much about the relationship at the time but now that the years have rolled on and the relationship is not what it once was, our thoughts turn to memorials. Not till we get older do we care much for the photos of our youth in the family album!

On the other hand the belated decision to build a memorial in London may have more to do with contemporary social trends in Australia and the way in which conservative politicians associate closely with Anzac traditions, anticipating that they will benefit from the reflected glory. The London project may be seen as just one way in which conservative politicians asserted 'traditional Anglo values' such as rule Britannia, white Australia, British heritage, imperial grandeur, colonial fidelity, military glory and Anzac mythology.

In the face of rapid technological change, republicanism, multiculturalism and globalisation the building of the London memorial may be seen as simply another salvo in the 'culture wars' that have raged in Australia over the last decade.

A remarkable example of colonial cringe can be seen in the text at the centre of the memorial:

**WHATEVER BURDEN YOU ARE TO CARRY
WE ALSO WILL SHOULDER THAT BURDEN.
AUSTRALIA – UNITED KINGDOM**

The members of the AIF would have heartily endorsed this statement of imperial devotion but such an open ended commitment from Australia in the early 21st century does seem a bit over the top. Old conservatives in Australia today would proclaim it but I doubt if many of the young Australians I teach would be willing to put their lives on the line for Britain as they did in the Great War.

There is fashion in memorials as there is fashion in anything else. Today memorials are no longer tall and triumphant but low slung and intimate, engaging the ordinary citizen in the experience.

The trend was set by the much acclaimed Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington DC. This memorial, by artist Maya Lin is a low slung triangular wall on which are inscribed the names of the 50,000 Americans who died in that South East Asian conflict. The monument in the American capital stands out on flat, open parkland and is perfectly complemented by the Pool of Remembrance and the haunting statues of the Korean War Memorial.

At first glance our memorial in London appears to follow this trend. Designed by Tonkin Zulaikha Greer Pty Ltd with principal architect Peter Tonkin and artist Janet Laurence, our memorial is also a low slung wall. On the front face are recorded 23,844 Australian place names. These are the homes of Australia's sons and daughters who served their nation in the two world wars. It certainly draws you in. These places are your heart and soul but you would be lucky to find your home town or your ancestor's place of enlistment as the place names are not in alphabetical order, indeed no order at all. To help you out the www.awmlondon.gov.au web site now has a 'Search for your Town' facility showing the location on the wall of a given Australian place. These place names have proved to be a headache for the custodians of the memorial. Only 6 years after construction the memorial had to be closed off for refurbishment as many of the letters were starting to fall off. (I hope they spent some of the \$9 million on structure insurance!)

When surveying the wall those who have seen the American Vietnam monument will notice a major difference between the Australian design and that of Maya Lin. While Maya Lin eliminated all trace of militarism from her work in Washington and carried not a hint of patriotism or imperial grandeur, the design team for our London memorial overprinted, in much larger font size the names of 47 Australian 'Battle Sites'. Here lies another controversy.

Members of my father's old division, the 'silent seventh' are miffed that three of their battles, Gona, Buna and Sanananda are not there while the American battle of Okinawa is included. They claim that the presence of two small Australian navy ships playing a minor role at Okinawa is less worthy of inclusion than their battles in which more of their comrades paid the supreme sacrifice than in any other Second World War battle involving Australians.

Members of the ill fated 8th Division who endured captivity in Changi and along the Burma Railway of Death are disappointed that 'Malaya' is not there. They believe they fought bravely for their country before being ordered to lay down their arms.

Questions may also be asked about some of the First World War selections. Monash's very significant victory at Hamel does not get a mention while Amiens, a city in which no Australian fired a shot is listed. Several of the battles listed around our memorial at Villers Bretonneux do not make it to the London memorial.

The official programme for the 2003 unveiling says that the selection *is not intended to be exhaustive, but rather to reflect the geographic spread of the service*. Well, yes, but by including battles in which our role was minor the memorial greatly exaggerates our role in the overall scheme of things in the two world wars. You have to ruefully admit that exaggeration is something we Australians are apt to do when it comes to stating our importance in the world. The men of the AIF had a reputation for being 'skites' and tellers of 'tall stories'.

Another controversy concerns the location. With a Hyde Park Corner address you might think that our memorial had a prominent place in that famous London Park but no! It is tucked away in a relatively small extension of the park cut off on all four sides by busy city thoroughfares. Worse still, it has been built down in the lowest point of the park so you could mistake it for an oversized grey retaining wall.

Completely overshadowing the Australian War Memorial are other British monuments. In the centre of the area is a huge triumphal arch, originally placed on the site to honour the victorious Duke of Wellington of Waterloo fame. On the western side of the area is a massive monument to the Artillery of the First World War and on the high side, the Machine Gunners 1914-1918 Memorial with

its statue of David. On the highest mound is the New Zealand Memorial. In such a setting the low Australian Memorial down in the hollow is just lost.

Whoever was responsible for the location of our memorial should be court marshalled, clapped into irons and transported to Botany Bay!

How to get to Hyde Park Corner: Hyde Park Corner on the Piccadilly line is the tube station close by. There are many buses passing the site going to and from Victoria Station. The Australian War Memorial is not shown on any of the tourist maps of London but the Wellington Museum (Apsley House) in the south eastern corner of Hyde Park is usually indicated. The Australian War Memorial is in the patch of grass over the road from the Wellington Museum. Head towards the huge triumphal arch. Walk down hill to the lowest point in the park. Eventually you will distinguish the memorial from the backdrop of bitumen and non-descript office buildings.

The Wellington Arch – Hyde Park Corner



While in the area check out the other monuments, all with a history of controversy. None more so than the Wellington Arch. Climb up inside the arch for some views of the London skyline and for the small museum outlining the chequered history of the arch.

Outside there is no indication that this structure was supposed to honour Britain's greatest military leader, the Duke of Wellington. The only plaque tells us that the quadriga surmounting the arch is a *mark of deepest loyalty & respect to his late revered majesty Edward VII by Herbert, First Baron Michelham of Hellingly KCVO.*

Apart from giving his name to that era of seeming innocence immediately prior to the Great War, one wonders what Edward did during his reign (1902-1910) to gain Herbert's adulation. We know that Edward's mistress, Alice Keppel was the great grandmother of Camilla Parker Bowles so who knows, one day we might thank Edward for putting a Queen Camilla on the throne of England!

The Artillery Memorial – Hyde Park Corner

This memorial, by English sculptor C. Sargeant Jagger is one of the more brutish in Britain. It was very controversial at the time of its unveiling in 1925 for on one end it has the statue of a dead Tommy. Around the fallen soldier is the inscription:

*HERE WAS A ROYAL FELLOWSHIP OF DEATH.
They will return never more but their glory will abide forever*



Dead warriors were rarely the art theme of war memorials in either Australia or Britain though the naked warrior on his shield by artist Raynor Hoff is the centre piece of the New South Wales Shrine of Remembrance in Sydney's Hyde Park.

If you think you have seen some of the figures on the

Artillery Memorial before you are not wrong. C. S. Jagger produced replicas of *Wipers* and *The Driver* and they were purchased by an Australian trust in 1936. Today they stand back to back adjacent to the Shrine of Remembrance in Melbourne. (My photo collection reveals that the *Wipers* in Melbourne is not quite the same as the *Wipers* in London.)

The Machine Gunners Memorial – Hyde Park Corner



Saul hath slain his thousands but David his tens of thousands

This memorial by artist Francis Derwent Wood was also unveiled in 1925 and caused similar controversy over the appropriateness of the artwork.

We have a black naked statue modelled on an Italian masterpiece, laurel wreaths suggesting heroes of ancient Greece, a text from the Hebrew Scriptures about two ancient Israelite kings, the use of Roman numerals to give the dates, all to commemorate *the glorious heroes of the machine gun corps who fell in the Great War*.

You try and figure out all that symbolism!

The Emperor Napoleon in the buff – Hyde Park Corner

While contemplating naked warriors cross over to Hyde Park and **Apsley House**, formerly the home of the Duke of Wellington and now a museum displaying various Wellington household treasures. In the stairway is this amazing 3.4m statue of the great French Emperor Napoleon who met his fate at the hands of Wellington at Waterloo in 1815. He is clothed in nothing but a fig leaf as a concession to modesty! Even more amazing is to find out that the statue was commissioned by Napoleon himself! The work entitled *Napoleon as Mars the Peace Maker* was by the Italian sculptor Antonio Canova. It took three years to make and was installed in the Louvre in Paris in 1816.

Evidently it was fashionable for big heads in the 18th century to have a naked statue made of themselves linking them in culture to the classical days of Greece and Rome – *big and heroic like the Farnese Hercules*. The statue here was purchased by the British Government in 1817. (Strange really. Can you imagine the American government paying for a statue of Saddam Hussein or the Australian government purchasing a bust of Ho Chi Minh?)

The New Zealand Memorial – Celebrating a Relationship – Hyde Park Corner

The latest addition to the collection of monuments in Hyde Park Corner is the New Zealand Memorial designed by architect John Hardwick Smith and sculptor Paul Dibble. It was unveiled on 11 November 2006. Referred to by a rude Australian critic as 16 star pickets falling down a slope, the memorial is a focus point for New Zealanders in London. See www.londonMemorial.govt.nz



A comparison of the New Zealand and the Australian memorials reveals much about the contemporary nature of society in both countries. The Australian Memorial is definitely a war monument from a conservative government with a heavy weight of colonial cringe. Names of battle sites dominate the face of the structure, the sacrifice of Australians for Britain is emphasised and the centre text is an extraordinary statement committing us to further sacrifice and the sharing of Britain's burdens. A perusal of the programme for the official opening in 2003 confirms the theme.

By complete contrast the New Zealand monument does not have war in its title. The whole theme is 'Celebrating a Relationship' and the memorial ranges over trade, immigration, education, sport, language and cultural exchange. The sacrifice of New Zealanders for Britain is but one aspect of the theme.

As I point out to my students, by studying monuments you not only learn about people and events being commemorated but you can also learn a lot about the people who erected the monument.

The contrast between Australian and New Zealand foreign policy in the early 21st century is displayed with great clarity by our London memorials. Worst of all, note the final strategic location: New Zealand is on the high ground while Australia is down in the hollow. We'll never win the Bledisloe Cup now!

