

Forever yours

STORIES OF WARTIME LOVE AND FRIENDSHIP



Some of the stories in this collection relate to material from the Australian War Memorial's special exhibition of *Love and War*. This theme has been explored in depth in a further resource for teachers, with classroom activities for senior students, entitled *We'll meet again–Australian stories of love in wartime*. This is available online at www.dva.gov.au

Forever yours – stories of wartime love and friendship – 2011

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Forever yours

STORIES OF WARTIME LOVE AND FRIENDSHIP

Written by Robyn Siers and Heather Tregoning-Lawrence



AWM 138252 [detail]

AWM REL12479

*Three things will last forever:
faith, hope, and love, and the
greatest of these is love.*



AWM PO4243.002 [detail]

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Note to the reader:

These stories take place during wartime. Many of them have happy endings, but some are sad, and you may feel upset after reading them. Teachers may wish to be sensitive to those students reading these stories who have parents serving overseas in war zones.



Private image

Introduction

The story of war is one of conflict and battles, of training, technology, and tactics, but at its centre, it is a story of people – ordinary people trying to live their lives in extraordinary circumstances.

During wartime, emotions become more intense, and people often take chances when unsure of what the future holds. When romance blossoms, some marry soon after. Some leave their homes, families or countries to be with the one they love. Letters, photographs, and gifts become important expressions of love during times of separation.

Love takes many forms. There is the love of a parent, and concern for the safety of their children, the love between brothers, sisters, partners, and friends, and the devotion between a pet and its master. For many during wartime, a patriotic love for their country underpins their military service. Loyalty to mates leads to selfless acts of courage. Some devote themselves to helping others, and some take hope and comfort from their strong spiritual beliefs.

Here you will find the personal stories of ordinary Australians who knew what it was to love, and be loved, and lose love during wartime.



Remember me

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How do you send love and hope across great distances and through years of separation and loneliness? How do you say goodbye when it may be forever?

During wartime, 'staying in touch' by whatever means possible, is of great importance to friends and families, separated from those they love and facing an uncertain future. Postcards, letters, trinkets, and souvenirs take on deeper meaning and help to ease the loneliness and isolation. Photographs are carried through years of conflict or imprisonment as a constant reminder of home, happiness, and distant loved ones.

One day when you are in Melb darl get me another one of your photos I have in my wallet. I am afraid the one I have will get rather Knocked about + I want one of them when I come home. Gee darl I love you + would you swap all the photographs in the world if I could be with you again.

Gunner Edgar Marchant to his wife, Ida, 13 January 1943

Edward Duncan Hood, from Victoria, was married with three children when he enlisted in the army in February 1916. By August he was in France, serving with the 29th **Battalion, AIF**. His wife, Phoebe, received gifts and letters from him, including a delicate silk embroidered handkerchief. In his pocket Private Hood carried a small blurry photo of his family. It showed Phoebe and the children: Pearl, Margaret, and young Edward, with Edward himself inserted in the background. His wife wrote a message on the back:

Dear Dunk, I am sending you a photo, don't laugh at it. We have all had a good laugh at it ... Let me know when you get it. I hope you receive it safe and don't get a fright.

She proudly wore her Female Relatives' Badge given in recognition of Edward's service. To it she attached a small 'sweetheart' brooch, given to her by her husband, which represented the **colour patch** worn by members of the 29th Battalion on their uniform sleeves. Sadly, Edward would never again join them in person. The photograph, along with several other personal items, was returned to Mrs Hood after her husband's death in France, on 27 October 1916.



Opposite:
The photographic postcard of the Hood family. AWM P09630.001

Souvenir cream silk handkerchief Edward Hood sent home to Australia to his wife, Phoebe, in 1916. AWM REL/02896.002



Phoebe Hood's Female Relatives' Badge with 29th Battalion colour patch brooch. AWM REL/02893.002



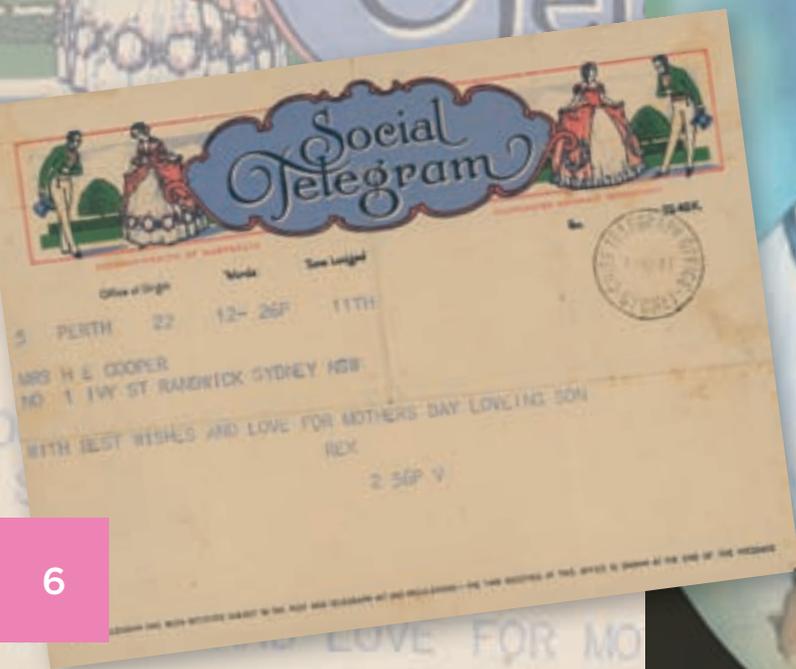
Lois Henriksen's silver brooch cut from an Australian florin. AWM REL27148.001

The pendant worn by Private Robert George Towers during the Second World War. AWM REL27148.002

For loved ones waiting at home, a cherished **keepsake** may be just what is needed to ease the pain of separation. Jewellery has often been given as an expression of love, and the wearing of a ring, brooch or necklace from a loved one is a public display of commitment and devotion.

Before leaving for service in Malaya in 1941, Private Robert Towers, from Victoria, made a **brooch** for his girlfriend, Miss Lois Fay Henriksen. He had carefully cut the **coat of arms** out of a coin and attached a clasp to its back so that she could wear it; he wore the corresponding outer part of the cut-out coin around his neck with his identity discs. Robert promised Lois that when the two parts were reunited, the war would be over, and he would be home to be with her forever.

In Malaya, Towers was captured by the Japanese, and Lois lost all contact with him. After the war, while working in a hospital treating men who had been prisoners of war, she met a soldier who had been with Robert in the prison camp in Japan. Lois discovered that he had died of illness in November 1943. His personal items were sent home to his mother – among them was the other part of Lois's brooch.



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Mrs Cooper received this telegram greeting from Rex on Mothers' Day in 1941.

AWM PRO1950

Rex Cooper sent this studio portrait to his mother, with the message, 'To Dear Mother, Love from x Rex x'.

AWM P03645.001

During the Second World War, HMAS *Sydney* was the pride of the Royal Australian Navy. When *Sydney* returned to Australia in February 1941, she received a hero's welcome, having sunk an enemy cruiser and destroyer in the Mediterranean during the previous year. One young sailor aboard, Able Seaman Rex Albert Cooper, had already served on the ship for three years and was glad to be back in home waters. In his diary, he wrote of overseas action around Colombo, Alexandria and Crete, but now he looked forward to getting back to Sydney to see his mum and dad, Harriet and John Cooper.

After several months on patrol and escort duties, the *Sydney* was on her return voyage home to Fremantle when, on 19 November, she was involved in a desperate battle with a German raider *Kormoran*. Both ships were badly damaged and burning, and the German sailors were forced to abandon ship. They watched the *Sydney* disappear into the night until it became a distant glow on the horizon. Neither *Sydney* nor any of the 645 men on board – including 21-year-old Able Seaman Cooper – were ever seen again.

Mr and Mrs Cooper always treasured the memory of their son, and kept the letters and photographs he had sent home.

Today keeping in touch with people, even those far away is quick and easy, with the use of mobile telephones, email, and blogs. This was not so for the thousands of Australian servicemen and women during wartime last century. They relied on the postal service, and letters and parcels could take weeks or months to reach their destination. The uncertainty felt by those away at war, and those waiting at home, was relieved only by news and tokens of love.

When I came down to the mess a few minutes ago I was absolutely miserable ... then the mail arrived with two for me, I could have kissed the guy who brought it. I never knew mail could be so important.

Telegraphist Jack Swift (HMS *Formidable*) to his wife, Beth, 20 July 1945

Letters formed the basis of many romantic relationships as couples waited and hoped to be reunited once the war was over. Private Reginald Dawson of the 17th Battalion became firm friends with a British soldier, Private George Hill, during his service overseas in the First World War. After his return home to Sydney, Reg continued to write to George, and over time, his letters extended to other members of the Hill family, including George's younger sister, Daisy. Friendship turned to love, and after several years of long-distance courtship via the post, Reg wrote, asking Daisy to marry him. She accepted his proposal, and made the long trip to Australia to meet him in person for the first time. In 1926 they married.



Daisy kept this postcard photograph and message from Reg by her bedside. (private image)

Reg and Daisy Dawson on their wedding day in Sydney in 1926. (private image)

For many Australians, wartime service also brought the opportunity to travel to distant lands and experience different cultures. Exotic gifts sent back home were a way of sharing these experiences. During the First World War, embroidered silk postcards, purchased in France bore messages and greetings for loved ones back home: *'Forget me not ...'; 'Best kisses ...'; 'Remember me love while away ...'*

Private John Charles Arney worked as a motor mechanic before enlisting in the army at the start of the Second World War in 1939. He embarked for overseas service on the transport ship *Orcades*, arriving in Egypt in February 1940. Shortly afterwards, he posted a small velveteen souvenir doll home to Ethel May Regan. After the war, John and Ethel were married.



