

War, memory and national identity in Australia

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War is embedded in Australian collective national memory and played a central role in shaping the sense of national identity in the twentieth century. This is something of a paradox. Australia is a country without a militaristic tradition, if we define “militarism” in the sense that the military is one of the dominant elements of the political and social structure, and military values infuse society. In contrast to many European countries, Australia has had, throughout its history since European settlement, a tradition of citizen soldiery. The first permanent regular army of any size was created only after the Second World War. Rather than the army imbuing society with its distinctive military values and ethos, therefore, it might be argued that the reverse is the case: that citizen values — of social egalitarianism, and disrespect for formal authority — have infused the Australian military. Being a member of the armed forces in Australia has little social cachet: few ex-servicemen would think of defining themselves by their former rank for the remainder of their lives as countless British ex-servicemen do. And no soldier of senior rank in Australia has used his military experience as the entrée to high political office,¹ as Dwight Eisenhower, and George C. Marshall did in the United States, even though that country too has no tradition of “the soldier on horseback”.

Yet if Australia has little tradition of reverence for military institutions, the memory of war plays a major role in the national political culture. The anniversary of the landing at Gallipoli on 25 April 1915 has acquired over the last eighty years something of the status of *the* national holiday. Anzac Day is mooted as preferable to the formal national day, Australia Day, because the

latter celebrates the landing of white settlers in 1788 and is linked inextricably with the oppression of the indigenous Australians. The impressive national monument to Australia's war casualties in the 20th century, the Australian War Memorial is the third most popular tourist destination in Australia. And the Anzac legend, which arose out of the celebration of Australian military exploits in the First World War, has been — and continues to be — one of the dominant narratives around which the Australian national sense of identity has been shaped. The centrality of the memory of war in the Australian political culture is clear in the political geography of the national capital, Canberra. This city was a conscious creation, purpose built in the inter-war years. The Australian War Memorial stands at the head of the most important of the three axes radiating from Parliament House. It directly faces across a large man-made lake, the physical embodiment of the State.

The memory of war that is central to the Australian political culture is, however, a memory anchored in the mythology of the First World War, despite the fact that some 41 per cent of Australian war deaths in the 20th century occurred in other conflicts. Why this is so, is an intriguing question to which there are at least two main aspects: the first, how did the Anzac legend become so dominant and maintain such a central place in the national political culture? And why have subsequent conflicts in which Australians have been involved, in particular the Second World War, not produced a mythology to challenge Anzac in the national collective memory?

To address, first, the question of the predominance — some might call it “hegemony” — of Anzac: the legend, obviously, is only *one* memory of Australians' experience of the First World War. It presents an idealised — and exceedingly chauvinistic — view of the Australian infantryman, or “digger”, suggesting that Australian men made naturally good fighters in 1914-18 because they came from a society in which egalitarianism, individualism and personal resourcefulness were dominant values. These social mores made Australian soldiers willing to challenge authority that was not anchored in competence, to show initiative and independence in tactical situations, and, above all, to exercise self-discipline in battle because of their devotion to their mates. To quote the man who more than any other Australian created the legend, the war correspondent and official historian, C.E.W. Bean, the Australian soldier would fight because he ‘could not give way when his mates were trusting to his firmness ... and life was not worth living unless [he] could be true to his idea of Australian manhood’.²

Why did such an interpretation of the First World War experience triumph over alternative memories of the past? What has given it such power, resilience and the ability to continue to have meaning for a society radically different from that of 1915? In seeking answers to these questions we have to engage with current debates about the relationship between history and memory. The growing interest in memory among historians reflects their concern that “history”, in the sense of scholarly published works, is an authorised discourse, and only one of the possible ways that a people “remembers” its past. At the extreme, historians speak of a “rupture” between “history” and memory, arguing that individuals and professional historians construct the past in different — and ultimately irreconcilable — ways.³ An alternative view — and one with more relevance to the Australian memory of war — is that history and memory are interdependent. Professional historians draw on individual and collective memory, for example through oral history, popular culture and their own subjectivity and life experience; while individual memories, on the other hand, constantly interact with professional and collective history. Historians and individuals look to each other to “fill the gaps” in their own narratives. Each group, as Luisa Passerini says, forgets “crucial aspects of society’s past” with the result that “reciprocal critique and elaboration is essential”.⁴