The South Asia Memorial – Hyde Park Corner

Immediately adjacent to Hyde Park Corner, on the road called Constitution Hill is the South Asian Memorial unveiled on 6 November 2002 by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II in her jubilee (fiftieth) year. The four stone columns are in memory of 5 million volunteers of India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Bhutan and the Caribbean who supported the British Empire in two World Wars. (Yes I know that the Caribbean is not in South Asia but it has been included on this monument.) Unlike the Australian monument, the South Asia Memorial carries no declaration of continuing imperial fidelity. There is the plain statement: *THE FUTURE IS GREATER THAN OUR PAST.*

As you can see, Hyde Park Corner has plenty of interesting memorials. Now it is time to unwind and have a pleasant wander in Green Park down to Buckingham Palace where many Australians and New Zealanders in the First World War received decorations and honours from the King.

The changing of the guard at Buckingham Palace is one of the most popular tourist attractions in London and you can apply for an invitation to a garden party. The palace itself may be open at times when the Queen is not in residence.

Buckingham Palace - FOR KING

*God save our gracious King
Long live our noble King
God save the King
Send him victorious
Happy and glorious
Long to reign over us
God save the King.*

God save the King was the National Anthem sung by the men of the AIF and it remained Australia's official anthem until 1984. Right up to the 1970s *God save the King* was compulsory at each and every major community gathering: musical concerts, sporting fixtures, cinema shows, school assemblies, parliament sittings, graduation ceremonies, State funerals. Even the circus could not begin until all had risen to their feet and *God save the King* had been played with due dignity!

One of the original verses of Advance Australia Fair reads:

*When gallant Cook from Albion sailed to trace wide oceans' shores
True British courage drew him on till he landed on our shore.
And there he raised old England's flag the standard of the brave
With all our hearts we love her still, Britannia rules the waves!*

When the song became our anthem in 1984 this verse was dropped. The diggers of the AIF would have sung it with fervour but today such fawning obsequiousness is considered to be just over the top!

It is undoubted that the diggers of the AIF were soldiers of the King and proud of it. Fighting for the King was noble, courageous and virtuous and Australian soldiers knew they were fighting for the King of the greatest empire the world had ever known. They saw themselves as the young lions who leapt to the defence of mother England in her hour of need.

I, (name) swear that I will well and truly serve our Sovereign Lord the King in the Australian Imperial Force from (date) until the end of the War, and for a further period of four months thereafter ... and that I will resist His Majesty's enemies and cause His Majesty's peace to be kept and maintained ... From the Oath of Allegiance signed by all enlisting in the AIF.

Throughout the First World War and right up to his death in 1936, King George V of Britain was extremely popular in Australia. Before he ascended the throne George V made two visits to this country. The first was in 1880 when he and his brother were serving on a British warship while the second was in 1901 when, as the Duke of York and heir to the throne after his father Edward, George opened the first Australian Federal Parliament in Melbourne's grand Exhibition Building. The 36-year old Duke and his wife, Princess Mary of Teck were warmly received by adoring throngs throughout the land. They were the Charles and Diana of that era.

King George V laid the foundation stone of Australia House in London, visited the 3rd Division training on the Salisbury Plain, inspected the Australian Hospital at Harefield, decorated many Australians at Buckingham Palace and on several occasions reviewed Australian troops on the Western Front. On the last occasion he conferred a knighthood on Monash in the grounds of the Chateau de Bertangles.

When Australians in the 1920s so frequently put *For King* on their war memorials they really meant it. Several statues of King George V were cast for erection in Australia – two of the more notable are in Canberra at the Old Parliament House. Inside Kings Hall is a statue of George V, one of three by Australian artist Sir Bertram MacKenna (the other two went to India).

The Kings Hall statue was unveiled by George's second son, also named George and also by then holding the title Duke of York. (Actually his real name was Albert but the grieving Queen Victoria had decreed that no royal was to be called by the same name as her beloved Albert.) The statue was unveiled in 1927 at the opening of the 'temporary' Parliament House. No one knew it at the time but this second son would become King George VI when his older brother Edward abdicated the throne to marry the American divorcee Wallis Simpson. Nor was anyone to know that his wife would become the Queen Mother and live to the great age of 101!

Outside the old Parliament House in Canberra is a mounted George V and an accompanying St George of dragon fame. This was done by artist Raynor Hoff and completed by J E Moorefield after Hoff's death in 1937. (Hoff also produced the artwork for Sydney's Shrine of Remembrance and the lion logo used ever since by car maker General Motors Holden.)

King George V, King of Britain during the First World War looks over to the British Houses of Parliament from his plinth outside Westminster Abbey.

In 1915, in order to set the example of self sacrifice King George announced that he would abstain from the consumption of alcohol for the duration of the war.

This had absolutely no impact on the prodigious consumption of beer by the AIF but it was a great boost to the temperance movement in Australia ultimately leading to the closure of all pubs and bars at 6pm, a shut down which remained in place for over 50 years. Even today the sale of alcohol in Australia is subject to numerous restrictions.

Australian travellers are surprised to see alcohol freely available in ordinary British and French supermarkets.

Even more amazing is to find that in France you can buy grog at petrol stations! No wonder France has a much higher road toll relative to population than does Australia.



Several other memorials to George V are scattered around Australia. There is a mounted George V outside the city hall in Brisbane and a regal George V in Melbourne's King's Domain. My mother reminds me that I, along with a fair proportion of Sydney's population began life in the King George V Memorial Hospital in Newtown.

Sullivan VC plaque

From the front of Buckingham Palace take a short walk down Birdcage Walk to the Wellington Barracks and there you will find a plaque on the barracks fence remembering an Australian, Corporal Arthur ‘Sully’ Sullivan VC who died in the vicinity as the result of being struck by a bicycle in a road accident.

Sullivan was one of two Australians awarded a Victoria Cross *For most conspicuous bravery and devotion to duty* during the British intervention in North Russia in 1919. Sullivan, a bank officer from South Australia enlisted in 1918 and got as far as training in England when the armistice took effect. Discharged from the AIF he joined a British unit sent to assist White Russian forces in their war with the Bolsheviks. The British force was withdrawn in September 1919 and Sullivan returned immediately to Australia where he resumed his career with the National Bank, rising to be branch manager at Casino in northern New South Wales.

In 1937 Sullivan, also president of the local RSL sub branch was chosen to be part of the Australian military delegation for the coronation of King George VI and it was on London’s Birdcage Walk that the tragic accident ended his life.

Australia House London - FOR COUNTRY



GOLDEN THE LINKS

THAT BIND OUR FAR FLUNG EMPIRE

Inscription on the First World War Memorial, Strathfield, Sydney, Australia.

YOU ARE LEAVING HOME TO FIGHT FOR THE SAFETY AND HONOUR OF MY EMPIRE.

Opening sentence of King George V’s personal message to the troops of the British Expeditionary Force, 12 August 1914.

THESE ALSO WILLINGLY SERVED FOR KING AND EMPIRE

Heading on each list of volunteers, War Memorial Arch, Burwood, Sydney, Australia.

ERECTED BY THE PEOPLE OF ECHUCA AND DISTRICT IN GRATEFUL REMEMBRANCE OF THOSE WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES FOR KING AND EMPIRE

Inscription on the Great War Memorial, Echuca, Victoria, Australia.

Several communities in Australia used a globe of the earth to symbolise empire. The memorial at left is in Hervey Bay, Queensland. *This stone was erected by the citizens of Pialba and district in honour of the men who served and fell in the Great War 1914-1918.* Photo: Bruce Domrow

The Commonwealth of Australia had been formed by the federation of the States in 1901. As a distinct political entity it was only in very embryonic form by 1914. People identified themselves first and foremost as *British subjects*. Britain was still ‘home’. There were no separate Australian passports. Australian currency had only recently started circulating and the Australian flag we know today had not yet captured the hearts and minds of the people. The men of the AIF were proudly *British Forces*. Few of their senior officers were Australian born and more often than not our troops carried the Union Jack rather than the blue Australian ensign.

Thus when local committees in Australia put *Country* or *For Country* on their war memorials as they frequently did, it wasn’t an independent Australia they were thinking about. Rather they were acknowledging the British Empire and Australia’s enhanced status within the grand imperial order. It is significant that the word *Australia* is rarely found on our First World War memorials whereas on hundreds the word *Empire* is boldly proclaimed. (The memorial in Sydney’s Double Bay proclaiming

Freedom – Justice – Australia is a rare instance.) Empire really mattered to Australians both before and long after the Great War.

Thus it was that even before they thought about building a Parliament House for themselves, the members of the pre-war fledgling Australian Federal Parliament determined to have an imposing Australia House in London, on The Strand no less, right in the very heart of the grand empire to which they so proudly belonged.

A competition was organised with distinguished Australian artists such as Bertram MacKenna and Arthur Streeton on the selection panel. MacKenna was already well known in the court of King George V. For the coronation in 1910 MacKenna had designed the coronation medal, the currency, the postage stamps and the military medals for the new king. It was MacKenna who designed the Cenotaph in Sydney's Martin Place and crafted the statue of Queen Victoria in Ballarat. In 1920, to honour the Anzacs MacKenna presented a bust of the Roman goddess of war Bellona and today it stands outside the Australian War Memorial in Canberra. Sports buffs will also want to know that MacKenna designed the medals for the 1908 London Olympics. In 1921 MacKenna was knighted, the first Australian artist to be so honoured.

The competition for the design of Australia House was won by the Scottish firm of architects, A Marshall Mackenzie and the foundation stone was duly laid by King George V in 1913. War interrupted construction and the building was not opened until 1918. Again King George V did the honours. (Here is a further indication that his wife the Queen was also very popular with Australians. The foundation stone includes the statement *Her Majesty Queen Mary being present on the occasion.*)

The Australian military presence in London remained concentrated at Horseferry Road until almost all diggers had been repatriated to Australia. The headquarters was then closed and Australia House became the focus for Australians in London. Our High Commission on the Strand was Australia's first diplomatic mission abroad and it is the oldest continually occupied foreign mission in London.

In 1915 the Australian Prime Minister Andrew Fisher resigned to take up the post of High Commissioner in London. It was then far more prestigious to be High Commissioner at the centre of the empire than to be Prime Minister of a tiny federation in one of the remotest corners of the earth!

After the Great War and especially after the Second World War Australia House became a lively contact point for Australian travellers. Its reading room of Australian newspapers was much frequented, a branch of the Commonwealth Bank was on site, a poste restante service operated for Aussie travellers and in the surrounding streets a huge campervan market thrived. Generations of Australians have toured Europe in a campervan bought outside Australia House.

Alas, all these services are now gone, made obsolete by technology, affluence and urban growth. Unless you have lost your passport or want to vote in an Australian election you are not welcome as of old. Our people in London have gone a bit paranoid in recent years so Australia House is all locked up. Even if you are on a Harry Potter pilgrimage you can't get in to see Gringotts Bank, the great banking chamber and vaults where Australia used to keep its gold reserves.

