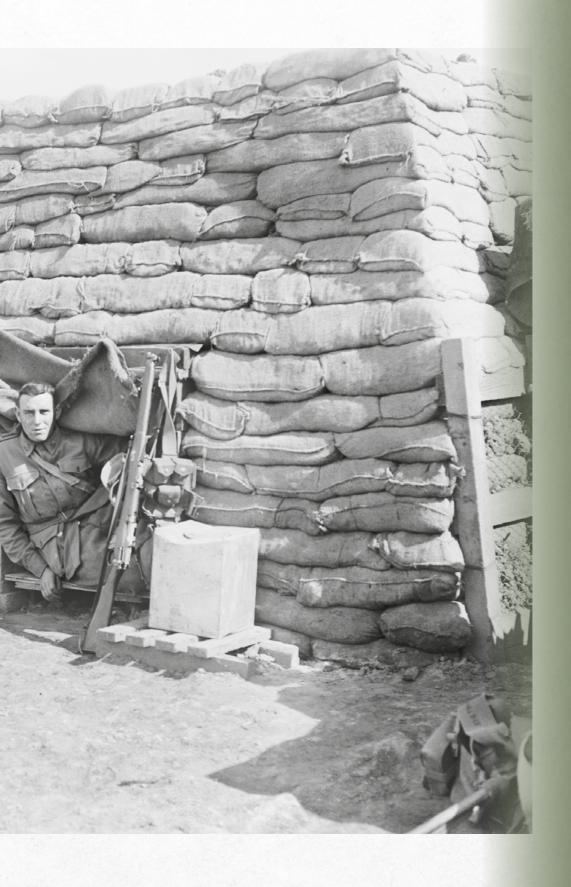


Commemorative Services

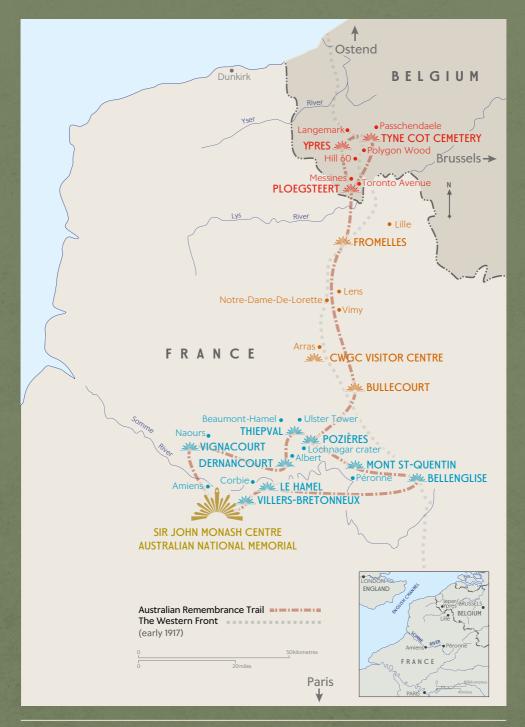




Four Australian soldiers occupy a shelter in the Bois Grenier sector south of Armentières in 1916. (AWM EZ0053)



AUSTRALIAN REMEMBRANCE TRAIL ALONG THE WESTERN FRONT



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Australian Government

Department of Veterans' Affairs

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P04780

Western Front: Major Events

By the time Australian soldiers began arriving in France, in March 1916, the First World War had been underway for almost 2 years. A strip of ravaged earth and fortified trenches running from the North Sea to the Swiss border, with the Allies on one side and the Germans on the other, had become the main theatre of combat. Modern weapons killed and maimed on an industrial scale.

The Australians were familiar with slaughter after their experiences in Gallipoli. In spite of this, the fighting they would encounter on the Western Front was of another order and expectations of them were high. 'If you uphold your reputation,' said Lord Kitchener, British secretary of state for war, '...you will be liked by everyone but the Germans.' The first port of call for the men of the Australian Imperial force (AIF) was Armentières, 15 kilometres northeast of Lille. 'You wouldn't know there was a war on, everything is so quiet,' one soldier wrote to his family.