Ethel Regan's souvenir *Orcades* sailor doll.
AWM REL34431.001

Lieutenant Colonel Albert Coates began his military service as a medical orderly on Gallipoli in 1915. After the First World War he returned to Australia and studied medicine, and when the Second World War broke out he was appointed as Senior Surgeon to the **Second AIF** in Malaya. During his time as a prisoner of war of the Japanese, he worked tirelessly to help his sick and dying fellow prisoners under dreadful conditions. He made this wooden frame to hold a photograph of his family which he carried as a constant reminder of home. After the war Coates returned to Melbourne and resumed his distinguished medical career. AWM REL/18564





Embroidered silk postcard made in France during the First World War.
AWM SC00203

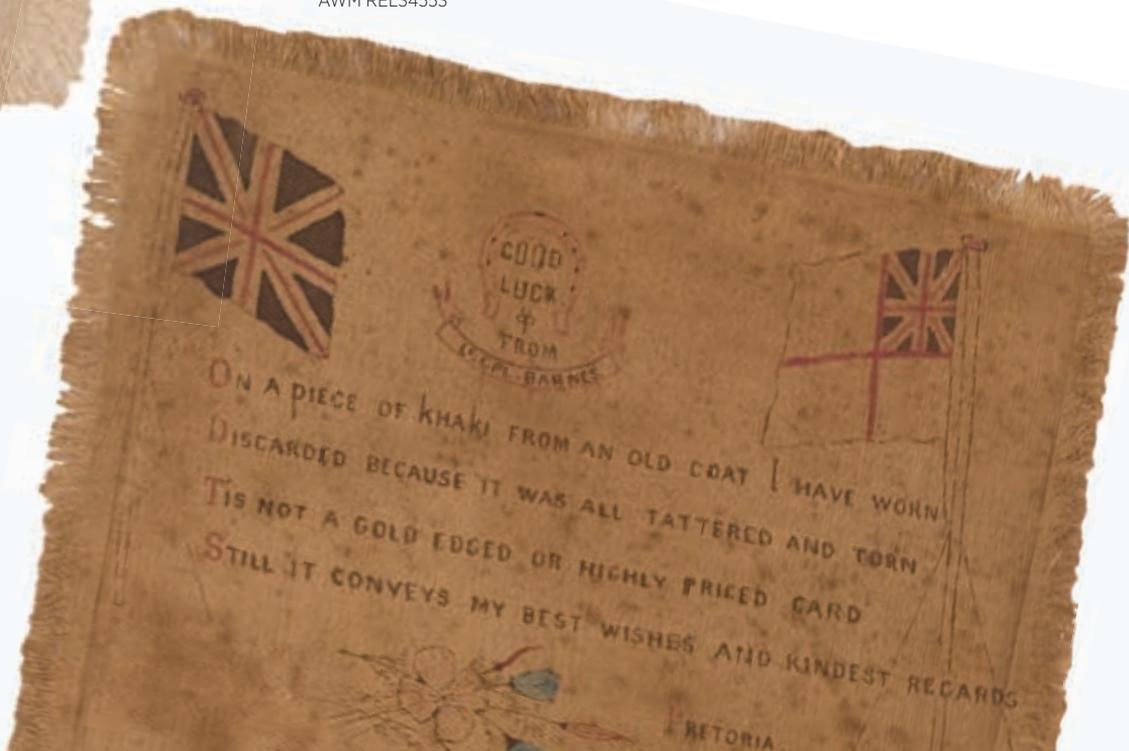
Staff Sergeant Clive Oliver carried this cameo pendant during his captivity in Thailand and Burma during the Second World War. It shows a profile of his wife Rita, and is hand carved from a **betel nut**. At the end of the war, Oliver returned home to his wife and two children. AWM REL33445



Sometimes soldiers had to use whatever material they could find to send letters home. Lance Corporal Edward Charles Barnes wrote a poem on a scrap torn from a khaki uniform and sent it home from Pretoria in South Africa to his wife, Elizabeth, in 1901:

*Good luck from LC CPL Barnes
On a piece of khaki from an old coat I have worn
Discarded because it was all tattered and torn
Tis not a gold edged or highly priced card
Still it conveys my best wishes and kindest regards
Pretoria*

AWM REL34553



A mother's love

Jack Edmondson and his mother were very close. In a letter to a friend, Maude wrote of her son:

Absolutely impossible to get him disturbed or ruffled in any way. I have never seen him in a temper in his whole but short life, a stickler for duty at all costs. Jack and I had a wonderfully happy life together, from his tiny days to the day of his going away.

John Hurst Edmondson, was the only child of Joseph and Maude, who were farmers, first near Wagga Wagga, New South Wales, then in Liverpool on the outskirts of Sydney. In May 1940, aged 26, Jack enlisted in the army. Well built and tall, he settled well into military life and was known as a quiet and efficient soldier.

Shortly after the outbreak of the Second World War, Mrs Edmondson had begun to keep a diary. In it, she wrote detailed accounts of the day-to-day activities on the farm at "Forest Home", and later, news reports of the battles being fought in North Africa by the 9th Division, of which Jack's unit, the 2/17th Battalion, was a part. Snippets from her diary tell the story of a mother's love and a son's bravery.

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8 January 1940

INTRODUCTION

At Jack's suggestion I am writing this. Both he and I are to write a few lines each day if possible, or as often as we conveniently can, then later the little events and so on that I put down can be read by him and so pick up a little of the home life that he shall miss while away.

Firstly, as a refresher, war was declared on Sunday evening 3rd September 1939. Jack being in the militia reported for duty immediately. Camping on low grounds and getting damp, together with night duty brought on the old dreaded bronchial asthma. Knew that Jack had been ill when he had his week-ends home, although he tried to evade the question saying he was alright. I found at night he had difficulty with his breathing.

Sat 20 April 1940

Jack and I spent a very happy day. We went to the city as usual, no fixed plan and then did just what we felt inclined to do. Sometimes we would visit a church or a picture theatre or the gardens. Today we saw the Mauritania at the wharf then went to Manly chiefly to pass close to the Queen Mary. I thought the ship wonderful. Jack made no comment.

Sat 4 May 1940

Whilst awaiting at the station, troop trains were continually going through and had been since early morning. A wretched man sitting near me kept up a continual talk continually repeating,



THREE YEARS, THREE MONTHS.—Playing all day long on the farm, Jack became friendly with the animals. He caught rabbits and made them his pets. He was keen on horses and his father bought him a pony, Black Bess, which became his companion.

AWM PR89/056

"They won't come home, none of them". In despair I asked him not to say it, as we all hoped so much they would, all of them. Thinking to end him, I said, "My son is going." His reply was, "Well, I don't care, he won't come back either." I just counted my knitting stitches as well as I could and got my back around to him.

Sun 9 June 1940

Jack and I had a long walk this afternoon. He for some reason looks forward to a long walk by ourselves each week if possible. It seems so good and restful away in the paddocks among the trees.

Sun 16 June 1940

Today we took afternoon tea to the camp. Had a lovely time together. Jack got cordials and we went into a paddock. I took quite a basket; cream puffs, a ginger sponge with cream filling, sandwiches, scones etc. Also extra cakes I had made for the hut. There was a rumour in the camp that France has surrendered. I think it shall prove correct ...

Sun 4 August 1940

*Jack tossed 6 pounds on my bed this morning before I was up. I didn't want to take it but he asked me to and said to do the things that he used to do ... Go to the pictures, have lunch and let it be his shout as usual, so I took it. It can keep until he gets back. I had never got a **snap** of Jack in his uniform as he doesn't like snaps of himself as a rule. Today we can't catch sun between the clouds, but never the less I took several little snaps ...*

Sat 5 October 1940

Jack's [final] leave over today. He left home this morning about 10am. I did not go with him to Liverpool this time or to the city. I thought it best for him as I know the ordeal when saying good bye. He asked me to promise him "that I will put up a good fight". Then he said "Mother it may be harder for you than you think". We were both upset, then he said "Mother keep your chin up". He got into the car and pulled himself together. Leaned out and gave me a salute, called out "Good luck" and off.

Tues 8 October 1940

Jack's birthday

Fri 18 October 1940

Jack's letter this morning said "embarking tomorrow on Queen Mary".

Sat 16 November 1940

First letter from Jack since his leaving Australia, Air mail posted Bombay, rather expensive postage. It was a long letter and heavy, written during the course of the voyage. He had a wonderful trip, no sea sickness, uneventful and no excitement.

Wed 18 December 1940

Every week I post bundles of papers and send parcels but so far cannot hear of anything arriving ...

Sun 22 December 1940

Beautiful day but I have been very miserable no one can imagine how I miss Jack, particularly on Sundays when we had our walks and talks and supper at night ...

Wed 25 December 1940

Fancy Xmas day – nothing could feel less like it. The day is glorious, but I think we both felt miserable. The paper says the boys are spending their Xmas day in Bethlehem and Jerusalem.



FOUR YEARS, SIX MONTHS.—The armistice is signed (November 11, 1918), and Jack is four. When the news of the armistice was known, Mrs. Edmondson explained to an absorbed child the story of the British Empire, and significance of the Union Jack.

AWM PR89/056

I don't think, yet I wonder shall Jack be home next Xmas. Tonight I don't feel an optimist.

Wed 1 January 1941

Another year commencing. I fear it promises to be a worse year than the last.

Fri 24 January 1941

Good news today a cable from Jack saying he is well, but he never has said that he has received a letter. I do wish he could get his mails ...

Fri 4 April 1941

The paper says – Germans attacking and our troops are being driven back. Germans have entered Bengh[ha]zi. I feel so very fearful as I know how little Jack spares himself. He would so completely forget himself as if he just did not count. I get the shivers when I think of it and there is no one I can even talk to. I would not worry JW. (Joseph William, Jack's father)

Sun 6 April 1941

Palm Sunday and had another dreadful day. I seem to feel there is something going to happen.

Mon 14 April 1941

I shall never forget today. It started off so badly and the whole day has been a continuation and to make it worse Stuffy the cat for some reason joined in, he came in and simply howled ... I then let him into the dining room thinking he would settle down, but he simply ran from room to room ... I just could not stand it so I caught him and sat him on a little table outside the back door... apparently he went off somewhere as he wasn't here for his tea and has not come inside tonight.

Fri 18 April 1941

*Nothing going right yet. For no reason the car will never start ... Fighting terrific in Greece, and North Africa not so good. I dread the casualty list also the heaviest air raid over London to date. Account in the Herald of heavy fighting and much use of **bayonet** at Tobruk. Also gives an account of a charge in which a Lieutenant and a Corporal took prominent parts on Easter Sunday night. Of course no names. When I read it I passed it onto JW and told him I was just sure the Corporal was Jack. He would neither agree or otherwise but I have read it several times and saved the cutting as I know the Corporal is Jack. It said no casualties but never the less, I know also that all is not well with Jack. Stuffy hasn't turned up yet. JW has looked around and called for him but he has not come home yet.*

Sat 19 April 1941

*Cleaned all the house thoroughly. Working and keeping going I find is best of all. Still action in Tobruk and the Australians are fighting a **rearguard action** in Greece. It is all wrong and to me seems dreadful. JW takes it more casual.*

Wed 23 April 1941

*I seem to have had a dreadful time of it and feel quite weak and ill. Got a letter today from Jack dated 30-3-41 and for the first time he said the conditions were bad. The food short and water one bottle for 48 hours. I think it is a **pint**. It worried me terribly so I went to Liverpool this afternoon and posted a parcel of **Horlicks** milk tablets, chocolate, milk, biscuits and cigarettes.*

Fri 25 April 1941

Got up early and made 2 rich fruit cakes for Jack, and shall go in and post the parcel in the morning. I am feeling afraid of something all the while I was working and packing cake etc, had a couple of brandys to tide me along. Jack asked me to keep notes and he would do the same.