We have to look to this interface, or dialogue, between collective and private memory if we are to understand the place of the First World War in Australian political culture. After many years of debate there is something approaching a consensus that the Anzac legend was the product of both organic, almost spontaneous, growth and deliberate exploitation by the State.⁵ For example, as soon as the news of the Gallipoli landing reached Australia in May 1915, it was seized upon by political authorities for its obvious potential in mobilising the war effort and maintaining voluntary recruitment for the Australian Imperial Force. Journalistic despatches from overseas and speeches of the Gallipoli commander were reproduced in instructional materials for school children, while wounded veterans were paraded on recruiting platforms at public rallies. The first anniversary of Anzac Day was celebrated not only in Australia but also in London at Westminster Abbey with traditional British pageantry.⁶ Thereafter, as the Australian nation was torn apart by a bitter debate about conscription for overseas service, successive non-Labor governments used Anzac to legitimise the stifling of dissent and to impose a

hegemonic ideology of imperial loyalty and conservative conformity. Historians have also speculated as to whether the Australian State grasped the opportunity to create a heroic sense of nationhood. The Australian Federation was then only fifteen years old and there was a prevailing sense still of regional and colonial loyalty rather than national identity. The exploits of the Anzacs “provided a sort of terrible richness to the Australian people in what had essentially been a life of emotional poverty in terms of nationality”.⁷

But none of this appropriation of the legend for the purposes of social and political control could have been effective had it not been for the fact that this national memory of war resonated and interfaced with private memories at the community and individual level. There seems little doubt that Anzac became so rapidly embedded in the national political culture because of the craving of bereaved relatives for a celebratory legend to give meaning to their aching personal loss in war. The legend also resonated with prevailing ideologies and cultural beliefs about the centrality of the “bush”, or rural life, in constructions of Australian manhood (the stereotypical image which is still abroad of all Australian men being Crocodile Dundees). In a popular cultural sense, the Anzac can be seen as the apotheosis of the late 19th century bushman.⁸

To turn now to the obverse side of the coin of the dominance of Anzac: that is, the relative eclipse of the Second World War in popular memory. In my experience of teaching the younger generation of Australians over the past decade, I have discovered that students almost universally know of Gallipoli, and possibly of the great battles of the Western front in which Australian troops were involved — Pozieres, Passchendaele and Villers-Brettonneux, But they are taxed to name any Second World War battle. If they *do* recall something of the war of 1939-45, it is the prisoner of war experience — Changi and the Burma Thailand railway predominantly. In my current research I am considering why this is so.

The answers are complex but in the first instance we have to revert to the dominance of Anzac. It is striking to see how, even at the start of the Second World War this new conflict was burdened with the mythology of the old.



Newspaper commentary in 1939-40 was explicit in portraying the men who were volunteering for military service as the heirs of the Anzac tradition, the sons of Anzacs, as indeed many of them literally were. The popular magazine, the *Bulletin* in 1940 ran a cartoon as the 6th Division of the 2nd AIF went into action against the Italians in the north African desert, the first land campaign in which Australian troops were involved. It depicted a young Australian soldier, shaking hands with an older soldier with "1914" on his slouch hat. The older man is saying, "In you go lads, and give it all you've got". The message of the 1940 cartoon is clear. The tradition is being handed on from the older to younger generation. It is notable that the Australian volunteer army of the Second World War was called the *second* Australian Imperial Force and its battalions were numbered after the First World War units (for example, the 2/21st battalion). It does not follow, of course, that this public representation of the AIF as the legatee of Anzac was accepted at the private level. But the oral and literary evidence that survives from the war⁹ indicates that a significant proportion of individual soldiers, socialised into Anzac through school rituals and family memories in the inter-war years, did construct their service in these terms. They saw the mythology of Anzac as being a standard against which they were obliged to measure their own performance. Even at its start, therefore, the memory of the Second World War was being shaped in way that would subordinate it to Anzac.

