

Valour & Violets

South Australia in the Great War



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South Australia August 1914

War declared

Fearing the worst, on 29 July 1914 Britain sent a cable to each of her dominions warning of impending war. At a trade union meeting held in Colac in regional Victoria on 31 July, the leader of the Labor Opposition, Andrew Fisher, told the crowd that:

Should the worst happen, after everything has been done that honour will permit, Australians will stand beside the mother country to help and if necessary defend her to our last man and our last shilling.

Speaking to a meeting at Horsham, Joseph Cook echoed Fisher's comments, saying: 'Whatever happens, Australia is a part of the Empire right to the full. Remember that when the Empire is at war, so is Australia at war'.

Germany declared war against Russia on 1 August 1914 and by the following day German troops were in Luxembourg. More than 3700 Luxembourg nationals would join the French Army and serve for the duration of the war. Many others would spend the war at near-starvation levels.

Germany sent notification to the Belgian Government that it had 12 hours to agree to the free and uninterrupted passage of German troops and equipment through Belgium. Belgium refused, and on 3 August, France declared war on Germany, who subsequently declared war on France. That same day, the British Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey, speaking to his friend, the British journalist John Alfred Spender, made his now-famous statement: 'The lamps are going out all over Europe; we shall not see them lit again in our lifetime'.

The following day, 4 August 1914, Britain declared war on Germany, siding with France and Belgium and, by default, Russia, with whom France had signed a defence agreement well prior to the outbreak of the war.



Left: Souvenir photographic poster of the Declaration of War, August 1914. Features British and Australian flags, illustrations of cannon and native flowers, and photographs of the generals of the United Kingdom and Australia, King George V in the centre, and battleships. The photograph originally belonged to Private Leslie Howard Thompson, No. 4768 AIF. Created by photographer Hyman Samuel Cohen. SLSA [SRG 435-1-486 RSL Collection].

PATRIOTIC DEMON- STRATION.

THOUSANDS MARCH
THROUGH THE STREETS.

HUGE CROWD AT ELDER
PARK.

STIRRING SPEECH BY THE
GOVERNOR.

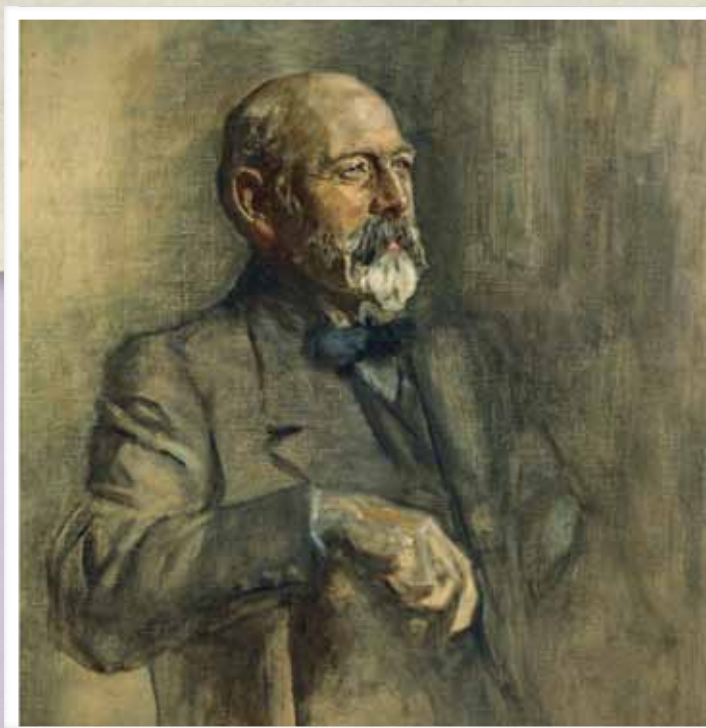
Seldom has a more fervent demonstration of loyalty and devotion to his Majesty the King been given in Adelaide than the one organised by the A.N.A. [Australian Natives Association] held on Saturday afternoon. More than 20,000 persons, it is estimated, gathered in Elder Park to hear patriotic speeches and sing patriotic songs. The crowd extended down to the bank of the river, and out on to the roadway. Patriotism was the keynote. The slightest reference to the King, Mr. Asquith, or Sir Edward Grey, the French, the Russians or the Belgians proceeded tumultuous applause. Persons on the outskirts of the crowd who could not hear a word joined in the applause with vigour.