Bombardments, raids, and snipers soon dispelled that. 'By cripes! We never had shelling like that on Anzac [Cove],' swore another soldier, after a barrage that left craters and splinters everywhere.

July 1916 saw the first major battle for Australians on the Western Front. The 5th Australian Division attacked German trenches at Fromelles in an attempt to draw German reserves away from the major allied offensive on the Somme. In less than a day, the Division suffered more than 5,000 casualties, gained not an inch of ground, and failed to draw out the Germans.

Troops carry ammunition ahead of the Battle of Amiens on 8 August 1918. (AWM E02849)



Four days later, the 1st Australian Division joined the Somme offensive with an attack on Pozières. 'It seemed as if the earth opened up with a crash,' wrote one soldier. For the next six weeks, the 1st, 2nd, and 4th Australian Divisions rotated through a battlefield churned by artillery and strafed by machineguns. In August, they attacked the nearby Mouquet Farm. Some 23,000 Australians were killed or wounded at Pozieres and Mouquet Farm. This was almost as many as had been killed or wounded during the 8-month long Gallipoli campaign. Those who survived, 'looked like men who had been in hell.'

Eventually, winter froze that hell over, forcing a lull in the fighting. The thaw in the new year of 1917 saw it resume.

In February and March, the Germans shrewdly fell back to the Hindenburg Line, a dense network of fortifications to the east of the Somme battlefields. This withdrawal forced the Allies to abandon a planned resumption of the Somme offensive. Instead, they launched a new campaign in the area of Arras. An Anglo-British attack on the village of Bullecourt was quickly defeated; a second attempt, in May, was successful but protracted and costly.

Gunners of an Australian battery use an 18 pounder British field gun to rain 'barrage fire' on the enemy trenches. (AWM EZ0141)



The Allies focus shifted to Flanders, with a successful attack by the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC) forces on Messines Ridge. Six weeks later, British and Dominion forces initiated the Third Battle of Ypres.

Australian formations were involved in 5 major battles during the Third Battle of Ypres. Initially, they seized German positions with the aid of protective, rolling artillery barrages. However, as the autumn conditions became wretched, hopes of a larger advance were diminished. Heavy rains turned the shell-churned earth into a muddy and boggy ground. At Passchendaele, advancing troops were slaughtered en masse by German machineguns. Between June and November 1917, when Canadian troops finally took the village, more than 40,000 Australian troops had been wounded, killed, or missing in action – half of them in October alone.

Lance Corporal Clarence Cyril Bell, 27th Battalion, in the Australian line forward of Villers-Bretonneux, illustrating how enemy stick bombs were used at close range. (AWM E02678)



The United States had joined the war in April 1917 and its resources were reaching France in ever-growing numbers. Determined to find victory before this became decisive, the Germans launched a major offensive in March 1918. Their large and rapid gains threatened to split the British and French armies at the Somme. In addition, the Australians fought a series of defensive battles that culminated in the recapture of Villers-Bretonneux in April 1918.

Finally, the Allies held the initiative. Lieutenant General John Monash took command of the Australian Corps and, with US troops and British tanks and air support, oversaw a limited but successful attack on German positions at Le Hamel. 'We are beginning to stir things up a bit, now,' wrote one soldier.

The costs of these battles were significant.

The Australians suffered more than 28,000 casualties in the first half of 1918, with the end of the war still 6 months away.

The costs of these battles were significant. The Australians suffered more than 28,000 casualties in the first half of 1918, with the end of the war still 6 months away. The tactics used at Le Hamel were replicated on a larger scale and were used with great effect by the Allies during the final months of the war. In the Hundred Days Offensive, the Allies would drive the Germans back to the Hindenburg Line and the Australians would fight, most famously, at Mont St Quentin, Peronne, and at Bellicourt.

Weariness with the war remained, and danger still lay ahead. Nevertheless, hope, fortified by vindication of Kitchener's sentiments, was now springing forth. As one soldier wrote in August 1918, ahead of the Battle of Amiens, 'I am just about sick of this game, now. I've been at it too long. [...] God grant it may be a great success and I pull through alright.'