There was little in Australia's involvement in the Second World War to challenge this hegemony of Anzac. Again this is an intriguing paradox. The First World War was a catastrophe on such a scale that it has been seen by Paul Fussell in his famous work *The Great War and Modern Memory*¹⁰ as the break between the pre-modern and modern worlds — a view that has been challenged by Jay Winter.¹¹ But the Second World War was, by many other measures, the greater conflict. At least 50 million — possibly 70 million — people died in the war of 1939-45, compared to roughly 10 million in 1914-18. In contrast to the Great War, the second war was truly a global conflict, encompassing every continent and ocean. The centuries-long dominance of the international order by Europe was finally shattered, giving way to the bipolar world of the superpowers and the dismantling of European imperialism. And, in the case of Australia, there was the new trauma of civilian deaths through bombing and the threat of invasion by a foreign power, for the first time since white settlement.

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Yet for all this, when it came to national mythologising, the Second World War had, for Australia, an almost anticlimactic quality to it. Compared to the war of 1914-18, the casualties were lower: at the most, 39 000 dead out of a population of over 7 million; compared with 58 000 dead from a population of less than 5 million. Relative to other countries too, Australia's losses were low. In the First World War the AIF suffered probably the highest death toll proportionately of any of the belligerent forces; in 1939-45 Australia's death toll was eclipsed by those of countries such as China and the Soviet Union. One estimate puts the death toll for the Soviet Union as 15 000 per day;¹² that is, 2-3 days fighting on the Eastern front would have accounted for *all* Australian deaths in the six and a quarter years of war.

The strategic role Australia played in the Second World War is also problematic from the perspective of national memory. The commitment of Australian forces to the Mediterranean and Middle Eastern campaigns from 1940-42, and the sending of many thousands of Australian air men to serve under British control in the bombing campaign against Germany — a policy which has been widely seen as a 'surrender' of Australian sovereignty¹³ — were all made within the context of imperial defence. Though not as resoundingly politically incorrect at the time as it is now, imperial defence became a source of recrimination when it was discovered that the insurance policy was void and Britain could not defend Malaya and Singapore in 1942.

Australia's later contribution to the war, meanwhile, was compromised by its troubled relationship with its new ally, the United States. Through the agency of General Douglas MacArthur, US commander in the Southwest Pacific Area, Australia was relegated to a marginal role in the final defeat of Japan. Even in 1944-45 there was a public debate about the strategic irrelevance of the campaigns to which Australians were committed — the "mopping up operations" in Borneo, New Guinea and New Britain. In contrast to 1918, when Australian troops played a crucial role in holding and driving the German army back to its borders, in 1945 the war ended with Australia engaged in "unnecessary wars".¹⁴ Only in 1942, when Australian troops held the Japanese attack across the Owen Stanley Ranges on the Kokoda Track, did Australians play a role in the war that could be seen in retrospective to have been decisive.

The Second World War, therefore, had for Australians a troubling air of ambiguity, a distinct lack of triumphalism and the absence of any defining

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narrative to challenge Anzac. This is evident if we consider how the war was remembered and celebrated at the national, community and private levels. There are considerable methodological challenges in exploring such a subjective quality as memory, but I argue that Australian memories of the Second World War can be accessed through at least three "gateways" (though these are not the only ones): war memorials, public ritual and popular culture.