"Forest Home" near Liverpool, New South Wales.
AWM PR89/056

I am afraid that mine are a dismal failure but nothing happy has even happened for so long. All seems to have gone wrong with me. It is very much wrong in North Africa too.

Sat 26 April 1941

Received the following telegram in the mail, the bus man brought it in,

It is with deep regret that I have to inform you that NX 15705 Corporal John Hurst Edmondson was killed in action on the 14th April and desire to convey the profound sympathy of the Ministry for the Army and the military board.

Minister for the Army

P Spender

April 26th 41

Received notice Jack killed in action 14th April 1941.



Mr and Mrs Edmondson receive the Victoria Cross awarded to their son Jack. AWM PR89/056

Maude Edmondson's premonition on 14 April proved to be correct. The day before, Jack was involved in a charge against the enemy at Tobruk in North Africa. The Australians were outnumbered, but despite being badly wounded himself, he bravely defended his **platoon** commander against an attack by two enemy soldiers. His commander, Lieutenant Frederick Austin Mackell survived, but Jack died the next morning on 14 April 1941.

For his extreme bravery, which undoubtedly saved his commander's life, Corporal Edmondson was **posthumously** awarded the **Victoria Cross**. His parents received the news of his award on 4 July 1941, and that was one of the final entries in Maude's diary. Her son's heroism was widely acclaimed and newspapers around Australia featured articles and stories of his bravery. Maude kept many of these and pasted them in a scrapbook. Among them, a small cutting recounted the depth of a mother's love:

Of course I am proud of him. I have always been proud of him. In a way, this great honour seems futile. I would rather have my son.



After his death, Jack Edmondson's story was widely recounted in the Australian media. AWM 044622



The medals awarded to Corporal John Hurst Edmondson: (left to right) Victoria Cross, 1939-1945 Star, Africa Star, War Medal 1939-1945, Australian Service Medal 1939-1945.

AWM REL31948.001-005



The headstone of Private Jack Hunter sits alongside those of the other four soldiers found buried with Jack in June 2006. (Peter Bennett)
AWM P07023.001

Studio portrait of Private Jack Hunter on the left and his brother Private Jim Hunter on the right, 1916.
AWM P05939.002



Lost for 90 years

Jack and Jim Hunter sat down under a tree to water their horses and have a quick bite to eat before continuing their journey. They still had six hours of riding ahead of them before they would see their old homestead again.

Back in 1914 when the call to war rang out across Australia, thousands of eager young men joined the queues outside recruitment offices in high spirits, ready to sign up for the big adventure. Like many others, the brothers had been keen to go, but their excited talk of overseas travel was soon cut short by their father, Harry. He had argued that they were needed more at home than they were for the war. Being a pioneering family in outback Queensland, near the small town of Nanango, meant that all the family were needed to help on the property. Their father's timber business was just starting to thrive, but his health wasn't the best. Still grieving the loss of his wife, Emily, which had left him to raise the seven children, he relied on his boys to help him, particularly his eldest son Jack, who was his right hand man.

Jack managed the timber interests, the cattle, bullock and horse teams, a mill, and the steam **traction engines** and **winch**.

Everyone was saying that the war was likely to be over by Christmas, and it seemed a waste of time to go through all that effort just to come home again in a few months, so the boys had obeyed their father's wishes.

But the war didn't finish at Christmas, and throughout the next year the brothers followed with great interest the story of the **Anzacs** fighting on **Gallipoli**. They felt torn between wanting to do their bit to help their country, and doing what was needed for their family. When the Australians withdrew from Gallipoli and started fighting in France, along the **Western Front**, the number of casualties rose sharply. Jim felt that he could no longer stay at home, and so on 20 October 1916 he signed up. He was 25 and did not need his father's permission to join the army. Jack didn't want his younger brother to go to war without him, so he signed up two days later.

They finished their initial training and went on their final leave with only six days off before they needed to report back to their commanding officer. The trip home had already taken 15 hours by train, and they were only half-way through the 12 hour ride that followed. There

Troops on board HMAT *Ayrshire* as it departs Port Melbourne, some holding paper streamers connecting them to well-wishers on the wharf. AWM PB0165

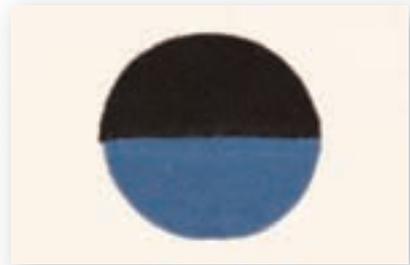


really wasn't going to be much time for their plans to muster and sell cattle, transfer property, and see friends and relatives. It was December and starting to heat up, so despite enjoying their rest in the shade, they needed to get going, as home was still a long way off.

It was wonderful to see their family again. Sisters Polly, Daisy, and May, and younger brothers Archie and Bill all crowded around, vying with each other for their big brothers' attention. While there was a sense of celebration, it was overshadowed by the unexpressed fear, that they may never come home again. They had all seen the long lists in the paper, the names of those who would never return and the messages of sorrow and grief from their families left behind.

Jack took time to make a private farewell to the girl he had promised to marry. Now he needed to make a new promise – that he would keep himself safe so he could come back to her. But he also made a promise to his little brother Jim that he would look out for him. They would go on this adventure together and he would keep Jim safe.

The town sent them off in style with a presentation evening and public farewell for both the Hunter brothers, and for two other local boys, Phil Therkeisen and Dan Buckley, who were also at home on their final leave. What none of these four realised that night was that one of them would never return.



Colour patch for the 49th Battalion, AIF. Every serviceman wore a distinctive colour patch on the shoulder of their uniform to identify which unit they belonged to.

AWM RELAWM13307.115



Polygon Wood and Nonne Boschen, Louis McCubbin, 1919. AWM ART03148



The area around Polygon Wood the day before the battle. A group of the 13th Australian Light Horse Machine Gun Company man a machine-gun. The wooden cross in the shell hole identifies the burial site of an unknown soldier. AWM E00807

During their training, Jack and Jim were inseparable. Jim was promoted to lance corporal, but when he discovered he would be separated from his brother, he happily returned to the rank of private to stay with Jack. In late January 1917, they embarked on the troopship *HMAT Ayrshire* for the long journey to the other side of the world. By the time the brothers arrived to take their place fighting on the Western Front, almost a year had passed since they first signed up. They joined the 49th Battalion, made up mostly of Queenslanders, stationed in Belgium, in an area that came to be known as Flanders fields.

What Jack and Jim saw around them was truly horrific. The landscape had been blown apart and the constant rain had turned the area into a **quagmire**. Miles of wooden **duckboards** were laid over the mud, but they could see how difficult it was to move the troops across these boards, and they wondered how they could ever move supplies through the mud. They were told that the **artillery** was having trouble maintaining its accuracy as every time the guns fired they would sink a little bit further into the thick mud.

In late September 1917, shortly after settling in to the routine of their new lives, Jack and Jim received word that they would be moving up to the frontline, ready to fight in their first battle. The area they had to capture from the Germans was called Polygon Wood and hidden amongst the trees were reinforced concrete bunkers known as pillboxes. The Australians moved into their positions under cover of darkness at 1.30am; the attack would start before dawn.

In the early morning light, Jack was ordered out into **no man's land** to retrieve a piece of metal that was reflecting light into the eyes of the troops further along the trench. While he was out, he was hit by **shrapnel**. Badly wounded, he managed to crawl back to the trench where Jim was waiting for him. However, unable to get the medical assistance his injuries required, Jack died in his brother's arms soon afterwards. The battle, and Jack's life, was over before breakfast.

Devastated, Jim wrapped him carefully in his groundsheet, tied it up with wire, and buried him in a temporary cemetery near the little township of Westhoek, along with four others who had been killed that day. Jim's battalion was relieved the next day and moved out, so he had to leave his brother behind.

The war continued and, despite being wounded and gassed, Jim fought on without Jack. But his brother's death was a heavy burden on him. As soon as the fighting stopped, Jim returned to Westhoek, and tried to find Jack's grave. His dearest wish was that he could bring his big brother home again. As he looked out over the battlefield where they had been two years earlier, the weed strewn landscape bore little resemblance to the muddy battlefield he remembered. He was unaware that a road had been built over the place where he had buried Jack; he may even have walked right over his grave without realising.



Menin Gate at midnight [detail], Will Longstaff, 1927. AWM ART09807

Menin Gate at midnight was painted by Will Longstaff to commemorate those soldiers (like Jack Hunter) with no marked graves on the Western Front during the First World War. The painting shows the spirits of the dead rising up around the Memorial.

Jim returned home to Australia; his grieving father thought Jim should go back and continue to try to find Jack's grave, but he was never able to do so. Eventually Jim had the life his brother never did, marrying the matron of the Nanango hospital, Esme Butler, and having a family of six children. But he never forgot his brother, often talking about him and the friendship they shared. In the last moments of his life, Jim called out for his brother Jack.

In 1927, ten years after Jack's death, the **Menin Gate** Memorial was built in Belgium. The inscription on it reads:

Here are recorded names of 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.

Jack's name was one of more than 50,000 that went on the Memorial, over 6,000 of them belonging to Australians.

In June 2006, the remains of five First World War soldiers were found when a road was dug up to lay a new gas pipeline in Belgium. The remnants of their uniforms identified them as Australian, so some Australian archaeologists were contacted to excavate the remains. Upon examination of the five bodies, one stood out from the others. He had been placed carefully in the grave, his hands crossed over his heart, and his body methodically wrapped up in a groundsheet. They knew when they saw this, that he had been buried by someone who loved him.

There were no personal effects found that could help identify the five soldiers, but painstaking research from the Army History Unit narrowed down the possibilities to seven individuals. These seven names were published around Australia in the hope of finding living relatives who could supply samples of DNA to identify the five sets of remains. Mollie Millis saw the names and wondered whether the 'John Hunter' that was listed was her Uncle Jack, as he would have enlisted under his proper name John, rather than his nickname. Her DNA correctly identified Jack's remains, and the Hunter family finally felt they had an end to this wartime story. Jim's son, Harry, had hoped that they could at last follow his grandfather's wishes and bring Jack home, but he was to stay forever in the country where he had fought and died.