No. 2 Squadron SE5a aircraft being inspected after coming to grief during a landing or take off at Savy Aerodrome. (The Digger's View by Juan Mahony)



A Timeline of the Western Front

1914

1915

1916

August 1914: After French and German skirmishes at Joncherey and the German invasion of Belgium, fighting between French and German forces ultimately leads to the French and British retreating to Marne.

September to November 1914: In the 'Race to the Sea', Allied and German forces rush northward in unsuccessful efforts to outflank one another, creating a semi-fixed and continuous 640 kilometre line of trenches that becomes the Western Front.

October to November 1914: The First Battle of Ypres, in

which reciprocal offensives make clear the industrial character of the fighting, takes place at enormous cost to all sides: French casualties approach 50,000, British casualties nearly 60,000, and German almost 130,000.

December 1914 to March 1915:

The onset of winter and trench warfare.

March 1915: The Battle of Neuve Chapelle, launched by the French and British, demonstrates the importance of organised attacks and communication. It is a tactical victory, but little more is gained.

April to May 1915: The Second Battle of Ypres, in which the Germans use gas to attack the Allied lines, marks the first, large-scale use of chemical weapons in the First World War.

May to June 1915: The Second Battle of Artois sees the French recapture lost territory but incur significant casualties.

September to

November 1915: At the Third Battle of Artois, the French and British seek to advance the Allied line again, but falter amid winter rains, exhaustion, and recriminations over responsibility for the offensive's overall failure. February to December 1916: The longest of the First World War battles, the Battle of Verdun marks the start of a new German strategy in which artillery is used to inflict catastrophic losses on the Allies (particularly the French) whilst minimising damages to the German infantry. Total casualties from the battle approach 750,000.

February to March 1916: Australian soldiers begin arriving in France.

July to November 1916:
More than 3 million
men take part in the
Battle of the Somme,
a major French-British
offensive in which more
than one million men
are injured or killed. The
Allies make their largest
territorial gain since 1914,
but fail to meet their key
strategic objectives.

July to August 1916: In a series of diversionary attacks, Australian forces take part in the Battles of Fromelles, Pozières, and Mouquet Farm.

February to March 1917:

The German army makes a strategic withdrawal to the Hindenburg Line, a network of fortified positions shorter and more easily defended than their previous positions.

April to June 1917: Allied offensives at Arras, Vimy Ridge, the Aisne, and Messines bring mixed results. Hopes of inflicting critical losses on the Germans are punctured by French losses on the Aisne, of nearly 190,000. Allied attacks at Arras and Messines are more successful.

July to November 1917: The Third Battle of Ypres sees consistent Allied attempts to break through and roll back German lines using protective artillery barrages. The horrendous weather stymies the offense, compounding the ability for the Allies to meet strategic objectives. The successful capture of Passchendaele is a consolation.

March to April 1918: After the winter, the German army launches the Spring Offensive to break through, outflank, and defeat British and French forces, After 3 years of trench warfare, the fighting is swift and mobile. Australian forces fight, most notably at the town of Villers-Bretonneux: they recapture it, lose it, and win it again on 25 April. While the Germans make large territorial gains, they are at a heavy cost and without defeating the Allies.

July 1918: With plans underway for an Allied offensive, Australian and American forces, commanded by Lieutenant General John Monash, target German positions at the village of Le Hamel. A well co-ordinated attack of infantry, artillery, tanks, and armour sees the offensive succeed in little more than an hour and a half.

August to October 1918:

In a series of massive offensives that begin with the Battle of Amiens, the Allies push the German army back – not only regaining territory lost in the spring, but also breaking through the Hindenburg Line. Australians fight at Mont St Quentin, Peronne, and finally, on 5 October, at Montbrehain.

November 1918:

The Armistice is signed, bringing the fighting on the Western Front to an end and the First World War to a close.