War memorials have been discovered in the last fifteen to twenty years by historians in Australia and overseas. They are recognised to be significant because they are an interface between public and private memory: they are expressions of private grief in a public place. In the forms they take, the inscriptions they use, the symbols they employ, we can see individuals and communities resorting to public rhetoric and already existing cultural forms to give meaning to their private loss in war. Moreover, because the building of memorials has so often been accompanied by fierce community debate, they reveal the battle for control of memory and the contested nature of memorialisation. As Daphne Berdhal has said in a brilliant study of the building of the Vietnam memorial in Washington, commemorations are "socially produced and negotiated events involving struggles over control of knowledge".¹⁵

In the war memorials that stand in the central public space of so many Australian country towns, and capital cities we see embodied the eclipse of the Second World War by the first. They are strikingly memorials to the war of 1914-18, erected in a great flurry of community and state fund-raising and debate during and after the war. With the conclusion of the Second World War in 1945 the question that faced each community was: were they to adapt existing memorials to include the *Second World War*, or should they erect new memorials? Ken Inglis's study of war memorials, *Sacred Places*,¹⁶ gives us some fascinating insights into this question and, by inference into the issue of memory and the Second World War. A public opinion poll in 1946 revealed that 58 per cent of people polled favoured adding new inscriptions to existing memorials, rather than building new ones. One year later, 20 per cent voted against *any* commemoration of the Second World War at all, even though they had not been given this as an option in the questionnaire. As the pollsters noted, it was uncommon for so many people to choose an alternative that had not been put to them. And the implication was that many more would have voted against any fresh commemoration had they been given this option.

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The *Zeitgeist* in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War therefore seems to have been non-celebratory, a reflection perhaps not just of the anticlimactic nature of the war, but of the deteriorating international situation. In contrast to 1919, there could be no illusions in 1946, with Europe again in ruins and the much celebrated Grand Alliance between Britain, the US and the Soviet Union rapidly dissolving into the Cold War and nuclear confrontation, that this had been a war to end wars.

The *Zeitgeist* in 1946 was also decidedly functional. Monumentality was out of fashion so far as commemoration was concerned, and even the major veterans' organisation, the Returned Services League, which had seen itself since 1919 as a custodian of the national memory of war, favoured utilitarian memorials. If there were to be new ones to the war of 1939-45 they should be community halls, schools, swimming pools, and fountains, instead of the obelisks, statues of diggers and cenotaphs that had dominated commemoration of the First World War. It is symptomatic of the functional mood after 1945 that this utilitarianism was encouraged by tax relief for public memorial halls, schools, etc. — a provision that had not been available when First World War memorials were built in the 1920s.

It would seem probable that this preference for functionality — and the fact that in the end many communities opted for adding Second World War inscriptions to old memorials — contributed to the comparative lack of public visibility of the Second World War. It is impossible *not* see the memorials to the first war as you drive through Australian cities and country towns. They are positioned centrally in main streets or tower above you from prominent heights. But memorials to the Second World War — for example the dandelion-spray fountain at Sydney's notorious tourist destination, King's Cross — cloak their commemorative role in their functionality.

A second gateway into war and memory is public ritual and public rhetoric. As I have noted, appropriation of the Anzac celebrations by the state and public agencies was unquestionably important in securing this battle its central place in Australian memory of war. Were memories of the Second World War similarly appropriated? My research suggests that, until the 1990s when there was a clear appropriation of the Second World War for nationalist purposes, many of the battles of the Second World War gradually slipped from public memory, because of the lack of what might be called "sponsorship" ("appropriation" sometimes implies too great an element of

cynicism or political purpose). “Sponsors” could include institutions, community and business organisations, ex-servicemen’s associations, and even individuals who invested their energies in ensuring that the memory of a battle did not fade. For example, in the newspapers of the immediate post-war years it is striking how prominent is the celebration of the battle of the Coral Sea of May 1942. Clearly this *was* an important battle in the Second World War. It might not have “saved Australia” as is popularly thought even now, because we know that the Japanese had neither the capacity nor the intention to invade the Australian continent in 1942.¹⁷ But certainly the battle of the Coral Sea, in which the US and Australian navies worked together for the first time in the war, foiled the Japanese attempt to capture Port Moresby and thus stopped them dominating Australia’s sea lanes of communication. But whatever its intrinsic importance, the prominence of the Coral Sea in the memory of battles would appear to owe something to the efforts of the Australian-American Association and the social elitism of the Coral Sea Ball which it hosted — and I am told, still hosts in Australia. Who among the socially conscious of Melbourne could afford to miss the ball of 1950 hosted by Mr (later Lord) Casey (former governor of Bengal and later Governor-General of Australia) and his wife — an occasion fulsomely reported in the social pages of the daily paper, the *Age*? The venue was transformed into a tropical paradise — complete with tropical fruits, palms, poinsettias, island boats, a volcano in eruption and coral reefs. There was a notable absence of the weapons of the war from the setting, but the dance programs were named after a ship or aircraft that took part in the battle of the Coral Sea.¹⁸