On **Remembrance Day** 2007, 90 years after Jack Hunter was killed, he was **reinterred** at Buttes New British Cemetery in Polygon Wood. Sprigs of wattle and a slouch hat were laid on the coffin. Mollie Millis and one of Jack's nephews, another Jim Hunter were there for the ceremony. On his tomb stone are engraved the words 'At rest after being lost for 90 years'. No longer did the Menin Gate Memorial need to bear his name. His 'known and honoured burial' was now complete.



Studio portrait of Private Jack Hunter. AWM P05939.001

A tale of two Kylies

Many different animals have played an important part in all the wars in which Australians have been involved. They have assisted with communication and transportation, and have acted as mascots, pets, and companions. In more recent conflicts, dogs have been trained to sniff out enemy weapons, ammunition, and explosives. These valuable animals are known as Explosive Detection Dogs (EDD). Handlers and dogs work, sleep, eat, and risk their lives together in wartime situations. Because of their close working relationships, it is not unusual for these dogs upon retirement to become family pets of their handlers.

One such dog is Kylie. In this interview, her handler, Corporal Adam Exelby, talks about his relationship with not one, but two special Kylies in his life.

Photograph courtesy of Adam and Kylie Exelby

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● **Adam, how long have you been in the Australian Army?
What is your job, and what do you love about it?**

I joined the army in 2002 as a combat engineer and have been employed since then as a clerk and currently as an EDD handler. Of course I love the fact that I get to work with dogs every day but I also enjoy training them to become EDDs.

● **When did you first meet your dog Kylie?**

We first met in Brisbane at 2nd Combat Engineer Regiment (2CER). She was with another handler at the time and little was I to know that in just over one and a half years I was going to be Kylie's new handler. I believe she was born in Sydney, and had been a stray that was picked up off the street.

● **Why was she chosen for training?**

She had the necessary attributes that we were looking for to make for a good working dog, i.e. a frantic retrieval drive and a perfect size.

● **What breed of dog is she, and how would you describe her? Nature, personality, likes, dislikes – that sort of thing.**

Kylie is a Kelpie cross. I would describe her as energetic, cuddly, and sometimes a bit of an extrovert, but occasionally she just needs time on her own too. She doesn't like it when someone rings the door bell as she barks a lot. She doesn't like us leaving for work in the morning, but she loves it when we arrive home in the afternoon.

● **What characteristics do you like about her?**

She loves cuddles, sings with you when you sing, and still loves her walks in the park with other dogs.

● **Does she do things that annoy you?**

When I'm cooking dinner she hangs around my feet hoping to get a scrap or two but usually after she is stepped on two or three times she gives up.

Adam and Kylie worked together to make sure the Commonwealth Games site in Melbourne was safe from explosives in 2006. Australian Defence Force image 2006021ladf8222937_04



● **Has she had any puppies?**

No, unfortunately she was de-sexed when we got her.

● **What does she like to eat?**

She still loves her dry 'Eukanuba' and her mince, but she loves chicken and anything that we humans eat. She also loves to eat her squeaky toy.

● **Describe a typical day in the life of Kylie the EDD.**

I would get to work and let Kylie out into a run which is a fenced-off grassed area. I would then take her out with me to do PT (physical exercise); usually we would go for a run for about 30 minutes. After PT, I would get Kylie ready to go out and spend the day searching at a venue. After conducting one or two 30-minute searches, we would head home with the other dogs. We would get back about 3 pm and it would be time for Kylie to have her dinner. After feeding Kylie, I would take her for a walk around a track. She got to be off-leash during this walk, so she could run freely around. Then she would go back into her kennel, where she would retire for the day, get all snug on her bed and, come night-time, go to sleep.

● **How long did she work in the army, and why did she retire?**

Kylie spent eight years in the army, which was most of her life, before she retired – which she has been now since the beginning of 2008. She retired because she reached the age most EDDs finish working. She was starting to show signs of ageing, and I think, even though a dog won't admit it because they have such a rewarding life at the kennels, she knew that retirement was just around the corner.

● **How did she come to be your pet?**

As a handler, we often get the choice to keep our working dog, and I opted to take her home to spend the rest of her days with me.

● **Is it difficult having a friendship and a working relationship with your dog, knowing that her work is sometimes dangerous and that she could get hurt?**

We are required to bond with our dog for working purposes, but over time and especially during operations, where you really value the time spent with your companion, it turns into a special friendship. This does depend on the personality of the dog, but most dogs like the comradeship.

● **Have you ever had to be away from Kylie for long periods? (E.g., quarantine, other reasons.)**

She did spend one month in quarantine after returning from Afghanistan, and I spent a couple of months away when I was on my training courses.



Photograph courtesy of Adam and Kylie Exelby.

● How do you think soldiers of the AIF in the First World War must have felt when they had to leave their horses behind on their return to Australia?

If I imagined leaving Kylie behind in Afghanistan, it would be very upsetting. It would be like leaving my best friend, deserting her without being able to explain or have her comprehend what's about to happen.

● When and how did you meet your wife, also called Kylie?

I met Kylie when I was on a training course in Sydney in 2008. I was supposed to be **deploying** that year, but my new EDD, Ivy, was injured while I was on course in Sydney. Kylie laughed loudly when I told her that my dog's name was also Kylie. When I went to work, my mates never knew which Kylie I was talking about!

● Is she in the army too?

No, but her dad was.

● How do the two Kylies get along?

My dog Kylie was living with me before I met my wife, but right from the start, my girlfriend had to understand the relationship that my dog and I had, and when she was able to appreciate this, I think the two of them started to adjust. Kylie says both she and the dog are very independent and strong willed.

My wife loves Kylie to bits but knows that I am Kylie's master. She takes her for a walk most mornings and I take her for her afternoon walk. We go out as a family to the beach on the weekends.

● What special part did your dog Kylie have to play at your wedding?

She was the ring-bearer and my 'best man'. Everyone loved it. Funny part was she became quite vocal, barking loudly, when everyone at the wedding cheered.

● How do you share one Adam between two Kylies?

My wife always comes first, but Kylie our dog is always considered whenever plans are made to go anywhere for the day. I share my time so neither gets jealous. I often get home before my wife, so I get to spend a bit of time with Kylie before my wife gets home, but I also make sure that my wife gets to spend time with the dog too.



TASMANIA MOURNS LOSS OF YOUNG HERO

10 December, 1942



Teddy with his brothers Fred and Bill, and parents James and Mary Sheean, in 1941. AWM 044155

Residents of the small town of Latrobe in northern Tasmania paid their respects to Mr and Mrs James Sheean at their family home, on hearing the news of the loss of their youngest son Edward, aged 18.

The brave young sailor lost his life when the ship in which he was serving, HMAS *Armidale*, was sunk by enemy action off Timor.

Born on 28 December 1923, in Barrington, Tasmania, Teddy Sheean moved with his family to Latrobe, where he attended the local Catholic school. After he left school, Sheean worked on farms in

the district before starting work with his father as a woodcutter and carpenter.

On 21 April 1941, Sheean joined the Royal Australian Navy as an ordinary seaman, following a similar pathway to five of his brothers, who had joined up, four in the army and one in the navy.

His training took him to Victoria, and later Sydney where he was billeted on HMAS *Kuttabul*, a small converted ferry. He escaped possible death or injury when the *Kuttabul* was sunk during the Japanese midget submarine attack on Sydney Harbour in June 1942. He was on home leave at the time.

Sheean was subsequently posted to the newly commissioned **corvette** HMAS *Armidale*, which



Thomas (Mick) and Teddy Sheean when they served together in HMAS *Derwent* in 1941. AWM 044154

carried out **escort duties** along Australia's east and north coast for several months.

Upon arrival in Darwin in October 1942, *Armidale* was given the task of resupplying and evacuating troops from Timor, which was occupied by enemy Japanese forces.

On 1 December, when standing off the coast of Timor, the *Armidale* came under air attack from Japanese bombers. The ship was severely damaged and began to sink quickly, so the captain, Lieutenant Commander David Richards, gave the order to abandon ship.

Many of the crew jumped overboard.

Sheean was wounded in the chest and back. As he stood on the deck, preparing to jump into the swirling water below, the Japanese fighter planes returned. They flew low over the wreck, firing at the men clinging to the rafts and lifeboats. A shipmate of Sheean's, Ordinary Seaman R.M. Caro, described what happened next.

"None of us who survived, I am sure, will ever forget the gallant deed that earned [Sheean] a **Mention in Despatches.**"

"When the order 'Abandon ship' was given, he made for the side, only to be hit twice by the bullets of an attacking **Zero.** The survivors at this

stage were being **strafed** in the water by the enemy."

"None of us will ever know what made him do it, but he went back to his gun, strapped himself in and brought down a Japanese plane, still firing as he disappeared beneath the waves".

Eyewitnesses recall seeing **tracer** firing skywards from the gun beneath the surface of the water as Sheean was dragged under with the ship.

Many of the survivors credit their lives to the courageous action of young Teddy Sheean. Only 49 from the 149 men on board survived the attack and subsequent ordeal in the water as they waited to be rescued.

Edward Sheean is survived by his parents, James and Mary, and their 13 children.

There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends. John 15:13



The corvette HMAS *Armidale* in Port Moresby harbour, September 1942. AWM 026612



For the love of God

If you were an Australian soldier, far from home during wartime, what would you keep in your pocket? A photograph of your family, a notebook and pencil, or perhaps some lollies? Along with all of these items, many soldiers kept a small servicemen's Bible or prayer book. They took comfort in their spiritual beliefs, trusting that, in the stress of battle, they were not alone and that God would keep them safe.

Chaplain George Jarvis wrote to his wife from the battlefields of France during the First World War:

Tuesday June 18, 1918

Yes dearest Ethel, I feel sure we can safely leave it all in God's hands. What a comfort it is to feel that, and I can tell you darling that I have realised more than once what a present comfort that is to feel one is in God's hands. When others are "windy" and ducking down and really scared, I feel the comfort of trusting in Him. PR85/389

Each service of the military – navy, army, and air force – have chaplains, or padres, as they are often called. Padre is a Spanish word meaning 'father', and it was probably originally used for Catholic priests, but now it refers to all male and female chaplains.

Padres have a unique role to play. They wear the same uniform and share the same pressures as other servicemen and women, but they are trained to bring peace, hope, and love to those they work with. Under the rules of the **Geneva Convention**, military padres are **non-combatant**, and when out on operations they wear a **Red Cross brassard** to identify them as protected people. They often accompany troops in front-line positions, working in conditions that are dangerous.

Chaplains are often the first people that soldiers turn to for help. One **RAAF** padre used this acrostic poem to summarise his roles and responsibilities.

Pactical support – making sure that individuals are cared for and looked after when they need it.