PRE-SERVICE PROGRAM

Pre-Service Program

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

THE BATTLE OF VILLERS-BRETONNEUX

This 3-part series narrates the story of the Battle of Villers-Bretonneux, where two pivotal attacks were made during the First World War.

JOHN MONASH SCHOLAR SPEECH

Dr William Choy

The General Sir John Monash Foundation is named after General Sir John Monash GCMG KCB VD.

The Foundation honours General Monash's legacy by awarding scholarships to Australians who demonstrate leadership, academic excellence, and a commitment to making a positive impact, both in Australia and abroad.

Dr William Choy (2025 Roden Cutler NSW John Monash Scholar) will reflect on his experiences and share his personal connections to service and sacrifice.

TASMANIAN (TROUWUNNAN) ABORIGINAL SERVICEMEN

Mr Mark Harriss

Mr Mark Harriss, a proud Aboriginal Australian from Tasmania, will share his personal story, reflecting on his cultural heritage and his family's enduring legacy of service.

Sergeant W. Joyce (left) and Driver Simister, standing on the Fouilloy-Villers-Bretonneux Road, watching the German shells bursting on the ridge of Hill 104, wide of the dressing station on the Corbie Villers-Bretonneux Road at the crest of the hill. (AWM E02330)

LIVE MUSICAL PERFORMANCES BY THE ROYAL AUSTRALIAN NAVY BAND

Conducted by Commander Cassandra Mohapp Music Director, Royal Australian Navy Band

ARRIVAL OF THE PORTE-DRAPEAUX

The Porte-Drapeaux, or 'Flag Bearers', are members of veterans' organisations who regularly participate in military and commemorative ceremonies within France. The flags they carry are emblazoned with the names of various units, conflicts and branches/chapters of their respective organisations.



SPIRIT OF PLACE

AUSTRALIAN DEFENCE FORCE READING

Mr Troy Simmonds Australian Army Veteran

Ms Megan Banton Royal Australian Navy Veteran

ROLL OF HONOUR

Portraits of some of the Australians who died on the Western Front are presented on the Australian National Memorial tower, as their names are read by members of the Australian Defence Force.



Excerpt of edited transcript of interview with Edward (Ted)
Smout, an Australian stretcher bearer with the 1st AIF and
3rd Division Australian Medical Corps, about his experiences
at Passchendaele:

The worst was at Passchendaele. We were looking after a field dressing station, there, and stretcher-bearing to it. We had our own ambulance. I worked 72 hours there, with very little sleep because, if you lay on the floor of the dressing station, they'd just run you over with their feet. You had to be young to take that.

The casualties were horrific. Horrific. There was a bucket of iodine in every tent, and they would slosh all the wounds. The badly wounded were alright, because they were kind of semiconscious, but the ones that weren't badly wounded were in big trouble – they felt the pain. To chloroform the others, you'd put a pad over their nose, pour a drop on it, and put them unconscious. There was no question of checking hearts – you didn't have anaesthetists. Stretchers would be brought in and lined the floor. The doctors learned more about surgery there than they would have in twelve months. [...]

The whole area was one mass of water. The town water supply had been blown up and flooded the salient, so the whole place was just a mass of mud and shells. Half the German shells coming over didn't detonate – the ground was too soft to explode them. So, you had to stay on the duckboards. They were these slatted boards that the pioneers would lay. You couldn't get off the duckboards. If they were blown up, you had to stay there until they replaced it so you could move because, if you got off, you would be over your knees in mud and be immobilised. We had men in these big shallows dying and crying out – and you couldn't get to them. Couldn't get to them. You couldn't get off the duckboards. It was really bad. Passchendaele was terrible.

Members of the 24th Battalion wait for the artillery barrage to lift ahead of a renewed attack which led to the capture of Mont St Quentin in September 1918. (AWM E03138)



General Chauvel and Colonel Lind meet with French officers on the steps leading to the Stone of Remembrance at Villers-Bretonneux in May 1937. (AWM $\rm H16935$)



DAWN SERVICE PROGRAM

Order of Service

DAWN SERVICE COMMENCES AT 5:30 AM AT THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL MEMORIAL

The music for the service is provided by members of the Royal Australian Navy Band.