The same mainly commercial Australian-American Association which hosted this Coral Sea Ball also raised funds for the American memorial in Canberra — a huge phallic column, topped by an eagle, which towers above the Department of Defence headquarters in Canberra. In an apparent instance of the interface between community and State memories of war, the memorial was funded initially by a community appeal, but carried through by the conservative government of Robert Menzies when the appeal failed to raise all the money needed. The Australian-American memorial is also illustrative of the way in which public memory of war is contingent on political context. Constructed in the heyday of the Australia-American alliance, ANZUS, and representing in monumental form Australia’s transferred strategic dependence from Britain to the US in the 1950s, it is impossible to imagine it being

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erected today. Nor, incidentally, would it possible to imagine it situated, as was mooted at one stage, at the heart of the national commemorative space, on Anzac Parade, the commemorative boulevard that stretches from the Memorial to the lake.

The Coral Sea is almost the exception the rule, in that it continued to be celebrated publicly and often ostentatiously on its successive anniversaries. Many other battles of the war of 1939-45, without such sponsorship, virtually disappeared for some decades from the calendar of national ritual of the war. Anzac Day and Armistice Day, the anniversary of the end of the First World War remained the major foci for national remembrance of war — though even these came under major assault and were in danger of extinction during the Vietnam era.

Other memories battles of the Second World War, however, while absent at the national level, did continue to be preserved at the community and private level. In any given year there were literally countless occasions on which the unit associations of the battalions and divisions which fought in the Second World War commemorated the battles in which they were engaged. The ceremonies were often attended only by their members and their families. In many ways these groups were the self-appointed custodians of *their* memory of the war, keeping alive memories of battles which were forgotten at the national level. These associations also played a critical role, over the years, in transmitting their memories of war to a new generation. Though originally they were exclusive — like the Anzac legend itself, confined to those who had military service overseas, and marginalising women and children from the commemoration of war — progressively these associations became *inclusive*. For example, one ex-service association whose members had been captured and interned on the Indonesian island of Ambon from 1942-45, made “pilgrimages” annually to the island from the mid 1960s on. Initially these pilgrimages were open to only survivors of the force. About ten years ago, as the veterans’ numbers were thinned by death and ill health, they began to include sons, then daughters, now any interested member of the public.

This preservation and transmission of community memory has been one of the reasons why in the last two decades there has been something of rediscovery of the Second World War at the national level. This has been a complex process, to which many elements in Australian society have contributed, but, after decades of little interface between the community and

national levels of memory, there has been a crossing of the memory from one level to another. To give two examples in explanation: the death march at Sandakan in north Borneo was the worst atrocity experienced by Australian prisoners of the Japanese — only 6 of the 2500 originally interned in this area survived captivity — but for decades it was eclipsed by other memories of war. In the 1980s however, the private Sandakan Memorial Foundation began creating a series of memorials. Then in 1992 — a year in which the fiftieth anniversary of the fall of Singapore created a broad reflective mood about the Asia-Pacific war — the anniversary of the final execution of the prisoners at Sandakan was commemorated by a service was attended by many relatives. On the next anniversary, 1 August 1993, the prime minister Paul Keating unveiled a monument in Burwood Park, Sydney. A plethora of newspaper and media commentary on the subject appeared around this time and the place of Sandakan in the national memory had been confirmed. Professional historians also played a role in this process, with a series of interviews with survivors of Sandakan in the mid 1980s being played on the national ABC radio and an accompanying book being published.¹⁹

A second example of the crossing over from community to public memory is a memorial commemorating the Greek campaign of April 1941, placed at the head of Anzac Parade. The debacle in Greece was one aspect of the Second World War that Australians saw little value in commemorating in the immediate aftermath of war. But as the ethnic composition of Australia changed in the postwar years (Melbourne claims to be the third largest Greek city in the world), so too did the national memory of war. The Greek memorial was built with money raised among the community of Greek-born Australians, unveiled in 1988 and dedicated to Greeks as well as Australian who died in this fiasco.