Advertiser, 10 August 1914, p. 13.

DEMONSTRATION OF SOUTH AUSTRALIAN PATRIOTISM



IMMENSE GATHERING AT ELDER PARK ON SATURDAY AFTERNOON



Right: Portrait of Sir Joseph Cook, sixth Prime Minister of Australia who was in office for just 15 months from 14 June 1913 to 19 September 1914. Painting by Sir James Guthrie (1859–1930), *Study for portrait in Statesmen of the Great War*, reprinted courtesy of the National Galleries of Scotland. Gifted by W.G. Gardiner and Sir Frederick Gardiner 1930. NGS [PG 1136].

Later the same day, as expected, Prime Minister Cook confirmed Australia's support for Britain and the British Empire, announcing that Australia was also officially at war.

In the winter of 1914, approximately 20,000 people crammed into Elder Park in Adelaide to enthusiastically celebrate the news of Australia's support for Britain. Nationalistic fervour prevailed, with flag-waving parades demonstrating deeply patriotic sentiments widespread throughout the state. Newspapers carried reports of impending war while echoing the need for loyalty to the British Empire in her 'hour of need'.

Promise of 20,000 troops

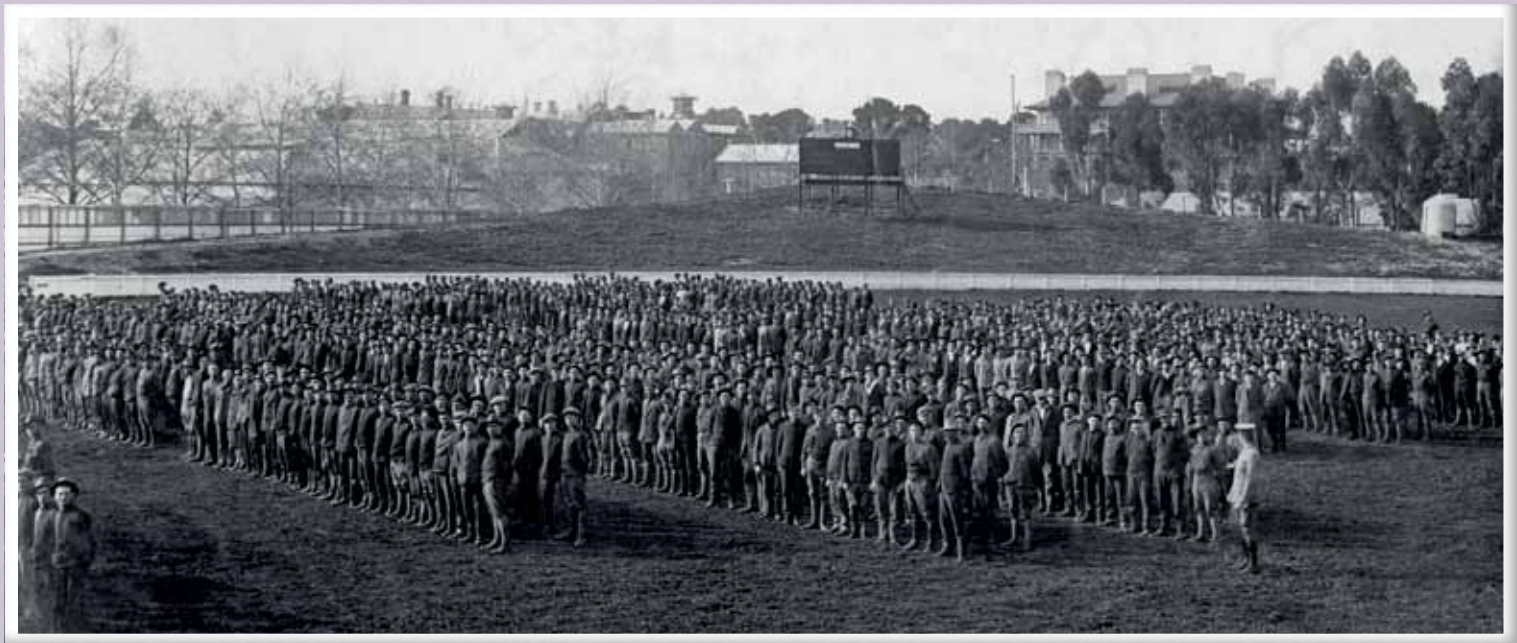
The majority of political, community and church leaders across Australia lent their full support to raising the Australian division promised to Britain by the Australian Government. In the first wave, up to 20,000 Australian men would be recruited over a period of just six months – an astonishing achievement by any measure.