About the only reason for a traveller to visit Australia House today is to admire the fine building and its works of art including MacKenna's *Phoebus driving the Horses of the Sun*, high up on the eastern end of the building.

Australia House does have some very distinguished neighbours: the Waldorf Hotel, the Aldwych Theatre, the Royal Courts of Justice, Somerset House and the London School of Economics. Right next door is Bush House, a magnificent classical temple housing the BBC. On the eastern side is the church of St Clement Danes. Australians with Air Force connections will want to visit here for St Clement Danes is the Memorial Church of the Royal Air Forces. In the tile floor are the badges of many allied squadrons based in Britain during the Second World War. The badges of the five fighter and six bomber squadrons of the Royal Australian Air Force were belatedly added in 2009. Outside St Clement are three statues facing Australia House: 'Bomber' Harris, Air Chief Marshal Lord Downing and the 19th century British Prime Minister William Gladstone. (Why no Australian? Not here nor anywhere else in London?)

How to get to Australia House: Australia House is on a large half circle block on the corner of The Strand and Aldwych. The nearest Tube station is Temple but why not just take a walk up The Strand

from Trafalgar Square. After all, many diggers of the AIF wrote home that they had been ‘walking on the Strand’ when on leave in London. For them it was a proud moment to walk tall in the very heart of the Empire. Australia House is close to Covent Garden and London’s ‘Theatre Land’. Men of the AIF often went to His Majesty’s Theatre on Haymarket where today, in a largely unchanged building *Phantom of the Opera* has been running since 1986.



They came from all corners of the Empire to fight in Britain’s war. This memorial is in Zambia on the northern side of the Zambezi River at Victoria Falls. The inscription states: *IN MEMORY OF THE MEN OF NORTHERN RHODESIA WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES FOR THE EMPIRE IN THE GREAT WAR 1914 – 1918*

Photo: Alan Slator

Cabinet War Rooms and Churchill Museum

A very popular tourist attraction in London is the Cabinet War Rooms where the British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and his cabinet bunkered down and rallied the nation during the dark days of the Second World War. A more recent addition (2005) is a Churchill Museum covering the life of the war time prime minister. In the pantheon of British heroes, Churchill is up there with Lord Nelson, Oliver Cromwell, Sir Francis Drake, the Duke of Marlborough and the Duke of Wellington. Some hail Churchill as the greatest Briton ever even though, near the end of the Second World War the obviously ungrateful British people threw him out of office and installed Clement Atlee as prime minister with a record majority.

It is a curious thing that Churchill’s name is more highly venerated in Australia than it is in Britain. Politicians in Australia have always gained much mileage by invoking ‘the Churchill factor’ when justifying interventionist foreign policies. They know that in the Australian popular mind Churchill was the good guy who stood up to the bad guy (Adolph Hitler) while all those lily livered appeasers (Neville Chamberlain) let the bad guy get away with murder.

This absurdly simplistic view of European politics of the 1930s and 40s is frequently invoked by conservative Australian politicians to justify any Australian aggressive foreign policy.

When Churchill died in 1965 memorial funds were set up and citizens were exhorted to ‘Give so the world will remember Churchill’. Australians poured in millions of pounds and dollars. (We went decimal in February 1966.) Australians put in far more per head of population than did the British themselves. (It turned out to be a good investment for since then many Australians have studied abroad courtesy of Churchill Fellowships.)



The Australian War Cabinet of the First World War met in this building at the corner of Spring and Collins Streets, Melbourne. Here William Morris Hughes, the Australian Prime Minister for most of the war presided over war cabinet meetings, plotted his ultimately unsuccessful campaign for conscription and received the latest telegraph messages on the progress of the war.

A tour of the Churchill Museum attached to the Cabinet War Rooms reveals that the veneration given to Churchill by Australians was not something he ever returned. He never visited Australia and on several critical occasions he pursued policies directly against Australia’s interests. While we celebrate the Gallipoli landings more and more we have forgotten that Churchill, as First Lord of the Admiralty was one of the architects of the debacle. When official inquiries revealed that the Dardanelles campaign was a complete shambles Churchill did the honourable thing and resigned from cabinet. Again, during the Second World War Churchill went to great lengths to keep Australian troops in the Europe/Middle East theatre rather than have them return to defend Australia against the Japanese. In Churchill’s view Australia was expendable.

Sir Robert Menzies, from time to time a guest of Churchill in his home, Chartwell in Kent candidly summed up Churchill's attitude to Australia: *Australia was a distant country which produced great fighting men and some black swans for the pond at Chartwell but it cannot be said that it otherwise excited his imagination or interest.*

How to visit the Cabinet War Rooms and Churchill Museum: Simply follow the pedestrian signs from Whitehall or Parliament Square. You can also visit Chartwell, now operated by the National Trust. Head south out of London to the M25 ring road. Come off the M25 at Junction 6. Run parallel to the M25 through OXTED, LIMPSFIELD and WESTERHAM picking up the many signs to CHARTWELL. In Westerham there is a large statue of the great man himself, brooding in his chair.

LA DELIVRANCE – North London

No Sex Please, We're British was one of the longest running comedies on the London stage. The title has entered the language as a statement mocking British reserve and prudery.

Visitors to France are often mildly surprised at the amount of nudity in art and sculpture so readily on display in public places. *What's your problem?* asked my hostess Valérie when I raised this matter of bare flesh in French art. We were wandering around the excellent Museum of Picardie in Amiens and noting all the classical sculptures by 18th century French masters. Very little clothing on any of them. *In our culture the female form stands for purity, innocence, light and goodness. It is life giving and eternal. There is a wholesome mystique about it. It raises us up from the sordid matters of this world* explained Valérie.

The real problem is that the British people are a bunch of prudes.

Well maybe, but a glance on any day at page three of the *Sun* newspaper will confirm that the British are not totally adverse to having naked females on public display. The girl on page three of the *Sun* is a British institution.

Ah but it is not British, my London friends assure me. It is all the fault of that Australian newspaper proprietor who came over here years ago and bought up most of our newspapers. The dirty digger introduced the girl on page three!

True enough, but by some quirk of history Britain has the only fully naked female war memorial anywhere in the world. Even the French did not take inspiration from their Venus di Milo in the Louvre and put naked forms on their war memorials. Given that there was not much purity and innocence in the First World War, this avoidance of traditional art is not surprising

The war memorial shown at left is in the London suburb of Finchley. It was unveiled in 1927. The inscription says it all:



**THIS STATUE BY EMILE GUILLAUME (French of course)
SYMBOLISES THE EMOTION INSPIRED AMONG THE ALLIED
NATIONS WHEN THE ARMIES OF BRITAIN AND FRANCE
DEFEATED THE INVADING GERMAN ARMIES AT THE BATTLE
OF THE MARNE SEPTEMBER 1914.**

Up in Scotland I came across a topless maiden in the *en avant* position on the war memorial at Rothesay on the Scottish island of Bute. Clearly the sculptor took his inspiration from the second most famous painting in the Louvre, Eugene Delacroix's *Liberty Guiding the People*. *Liberty* is an image frequently used in both France and the United States but being republican she has no place in Australia. The men and women of the Australian First World War generation were monarchists through and through. Only the traitorous Irish harboured republican notions.

The naked female form is rare on Australian war memorials, On the South Australian State Memorial is an artwork depicting motherhood, comforting at her breast a naked young man

representing the innocent fallen of that generation and on the elaborate memorial arch in the New South Wales city of Wollongong sits a topless *Peace* holding aloft a red electric torch!

We almost had a fully naked female on the Anzac Memorial in Sydney's Hyde Park. Architect Bruce Delitt commissioned Raynor Hoff, an English veteran of the Great War to produce the artwork including commemorative sculptures for the east and west faces of the building. One of these external sculptures entitled *The Crucifixion of Civilization* had a naked female hanging on a cross while at her feet stood a pile of dead men and the debris of war. Some churchmen, both Catholic and Protestant were outraged at the symbolism and the east and west faces of the Anzac Memorial remain vacant to this day.

How to get to La Deliverance: Catch the tube (or number 13 bus from Trafalgar Square) to GOLDERS GREEN station. There catch either bus number 82 or 460 north towards FINCHLEY. The memorial is in a park just on the northern side of London's North Circular Road (A406) in Finchley.

WILL DYSON – Hendon Cemetery

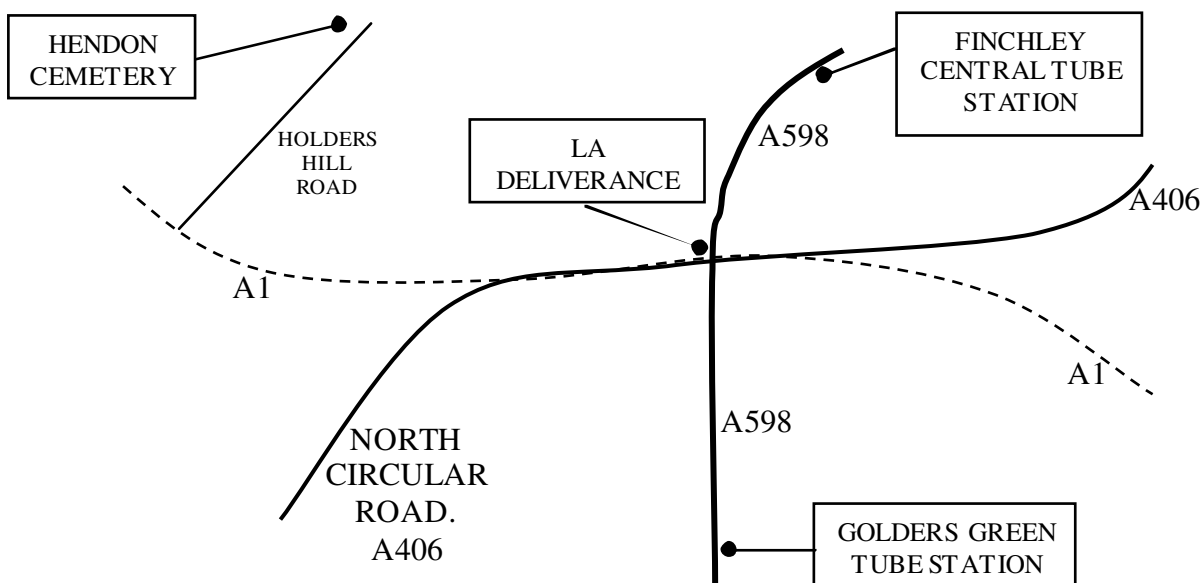
If you are in the north London area to see La Deliverance you may wish to pay your respects at the grave of Australia's first official war artist Will Dyson who lies in nearby Hendon Cemetery. Dyson had made his mark drawing cartoons for the *Bulletin* in Sydney. By 1914 he had moved to London and had established himself as one of the most incisive artists in British journalism.