Also critical to the rediscovery of the Second World War in recent years has been the role played by government and government agencies. In the 1990s there was a conscious attempt to use the memory of the Second World War for nationalist and republican purposes. In 1992 the Labor prime minister, Paul Keating, himself of Irish-Catholic extraction and hence schooled in that political tradition which had been anti-conscription and anti-imperialist during the First World War, exploited the fiftieth anniversary of the fall of Singapore to castigate the British for their 'betrayal' of Australia. (The fact that Australian governments had been complicit in the neglect of imperial defence in the

1930s was conveniently overlooked.) In July 1992 Keating also made a very public visit to Kokoda where he stooped to kiss a memorial to Australian soldiers who had held the Japanese advance across the Owen Stanley Ranges in mid 1942. It is worth noting, in this instance, how serendipitous can be the gestures that acquire profound symbolic meaning. Keating, I know from the historian travelling with him on this journey to provide background briefing on the battles of 1942, only kissed the memorial because he had discovered to his dismay that there were *three* memorials at that site, not two as anticipated. Having run out of wreaths, he searched desperately for the gesture to commemorate the third memorial. It was his stooping to kiss, not his laying of the wreaths, which provided the photo opportunity for journalists who have now immortalised that moment.

At the same time as politicians created new public memories of the Second World War in the 1980s and 1990s, there were significant numbers of people, who had a vested interest in expediting the crossover of memories from the community to national level — what might be called, irreverently, a “memory industry”. Among these were a new generation of historians who saw, in the fiftieth anniversaries of the war, a means of establishing their reputations and earning publishing points; publishers who saw related commercial opportunities; curators in the Australian War Memorial who had a professional interest in memorialisation; and bureaucrats in the Department of Veteran Affairs (formerly Repatriation), who carved out new roles for themselves, as their former functions of servicing the needs of veterans declined with the ageing of that cohort. Since the early 1980s, therefore, Anzac Parade has been increasingly festooned with new memorials, while in 1995, the anniversary of the end of the Second World War was marked by a huge media campaign, *Australia Remembers* that sought to educate the public about that conflict.

A further impetus to revived memories of the Second World War occurred at the level of popular culture. The Second World War initially spawned a hugely popular literature. Phenomenal numbers of the war novels of Lawson Glassop,²⁰ Eric Lambert and Jon Cleary were bought — and presumably read — by Australians in the war and immediate post-war years. Lambert’s *The Twenty Thousand Thieves* (1951) sold three-quarters of a million copies; John Cleary’s *The Climate of Courage* (1954), over half a million. Selected titles were converted into morale-boosting films even while the war was

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progressing. These novels were set against the backdrop of the campaigns of the Middle East and New Guinea — and to that extent familiarised their readers with the contours of the war — but the novels were also intent on exploring, from different ideological perspectives, issues such as the way in which war dichotomised the world into friend and enemy, the test of Australian character in war-time, the democratising experience of life in the army, and the impact of war on gender relations and Australian masculinity.²¹ The early postwar years also saw the publication of some immensely popular prisoner-of-war fiction and memoirs. Russell Braddon's *The Naked Island* (1952) sold over a million copies; Rohan Rivett's *Behind Bamboo* (1946) has had at least five editions and is still in print.