Although many of the first wave of men were rejected due to their bad teeth, their age or their height, the criteria for rejection gradually eroded over the course of the war, as the numbers of volunteers declined and casualty lists grew.

South Australians came from all over the state to volunteer, with the total number of recruits over the course of the war representing 37 per cent of the male population aged 18 to 44 years.



Above: Alfred Allen Simpson, Lord Mayor of Adelaide 1913 to 1915. At the outbreak of the war he initiated the Mayor's Patriotic Fund which later became known as the South Australian Soldier's Fund. He also assisted Lady Galway to establish South Australia's branch of the Belgium Relief Fund and made it clear that any public employees who volunteered for overseas service could have their jobs back when they returned.



The [Adelaide] High School and its predecessor, the Pupil Teachers' School are sending a splendid representation of 'old boys' in the First Imperial Contingent. Their schoolfellows, past and present, are proud of them, and are assured that not only will they uphold worthily the honour of their school and country, but also that they will always be ready and willing when duty calls ... It is needless to remind them that they will always be present in our thoughts, and that, in so far as the censor will allow, we will follow them in their voyages and marches; that we will rejoice when we hear of their victories, or, should misfortune in any form overtake any of them ... May they fight the good fight, and may God protect them, and great will be our rejoicing when safely and victoriously they may return home.

Above: Long lines of army recruits still wearing civilian clothes assembled at Adelaide's Jubilee Camp behind the University of Adelaide. Although believed to have been taken in 1915, scenes similar to this one prevailed. SLSA [PRG280/1/3/287].

Left: Schools across the state recorded the names of student alumni and teachers who enlisted. This extract is from the *Adelaide High School Magazine* published on 16 September 1914, and captures the sentiment of the times.

Girls' Social and Political Union

In this climate, 20 young South Australian women formed their own political society. Called the Girls' Social and Political Union, the aim of the organisation was to 'promote mutual awareness of matters South Australian, Imperial and international to make the most effective use of their voting rights'.