Conducted by Commander Cassandra Mohapp Music Director, Royal Australian Navy Band

PLAYING OF THE DIDGERIDOO

Able Seaman Boatswains Mate Todd McGrady Royal Australian Navy Band

INTRODUCTION

MASTER OF CEREMONIES

Major Josh Watson Australian Army

MOUNTING OF THE CATAFALQUE PARTY

Members of Australia's Federation Guard

WELCOME

CALL TO REMEMBRANCE

Air Marshal Stephen Chappell DSC CSC OAM Chief of Air Force, Royal Australian Air Force

COMMEMORATIVE ADDRESS

A representative of the Australian Government

HYMN

MAKE ME A CHANNEL OF YOUR PEACE Royal Australian Navy Band

Make me a channel of your peace: Where there is hatred, let me bring your love; where there is injury, your healing power, and where there's doubt, true faith in you.

Make me a channel of your peace: where there's despair in life let me bring hope; Where there is darkness, only light, and where there's sadness, ever joy.

O, Spirit, grant that I may never seek so much to be consoled as to console, to be understood as to understand, to be loved as to love with all my soul.

Make me a channel of your peace: it is in pardoning that we are pardoned, in giving to all that we receive, and in dying that we're born to eternal life.



COMMEMORATIVE ADDRESS

A representative of the Government of the French Republic

PRAYER OF COMMEMORATION

Chaplain Wing Commander Christine Senini Royal Australian Air Force

OFFICIAL WREATH LAYING

ODE OF REMEMBRANCE

Warrant Officer Class One Damien Woolfe
Warrant Officer Ceremonial, Australian Defence Force

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

Response:

We will remember them.

All:

Lest we forget.

ACTE DU SOUVENIR

Lieutenant Colonel Jean-Marc Sapet
Military Delegate for the Department of the Somme

LAST POST

ONE MINUTE OF SILENCE

REVEILLE

NATIONAL ANTHEMS

LA MARSEILLAISE

Allons, enfants de la Patrie,
Le jour de gloire est arrivé!
Contre nous de la tyrannie
L'étendard sanglant est levé,
L'étendard sanglant est levé!
Entendez-vous dans les campagnes
Mugir ces féroces soldats?
Ils viennent jusque dans vos bras
Égorger vos fils, vos compagnes!
Aux armes, citoyens,
Formez vos bataillons,
Marchons, marchons!
Qu'un sang impur
Abreuve nos sillons!

ADVANCE AUSTRALIA FAIR

Australians all let us rejoice,
For we are one and free;
We've golden soil and wealth for toil;
Our home is girt by sea;
Our land abounds in nature's gifts
Of beauty rich and rare;
In history's page, let every stage
Advance Australia Fair.
In joyful strains then let us sing,
Advance Australia Fair.

Captain Watkins and Lieutenant Guy Lyndon Ditchburne MC, 28th Battalion, pictured with nursing staff outside K Ward of the 3rd London General Hospital in August 1917. (AWM P02724.002)