Advice – a listening ear and help to see different options before making important decisions.

Diplomacy – mediation between people to sort out problems.

Religious stuff – church services, celebrating births, deaths and marriages, prayers and opportunities for personal spiritual growth.

Encouragement – sharing the tough times of deployment and **postings**, bringing peace in wartime situations.

In 1942, Padre P. Sands was the first RAAF chaplain in New Guinea during the Second World War. Along with caring for their spiritual needs, he helped to obtain and furnish a recreation hut for members of the RAAF in Port Moresby. It doubled as a chapel for Sunday church services for the servicemen and women.



AWM P02704.021



AWM P02704.007

Here's the **MARBLE STAIRCASE**, entrance to the show
Wipe your feet upon the mat, and give your nose a blow

Meet the padre, the bloke in the HUT!
The doors of which are never shut.
Recital or concert or cinema show
He pressed the button, the blokes made 'em go.

This is the Padre, a scrounger renowned,
But we furnished the REC HUT by the loot that we found!
At Moresby he lost all his middle aged spread
And most of the fluff from the top of his head!



AWM P02704.002

This is the car that was looted by night!
Pinched by the transport who made it work right,
In time for the 'DO', with its camouflage paint.
A canonised Austin, a rightly named SAINT!

After the hut was finished, Padre Sands got together a group of men who performed in weekly concerts to entertain the troops and maintain morale. They called themselves the 'Moresby Microbes'. When Leading Aircraftman Frank Lansdowne left the group, Padre Sands wrote rhyming verses to accompany a series of photographs which were placed in an album and presented to him as a farewell gift.

The Salvation Army, or the 'Salvos' as they are affectionately known in Australia, is a worldwide organisation committed to caring for people's physical and spiritual needs. Nowhere was this more evident than during wartime. At the outbreak of the First World War, the Salvation Army was being widely identified as 'Christianity with its sleeves rolled up', and many of its chaplains and volunteer workers served in every area of that conflict.

It was at Le Havre in France that their famous 'Hop In' sign first appeared. Servicemen could stop at these centres for a hot cup of tea and a friendly chat. 'Salvos' also doubled as medics and stretcher-bearers for troops wounded on the frontline. Many Salvation Army women, who were trained as nurses, volunteered and gave distinguished service in The Australian Army Nursing Service during the Second World War.



Troops get themselves a cup of tea at a 'Hop in' centre close to the front line, Borneo, 1945. The familiar banner reads, 'Make yourself at home. Hop in! The Salvation Army' AWM 018876

Salvation Army chaplain to the 2/9th Battalion stationed at Tobruk during the Second World War was Arthur McIlveen, better known as Padre Mac. He took an old wind-up gramophone with him to the battlefield. Of the few records he possessed, several were shattered by shellfire. Undeterred, Padre Mac taped them together so they could still be played to lift the morale of the men. AWM REL30722.002



Sometimes military bands were staffed largely by musicians from Salvation Army church bands, the members of which all enlisted together to do their bit for the war effort. One such Second World War band was that of the 2/22nd Battalion. Its members all originally came from the Brunswick Salvation Army Band in Victoria and enlisted together in 1940. The band served as part of 'Lark Force' in the remote Pacific outpost of Rabaul, New Britain. In the early hours of 23 January 1942, a force of over 20,000 Japanese troops with air and naval support stormed ashore. The Australians were overpowered and quickly ran out of ammunition and any means of communication. When the order 'every man for himself' was given, many fled into the jungle, hoping to escape from a remote beach and somehow get back home.

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Members of the 2/22nd Battalion regimental band, c. 1941. AWM P04138.002

Eventually the members of the band, along with hundreds of missionaries, nurses and soldiers were rounded up by the Japanese and taken aboard a transport ship, the *Montevideo Maru*, bound for prisoner-of-war camps. Tragically, the ship was sunk by an American submarine soon afterwards, with the loss of all Australian prisoners. Private Frederick William Kollmorgen escaped from the island, and was the only survivor of the 24 band members.

The disappearance of the 2/22nd Battalion was felt by many Australians; more than 1000 people had died but their fate remained a mystery until after the war. The members of the Brunswick Salvation Army **citadel** had lost their band, their brothers, husbands, fathers, and friends.

In 1916, 25 April was officially named Anzac Day and the first anniversary of the landing on Gallipoli was observed in Australia, New Zealand and Britain, and by troops in Egypt. By the 1920s, Anzac Day ceremonies were held throughout Australia, and in the ensuing decades, returned servicemen and women from all conflicts, and peace keeping missions have joined the parades.

Prayers, readings, and hymns often form part of commemorative ceremonies, whether recited by the audience together or read by chaplains and other selected people. Each acknowledges the sacrifice of those who have served, and the spiritual strength and comfort that a belief in God can provide.

Prayer of Remembrance

Today we remember with thanksgiving those who made the supreme sacrifice for us in time of war. We pray that the offering of their lives may not have been in vain. Today we dedicate ourselves to the cause of justice, freedom and peace; and for the wisdom and strength to build a better world.

O God, our help in ages past

*Our God, our help in ages past,
our hope for years to come,
our shelter from the stormy blast,
and our eternal home.*

*Under the shadow of thy throne
Thy saints have dwelt secure:
Sufficient is thine arm alone,
And our defence is sure.*

Red poppy wreath
AWM REL12479



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The Salvation Army Band participates in the national 2008 Anzac Day Ceremony at the Australian War Memorial.
AWM PAIU2008/049.12 [detail]



Devotion to duty

Mary Chomley shivered in the London night air as she left the Red Cross headquarters, and headed home. Thoughts of a cosy lounge room, a hearty supper, and animated chatter with her sisters Eileen and Aubrey in front of the fire filled her mind. Her anticipation was tinged with sadness, however, as she remembered the thousands of Australian servicemen held captive in prisoner-of-war camps dotted across Europe. Tonight they would not be enjoying such home comforts.

All day in her draughty office Miss Chomley had read, sorted, and answered where possible, requests from prisoners, and letters from families back home, desperately seeking information about the welfare of the loved ones they were trying to contact. It made her all the more determined to press on with the work to which she had devoted her life; the job of caring for the physical needs of the prisoners with parcels of food and clothing, and alleviating their sense of isolation and loneliness with news from home.

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Christmas boxes were sent out to soldiers in the field and in camps. The Australian Red Cross stated in its *Official Monthly Gazette* of December 1917, 'Wherever they are, our boys will have a reminder on Christmas Day that the thoughts and sympathy of their people in far off Australia are with them'.

AWM REL32973

Mary Elizabeth Chomley. AWM H01366

Mary Elizabeth Chomley was born in Riddell's Creek, a small town in Victoria, in 1871. With a father who was a judge, she grew up taking a great interest in community affairs. At the turn of the century, opportunities for women outside the home were quite limited, so it wasn't long before Mary began to champion women's rights. She was the secretary of the **Australian Exhibition of Women's Work** in 1907, and the first state secretary of the **Victoria League** between 1909 and 1914. Both societies promoted a sense of devotion to the British empire, and offered practical assistance to those in need. When war broke out in Europe in 1914, Mary travelled to London to offer her services to the Red Cross. She was 43.

Her friend, Lady Helen Munro Ferguson, was President of the Australian Red Cross Society, and quickly promoted Mary to the position of Secretary of the Prisoner of War Department. This team of volunteers passed on news to the families of over 4,000 Australian prisoners held captive in Turkey, Germany, and Holland. They also packed and sent parcels of food, clothes and books to prisoners.

In the camps, Mary was described as an 'angel'; she was the link between the prisoners and those waiting at home. She was the first point of contact for prisoners, who were only allowed to send one postcard a week and two letters a month to the Red Cross office. Miss Chomley and her team kept detailed records of where the men were and what they needed. They noted which books and magazines had been sent, and each man's clothing and boot size. Care was taken to meet their particular needs while still abiding by the German regulations. Pepper, for example was not allowed to be sent in food parcels as it could be used to put tracker dogs off the trail of escapees, and toothpaste could not be sent in tubes as it was felt these might contain secret maps. Thousands of food parcels were packed and



Private Douglas Grant (left) poses for a studio portrait with Private Harry Avery (middle), and a British friend, c. 1916-17. AWM P01692.001



Corporal James Skelly, from Rockdale, New South Wales, sent this photograph to Mary Chomley, and she kept it in her album. It shows prisoners of war unloading parcels at the Schneidemühl prisoner-of-war camp, near Posen in eastern Germany, December 1917. AWM P01981.009

Women at work in the Red Cross prisoners-of-war records section. AWM H07970



sent to the camps, between 1916 and the end of the war in 1918; their contents often included tea, sugar, condensed milk, raisins, jam, cigarettes, soap, cornflour, salted beef, sausages, cheese, and lentils.

Whether or not the Red Cross parcels actually made their way into the hands of the prisoners was largely dependent on the good will and organisation of camp commanders. Sometimes they chose a trusted prisoner to head up distribution of the parcels. One such prisoner was Douglas Grant, an Indigenous Australian soldier in a camp near Berlin. Born in northern Queensland, Douglas had been adopted and raised by the Grant family in Sydney after the death of his parents. Robert Grant, his adoptive father, was Scottish by birth and worked as a scientist for the Australian Museum. Douglas had received a good education, and trained as a draughtsman. In 1916, he enlisted in the AIF, and left for France to join the 13th Battalion. His service was short-lived however; on 11 April 1917 he was wounded and captured by the Germans at Bullecourt. Because of his Scottish accent, his dark skin, and his artistic and scientific abilities, he became an object of curiosity to German doctors and scientists, some of whom he knew because of his father's scientific expeditions. One German scientist described Douglas as 'an unmistakable figure', recalling how prisoners appointed him to take charge of relief parcels because of 'his honesty, his quick mind and because he was so aggressively Australian'. He wrote often to Miss Chomley. In May 1918 in a letter requesting additional uniforms and Australian literature he wrote,

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Letters from home! Who can imagine what it meant to us? For fifteen weary months we had been forced by starvation and hardship to submit to humiliation and indignities, allowed barely sufficient food to keep body and soul together, and forced to gather weeds and herbs for sustenance; gaunt, unwashed, unshaven and devoured by vermin; knowing practically nothing of what was going on beyond our barbed wire enclosures; seemingly dead to the world, and, for all we knew, mourned as dead; would we ever see our loved ones again?

...And at last to see the old familiar handwriting; to be brought into touch with the outer world. At sight of those letters I broke down completely.

Tommy Taylor (captured at Bullecourt, 1917), Heilsberg prisoner-of-war camp

I am happy to say that I am enjoying perfect health, but as it is only natural I long and weary for Home which I trust may soon be within measurable distance.