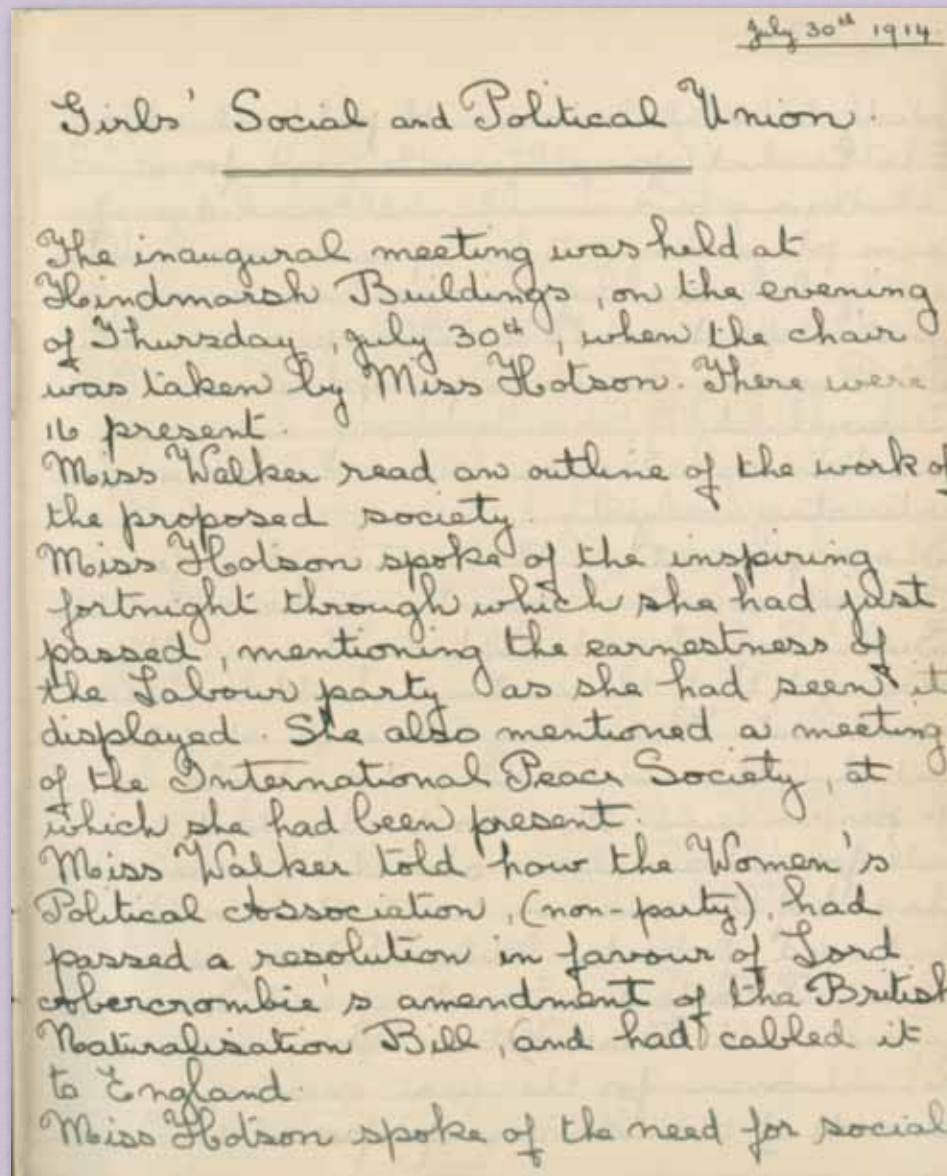
Their first meeting was held at the Hindmarsh Building on Wyatt Street in Adelaide on Thursday 30 July 1914, a few days before war was declared. At the meeting an outline of the work proposed was read by the group's founder, 18-year-old Ellinor Walker.

The young women met regularly over the following three years (1914 to 1917), discussing matters ranging from patriotism and conscription to equal pay and the fate of property following divorce or a husband's death. Not averse to grass-roots political activism, the society also debated a proposal raised in 1917 to organise a 'women's strike to stop the war'.

Many of the group were also active members of both the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) and the Women's Non-Party Political Association, the latter having been established a few years earlier in July 1909 at Bricknell's Café in Rundle Street, Adelaide. Some also belonged to the Social Purity Society,



Above: Women's rights activist and teacher, Ellinor Gertrude Walker, OBE. A graduate of Adelaide's prestigious Wilderness School she was awarded the Tennyson Medal in English at age 15. Founding director of Greenways (in the Montessori tradition) which she established at the family home in Fullarton, at age 18 she formed the 'Girls Club' to study political matters. This led to membership of the Women's Non-Political Association in 1917 and later to her involvement with the Loyal League of Women Voters of South Australia, of which she was an active member for more than 65 years.



Left: The minutes of the Girls' Social and Political Union which met 55 times over three years. Courtesy of the Society of Women Writers (SA Branch) Australia Inc.

founded by the pioneering South Australian feminist Mary Lee, who had successfully advocated for raising the age of consent for girls, as well as providing accommodation and assistance for young women deemed to be at risk of prostitution.

The Women's Non-Party Political Association was an exclusively women's society, independent of male affiliation. Founded by other South Australian first-wave feminists, the association's members included Catherine Helen Spence, Lucy Morice, Mary Colton, Rosetta Birks, Elizabeth Nicholls and Mary McCorkingdale. Kate Cocks (South Australia's first policewoman) and Dr Violet Plummer (Adelaide's first female doctor) were also members, as were Dr Helen Mayo, working in the area of women and children's health, Mary Kitson and Adelaide Miethke, both active in founding the Women's Teachers Association. Many of these South Australian women would play a leading role in both the peace and anti-conscription movements.