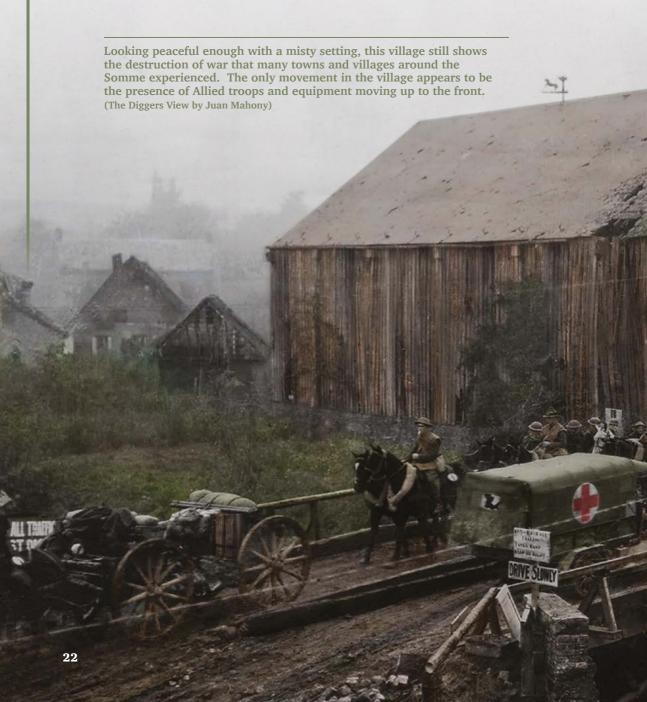




Chaplain Wing Commander Christine Senini Royal Australian Air Force

CATAFALQUE PARTY DISMOUNTS

Members of Australia's Federation Guard



PUBLIC WREATH LAYING

Members of the public are invited to lay floral tributes.

OFFICIAL PARTY DEPARTS

Please note that the Villers-Bretonneux Town Service will be held at the French Monument, Town Centre, Villers-Bretonneux at 8:30 am today. All members of the public are invited to attend.







VILLERS-BRETONNEUX
TOWN SERVICE

Order of Service

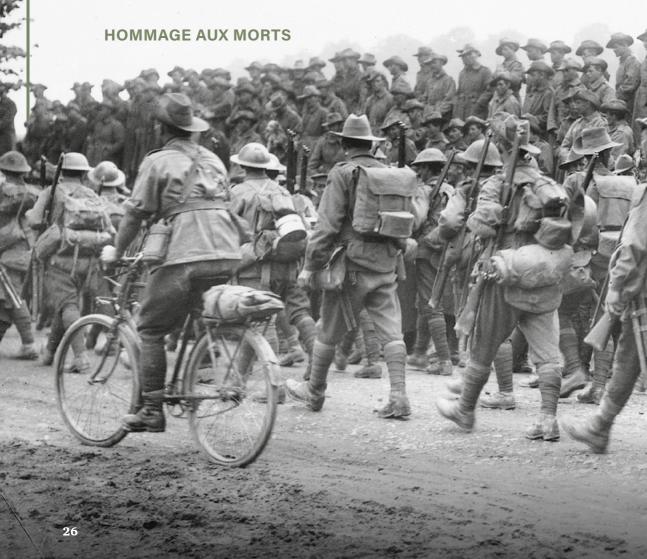
VILLERS-BRETONNEUX TOWN SERVICE COMMENCES AT 8:30 AM AT THE FRENCH MONUMENT

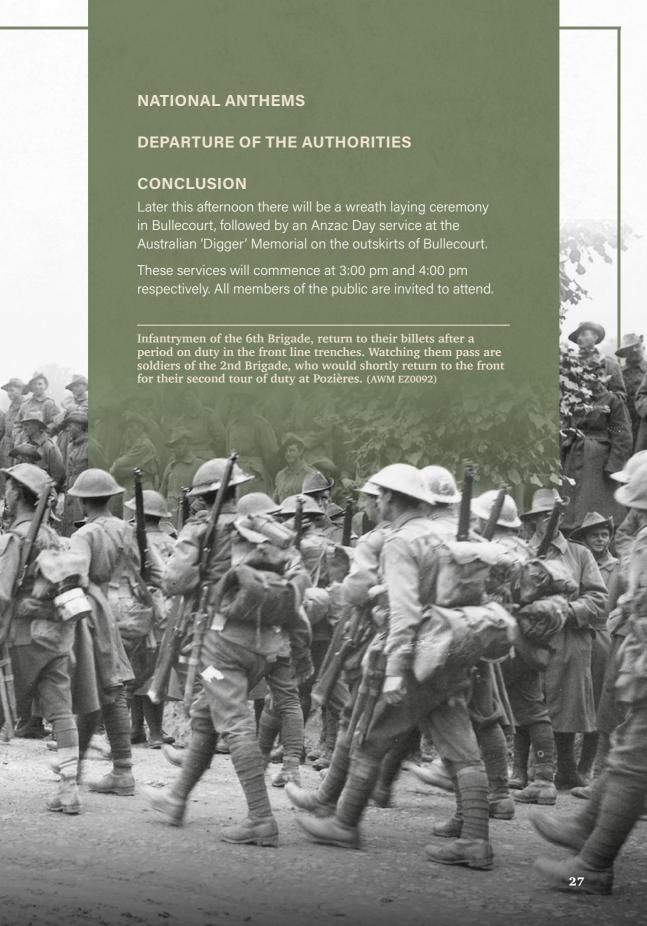
This is a French Military Ceremony organised by the Departmental Military Delegation of the Somme.