Charles Bean had long campaigned for Australian photographers and artists to be appointed to produce the 'sacred records' of the deeds of the AIF and in December 1916 photographers Frank Hurley and Hubert Wilkins along with artist Will Dyson were so commissioned. Frequently under fire (Wilkins was awarded a Military Cross and Bar and Dyson was wounded several times) these three did indeed produce the 'sacred records' which are such a national treasure today.

Dyson's most famous sketch was *Calling them Home*, an Australian bugler calling up the ghosts of his fallen comrades. Like Longstaff's *Menin Gate at Midnight* copies of Will Dyson's *Calling them Home* had a special place in thousands of homes across Australia in the post war years.

Dyson's wife, sister to his good friend Norman Lindsay died in the Spanish flu epidemic of 1918-1919. This, on top of his war experiences devastated Dyson. He returned to journalism but the fire was not there as of old. He died in Britain in 1938. For some reason his grave was not maintained and had been left unmarked for more than 30 years. Through the efforts of the C.E.W. Bean Foundation the graves of Dyson and his wife were restored in 2004.

How to get to Hendon Cemetery: Bus 240 from GOLDERS GREEN station will take you up HOLDERS HILL ROAD to the cemetery.



Alegorical Females



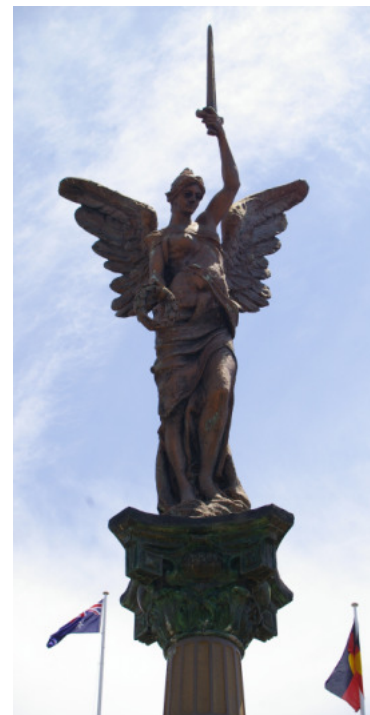
Allegorical females were slightly more acceptable than naked ones on memorials in both Britain and Australia. Usually they represented Victory, Britannia, Peace, History, Fame or Justice. Winged women could also be seen as a Christian angel giving eternal life.

The dove carrying angel shown on the left is in the London suburb of Ashford. It was erected by the *Mens and Womens Section, Ashford Middlesex Branch, The British Legion* to remember the *Old Scholars of the West London District School* who fell in the Great War. Around the base is the inscription from 1 Samuel 25: 15-16: *The men were very good to us and we were not hurt. They were a wall unto us both by night and day.* These words, originally about the protection given by the men of the Israelite David are also found on Will Gilbert's famous 'bomb thrower' war memorial in the Australian mining town of Broken Hill.

Amazing! The same scripture used for both an angel of peace and a bomb thrower! You try and sort out that contradiction.

Perhaps the finest allegorical female on a Great War memorial in Australia is shown at right. *Victory* by Gilbert Doble stands atop the

memorial in the Sydney suburb of Marrickville. Doble was a pacifist so he always went for the allegorical female rather than the fighting man.



The Imperial War Museum and Trophy Guns

London's Imperial War Museum www.iwm.org.uk is acknowledged as one of the finest war museums in the world. It deserves the high praise and is worth a visit even though there is little on display that is specifically Australian. There is a very good reason for the limited range of Australian exhibits.

From the moment an Imperial War Museum was mooted farsighted Australians lobbied for a share of the trophies to be brought back to this country. The captured weapons were to be distributed far and wide across the nation for public display and a nucleus of them would form the foundation collection of an Australian War Museum. As the Australian Prime Minister wrote in 1918: *Now that Australia is making history of her own, she requires every possible relic associated with this to help educate her children in this national spirit thereby ensuring loyal adherence to and defence of the empire of which she forms a part.* Billett, *War Trophies*, p xiv.



This First World War memorial in the Sydney suburb of Enfield is unusual in that it combines a memorial cenotaph with a trophy gun, in this case a 105mm howitzer donated by the French government.

Usually the trophy weapons, representing triumphant celebration were kept at a respectable distance or placed in quite separate locations to the solemn memorial listing those who served and those who paid the supreme sacrifice.

Great War trophy guns may still be observed in parks and other public places across Australia to this day and the Australian War Museum idea evolved into the Australian National War Memorial in Canberra, surely the finest war museum and site of commemoration anywhere in the world.

Most of the weapons left over in Europe from the First World War were melted down or reused in the Second so today there are very few Great War weapons on public display outside museums anywhere along the Western Front. A Krupp gun was recently installed at a road junction in the village of Sint-Elooi, right on the old front line south of Ieper. Another (at right) can be seen in the Belgian town of Warneton in the Place de L'abbaye, just one block up from the River Lys which at that point is the border between France and Belgium.



Australia's biggest land battle trophy was the massive German railway gun captured near Harbonniers in August 1918. The 'little Bertha' which had been shelling Amiens was a naval gun mounted on a specially designed railway wagon. It was jealously guarded by Australian soldiers when it went on display in the Champs de Mars next to the Eiffel Tower before being shipped to Australia.

In the Second World War the barrel was removed and the carriage used to test naval weapons in South Australia. Tragically, the gun and carriage were never reunited. The carriage was broken up for scrap (and sold to the Japanese according to legend) so today only the barrel remains. It is mounted outside the Australian War Memorial in Canberra. The part destruction of the gun must surely go down as one of the great heritage crimes in Australia's history.

The Imperial War Museum in London is located in a former mental asylum on the south side of the Thames in that delightfully named area, The Elephant and Castle. Actually The Elephant and Castle, along with many other suburbs on the south side is a rather poor, disadvantaged area of London. It is almost third world in some places. In suburbs such as Brixton or Camberwell Green you can see the down side of globalisation in a great world city.

Prominent in the foyer of the museum is one of the Mark V tanks used so effectively by Monash in the Battle of Hamel and in subsequent advances along the Somme.

After seeing a few galleries my family visited the Holocaust section, a display every bit as powerful and disturbing as the United States Holocaust Museum in Washington DC. My adult children, even though they already knew basic Second World War history were awestruck. After the Holocaust section they didn't want to see any more war galleries and were rather quiet as we caught the bus back to Westminster.

How to get to the Imperial War Museum: The nearest tube station is Elephant & Castle on the Bakerloo line and on the Northern (Bank branch) line. Walk up St George's Road. The Museum is marked on the bus map on the corner of Lambeth Rd and St George's Rd. Buses 12, 53 and 148 from Westminster will get you right to the museum.



Some of my students pose on a German 1913 Long Howitzer in the central west of New South Wales. This gun, originally allocated as a war trophy to the city of Bathurst now stands at the entrance to the Bathurst Sheep and Cattle Drome at Kelso. The Drome is on land used as a military base in the Second World War especially for the ill fated 8th Division. The land was also used as a migrant hostel during the period of post war immigration.

The gun was recently restored by inmates of Bathurst Gaol.

Headquarters, Australian Imperial Force, 130 Horseferry Road

*He landed in London and straight away strode
Direct to Headquarters in Horseferry Road.
A Buckshee Corporal said 'Pardon me, please,
But there's dust on your tunic and dirt on your knees.
You look so disgraceful that people will laugh',
Said the cold footed coward that works on the staff.
The Aussie just gave him a murderous glance,
And said, 'I've just come from the trenches in France,
Where shrapnel is falling and comforts are few,
And Aussies are fighting for cowards like you.
I wonder old shirker, if your mother e'er knew,
That her son is a waster and afraid of the strafe,
But holds a soft snap on the Horseferry staff?*

*Aussie, N° 7, September 1918. Quoted in Seal, *Inventing Anzac*, p51.*

Soldiers the world over have had unkind things to say about those who never get anywhere near the front line. First World War diggers called them 'base wallahs' while in the Vietnam War they were known as 'pogos' for it was said that they spent their days bouncing around on pogo sticks. It is quite understandable that the men of the AIF, when on leave in London were not going to take any orders from the pogo bouncers of Horseferry Road.

By mid 1915 it became clear that the offices of the Australian High Commissioner in London were inadequate to cope with the increasing numbers of Australian soldiers recuperating in Britain. Premises at 130 Horseferry Road, Westminster were secured. (The 1917 London Post Office Street Directory lists 130 Horseferry Road as 'Wesleyan Training College for Schoolmasters and Practising Schools' and beneath in italics, *Australian Military Office*.)

By the end of 1915 there were over 10,000 Australian soldiers in Britain and around 200 AIF members running the Horseferry Road operation with sections set up to deal with medical, quartermaster, pay, transport, records and military police – whom, the *Official History* tells us, *it was now found advisable to organise and station in London and in the British provincial centres*. In a move then seen as quite radical, dozens of female clerks were employed for record keeping – whose labour for this purpose was as effective as that of soldiers and much cheaper as the *Official History* quaintly observes.

When the HQ of the AIF moved from Egypt to London they also moved into the Wesleyan College and greatly expanded operations. By the end of 1916 there were well over 1000 AIF officers and men working in several buildings along the street such as the *AIF & War Chest Club* for all soldiers and the *AIF Clothing Store*.

Today as you wander up Horseferry Road from the Lambeth Bridge looking for number 130 there is not much of great interest, just nondescript post 1945 office and residential blocks. Some years ago Prince Charles, commenting on architects and their impact on central London suggested that the Luftwaffe had done a better job! Naturally, howls of rage went up from the tabloid press. Not for the first time they wanted the Prince's head on a plate but I think I can see what he means.

About the only building to catch your eye is the headquarters for Channel 4 at 124 Horseferry Road. Londoners will tell you it is one of those increasingly common buildings designed by unemployed window cleaners. Be that as it may, this was the site of the AIF Headquarters in the First World War.



The block of Horseferry Road from Medway Street to Chadwick Street contained properties numbered 124 to 149. The Wesleyan College and Practising Schools at 130 occupied most of the block but they had only a relatively small access driveway to the front street. The whole block was demolished in the late 1960s as part of Westminster redevelopment and the Channel 4 building was completed in 1994. Goodness knows what the men of the AIF would have thought about Channel 4's displayed motto: *Discover our world in yours, Discover your world in ours.*

In the centre of the block, with access from either Medway or Chadwick Streets is a small park and childrens' playground maintained by Channel 4. Take a rest on a bench in the garden and you are in the right place to contemplate the life and times of the pogo bouncers of Horseferry Road.