Below: A busy day on Rundle Street, Adelaide, 1914, looking east from King William Street. The city buildings and shops include C.J. Young Shoe Co., Barlow's Shoes, a chemist, Stevenson's Jewellers, Clock and Marshall's Department Store. Shown on the south side are Thelma-Duryea Photographic Studio and Bricknell's Café where the Girls' Social and Political Union met regularly from 1914 to 1917. Also visible are the Grand Theatre, Sigalas & Co., Cawthorne's Piano & Music Warehouse, Kindermann's Cafe (est. 1851), Charlick Bros Grocers & Teamen, and De-Lany's Red Lion Hotel.

Changes to 'women's work'

Despite the fact that South Australian women had achieved the vote in 1894 (following New Zealand in 1893) and that most other Australian states had followed by 1902 (Victoria 1908), the bulk of paid work deemed appropriate for South Australian women at this time was mainly in domestic service.

During the war years women began to branch out into areas of work that were traditionally carried out by men. Women's work was considered to be less valuable than men's, a 'value' reflected in a lower weekly pay packet, which was probably a result of the Harvester Judgement in 1908.



Egypt February 1915

Military Training Camps, Egypt



Training at Mena, Zeitoun and Maadi Military Camps near Cairo was arduous and intense, continuing eight hours a day, six days a week. The Pyramids and Sphinx at Giza provided a spectacular backdrop to the sandy makeshift training grounds. Initially, as a means of acclimatising, the troops were required to wear full kit with heavy packs during the long route marches through the hot desert, causing men to perspire excessively, particularly on their backs. The first order on arriving at the training area was always 'drop packs'. As they took their midday meal break, the desert winds blew onto the saturated men, with many of the men becoming sick because of the 'chill'. In some instances pneumonia developed, with Private Alfred Liersche of 10th Battalion, for example, succumbing to the illness.

The military authorities who observed the development of the 3rd Brigade (which included the 10th and 12th Battalions) described them as having 'unity of purpose', 'the will to succeed,' and an 'ability to work together as sections, platoons, companies and battalions'. These attributes, combined with the enthusiasm of the troops, came to the attention of Divisional Commander General Bridges. It was no doubt one of the reasons behind his decision to use the 3rd Brigade as the covering force for the Anzac landing.

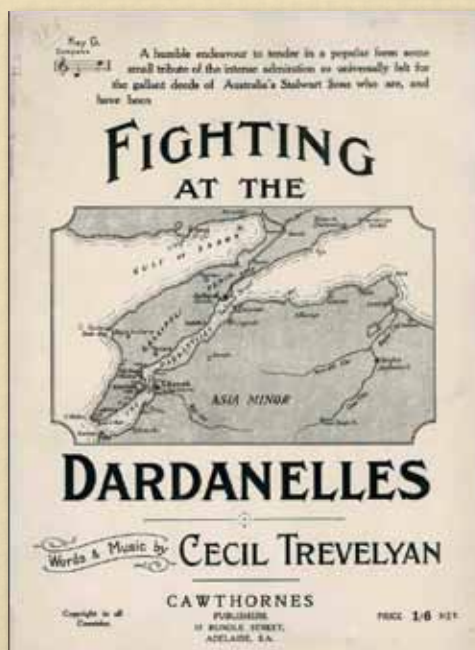
At the completion of training, limited leave was sometimes granted in Cairo and many men took the opportunity to tour the Pyramids and tombs, haggling with Egyptian traders for souvenirs to send home. Others, however, were more interested in letting off steam in the seedier areas of the city known as 'Wozzas'. Some of the Australian soldiers acquired a reputation for rowdy behaviour and larrikinism and there was a high incidence of venereal disease. This became such a large-scale and long-term problem that the army made it a serious offence to hide a suspected venereal disease. Ships crowded with infected men arrived home. The army's obvious problem was to explain the reason for their early return.