WELCOME OF THE AUTHORITIES

SPEECHES AND READINGS

WREATH LAYING





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Customs, Traditions and Protocols

PLAYING OF THE DIDGERIDOO

The didgeridoo is played here today to acknowledge and pay respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and women who have contributed to the defence of Australia in times of peace and war.

CATAFALQUE PARTY

Historically, a catafalque was a support for a coffin, but it has come to represent a remembrance stone or a tomb. A catafalque party was originally appointed to guard a coffin from theft or desecration. Now it performs a ceremonial role, honouring the dead.

FLAGS

Flags are important symbols of all nations, and of those who have fought and died for those nations, and as such should be treated with respect at all times. They should not be subjected to indignity or displayed in a position or size inferior to any other flag. They should always be flown aloft and free and should not be allowed to fall or lie upon the ground.

Please note that 'flag draping' (i.e. wearing the flag as a cape or cloak), allowing the flag to touch the ground, or defacing the flag by writing on it, may be considered disrespectful acts and are discouraged at this service.

In accordance with Australian flag protocol, the Australian national flag is flown on the left facing the memorial, and the French flag on the right.

When a flag is raised or lowered, or when it is carried past in a parade or review, all present should face the flag, remove headwear and refrain from talking. Service personnel in uniform are to salute.

LAST POST

The Last Post is a bugle call which signals the end of the day. It became incorporated into funeral and memorial services as a final farewell and symbolises that the duty of the dead is over and they can rest in peace.

Visitors should stand, remove headwear and refrain from talking during the playing of the *Last Post*. Service personnel in uniform are to salute.

an industrial scale. periences in Gallipe Western Front was



NATIONAL ANTHEMS

Visitors should stand facing the flags, remove headwear and refrain from talking during the playing of all national anthems. Service personnel in uniform are to salute.

ODE OF REMEMBRANCE

Many ceremonies of remembrance include a recitation of the Ode. It is the fourth stanza of 'For the Fallen', a poem written by Laurence Binyon (1869–1943) in 1914. It can also include the third stanza. The Ode has been recited in ceremonies since 1919.

Visitors should stand, remove headwear and refrain from talking during the reciting of the Ode.

ONE MINUTE OF SILENCE

The practice of observing one minute of silence originated soon after the First World War and provides an opportunity for quiet reflection on the sacrifice of those who served and lost their lives.

Visitors should stand, remove headwear and refrain from talking during the period of silence.

PORTE-DRAPEAUX

The Porte-Drapeaux, or 'Flag Bearers', are members of veterans' organisations who regularly participate in military and commemorative ceremonies within France. The flags they carry are emblazoned with the names of various units, conflicts and branches/chapters of their respective organisations.

REVEILLE

In dawn services, the *Last Post* is followed by the *Reveille*. Historically, the *Reveille* woke the soldiers at dawn, and the name of the ceremony is mentioned in sixteenth century books of war. Until a hundred years ago, the *Reveille* was performed on drum and fife; today a solo bugle or trumpet is used.

Note: The Royal Australian Navy *Reveille* bugle call is different to that played by Army and Air Force.

Embroidered silk postcards were a popular souvenir for troops serving on the Western Front to send messages to loved ones at home. (AWM SC00803)

Commonwealth War Graves Commission

Cemeteries on the Western Front are managed and maintained by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC).