The Grey Coat Hospital almost opposite Channel 4 is about the only building and institution in the vicinity remaining largely as it was in 1914-1918. In spite of the name the place is a school and always has been since it was established as a Church of England charity school in 1698 to provide boarding and education for poor children in Westminster. Back then hospital simply meant a place where people were taken care of rather than having a specific medical meaning. Originally co-educational, the Grey Coat Hospital has been a girls' school since 1871.

That's what I like about the quirky British. They preserve their heritage. The name Grey Coat Hospital has been confusing people for 300 years but they stick with it.

Another institution still in its Great War location in Horseferry Road is the London Scottish Regiment at number 95. This regiment was raised in 1859 and it continues today with members serving in a number of world trouble spots. The drill hall and the front of the building were substantially rebuilt during the 1950s. See the website www.londonscottishregt.org.

The Air Force Memorial – Runnymede

Wherever and for as long as freedom flourishes on the earth, the men and women who possess it will thank them and will say they did not die in vain.

From the speech by HM Queen Elizabeth II at the unveiling in 1953.

When out west of London visiting Windsor Castle, Australian travellers, especially those with Air Force connections should take the opportunity to visit the fine Air Force Memorial at Runnymede which honours over 20,000 British airmen who perished in the Second World War and who have no known grave.

This memorial, designed by Sir Edward Maufe and sitting high on the heights of Runnymede lists 1397 names from the Royal Australian Air Force and 576 names from the Royal New Zealand Air Force, mostly in the 1944 and 1945 categories.

From the tower there is a panoramic view over the upper Thames Valley with Windsor Castle on the left around past Heathrow Airport to central London on the horizon on the right. The large reservoirs you see below are part of London's water supply.

Judging by the estates and the cars on the heights of Runnymede this part of England is home to some seriously rich and powerful people. If such was the case in 1215 no wonder they were able to force King John to show up at their place and sign the Magna Carta!

How to get to the Air Force Memorial: The A308 running between WINDSOR and STAINES in south west London is the road to find. Come off the M25 ring road (or London Orbital as they call it) at the elongated junction 13 following exit signs: A30 STAINES. Then follow the A308 green and white signs towards WINDSOR. From the Windsor end follow the A308 signs towards STAINES. About half way between the two, at the Tea House where the A308 skirts the river Thames, AIR FORCE MEMORIAL signs will direct you up the hill and then into COOPERS HILL LANE. A car park is provided; then there is a short walk to the memorial.

Alternatively you can catch a bus from Windsor to the Tea House (or park your car there) and, following the National Trust's map, take a pleasant walk for about 20 minutes to the Runnymede Memorial then another 20 minutes up the hill to the Air Force Memorial. The memorial closes at 4pm in winter and 6pm in summer.

Admiral Arthur Phillip RN

TO HIS INDOMITABLE COURAGE, PROPHETIC VISION, FOREBEARANCE, FAITH, INSPIRATION AND WISDOM WAS DUE THE SUCCESS OF THE FIRST SETTLEMENT IN AUSTRALIA, AT SYDNEY, SATURDAY JANUARY 26, 1788.

Inscription on plinth holding bust of Arthur Phillip, London.



Over on the eastern side of central London are the very popular tourist attractions of St Paul's Cathedral, the Tower of London, the Museum of London, the Tower Bridge, the new Tate Gallery and the Shakespearean Globe Theatre. While in the area take a short walk to a small park at 25 Cannon St where you will find a bust of someone of great significance to Australia:

Admiral Arthur Phillip RN, Citizen of London, Founder and First Governor of Australia, born in the ward of Breadstreet, 11th October 1738, entered Royal Navy 1755, died 31st August 1814.

Sydney has a large statue of Phillip, erected in 1897 tucked away in a corner of the Botanic Gardens and a couple of busts: one outside the Museum of Contemporary Art at Circular Quay and another in the Sydney suburb of Gordon but that's about all the acknowledgement he gets. No school textbook refers to Phillip in such glowing terms as

those used on his London memorial. In most textbooks he is a mere Captain, not an Admiral!

Certainly every Australian school child learns about the First Fleet and the 18th century policy of sending excess British convicts to Botany Bay. Students do learn about the long voyage of the 11 ships and the privations suffered by the colony during the early years but somehow Phillip doesn't get much credit for the survival of the infant colony. He never gets the reverential mention Americans reserve for their George Washington, Thomas Jefferson and the Pilgrim Fathers.

And what about Captain John Hunter who made a perilous voyage around the world at high latitudes in the *Sirius* to pick up supplies from Cape Town thereby saving the infant settlement at Sydney Cove from starvation and disintegration? Most school history textbooks in Australia these days scarcely mention Phillip or Hunter. Rather they concentrate on the culture contact between indigenous Australians and the newly arrived Europeans.

When you think about it, Phillip's achievements are not unremarkable. With ramshackle ships he successfully completed what must surely be one of the greatest sea voyages of all time. In spite of wretched convicts, drunken soldiers, fractious officers and the ever present spectre of starvation he kept the colony under command. He had an enlightened view of the indigenous inhabitants, he sent off many expeditions of discovery and he had a vision for the Great South Land. He was indeed the *Founder of Australia*, a phrase you will find used again on a memorial plaque under an Australian flag in the Abbey in Bath where Phillip died in 1814.

Yet we Australians have never placed Arthur Phillip up there in the pantheon of our heroes. We lionise a great man like Winston Churchill who cared not a jot for us and frequently acted against our best interests yet we forget an ordinary man such as Arthur Phillip to whom we owe so much. Sadly it again demonstrates that the colonial cringe is not yet dead in Australia, not by a long chalk.

HAREFIELD HOSPITAL AND CHURCHYARD OF ST MARY THE VIRGIN

*TO THE GLORY OF GOD WHO GIVETH US THE VICTORY
AND IN MEMORY OF BRAVE AUSTRALIAN SOLDIERS WHO
AFTER TAKING PART IN THE GREAT WAR
NOW REST IN HAREFIELD CHURCHYARD.*

Inscription on obelisk unveiled in 1921 in Harefield Churchyard.

Every year thousands of Australian tourists head northwest out of London to visit the ancient university town of Oxford. Usually they will include nearby Blenheim Palace and the very English village of Woodstock in their itineraries. Two Australian sacred places lie along the way: a hospital and a cemetery in the village of Harefield on London's rural-urban fringe.



In 1914 an Australian with the improbable name of Charles Arthur Moresby Billyard-Leake esq owned a property in Harefield and generously made it available to the Australian Government for wounded soldiers *for the duration of the war and 6 months after.*

The place grew into a major Australian hospital and after the war the facility passed to local health authorities. It has continued to operate as a major district hospital ever since. Today it is one of the leading cardiac hospitals in Britain.

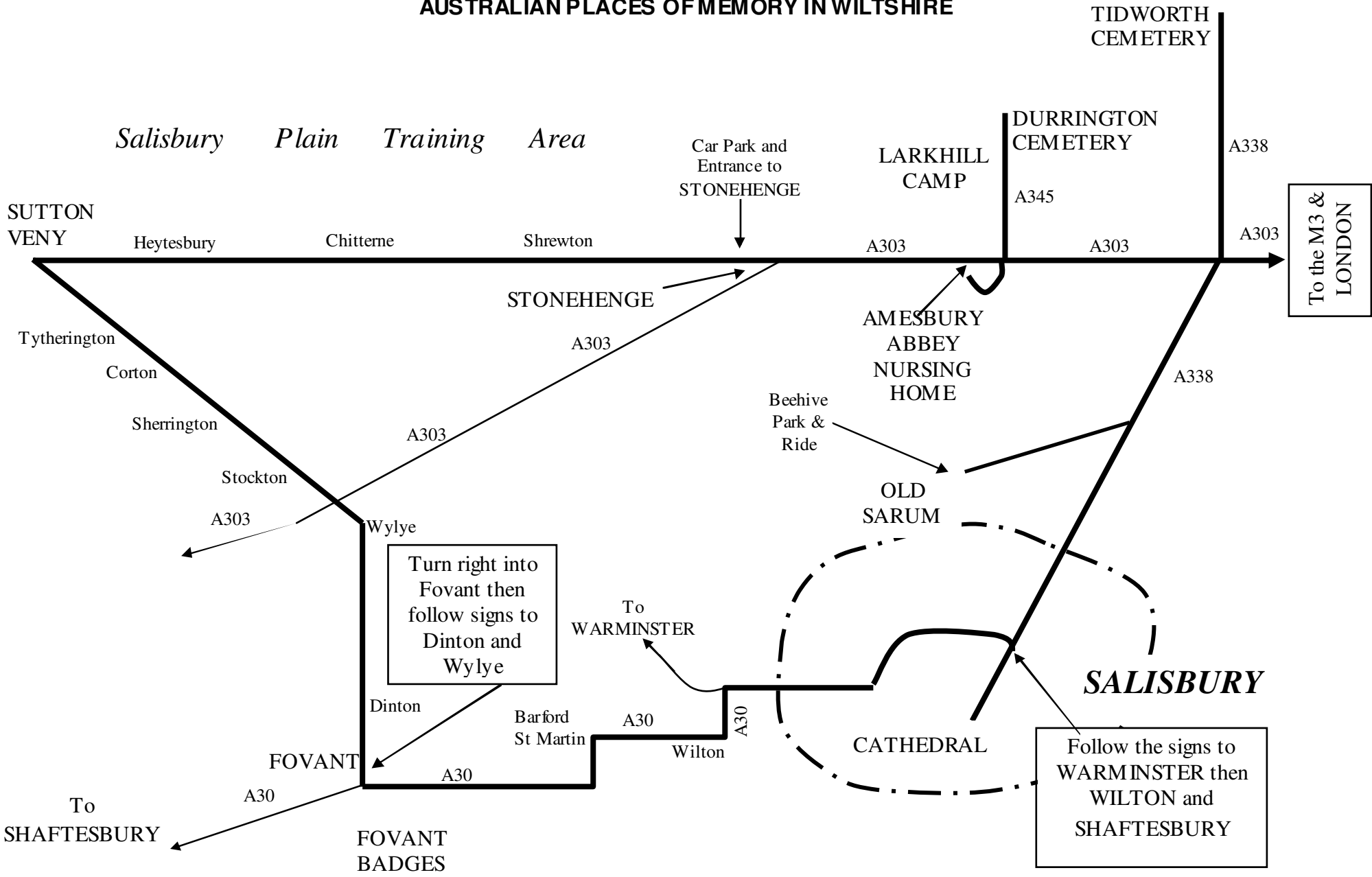
In 2003 a major new wing was opened by the Australian Ambassador and designated *The Anzac Centre.*

In the cemetery of the Church of St Mary the Virgin, Harefield there are 112 Australians from the First World War including Private William Hitchen of the 45th Infantry Battalion. At 52 years of age Hitchen would be one of the oldest infantry men to have served in the war

The distinctive scroll headstones were chosen by the hospital staff and retained even when the standard Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstones were introduced.