Below: The Australian Light Horse Camp at Maadi, Egypt, in approximately 1915. SLSA [SRG 435/1/220].





Above: Lines of the Australian 9th and 10th Battalions at Mena Camp, looking toward the Pyramids. The soldier in the foreground interacts with a regimental mascot. Many Australian units brought kangaroos and other Australian animals with them to Egypt, and some were given to the Cairo Zoological Gardens when the units went to Gallipoli. The Australian camps were set up just outside Cairo with the infantry at Mena and the Light Horse at Maadi. The New Zealanders were close by at Zeitoun (see map on page 157). Training was undertaken nearby on the desert sands with the Pyramids at Giza providing a stunning backdrop. AWM [C02588].



*Twas said in Cairo we disgraced our name,
But one or two don't make Australia's all;
Australian troops will always play the game'
And ever act the man at duty's call.
And when it came to fight we held our end up;
We landed midst a storm of shot and shell;
And history will tell of our behaviours,
In our fighting at the Dardanelles.*

Above and left: South Australian composer Cecil Trevelyan wrote a patriotic song titled 'Fighting at the Dardanelles' in which the second verse refers to the Anzacs in Cairo's Wozza district. SLISA [B1267689].



Above: A photo of British General William Birdwood taken in 1920 when he visited Adelaide after the war. SLSA [B26285/193].

Left: General Birdwood's headquarters were in Shepherd's Hotel, Cairo (pictured), where the term ANZAC was first coined. The hotel was used as a base for the military.

An acronym for the corps

General William Birdwood's headquarters in Cairo's world-renowned Shepherd's Hotel was a very busy place. Clerical staff had been detached from other divisions, while additional staff were brought over from England to assist with administration duties associated with the arrival of the newly formed 'Australasian Army Corps'. Before long, the ground floor corridor became cluttered with cases addressed to the 'A. and N.Z. Army Corps', a long name decidedly unsuitable for constant use, especially when writing instructions, telegrams and other vital correspondence. In early 1915, Major Cyril Mosley Wagstaff of the Royal Engineers, a junior member of the operations section of Birdwood's staff, mentioned to his fellow clerks the need for a convenient code name for the corps.

A rubber stamp of the same size as the large letters painted on the cases had already been cut, and when the superintending clerk held up the new stamp, he asked 'How about ANZAC?'. Wagstaff was delighted, immediately taking the idea to Birdwood, who approved its use from that moment on. The shorthand name for the corps became ANZAC, a word whose meaning was to grow in stature as it entered Australian and New Zealand history.