Please accept many thanks for past favours,

*Yours faithfully
Douglas Grant*

During the course of the war, Mary received letters and photographic postcards from hundreds of prisoners. Often they wrote to thank her for her kindness, and for responding to their

needs so quickly. Some wanted her to notify their families that they were still alive. Far away from the battlefields, loved ones back home in Australia waited anxiously for news. When communication suddenly ceased, many families wrote to the Red Cross for assistance, hoping that their 'boys' had escaped death and been taken prisoner. The mother of one prisoner of war, Adrian Frazer, wrote: "The *Herald* says you give the boys 'motherly' attention; this is just what we felt and think you can realise what this means to a sorrowing mother's heart." When prisoners died, Mary's department did what they could to ensure that they were buried with dignity, and that families were notified.

In keeping with her meticulous organisational and record-keeping skills, Miss Chomley kept the postcards the men sent her both during and after the war. She placed them carefully in a photograph album, and there they have been preserved as a reminder of the spirit and the will to live that those young Australian prisoners of war possessed. They allow us to piece together many stories that would otherwise never be told. They are also a testament to the kindness and devotion of Miss Mary Elizabeth Chomley and her remarkable team.



Private (Jack) Bolton, 31st Battalion, AIF, from Sydney. The note on the back reads: *To you who have worked loyally and untiringly, with a patience beyond my understanding. I send this photo with heart-felt thanks, and I pray that God may reward you where I cannot ... Jack Bolton.* He returned to Australia in September 1918. AWM P03236.016



Corporal Stephen Joyce, 15th Battalion, from Townsville, Queensland. Shortly after his capture at Pozières in 1916, Joyce wrote to the Red Cross office: *"I am a prisoner of war and wounded in Germany, I have nothing at all and would be very much obliged if you would send me some clothes and a parcel of comforts Tobacco, pipe and some eatables. Would you please notify my Battalion where I am, also my people and oblige.* He arrived back in Australia in March 1919. AWM P03236.041



Private Jack Geddes, 13th Battalion, AIF, from Parkes, New South Wales, dressed in hospital clothes in the grounds of a military hospital in Germany. On the back of the photograph he wrote: *"Dear Miss Chomley, I trust you will accept this small token of gratitude, from a repatriated man, who shall never cease to remember the great kindness he received from you during his two years enforced sojourn in Germany. Jack Geddes.* Geddes arrived back in Australia in January 1919, but died two years later. AWM P03236.180



Members of a prisoners-of-war camp football club pose with their dog and rabbit mascots, and a very young looking German guard, Munster, Germany, c. 1918. AWM P03236.164



'Ella the Elephant', Olive's first field ambulance.

AWM P01352.003

A foreign affair

Olive stamped her foot, and shook her head impatiently. She had not come halfway around the world, transporting her own ambulance and dodging bullets in the Greek mountains, only to be held up by a broken wheel spring. A polite but commanding voice behind her enquired if any assistance was needed, and Olive spun around to meet the eyes of a very handsome soldier.

In the process of ensuring that the ambulance was back on the road as quickly as possible, Captain Milan Yovitchitch and Olive Kelso King became firm friends. His broken English did not hamper communication as Olive was fluent in both French and German. The captain had already heard that Olive was a very heroic woman, having saved many wounded Serbian soldiers from certain death in a dramatic night-time escape from advancing enemy troops in the mountains at Gevgelija. She had been awarded the Royal Serbian Memorial Medal for her bravery.



The Allies Field Ambulance Corps (AFAC) badge worn by Olive on her cap while serving in France in 1915.

AWM REL/18761



Olive dressed in her SWH uniform. AWM P01351.001



The identity bracelet Olive wore while working for the Serbian Army; on the back is a drawing of her field ambulance with 'Ella' engraved in Serbian underneath. AWM REL/18756

To fill in the time while waiting for a replacement vehicle to arrive, Captain Yovitchitch assisted Olive with her Serbian language lessons and showed her around some of the ancient historic sites of Salonika. For her part, she told him of her early life growing up in Sydney, her grief and restlessness after her mother's premature death from cancer when Olive was just 15, and her love of adventurous pursuits such as skiing, mountain-climbing and rally car driving.

It was just such an adventurous spirit that had led her to volunteer as an ambulance driver when the First World War broke out. Despite being told it was 'men's business', she bought a second-hand lorry and converted it into a 16-seater ambulance. Because it was so big and cumbersome, she nicknamed it 'Ella the Elephant'.

At first Olive had worked for the **Allies** Field Ambulance Corps (AFAC), and transported wounded soldiers from the **front** back to British military hospitals. She had enjoyed the friendship of the other female drivers as they shared stories of their exploits over meals hastily thrown together in the deserted **chateau** near Rouen in France, where they were billeted. At one point, she had been captured by the enemy and had her ambulance confiscated, but because she spoke fluent German and knew a number of influential German families, she was soon released.

In 1915, Olive offered her services to the Scottish Women's Hospital (SWH), which staffed field hospitals and ambulances with female volunteers. She was dismayed to find that their uniform was shapeless, heavy, and grey. Despite her distaste for their rules and regulations – high heels, lipstick, and jewellery were not to be worn – she was keen to get back to assisting the war effort in the best way she could.

Conditions at the Troyes field hospital near Rheims in France, where she was sent, were far from ideal. Wounded men were housed in canvas tents connected by long lines of duckboards set up in the muddy fields adjacent to the Chateau de Chanteloup. Olive's childhood Girl Guide training stood her in good stead when the women were called upon to erect tents in the icy conditions.



This engraved sterling silver cigarette case is believed to have been given to Olive by Yovi. Apart from her name, there is a more personal message: 'To my dear little pal Jo, Milan, Salonica, 1916-18'. The miniature medals inset into the lid are copies of Serbian awards for bravery. AWM REL/18757

Olive in her Serbian army ambulance driver's uniform in Sydney after the war. She is wearing her Serbian medals and awards, including the impressive Order of St Sava at her neck. AWM P01351.003

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The formation of a new SWH unit in Greece had led to Olive's transfer to Salonika. Here food was scarce, and the volunteers survived on **rations**: corned beef, hard tack, jam, and sometimes a soup of boiled weeds. When she could, Olive was able to supplement the unit's diet with fresh fruit bought from the local markets. Despite the huge numbers of wounded soldiers from many different countries constantly needing transport, Olive found time to explore the ancient city. She was fascinated by the sight of the local men and women in bright national dress, set against the backdrop of the snow-covered mountains. She revelled in the danger and excitement of service, and in her ability to make a difference, until that fateful day when a large pothole had brought Ella's springs unstuck. That disaster changed Olive's life forever.

Before long, friendship with her Serbian captain turned into romance. She shortened his name to 'Yovi', and he called her 'Olinka' – the Slavic version of her name. Whenever they could, they spent time together, talking, dining, or dancing in one of the local cafes. After long hard days, sometimes driving for 16 hours, surrounded by misery and suffering, Olive drew strength from their time spent together. Could it be that she had found her soul mate at last? She hoped her father back home in Sydney would approve when it came time to tell him about her Yovi.

But a 'happily ever after' ending was not to be. One day, Yovi confessed that he could not marry Olive, as he was promised to someone else. His parents had arranged the match to a girl with ancestral links to the royal family, and the plan was for them to marry after the war. Undeterred, Olive and Yovi remained friends. The future was very uncertain, and only their immediate situation seemed important. All that mattered was staying alive each day and grabbing some happiness when they could. When some of her colleagues scolded her for her behaviour in public, she promptly resigned from the SWH and, at Yovi's suggestion, joined the Serbian army as a driver. She was given the rank of corporal and a practical uniform much more to her liking: a tunic, breeches, and knee-high boots.



Frequent journeys over steep mountain roads began to take their toll on Ella, however, and the ambulance was in need of almost constant attention. She and Artsa, the Serbian army mechanic, did their best to keep Ella on the road. Eventually, Olive asked her family for help, and enough money was sent to buy a smaller, more modern vehicle, which Olive had converted into a second ambulance that she dubbed 'Bridget'.

In August 1917, when a large part of Salonika was destroyed by fire, Olive was kept very busy **evacuating** people, or helping to extinguish the flames roaring through the old wooden buildings. She knew she must keep calm and stay alert to be of most use. At one point, hot winds fanned the blaze toward the store of medical supplies in the army depot. Olive and the other volunteers worked through the night spreading wet sheets over the precious supplies to keep them safe. It was not until two weeks later that Olive had time to write to her father, describing the destruction in the beautiful old city. Thousands of people had died, and thousands more were left homeless. She begged him to send more money so that she could help. Although modest in her description of her efforts during the fire, her courage was recognised when she was awarded the Serbian Silver Medal for Bravery.

Shortly after, Yovi received word that he was to replace the military **attaché** in the Serbian Embassy in London. Olive put on a brave face and congratulated him on his promotion, but her heart was breaking. Work took them both to a final meeting in Corfu, and it was here that they said goodbye. They were both on duty, and surrounded by their workmates, so farewells were short and formal. Later Olive wrote of wanting to 'howl my eyes out'. She had never told her father of the real relationship she had had with Yovi, but in a letter home she confessed, 'Yovi was my constant pal. And Salonika is desolate without him.'

Early the next year, when Olive heard news that Yovi had formally announced his engagement, she turned to her long-time friend, Artsa, for comfort. He confessed that he had secretly loved her for many years, and, as a sign of his devotion, built her a small cottage using the discarded wood from a large shipping crate. Touched by his love, Olive began to consider his proposal of marriage. Her father sent disapproving letters, as did her commanding officer, Colonel Derok, and Yovi too when he heard the news. Despite feeling very annoyed by these 'men lecturing her', she realised that a marriage with Artsa could never be; the matter was finally resolved when Artsa was posted away from Salonika.

As the war reached its final stages in 1918, Olive became increasingly distressed by conditions in Serbia for the soldiers and their families. Once again, her father came to the rescue and, with over £10,000 raised in Sydney, she set up a number of mobile **canteens**, providing food, clothing, and medical supplies for the people. Often they queued for hours for a bowl of hot soup or stew. For her work establishing 17 canteens, Olive was awarded the Cross of the Order of St Sava in 1920, personally presented by King Alexander.

After six long hard years away from her family, Olive decided to return home to Sydney in 1920. She visited Serbia only once more in 1922, when she and her father and stepmother were invited back for the king's wedding. Of course, the handsome Captain Yovitchitch was also in attendance, being a long-time friend of the king. As he and Olive waltzed around the dance floor, it was for a moment as if nothing had ever come between them.

They never met again, but she treasured the memory of Yovi in her heart forever. Olive never married.