How to get to Harefield: The village of Harefield lies just outside all the standard London street directories but it is inside the M25 London Orbital. Travelling up the A40 out of London come off at junction 1, the beginning of the M40 motorway to Oxford. Head north following the signs to DENHAM, DENHAM GREEN then HAREFIELD. If you are coming around the M25 ring road, come off at junction 17 and head south through MAPLE CROSS, WEST HYDE then HAREFIELD. The hospital is on the northern side of the village centre while the churchyard is on the southern edge signposted: ANZAC graves.

AUSTRALIAN PLACES OF MEMORY IN WILTSHIRE



AUSTRALIA'S SACRED PLACES IN WILTSHIRE

Salisbury

The road sign below is due north of Salisbury on the A345 at the Beehive **Park and Ride**. It gives directions to three places often visited by members of the AIF - **Salisbury, Old Sarum** and **Stonehenge**. Many Australians in the First World War were camped within sight of Stonehenge and they often took their leave in Salisbury and surrounding villages. Today the cathedral city and the two pre history sites are among the top tourist attractions of Britain drawing thousands of visitors including many Australians and New Zealanders.

Park and Ride is becoming standard practice in summer in many cities across Britain. The narrow streets of the historic centre of a major tourist city cannot possibly cope with the cars of thousands of tourists so parking areas are set aside on the city fringe and a shuttle bus service is provided. Salisbury, Cambridge, York, Canterbury and Bath, to name a few cities all have **Park and Ride**.

Stonehenge, Old Sarum and Salisbury are often covered in a day trip from London but other travellers will want to take in more of the local scene. With a couple of days you can incorporate a circuit of Australia's sacred places as well.

After all a leisurely drive through picturesque villages, idle wanderings in village markets, a meal in a genuine English rural pub, visits to ancient sites, a rambling walk through the woods and a night in a delightful rural B&B are quintessential British experiences not to be missed. Wiltshire has them all.



Salisbury is a most attractive market town and its cathedral is one of the finest in England. The cathedral holds an original copy of the Magna Carta, surely one of the most significant political documents of all time. Mounted in the cloisters you will find some of the original wooden crosses transferred from war graves on the Western Front.

Also in the cathedral is the grave of Edward 'Ted' Heath, one of the few British Prime Ministers to have shown genuine interest in and affection for Australia. He is usually remembered as the prime minister who took Britain into the European Union (or the Common Market as it was then known) but he retained fond links with Australia making numerous visits to contact friends, conduct symphony orchestras and participate in the Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race. Heath served in the British Parliament for 51 years and was Prime Minister from 1970 to 1974.

Tuesday & Saturday are market days in Salisbury and in summer the place is packed. At such times using one of the three **Park and Rides** is essential. Off season is much easier with plenty of parking in the central area.

Check out www.visitsalisbury.com and decide which local things are of interest to you.



Left: Salisbury Cathedral. Right: Original crosses from British First World War graves on the Western Front mounted in the cloisters of Salisbury Cathedral.

An Australian circuit in Wiltshire

To take in the three major tourist attractions plus visits to Australia's sacred places a two day circuit from London is suggested. A standard road atlas of Britain is OK but it is much better if you have the Ordnance Survey 1:50,000 Map Number 184 – **Salisbury and the Plain**. This map is much easier to follow and all the places you want are on the one sheet.

1. From Salisbury head west on the A36 following the signs, initially to WARMINSTER and then to WILTON and SHAFTESBURY. At the roundabout in Wilton turn left down the A30 following the signs to SHAFTESBURY. Some 5 kms down the A30 are the parking bays for the Fovant Badges.
2. Less than a kilometre further on, turn right off the A30 and enter the village of FOVANT. There are more than 30 Australian war graves in the churchyard of the Fovant village church. Next take the picturesque back roads heading straight north over the Nadder River through DINTON and on towards WYLYE.
3. At the Wylie T junction turn left and follow the minor road under the A303 and on along the south side of the Wylie River through BAPTON, STOCKTON, SHERRINGTON, CORTON and TYTHERINGTON to SUTTON VENY.
4. From Sutton Veny head for HEYTESBURY on the A36 where you turn left onto the B390 following the sign to CHITTERNE. Continue on to SHREWTON and you are travelling over country where many Australians trained in the First World War. At Shrewton you merge into the A360 following signs to AMESBURY and SALISBURY. Some three kilometres out of Shrewton the A360 turns south to Salisbury but keep going straight ahead on the A34 and you will be right at STONEHENGE.
5. The A34 merges into the main road across the region, the A303. At the Amesbury roundabout turn north up the A345 for Durrington Cemetery.
6. Return to the A303 and head east for 8 kilometres before turning north up the A338 for Tidworth Military Cemetery.
7. Return back down the A338 for some 18 kilometres before turning down the old Roman road following the signs to OLD SARUM. The A345 will then take you straight south to Salisbury completing the circuit.

The 'Rising Sun' in the chalk in Wiltshire

A camp to process wounded Australian soldiers in Britain had been established at Weymouth in the south of England in 1915 while the Dardanelles campaign was still in progress but with the move to the Western Front, training camps already established in Egypt were brought over to England and barracks had to be found. In addition the 3rd Division was arriving from Australia so even more accommodation was required.

The Australians were given Lark Hill for the 3rd Division and some sixteen other camps for training purposes, all within 20 miles of Salisbury and some within sight of Stonehenge. These camps could hold 41,000 men and if more accommodation was needed the Australians could have the recently completed barracks at Tidworth.

Long before the Australians arrived various British military units revived the ancient art of large scale carving into the limestone measures which dominate the geology of southern England. Throughout the region quarries and areas of land slip reveal the whitish chalk of the subsurface strata and coastal outcrops such as the white cliffs of Dover are justly famous.

Intended no doubt to keep the soldiers busy, the carving of regimental badges into the hillsides around the camps was taken up with enthusiasm. Not to be outdone the Australians set to and made two contributions – a large outline map of Australia and a huge 'rising sun' army badge, more than 50 metres across. By the end of the war there were over 20 badges scattered around the district in what must go down as one of the world's largest graffiti exercises.



Post cards sent home by Private Abram Unicomb show the original contributions by the Australians to the badges in the chalk in Wiltshire. The map of Australia was not restored in the Fovant project. It was on a different hill to the 'rising sun' badge and the geology of the area was such that restoration was not a viable proposition.

Time, erosion and farming activities led to deterioration and most of the badges faded from view. Indeed, during the Second World War efforts were made to eradicate the badges lest the Luftwaffe use them as markers!

It was not until the end of the 20th century that locals of the region began a restoration project to professionally restore some eight badges on the north facing slope of the Nadder valley opposite the village of Fovant. The story is told at www.fovantbadges.com

Actually the 'rising sun' Australian Army badge is not a sun at all but a semi circle of bayonets. It first appeared on the uniforms of soldiers from the various Australian colonies fighting in the South African (Boer) War (1899-1902). In 1901 the 6 British colonies of the great south land federated to form the Commonwealth of Australia and the badge was worn by some of our troops identifying their new status as Australian forces.



Parking bays are provided on the A30 but the best view would be from a champagne breakfast in a hot air balloon gently drifting over the hills and dales!



Private Abram Unicomb (third from left in back row) was a member of this Australian Army band in Wiltshire prior to transfer to the Western Front in 1917. Photo: Unicomb family

The Church and Churchyard of St John the Evangelist, Sutton Veny

The tiny village of Sutton Veny has long maintained links with Australia that began during the First World War. Many Australians were camped in the area and Sutton Veny was the nearest small settlement providing shops, churches, pubs, entertainment and home hospitality.

For more than a generation Australian soldiers who had received friendship and hospitality continued personal links with the families of Sutton Veny who had welcomed the diggers so far from home. 143 Australian graves from the First World War are carefully maintained in the churchyard of the parish church, St John the Evangelist.

Among these are two females, Sister Tyson and Matron Walker of the Australian Army Nursing Service. Over 2000 Australian nurses served abroad during the First World War, most in British or French hospitals. Some were very close to the front line serving in Casualty Clearing Stations.

Many of the Australians here in the churchyard succumbed to the Spanish flu epidemic of 1918-1919. One of the saddest stories concerns 2135 Sgt John Page MM (Grave Ref: 22 II). Page arrived on the Western Front in November 1916. He fought in France and Belgium receiving the Military Medal for courageous action near Warneton. He was wounded on three occasions. During his last hospitalisation in Harefield, Page met local girl Elsie Hawkins and they married in the Church of Mary the Virgin in Harefield on 22 October 1918. Page returned to his unit on the Salisbury Plain near Sutton Veny but he contracted the Spanish flu and died on 11 November, the day of the Armistice.

Every year children from the local primary school lay red poppies on the graves in a ceremony that for over 50 years was broadcast live to Australia. The Australian High Commissioner in London attends the ceremony and then in true Anzac tradition there is a cricket match between Australians and a local team.



After the Second World War a chapel in the church was dedicated *The AIF Chapel* and it is maintained as a memorial to the First Australian Imperial Force. Flags of Australia, Britain and the RSL have been hung and a 'rising sun' Australian Army badge sits on the altar. There is a Roll of Honour listing the names of the fallen who lie in the churchyard.

In British war cemeteries (but not on the Western Front) you will see several non-standard headstones as shown here. This arises because families in Britain had the option of paying for their own. Also some were erected by their comrades long before the standard headstone came into use.

Today the village of Sutton Veny has about 600 residents. Many of them are retired military personnel. There are no shops and only one B&B. For urban services residents go to the nearby town of Warminster.

Durrington Cemetery

Durrington is a beautifully maintained municipal cemetery containing 141 burials of Australians from the First World War. As at Sutton Veny the Australians here were all from training camps established on the Salisbury Plain. Most of the Australians in Durrington Cemetery were from the nearby Lark Hill Camp which remains a major British military base to this day. In this cemetery is a very significant Australian monument. It is a stone obelisk with the following inscription over the four faces:



To the glory of God and in memory of the men of the First Training Battn, Australian Imperial Forces who died on active service at Lark Hill. Erected by their comrades 1917. Greater love hath no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends.