But after their initial success, this war literature lost some popularity with the changing fashion in literature and the development of widespread anti-war attitudes in the 1960s. Again it was not until the 1980s that there was a renewed interest, at the popular culture level, in the Second World War. On television there was an immensely popular television series, *The Sullivans*, which portrayed — in some 1114 episodes — the experiences of a lower middle class Australian family during the war. This series consciously aspired to recreate “history” for an audience who had no direct experience of the war and to sustain the memories of those who had. The producers drew strongly on popular memory of war, encouraging viewers to ring and supply the series with raw material for from their recollections of wartime Australia.²²

In the same decade there was the beginning of what has proved to be a virtual explosion of memoirs, published diaries, documentaries and “faction” concerned with the POW experience. This development owed something to the fact that ex-prisoners themselves had reached the age at which they had the psychological need and the time to reflect on their lives. And their families, conscious of the premature morbidity and mortality of ex-POWs, encouraged them to place their memories in the public domain (another instance of the cross over from private memory to public). There was an extraordinary market for this literature. The diaries of a prisoner—of-war doctor, Sir Edward “Weary” Dunlop, who became something of an iconic figure sold at least 50,000 copies in their first five years of publication.²³ Another POW diary, Stan Armeil's *One Man's War*, (1980) enjoyed comparable sales and was prescribed for senior school studies in two Australian states.

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It is clear therefore that much has happened in the last two decades to revive memories of the Second World War at the national level, but — to revert to my earlier point — the mythology of the First World War still remains dominant. It is not simply that Anzac had established itself so firmly as the dominant national memory of war before 1939 — a process which was reaffirmed by Peter Weir's 1981 film *Gallipoli* which socialised a whole new generation of Australians into the central elements of the legend — but because even as the memories of the Second World War have been revived in recent years, they have been done so within the context of Anzac. Moreover, Anzac itself has changed in a way that has allowed it to continue to subsume the Second World War experience.

The prisoner-of-war memory is a striking example of the former process. Both in the immediate post-war and more recent publications POW writers strove, consciously and unconsciously, to integrate their memories of captivity into the Anzac legend. This was far from easy given that Anzac was a legend which above all celebrated the AIF as the finest fighting force in history and the Australian 8th Division, which was captured by the Japanese in 1942, had been humiliatingly defeated. But ex-POWs achieved this integration by emphasising those aspects of captivity which reinforced the legend: namely the supposed capacity of Australians to be resourceful in adverse circumstances, to survive against the odds to maintain a dry laconic humour at all times, and above all to manifest mateship. Even ex-prisoners who were not consciously writing for a commercial market appear to have felt constrained in their memoirs to adopt the rhetoric and values of Anzac. The clear evidence that there was stealing, selfishness, and divisiveness in the POW camp was rationalised away and subsumed into a celebration of Australian mateship and self-imposed discipline.

This self-conscious integration of the POW experience into Anzac may explain why it is that the POW experience appears now to have emerged as possibly the dominant memory of the Second World War in Australia at the national level. This of course owes something to the objectively terrible nature of their experiences: almost as many Australians died in Japanese camps as in action against the Japanese, and nearly 1 in 3 of Australian POW in the Asia-Pacific region died. In my experience there is scarcely a family in Australia that does not know of someone who was a prisoner of the Japanese. But, it took that dialogue between private and public memory of war — and that alignment

of the POW memory with the dominant discourse of Anzac — to position the prisoner's experience at the centre of the national memory. It is a statue of Dunlop that stands out the national war memorial, not a military commander or even a combat figure.²⁴ (The other statue outside the Memorial is a similarly iconic figure of self-sacrifice and humanitarianism, the soldier John Simpson who rescued the wounded on his donkey until he was killed at Gallipoli in May 1915.)

As for Anzac itself, this has evolved from being essentially a masculinist, Anglo-Saxon myth, to the point where it is now constructed as commemorating not only the two world wars but all 100 000 Australians who died in the various conflicts of the twentieth century. As Keating said at an emotion-charged burial of an Unknown Soldier on the 75th anniversary of the end of the First World War, Anzac is not a legend that asserts the primacy of soldiers over civilians, of one race or religion over another, or of men over women, or one generation over another. In this new inclusive form Anzac has demonstrated the capacity to continue to serve, as it did for earlier generations, as a focus for the sense of national identity. To quote Keating again: "We have gained a legend: a story of bravery and sacrifice and with it a deeper faith in ourselves and our democracy, and a deeper understanding of what it means to be Australian".