Miss Golda Ellis in her Cheer-Up Society uniform.

AWM P04243.002 [detail]

My Cheer Up Girl

Golda

The train pulled up at Murray Bridge railway station, in South Australia, and hundreds of khaki-clad men filed out onto the platform. They were hot, thirsty, and tired from their long trip, but were immediately welcomed by girls from the 'Cheer-Up Society', who offered them fruit and chocolate.

Golda Ellis couldn't move as fast as the other girls at the station: the metal **caliper** on her leg slowed her down. Golda knew she was lucky she could walk at all, having been struck down with **polio** when she was ten. She had fought for an active life, learning to ride horses and trying to lead a normal country girl's life, and when the war had broken out she was determined to do her bit. None of the women's services would take her because of her crippled leg, so she had volunteered for the Cheer-Up Society. This meant she got to wear a uniform after all: white dress, veil, and light blue woollen cape. At times, she thought the term 'Cheer-Up Girl' didn't seem quite right as two of her aunts had also volunteered to be 'Girls'.



Miss Golda Ellis distributing fruit to soldiers on the busy Murray Bridge railway station.

AWM P04243.006



Golda's Cheer-up society cape showing some of the colour patches and badges she had collected from servicemen passing through Murray Bridge. AWM REL32369

Golda enjoyed meeting all the young men as they were heading off to war – or coming home. Many of them hadn't been around women for a long time and were interesting to talk to. Many chatted about their homes and their families: they seemed to love showing her pictures of the wives and babies they had left behind.

Golda made her way through the crowd of soldiers. She always looked for the distinctive colour patches they wore on their sleeves. Today she spotted one she hadn't seen before. She made her way over to the young man and offered him some fruit in exchange for the colour patch on his uniform. He gave her a puzzled look till she pulled back her blue cape and showed him all of the patches she had already collected. She wasn't allowed to put them on the outside of her uniform, so she had sewn them on the inside of her cape. He gladly handed his patch over, and she tucked it safely away in her pocket.

Ozzie

Ozzie Neall looked out of the train window at the green valley that was so different from the landscape around Darwin that he had left behind. Soon he would be home and he would see his family for the first time since he had left to fight in the Middle East two years earlier. He was planning to surprise his mother and sisters: they were not expecting him to come so soon. He didn't want to draw too much attention to himself on his return; he just wanted to spend the time with his family, and catch up with his mates. But he was from a small country town, and considered a bit of a local hero – so they were likely to make a fuss. There had even been a front-page article in the Casterton News, titled 'Dramatic story of bravery', which contained a letter he had written to his family.

As he waited for the train to pull in, Ozzie mused about the time he had spent in Tobruk and the day that his battalion had advanced more than 30 kilometres into enemy-held territory on foot, and how he had fought off enemy tanks singlehandedly with an anti-tank rifle he had picked up on the battlefield. He hadn't really felt brave that day: he was just 'doing his bit', but others saw it differently and he now had a Distinguished Conduct Medal (DCM) for bravery.

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Hand tinted portrait of
Lieutenant Oliver Zachariah
Neall in his uniform.
AWM P04243.003



The ribbon from Ozzie Neall's DCM
(crimson, dark blue, crimson) sewn
inside Golda Ellis's cape.
AWM REL32369



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The satin horseshoe that Golda wore on her wedding day.
AWM REL32370.003

Hand-tinted wedding portrait of Lieutenant Oliver Zachariah Neall, and his wife, Golda, taken on 23 October 1943 at Murray Bridge, South Australia.
AWM P04243.001

Finally, the train arrived at Murray Bridge, and he hopped off. He had promised to drop in on the Ellises, some friends of his parents who lived there. He had no trouble finding the house, and they were happy to see him and invited him to stay. They asked if he would mind calling their daughter – Golda – in for tea. He found her scrubbing the bathroom floor. She looked up at him, and smiled – it was love at first sight. By the time he had left, Golda had another new patch for her cape, the ribbon from his DCM.

Golda and Ozzie were married five months later, in October 1943. Golda wore a white lace wedding dress even though wartime restrictions meant that many brides wore their best suits, or their uniforms, instead of wedding dresses. Golda also carried a white satin horseshoe (for luck) with a pale blue silk ribbon ('something blue') bearing the words 'Good Luck from Murray Bridge Cheer-Up Society'.

A new life abroad:

the story of an English war bride

Eileen Lakeman, known as Val to her friends, was one of thousands of British girls who married Australian servicemen during the Second World War. She joined the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF), which provided opportunities to meet servicemen from all over the world. Her last posting was at High Ercall Station in Shropshire, where she met Roy, an operational training unit pilot. Val tells her story of wartime love that took her to the other side of the world.

*I first met Roy when I was having a meal late in the evening with Scottie, a WAAF friend of mine. We were sitting, just she and I, in the mess and in came two pilots, one was in the British uniform and the other one was in an Australian uniform. The Australian was a very nice-looking young man and he looked cold and a bit shy and they had obviously just been posted to the station. Scottie said to me, "That one looks a bit of all right." So I said, "Yes, he is not bad looking." So she said, "I bet you can't get a date with him within the week." I said, "I bet **half a crown** I do." That started off the romance. It was a gentle kind of romance that he and I had. We used to go to the pub and to parties in the Sergeants' **Mess** and most of our evenings were spent together.*

With its distinguished dark blue colour and stylish tailoring, the Australian Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) uniform was considered by many young women to be particularly eye-catching. As for the airmen themselves, their easy-going nature made them always popular. And not just with young women – the Australians were also welcomed into many homes across Britain as a gesture of friendship.

Like many young wartime couples, Val and Roy faced an uncertain future. Val had already lost one sweetheart – he had been shot down over Germany – and was cautious about having her heart broken again. She volunteered for a posting, which would take her overseas, but Roy persuaded her to stay and marry him instead. During a time of severe wartime restrictions, many weddings were low-key affairs, with young brides wearing borrowed wedding dresses or their uniform to be married.

*It is pretty exciting getting married and we were going to do it properly; there was to be none of this registry office stuff. I was the first one in the family to get married and we were going to do it the way it ought to be done. One of my girlfriends loaned me her wedding dress; she had been married to an airman a little while before. My sister Betty had been a bridesmaid before so she had the bridesmaid outfit and of course Roy was in uniform and it was going to be in a beautiful church. I didn't even realise we had a guard of honour until after the wedding when I saw the photographs. It was lovely and I had white **chrysanthemums**, like pillows, and Betty had chrysanthemums too. Whether everybody dreams of having the wedding I had, I don't know, but it was super.*

After the honeymoon Val and Roy returned to their respective jobs on the Station. They rented a room in an old farmhouse that was freezing cold and had no bathroom. When Val fell pregnant with their first child, she resigned from the WAAF and went home to live with her family until the end of the war.

In May 1945, we had 'Victory in Europe' day and that was just absolutely wonderful. There were street parties and excitement and the church bells were ringing and everybody was putting tables and chairs out in the street and we all did 'Knees up Mother Brown' and sang and danced and clapped and ate and drank - not something someone who is eight months pregnant should actually do but I enjoyed it. A few weeks after, my daughter Karel was born.



Val in her WAAF uniform.

Image courtesy of the Australians at War Film Archive

Roy Lakeman in his uniform.

Image courtesy of the Australians at War Film Archive

Val and Roy exiting the church on their wedding day. Val's fellow WAAF's provide the guard of honour.

Image courtesy of the Australians at War Film Archive





The troopship *Stirling Castle* steams into Sydney Harbour in 1946, carrying many young English war brides, excitedly looking forward to their new life 'down under'. AWM P02526.013

With the war over there were thousands of troops around the world who needed transportation home. It took time to arrange for the transportation of the war brides, and many ships were not well equipped to cope with the inevitable babies and small children aboard. Food for the babies and infants had not been considered, and there were only a few sinks set aside that could be used for washing nappies.

I got my papers to board the Stirling Castle in January 1946 and that was exciting. I didn't think about Australia or Roy or what was going to happen, just the adventure. Then the day came and my family all took me up to the station and it wasn't until then that I realised that I was actually going away permanently to a place that was on the bottom hand corner of the earth, about which I knew hardly anything. By the time I got on the train I was absolutely beside myself with sadness and I couldn't stop crying. All I knew was that I had left my mother and father and my two sisters and my aunts and I maybe wasn't ever going to see them again.

The trip to Australia took seven weeks and the ship's first port of call in Australia was Fremantle, where the English girls were amazed by the amount of food on offer. After years of strict rationing, the abundance of meat and fresh vegetables was overwhelming. Val disembarked at Melbourne and travelled to Sydney with Karel on the train.

Eventually we arrived at Central Station; it was the last day in February and it was without exception the hottest day that I remember. I could see Roy was there and I was waving and he was waving and it was all very exciting except of course he didn't have his uniform on



Dances at the RAAF messes were a popular pastime for servicemen and women.
AWM UK2108



Sweetheart brooches like this one were often given by RAAF flying officers to their girlfriends and wives as an expression of their love.
AWM REL25037

so he was different from what I expected but he had beautiful curly hair. He was so excited to see us and of course Karel had grown a lot. Roy's mother was standing beside him and she welcomed me and kept on saying how lovely Karel was, and then there was Roy's aunt and uncle. I was just excited to be there and to see Roy and we couldn't stop hugging each other and he couldn't stop looking at Karel and cuddling her.

Houses were in very short supply across Australia, so at first the couple stayed with Roy's family at their home in Bronte, in the Eastern suburbs. Val and Roy were lucky to be in Sydney – many young war brides found themselves living with in-laws in remote country areas with no flushing toilets, cooking on a wood stove and doing their laundry in a **copper**. It was vastly different from the life they had left behind. Val, Roy and Karel moved into a small flat that they initially shared with friends from England to help save on rent.

*I was desperately home sick, and around 1948 I realised there were a lot of other people, probably feeling the same way, so I had started an overseas brides club. I found a whole group of women with children, and we started going on a weekly basis into the **YWCA**. On looking back although it was a life line for us, we were a miserable bunch of girls. We complained, we were all bitten by mosquitoes, we hated the heat and we talked about the down-side of things. We had got over the initial joy of being with our husbands. The YWCA was a life saver and that is where we went and our children went to the crèche. Gradually over the years we did assimilate.*

After three years in Australia, Val was still very homesick, and over her initial joy at being reunited with Roy. Val took Karel back to Britain to live with her mother for a year, but found she missed Australia and Roy. Returning to Australia, she lived happily with Roy, raising their family in their little flat. For over 60 years, Val continued to meet with members of the war brides club she set up after the war.

I will be forever glad that I won my beloved husband, Roy, along with that half-crown bet.