The precise date of unveiling remains a mystery but this structure would have to be the oldest existing Australian Great War memorial overseas. Indeed only a few Great War memorials in Australia pre date the one in Durrington Cemetery.

Surprisingly, this memorial remains a private one. It is not on the register of official memorials maintained by the Office of War Graves in the Australian Department of Veterans Affairs.

The first Australian memorials on the Western Front were erected at Pozzières in July 1917 when both the 1st and 2nd Divisions erected memorials to their fallen comrades. However these memorials were overrun in the German 1918 offensive and they were not restored after the war. The present memorials for the 1st, 3rd, 4th and 5th Australian Divisions, built in 1919 are our oldest existing memorials on the Western Front.



How to get to Durrington Cemetery: From Amesbury head straight north up the A345 following the signs to MARLBOROUGH. Exactly 2 kms up the A345 is this roundabout. Do not turn right into Bulford and Durrington but continue north for another 1.2 kms. The cemetery is on the northern edge of the town on the right. A small parking bay is provided on the left. Be careful crossing the road for it is narrow with speeding traffic and a blind hill.

Amesbury Abbey Nursing Home, Church St, Amesbury

While touring in this area of Wiltshire there is an opportunity to visit another Australian sacred place in Britain but one not associated with the First World War. The imposing Amesbury Abbey, now used as a nursing home was the British Headquarters of the second AIF during the Second World War (1939-1945).

The Australian presence in Britain during the Second World War was nowhere near as great as it had been during the First. Australian soldiers arrived in Gourock, Scotland in June 1940 but within a few months they were sent back to the Middle East to join the 6th and 7th Australian Divisions engaged in fighting the Italians, the Germans and the Vichy French.

The participation by the Australian Army in the European theatre of the war of 1939-1945 was very minor. Members of our Second World War infantry divisions were initially occupied in the Middle East, just as their fathers had been but the entry of Japan into the conflict and the consequent threat to Australia meant that there would be no going on to fight in Europe. Rather our Second World War divisions were brought back to defend Australia and thus our effort was concentrated in Asia and the Pacific. Almost all of around 20,000 Australian service personnel in Britain during the Second World War were air force personnel.

The lower impact on the Australian identity of the Second World War relative to the First is readily observed on war memorials around our nation. Very few separate Second World War memorials were erected in Australia. In almost every community the dates 1939-1945 and the names of those who served were simply added to the existing First World War structure.

Some individual events of the Second World War are commemorated. In my local area there are memorials for the siege of Tobruk, the sinking of the Centaur, the Kokoda Track, the Sandakan Death March and the Holocaust, all very useful for school history site studies but there are no separate public monuments listing just those who served in the Second World War. Honour boards in local churches and RSL clubs are about the only specific Second World War lists.

My teenage students find all this hard to understand. Why have we given so little attention to defending our own country and so much attention to a remote military disaster like Gallipoli? We Australians are a bit strange that way. We remember tragic defeats rather than glorious victories. We all remember Bourke and Wills who perished trying to cross the continent. Nobody can remember any explorer who actually made it.

In the Amesbury Abbey Nursing Home a small section of the foyer has been set aside for a historical display commemorating Australian presence at the site.



How to get to Amesbury Abbey Nursing Home: From the roundabout on the A303 exit south following the signs to AMESBURY. On entering the town Church Street is immediately on your right but is one way against you so you have to go clockwise around a block to get to the Church of St Mary & St Melor in Church St. Drive through the gateway immediately left of the church as shown here on the left. There is plenty of parking in the very pleasant grounds of the abbey as shown on right.

Tidworth Military Cemetery

Tidworth is an ongoing military cemetery owned by the British Department of Defence. It contains war and non war service deaths including family members of servicemen and women right up to the present day. There are 162 Australians from the First World War buried here making Tidworth our largest Great War cemetery in Britain after Brookwood. Over 100 New Zealanders are also buried here.



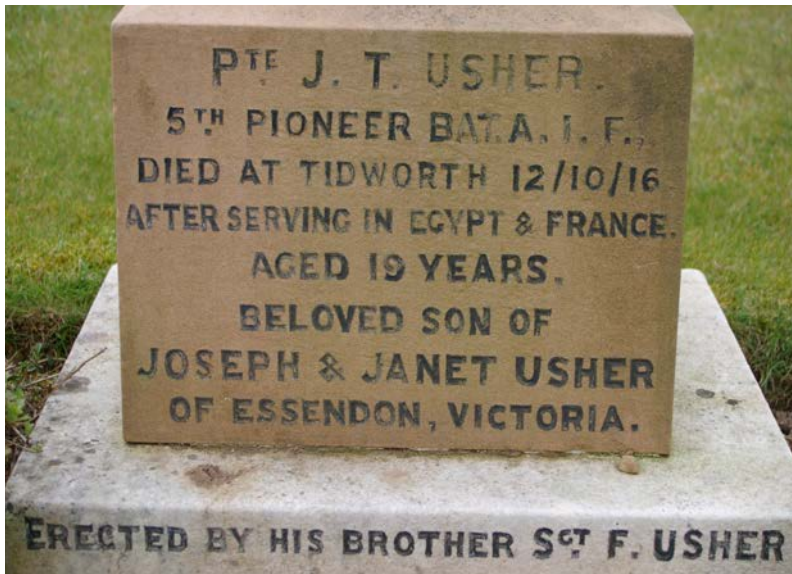
Wandering among the graves and reading the phrases placed on the headstones by family members gives a profound insight into the mindset of Australian families of the 1920s and how they saw the sacrifice of the best of a generation.

When the Imperial (Commonwealth) War Graves Commission set up the standard headstones, families were given the opportunity to add a phrase of remembrance if they so desired. A list of standard eulogies and comments was provided for families so they could make a selection if they did not wish

to compose one of their own. Thus certain of the more popular comments are repeated on headstones throughout Britain and along the Western Front.

Around 40% of families did take up the offer of adding a comment and they expressed the full range of emotions in coping with their grief and loss.

Here are some comments on Australian war graves in Tidworth Military Cemetery. It is impossible to wander from grave to grave without tears.



- *He died an Australian hero, the grandest death of all*
- *A soldier brave lies in this grave, his duty nobly done*
- *The path of duty was the way of glory*
- *Sleep on beloved till Jesus comes and we shall meet again*
- *Manly, unselfish and brave, his precious young life he gave*
- *His country called and honour bade him go*
- *One of Australia's best. Tho' lost to sight, to memory ever dear*
- *Tho' in a distant land, we ever think of you, our beloved son*

How to get to Tidworth Military Cemetery: From Amesbury head east on the A303 then turn north up the A338 following signs to TIDWORTH, SWINDON, MARLBOROUGH and COLLINGBOURNE DUCIS. Continue north through Tidworth and the intersection shown at right. The cemetery is out of town, on the left, a kilometre beyond the northern edge of the urban area of Tidworth. There is a large central driveway so parking is no problem. Return back down the A338 all the way to Salisbury to complete the circuit.



SOME GREAT WAR MEMORIALS AROUND BRITAIN

FOR GOD AND THE RIGHT THESE GAVE THEIR LIVES IN THE GREAT WAR TO DEFEND THEIR KING AND COUNTRY. THEIR MEMORY IS ENSHRINED IN THE HEARTS OF THE PEOPLE OF THIS PARISH WHO ERECTED THIS MONUMENT AS A MARK OF THEIR GRATITUDE AND AFFECTION.

Inscription on the Great War memorial in the 13th century village of Lacock, east of Bath.

As you wander the highways and byways of Britain take note of the Great War memorials to be found in almost every town and city. There are over 30,000 of them. Many are notable works of art and they reflect a much wider range of commemorative sculpture than is the case in Australia whose Great War memorials are overwhelmingly plain obelisks and statues of soldiers at rest.



The soldier on the memorial in the English town of Iron Bridge, far left is a common form of Great War commemorative art both in Britain and Australia. The bridge in the background is the oldest metal bridge in the world having been built before the First Fleet set sail for Botany Bay. One of the few happy or rejoicing soldiers is shown at left. This Tommy stands on the Great War memorial in the Thames River village of Chertsey in south-west London.

A contender for the title of the most aggressive artwork on a memorial in either Britain or Australia is the striking Cameronians Memorial outside the magnificently refurbished Art Gallery building in Glasgow. Rising past a fallen comrade a rifleman goes over the top while the machine gunner pours fire at the enemy.



The inscription on this memorial reads:

TO THE GLORIOUS MEMORY OF ALL RANKS THE CAMERONIANS (SCOTTISH RIFLES) WHO TO UPHOLD LIBERTY AND JUSTICE IN THE WORLD LAID DOWN THEIR LIVES IN THE TWO WORLD WARS

Australia does have its 'at the ready' digger in the Sydney suburb of Double Bay and 'the bomb thrower' in the New South Wales mining town of

Broken Hill but overall there are hardly any 'attack mode' memorials in our southern continent. Nor are there many statues rejoicing in victory in either Australia or Britain. The death and suffering had been on such a massive scale that communities were traumatised for years afterwards. The sombre tone is reflected in the artwork and in the inscriptions on memorials everywhere.

Scotland the Brave – The Scottish National War Memorial

*There was a soldier, a Scottish soldier
Who wandered far away and soldiered far away
There was none bolder, with good broad shoulders,
He fought in many a fray and fought and won.
He's seen the glory, he's told the story
Of battles glorious and deeds victorious
But now he's sighing, his heart is crying to leave these green hills of Tyrol.*

*Because these green hills are not highland hills
Nor the island hills, they're not my land's hills
And fair as these green foreign hills maybe
They are not the hills of home*

From that great traditional Scottish lament, *The Green Hills of Tyrol*.

At the last census over 1.5 million Australians claimed Scottish ancestry, almost as many as claimed Irish blood in their veins. Thus it is not surprising that so many Australians include a visit to Scotland in their itineraries of a holiday in Europe and almost all will visit the great Edinburgh Castle in which is found the Scottish National War Memorial

Of all the combatants in the Great War, Australia and Scotland are most alike in the way they have commemorated the conflict and in the way they have held up the courageous warrior, fallen on foreign fields as the central character defining the nation. Imbued in Scottish culture with all its clans, tartans, pipes and drums is the proud tradition of fighting Scots giving their lives in lands far away. Scotland the brave is at the heart of national identity just as Anzac is a defining feature of Australia.