NOTAS:

¹ Chris Coulthard Clark's study of civil-military relations in Australia (*Soldiers in Politics: The Impact of the Military on Australian Political Life and Institutions*, Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1996) lists many politicians who had prior military service but none who used their war records as the springboard to high political office.

² *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918*, vol. I, *The Story of Anzac* (St Lucia: Queensland, 1981, first published, 1921), p. 607.

³ For a good overview of the debate see Paula Hamilton, 'The Knife Edge: Debates about Memory and History' in Kate Darian-Smith and Paula Hamilton (eds), *Memory & History in Twentieth Century Australia* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1994), ch. 1.

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⁴ Quoted, *ibid.*, p. 12.

⁵ For an analysis of the Anzac literature see Joan Beaumont (ed.), *Australia's War, 1914-18* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1995), ch. 6.

⁶ E.M. Andrews, 'The first Anzac Day in Australia and Britain', *Journal of the Australian War Memorial*, no. 23, 1993, pp. 13-20.

⁷ L.L. Robson, 'The Anzac Tradition', *Journal of History*, vol. IV, no. 2, 1959.

⁸ The classic development of this argument can be found in Russel Ward, *The Australian Legend* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1958).

⁹ See John Barrett *We were There: Australian Soldiers of World War II Tell their Stories* (Ringwood, Vic: Viking, 1987), ch. 7; Joan Beaumont, *Gull Force: Survival and Leadership in Captivity, 1941-45* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1988), pp. 17-18.

¹⁰ London: Oxford University Press, 1975.

¹¹ *Sites of Memory: Sites of Mourning* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

¹² H.P. Willmott, *The Great Crusade: A New Complete History of the Second World War*. (New York: Free Press, 1989), p. 146

¹³ John McCarthy, *A Last Call of Empire: Australian Aircrew, Britain and the Empire Air Training Scheme* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1988).

¹⁴ See Peter Charlton, *The Unnecessary War: Island Campaigns of the South-West Pacific, 1944-45* (Melbourne: Macmillan, 1983).

¹⁵ 'Voice at the Wall: Discourses of Self, History and National Identity at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial' in *History and Memory*, vol. 6, no. 2, 1994, p. 92.

¹⁶ *Sacred Places: War Memorials in the Australian Landscape* (Miegunyah Press, 1998).

¹⁷ See David Horner, 'Defending Australia in 1942', *War & Society* vol. 11, no. 1, 1993, pp. 1-20.

¹⁸ *Age*, 9 May 1950 (People and Parties section), p. 6.

¹⁹ Hank Nelson, *P.O.W. Australians under Nippon* (Sydney: ABC, 1985).

²⁰ *We Were the Rats* (1944).

²¹ See David Walker, 'The Writer's War' in Joan Beaumont (ed.) *Australia's War, 1939-45* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1996), ch. 6.

²² See Kate Darian-Smith, 'War Stories: Remembering the Australian Home Front during the Second World War', in Hamilton and Darian-Smith (eds), *Memory & History*, pp. 137-58.

²³ *The War Diaries of Weary Dunlop* (Melbourne: Nelson, 1986).

²⁴ There are at least four statues of Dunlop in Australia. A Weary Dunlop Statue Appeal raised the astounding sum of \$400 000 by public subscription with apparently no difficulty and the memory of Dunlop has even extended to the Qantas resort of Great Keppel island where there is, I am told, a Weary Dunlop cocktail!

RESUMO: A guerra está imersa na memória coletiva da identidade nacional australiana e desempenha um papel fundamental na formação do sentido da identidade nacional no século 20. O heroísmo na guerra constitui-se em lenda instituidora de identidade: a narrativa de bravura e sacrifício, a fé profunda em si e na democracia e a compreensão do que significa ser australiano.

PALAVRAS-CHAVES: identidade nacional, guerra, Austrália.