The CWGC was founded by Royal Charter on 21 May 1917 and is responsible for the commemoration of some 1,700,000 members of the Commonwealth forces who gave their lives in the 2 world wars.

The graves and memorials of these men and women, who came from all parts of the Commonwealth and who were of many faiths and of none, are found around the globe at 23,000 locations in 154 countries and territories.

Today the CWGC, on behalf of the six member governments of Australia, Canada, India, New Zealand, South Africa and the United Kingdom, looks after more than 1.1 million graves worldwide, including all those Commonwealth graves on the Western Front.

During the First World War the dead of both sides were buried under battlefield conditions, their final resting places marked by wooden crosses or stakes.

In that conflict, the most important battleground was the Western Front in France and Belgium, where great battles were fought with names that became household words in Australia – Fromelles, the Somme, Bullecourt, Messines, Passchendaele and Villers-Bretonneux.

Of the more than 295,000 Australians who served in this theatre of war in the Australian Imperial Force (AIF), more than 46,000 lost their lives and some 132,000 were wounded.

It was not until the 1920s that the CWGC began the task of constructing permanent cemeteries and memorials here. Our cemeteries and memorials around the globe are physical reminders of a painful past, but they are also places that have the power to bring enormous comfort to the families and comrades of those buried and commemorated there.

We would encourage you to visit the graves and to spend a quiet moment reading the names, before departing, the better for the experience – inspired by those who lie here and determined that they will never be forgotten. Information on locating war graves is available at www.cwgc.org.

THE CWGC VISITOR CENTRE

An extraordinary organisation, an extraordinary experience.

Open since June 2019, the CWGC Experience is a unique visitor attraction that shines a light on the work of the remarkable organisation at the heart of remembrance of the war dead. The CWGC Experience gives visitors an up-close and intimate look behind the scenes at the teams who still work painstakingly to care for the fallen.

From the story of how we still recover and rebury the dead today, to the skilled artisan craftsmen at work maintaining the world's most impressive and recognisable monuments and memorials, a trip to the battlefields of the Western Front is not complete without a visit to the CWGC Experience.

The CWGC Experience is open from Monday to Friday from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm.

Commonwealth War Graves Commission 5-7 Rue Angele Richard 62217 Beaurains, France

Organise your visit here: www.cwgc.org/visit-us

The Department of Veterans' Affairs would like to thank all those involved in the Anzac Day services including:

- The Prefecture of the Somme and all French Services
- The Somme Departmental Council
- The Mayor and community of Villers-Bretonneux
- The Mayor and community of Fouilloy
- The Military Delegation of the Somme
- The Gendarmerie of the Hauts-de-France region
- French medical and emergency services
- The Commonwealth War Graves Commission
- Tourist Office Val de Somme
- The Porte-Drapeaux of the region
- All those who have participated in the service

Australian flag belonging to Lieutenant John Carr Ewen. It is embroidered with the colour patch of the 2nd Division Field Artillery and the names of places in France and Belgium where Ewen served.

brodé du patch de la 2nd Division Field Artillery et des noms des endroits Le drapeau australien appartenant au Lieutenant John Carr Ewen. Il est en France et en Belgique où Ewen a servi.

Portrait informel du Private 3217 A. G. Townsend, membre du 46e bataillon, 46th Battalion, making a meal of vegetables salved from a ruined garden. Informal portrait of 3217 Private A. G. Townsend, a member of the

préparant un repas avec des légumes récupérés d'un jardin en ruines.

(AWM E02185)



French national flag bearing signatures of members of the 9th Australian Field Ambulance and places they served on the Western Front.

Le drapeau français, portant les signatures des membres de la 9th Australian Field Ambulance et les lieux où ils ont servi sur le front occidental.

(AWM REL/01258)

Gunners of an Australian battery use an 18 pounder British field gun to rain 'barrage fire' on the enemy trenches.

Les artilleurs d'une batterie australienne utilisent un canon de campagne britannique pour déchaîner un tir de barrage sur les tranchées ennemies. (AWM EZ0141)





Department of Veterans' Affairs