If you wish to find out just how fiercely proud the Scots are of their warrior ancestors, try claiming that the Anzacs were the best soldiers of the First World War and see what reaction you get! Actually the 'diggers' and the 'jocks' always got on famously together in Britain's wars. Charles Bean relates that in the terrible winter of 1916-1917 the Australians *had their mates of the splendid 15th Scottish Division at Le Sars on their left* and he notes:

Even before this the Australians fraternised to a marked degree with the Scots. The independent and democratic outlook of both peoples gave them a strong affinity, and many Australians spent their leave in Scotland. Bean, *Anzac to Amiens*, p269.

Of course the favourite sport of both diggers and jocks was to make fun of the accursed English upper class officers!

The Scottish National War Memorial in Edinburgh Castle is almost spooky in its commemoration of the fallen warrior. Like the Shrines of Remembrance in Sydney and Melbourne the Scottish National War Memorial is grand in scale, heavy with symbolism, deeply religious and awe inspiring in its remembrance. Indeed, these three capital city shrines, found nowhere else in the world are silent witness to the fact that Scotland and Australia took the commemoration of their fallen deep into their national identities far more than any other group involved in the Great War.

At the unveiling of the Menin Gate in 1927 a lone piper played *Flowers of the Forest*, the sixteenth century Scottish dirge lamenting the loss of young men in battle. In like manner a lone piper, high on Edinburgh Castle plays *Flowers of the Forest* to conclude the world renowned Edinburgh Military Tattoo. Scotland the brave salutes her fallen warriors.

*The flowers of the forest, that
Fought aye the foremost,
The prime of our land lie cauld in the clay.*

Visitors from Australia and New Zealand present at the tattoo need no explanation. Deep in their hearts they know exactly what it all means.

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To a small primary school boy, the massive tomes of the *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918* seemed to take up the entire wall of the school library. The dark maroon volumes, each with gold lettering commanded a sense of awe and reverence. We never touched them for we just knew that they were sacred writings, the holy writ that recorded our deeds of valour and our achievement of national glory.

In the years since I have never met anyone who has actually read the entire work and that is understandable. You would have to be a complete military enthusiast to plough through the twelve volumes that took Charles Bean and others more than 20 years to write.

However if you flick over all the military detail you can find some gems of candour and honesty that are most revealing about Bean and his generation. You can download chapters of the *Official History* from the Australian War Memorial website: www.awm.gov.au

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Downing, W. H. *To The Last Ridge*. Sydney, Australia: Duffy & Snellgrove, 1998. Originally published in 1920 then 'lost' for almost seventy years, this powerful memoir is sometimes said to be Australia's *All Quiet on the Western Front* but unlike Remarque, Downing never seems to lose that naïve, boyish enthusiasm for the war so common among members of the AIF.

Lynch, E. P. F. (Ed. Will Davies). *Somme Mud – The War Experiences of an Australian Infantryman in France 1916-1919*. Sydney, Australia: Random House, 2006. Another very powerful memoir by an Australian. Lynch spent his life post war as a school teacher.

Davies, Will. *In the Footsteps of Private Lynch*. Sydney, Australia: Random House, 2008. An example of someone following in the footsteps of a First World War digger. Following just one soldier has its limitations as no one Australian soldier participated in anything like all the battles of the Western Front. Davies researched battalion diaries and informs us when *Somme Mud* is a memoir and when Lynch had to draw on other sources.

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Hartnett, H. G. *Over the Top – A digger’s story of the Western Front*. Sydney, Australia: Allen & Unwin, 2009. First published over 90 years after the First World War ended, Hartnett’s manuscript is a very detailed account of the experience of an Australian soldier on the Western Front.

Johnston, George. *My Brother Jack*. London, UK: Collins, 1964. A classic of Australian literature. Semi autobiographical account of growing up in Australia after the Great War. Both Johnston’s parents served on the Western Front. Johnston himself was a distinguished war correspondent in the Second World War.

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The Photographic Record

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Cochrane, Peter. *The Western Front 1916-1918*. Sydney, Australia: ABC Books, 2004.

Reid, Richard. *1917 – Australians on the Western Front - Ypres*. Canberra, Australia: Department of Veterans’ Affairs, Commonwealth of Australia, 2007.

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The Red Baron

Newton, Dennis. *Spectre of the Red Baron: Parts 1 & 2.* Journal of the Australian War Memorial, N^o 8, April 1986 and N^o 9, October 1986. Australian War Memorial.

Wohl, Robert. *The War Lover.* MHQ: Quarterly Journal of Military History, Vol 9, N^o 4 1997. American Historical Publications.

War: Its Commemoration and Sanctification

Inglis, K. S. *Sacred Places. War Memorials in the Australian Landscape.* Melbourne, Australia: Melbourne University Press, 1998. (Revised edition, 2008) This is the classic study of Australian war memorials and what they reveal about Australia and its history.

Seal, Graham. *Inventing Anzac. The Digger and National Mythology.* St Lucia, Australia: University of Queensland Press, 2004. In this academic study historian Graham Seal goes right back to primary sources to trace the establishment and evolution of the Digger and Anzac mythologies which are such an important part of Australia's identity. Seal finds delightful treasures in trench newspapers, digger jokes, verses from the front line, soldier diaries and memoirs, songs, music and parody. He also finds some strange twists in the evolution of our national legends.

Mosse, George L. *Fallen Soldiers – Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars.* New York, USA: Oxford University Press, 1990. This highly regarded study looks at war and its sanctification. It shows how survivors and following generations created myths and legends about the war experience and turned them into a religious cult. Australia gets only an occasional mention but if you look around you can see that in Australia the cult of the fallen warrior continues to flourish as nowhere else.

Fussell, Paul. *The Great War and Modern Memory.* New York, USA: Oxford University Press, 1975. (25th Anniversary Edition, 2000.) Second World War infantry officer and professor of English literature traces the impact of the First World War through the writings of ordinary soldiers, war poets and various literary figures. This work is best suited to students of advanced English.

Ferguson, Niall. *The Pity of War.* London, UK: Penguin Books, 1999.

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Billett, Major R. S. *War Trophies from the First World War, 1914-1918.* Sydney, Australia: Kangaroo Press, 1999.

Guides to Australian Battlefields of the Western Front

Laffin, John. *Guide to Australian Battlefields of the Western Front.* Sydney, Australia: Kangaroo Press and Australian War Memorial, 1992. (revised edition 1999). Second World War veteran John Laffin was a most prolific writer/historian on Australia's war experience. He produced over 40 military titles as well as books on Geography, the French Foreign Legion and Middle East politics! However his chief interest was the Western Front where both his parents had served during the First World War. Laffin lived in France for many years and spent many days touring the battlefields meticulously researching Australia's role. Though now out of print and a little dated, Laffin's book remains the authority on Australian battlefields of the Western Front.

McLachlan, Mat. *Walking with the Anzacs.* Sydney, Australia: Headline, 2007. This is an up to date guide for Australian war enthusiasts wishing to walk the old battlefields. The emphasis is on battle

locations, war cemeteries and the deeds of the Anzacs in the locality. McLachlan's book is an easy to follow on-road guide for those keen on military history. See www.battlefields.com.au

Stanley, Peter. *A Stout Pair of Boots – A guide to exploring Australia's battlefields.* Sydney, Australia: Allen & Unwin, 2008. This practical book is for serious battlefield enthusiasts. Judging by the hairy experiences with map and compass the author had on battlefields elsewhere in the world, doing battlefield site studies on the Western Front would be pretty easy! However don't go wandering in the fields during the European summer growing season. French and Belgian farmers will not be pleased. Also watch out during September and October. Those same French and Belgian farmers will be out duck shooting!

Somme Tourist Board. *The Visitor's Guide to the Battlefields.* Amiens, France: Comité du Tourisme de la Somme, 2004. A most useful brief summary in English of sacred places of all allied nations in the Somme Valley.

Reid, Richard. *'Beaucoup Australiens ici' - The Australian Corps in France 1918 (Revised Ed).* Canberra, Australia: Commonwealth of Australia, 2000.

Hutchinson, Garrie. *Pilgrimage – A Traveller's Guide to Australia's Battlefields.* Melbourne, Australia: Black Inc, 2006. A worldwide battlefields guide in the heroic genre. A massive book with the same old bias: 63 pages for Gallipoli, 53 for the whole of the Western Front. The cover says: *Ideal for armchair travellers and lovers of history.*

Laffin, John. *The Battle of Hamel.* Sydney, Australia: Kangaroo Press, 1999.

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Understanding the French

The Political Warfare Executive. *Instructions for British Servicemen in France – 1944.* London, England: The Foreign Office, 1944. (Reprinted by the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, 2005)

Turnbull, Sarah. *Almost French.* Sydney, Australia: Bantam Books, 2002. This is the hilarious story of an Australian journalist who travels to France, marries a Frenchman and becomes almost French.

Clarke, Stephen. *Talk to the Snail – Ten Commandments for Understanding the French.* UK: Bantam Press, 2006.

Wadham, Lucy. *The Secret Life of France.* London, UK: Faber & Faber, 2009.

All these books are a delightful way of understanding France and the French and in the process exposing our own prejudices and perspectives. See also <http://www.understandingfrance.org>

Bouvet, Christian and Lambin, Jean-Michel (Eds). *Histoire/Géographie 3e.* Paris, France: Hachette, 2006.

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Understanding England

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Keneally, Thomas. *The Commonwealth of Thieves.* Sydney, Australia: Random House, 2005.

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Knightley, Phillip. *Australia – Biography of a Nation.* London, UK: Jonathan Cape, 2000.

Mackay, Hugh. *Reinventing Australia.* Sydney, Australia: Pan Macmillan, 1993.

Mackay, Hugh. *Advance Australia...Where?* Sydney, Australia: Hachette, 2007.

Bryson, Bill. *Down Under.* New York, USA: Doubleday, 2000.

Ward, Russell. *The Australian Legend.* Melbourne, Australia: Oxford University Press, 1958.

Hirst, John. *The Australians.* Melbourne, Australia: Black Inc., 2007.

The Gospels of Independent Travel

Wheeler, Tony. *Across Asia on the Cheap.* Melbourne, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications, 1973.

Wheeler, Tony. *South East Asia on a Shoestring.* Melbourne, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications, 1975.

These two books changed my life. They inspired the adventure of independent travel – making our own way, making our own discoveries, connecting with local people, rejoicing in the journey as much as in the destination. In our youth these books sent Joy & me backpacking across Asia and Europe and they continue today to inspire the delight of going out on a voyage of discovery. Of course we, like Lonely Planet publications have got a bit older, have gone a bit upmarket and we are not as short of money as we were then. And we confess that, again like Lonely Planet books we are not as slim as the originals!

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