Where did it happen?



- 48
- 1 NSW**
Olive Kelso-King
Val and Roy Lakemen
Douglas Grant
the Exelbys and dog Kylie
Maude and Jack Edmondson
 - 2 Victoria**
the Hood family
Elizabeth Chomley
 - 3 South Australia**
Golda Neall
 - 4 Western Australian coast**
Rex Cooper
 - 5 Queensland**
Adam Exelby and dog Kylie
Jack and Jim Hunter
 - 6 Tasmania**
Teddy Sheean
 - 7 Papua New Guinea**
Padre Sands
 - 8 New Britain**
2/22nd Battalion band
 - 9 Timor Sea**
Teddy Sheean



- 10 **Malaya** (now Malaysia)
Robert Towers
- 11 **France**
Olive King
Edward Hood
Douglas Grant
- 12 **Belgium**
Jack and Jim Hunter
- 13 **Germany**
Douglas Grant
- 14 **England**
Val and Roy Lakeman
Elizabeth Chomley
- 15 **Greece**
Olive King and Yovi
- 16 **Libya**
Ozzie Neall
Jack Edmondson
Padre Mac
- 17 **Afghanistan**
Adam Exelby and dog Kylie

Timeline

- 1899–1902** As part of the British empire, Australia offered troops for the war in South Africa, also known as the Boer War.
- 1900** Australians joined a multinational force sent to China to quell the Boxer Rebellion.
- 1901** 1 January: Proclamation of the Commonwealth of Australia.
- 1914** August: Australia pledged support for Britain at the outbreak of the First World War.
- 1915** 25 April: Members of the Australian Imperial Force (AIF), and troops from New Zealand, Britain, and France landed on the Gallipoli peninsula in Turkey.
- 1916–18** Australian forces fought on the Western Front in Europe, and in the Middle East.
- 1918** 11 November at 11 o'clock: the armistice began, ending hostilities.
- 1939** 3 September: the beginning of Australia's involvement in the Second World War.
- 1941** April–December: Siege of Tobruk, Libya
December: Beginning of the Pacific War
- 1942** February: Singapore fell to Japan, and Darwin was bombed for the first time.
- 1945** 8 May: VE Day (Victory in Europe). 15 August: VP Day (Victory in the Pacific).
- 1946–51** Australians joined the British Commonwealth Occupation Force in Japan.
- 1947–present** Since the first peacekeepers left Australia for the Netherlands East Indies (Indonesia), over 30,000 Australians have been involved in peacekeeping and humanitarian operations in many parts of the world.
- 1950–53** Australians joined the United Nations multinational force, defending South Korea from the Communist force of North Korea, China, and the Soviet Union.
- 1950–63** Australia assisted in operations in Malaya against the Malayan communists.
- 1963–66** Indonesia and Malaysia fought a small, undeclared war which came to involve troops from Australia and Britain.
- 1962–75** Australia fought alongside the United States in South Vietnam to stem the spread of communism in Europe and Asia.
- 1990–91** Australia joined the US-led, multinational task force in the Persian Gulf against Iraq following its invasion of Kuwait.
- 2003–09** Australia joined a “coalition of the willing” to invade Iraq, based on what proved to be flawed intelligence on Iraq's possession of weapons of mass destruction.
- 2001–present** Australia joins the US-led forces of the International Coalition Against Terrorism in Afghanistan, fighting against Al-Qaeda terrorists and the Taliban.

Glossary

AIF	The A ustralian I mperial F orce (AIF) was the volunteer force raised for overseas service by Australia in the First World War.
allies	Countries that join together, with a shared goal.
Anzac	Anzac was the acronym derived from the initial letters of the A ustralian and N ew Z ealand A rmY C orps, formed in Egypt prior to the landing on Gallipoli in April 1915. It quickly became a word.
Artillery	Large-calibre guns used in land warfare; usually mobile and operated by a crew, they fire rounds which explode either on impact or in the air.
attaché	A French term referring to a person who is assigned (“attached”) to a higher placed person, or another service or agency. A military attaché is an officer attached to the staff of an ambassador to another country.
Australian Exhibition of Women’s Work	Held at the Exhibition Building, Melbourne, over five weeks in 1907, displaying arts and crafts from exhibitors from Australia, Britain, Europe, North and South America, India, and Africa.
battalion	An army unit usually consisting of a head quarters, and four or more companies of soldiers. In the First World War a battalion had approximately 1,000 soldiers, but today it has only about 600.
bayonet	A stabbing weapon designed to fit on the end (or “muzzle”) of a rifle.
betel nut	The hard woody seed of the Areca palm which grows in the tropics.
benediction	A blessing usually delivered at the end of a ceremony or religious service.
brassard	A band made of cloth or other material worn around the upper arm, over the uniform sleeve, to which badges are attached.
brooch	A decorative piece of jewellery designed to be pinned to clothing.
calliper	A metal splint to support the leg.
canteen	A kiosk selling supplies of food, drink, and clothing.
chaplain	A priest or religious minister attached to a military unit, also known as a padre.
chateau	A large residence or country house in France.
chrysanthemum	A large daisy-like flower, with pink, white, and yellow varieties.
citadel	A fortress, stronghold or place of refuge. The Salvation Army Church use the term to refer to their places of worship.
coat of arms	A country’s official symbol or badge. Australia’s coat of arms features a kangaroo and an emu on either side of a shield bearing the emblems of each state.
colour patch	Worn on a uniform, these indicate which unit a soldier belongs to.
copper	A large copper tub used for heating water in the laundry.
corvette	A small lightly armed warship, often used to escort larger ships.
deployment	The movement of military units and personnel into position for military action.

duckboard	A path of wooden slats placed over muddy ground.
escort duty	The movement of vehicles, ships or planes for the purpose of protection or security.
Eukanuba	A brand name of high-protein, dry dog and cat food.
evacuate	To quickly move people away from the threat or occurrence of a hazard. In wartime, people were often evacuated from areas where enemy air raids frequently occurred.
front	The line of battle, and scene of actual fighting (see also Western Front).
Gallipoli	The Gallipoli peninsula is located in Turkey, with the Aegean Sea to the west and the Dardanelles Straits to the east. Australian soldiers landed on its western coast on 25 April 1915 as part of a British and French invasion.
Geneva Convention	An international agreement first made at Geneva in 1864, governing the treatment of captured and wounded military personnel in wartime.
half a crown	A British coin worth two shillings and sixpence. It is roughly equivalent to 25 cents in today's Australian currency.
Horlicks	A brand of malted powdered milk drink.
keep sake	A small item that reminds a person of a specific event or time.
Menin Gate	A war memorial in Ypres, Belgium, dedicated to the memory of British and empire soldiers who were killed near Ypres in the First World War and who have no known graves (they are known as "the Missing").
Mention in Despatches	A military award for brave or commendable service where one's actions are written up in an official battle report.
mess	The place where military personnel socialise, eat, and (in some cases) live.
militia	A military force composed of ordinary citizens providing home-front security.
non-combatant	A person involved in the military, but not fighting in a war: for example, a chaplain. The term can also be applied to civilians.
Nehemiah	A Bible character who led the Jewish people in the rebuilding of Jerusalem. His story is told in the Old Testament book of Nehemiah.
no man's land	The ground on the battlefield between two opposing armies.
Operation Anode	The Australian Defence Force (ADF) contribution to RAMSI (R egional A ssistance M ission to the S olomon I slands).
pint	An imperial (pre-metric) measurement roughly equivalent to half a litre of liquid.
platoon	A military unit, typically composed of two to four sections, containing from 16 to 50 soldiers.
polio	The shortened word for poliomyelitis, an infectious viral disease that affects the central nervous system and can cause temporary or permanent paralysis.
posting	The process of assigning military personnel for duty.
posthumous	Occurring after death
pound	A British unit of money, replaced by a two dollar note in Australia in 1966.
quagmire	Muddy, boggy ground

RAAF	Abbreviation for R oyal A ustralian A ir F orce.
rations	A fixed official allowance e.g. Soldiers are given food rations.
rear guard action	a defensive action fought by the rearguard of a retreating army.
Red Cross	An international humanitarian organisation founded by Henry Dunant in 1863, bringing relief to victims of war or natural disasters.
Remembrance Day	Originally known as Armistice Day, Remembrance Day is observed on 11 November to recall the end of the First World War on that date in 1918. It commemorates the sacrifice of members of the armed forces and of civilians in all wars.
re-inter	To rebury a corpse
Second AIF	The overseas force raised in the Second World War.
shilling	A former Australian coin replaced with a ten cent coin in 1966.
shrapnel	Metal balls thrown downwards by an exploding shell; also the term used for metal fragments thrown by shells, bombs and landmine.
snap	A photograph.
strafe	To bombard or harass with bursts of gunfire.
tracer	Special ammunition rounds that, when ignited upon firing, burn very brightly, making the path of the bullet visible to the naked eye. This enables the shooter to make corrections to their aim.
traction engine	a steam or diesel engine used for pulling heavy loads.
Victoria Cross	The highest British Empire award for acts of bravery in wartime was instituted by Queen Victoria in 1856. The Victoria Cross for Australia was introduced in 1991.
Victoria League	An organisation formed in 1901 to promote co-operation between the different parts of the British empire, by exchanging information and hospitality, and by undertaking practical schemes to help those in need.
Western Front	The main area of operations for allied forces for the duration of the First World War. It ran continuously from the English Channel in Belgium to Belfort on the Swiss border, a distance of 760 kilometres.
winch	A mechanical device used to adjust the tension of a rope or cable as it is wound up or let out.
YMCA	The abbreviation for the Y oung M en's C hristian A ssociation founded in Britain in 1844 by George Williams. Its goal was to put Christian principles into practice, by developing "a healthy spirit, mind, and body".
YWCA	The abbreviation for the Y oung W omen's C hristian A ssociation formed in Great Britain in 1855 during the industrial revolution. It was created to provide protection, education, and assistance to working women.
Zero	A small single-seat fighter plane used successfully by the Japanese during the Second World War.

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Thurs Aug 29

Dear Gene,

Well its my turn to write now and youll probably think Im batty too but Im no Im just as crazy as any one person can be thats all. We just read your letter again here and I tell you this much, If only I could get the necessary money Id bowl right up to Woolworth and spend you off to get married. youd have some in plenty on my hands I can fool about a bit so dont imagine Im gone completely out of my head. Its just that these are the only words I can think of. - yes but Im probably the happiest man in camp, how will it be when were firstly engaged, and then married. Picture me darling as I write around and around in a circle I love you, I love you, I tell you personally, to night youll hear nothing else still you wont get this till tomorrow, well dear Ill leave



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