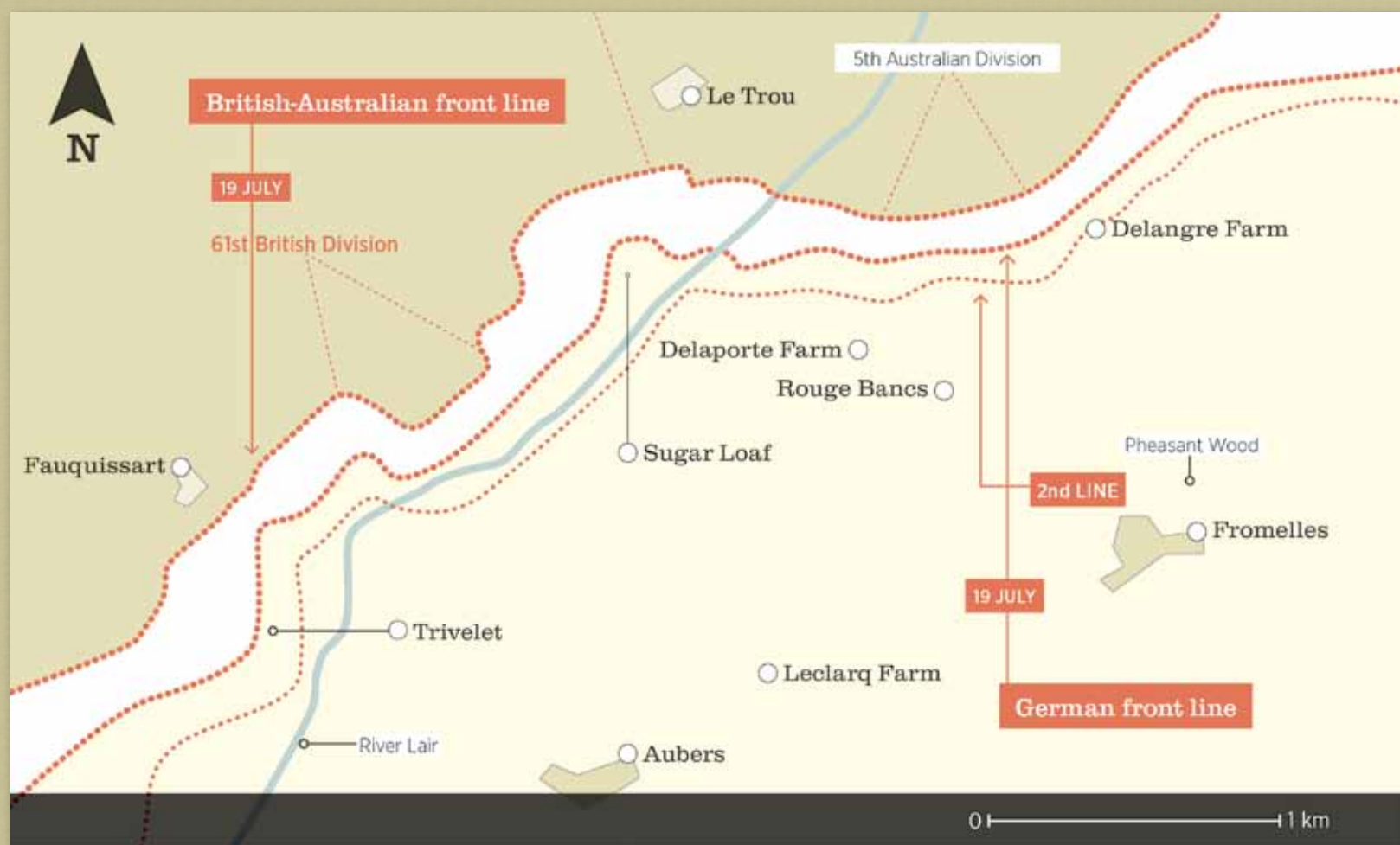
France July 1916

The Somme Offensive

The Battle of the Somme was a series of major battles fought between 1 July and 18 November 1916 along the Somme Valley in France. Planned by General Haig in conjunction with the French General Joseph Joffre, the Somme Offensive was the major Anglo-British offensive for 1916. The battle raged for four-and-a-half months, with some of the largest, longest and bloodiest battles of the Great War. The first 24 hours was a bloodbath that resulted in casualty rates never before experienced in warfare: the British alone suffered almost 60,000 casualties, of whom a third were killed.

The major battles in which South Australian troops fought included Fromelles on 19 and 20 July and Pozières Ridge, from 23 July through to 3 September. South Australians in the 32nd Battalion were involved at Fromelles, while the 10th, 12th and 27th Battalions were involved in battles fought over Pozières Village and Mouquet Farm, and those in the 16th, 50th, 52nd Battalions and the 5th Pioneer Battalion, fought at Mouquet Farm.

The Australians also launched a number of futile and costly attacks around Flers in November 1916. The high number of casualties suffered by the Australian divisions on the Somme put a great strain on Australia's system of recruiting volunteers and led to the first divisive referendum on conscription.



Above: South Australia's 32nd Battalion were the first to fight on the Western Front. They fought in the Battle of Fromelles in July 1916 and suffered huge casualties.

Fromelles

Situated 70 kilometres north of the Somme Valley in France, Fromelles was the AIF's first major battle on the Western Front – and one of the worst battles in Australia's military history. In one day, 5533 Australians were wounded or killed. Of this number, 718 casualties were South Australians in the 32nd Battalion with 215 killed outright or dying of their wounds later, and the remainder either wounded or taken prisoner. The combined losses from this one battle equated to approximately 90 per cent of the battalion's fighting strength.

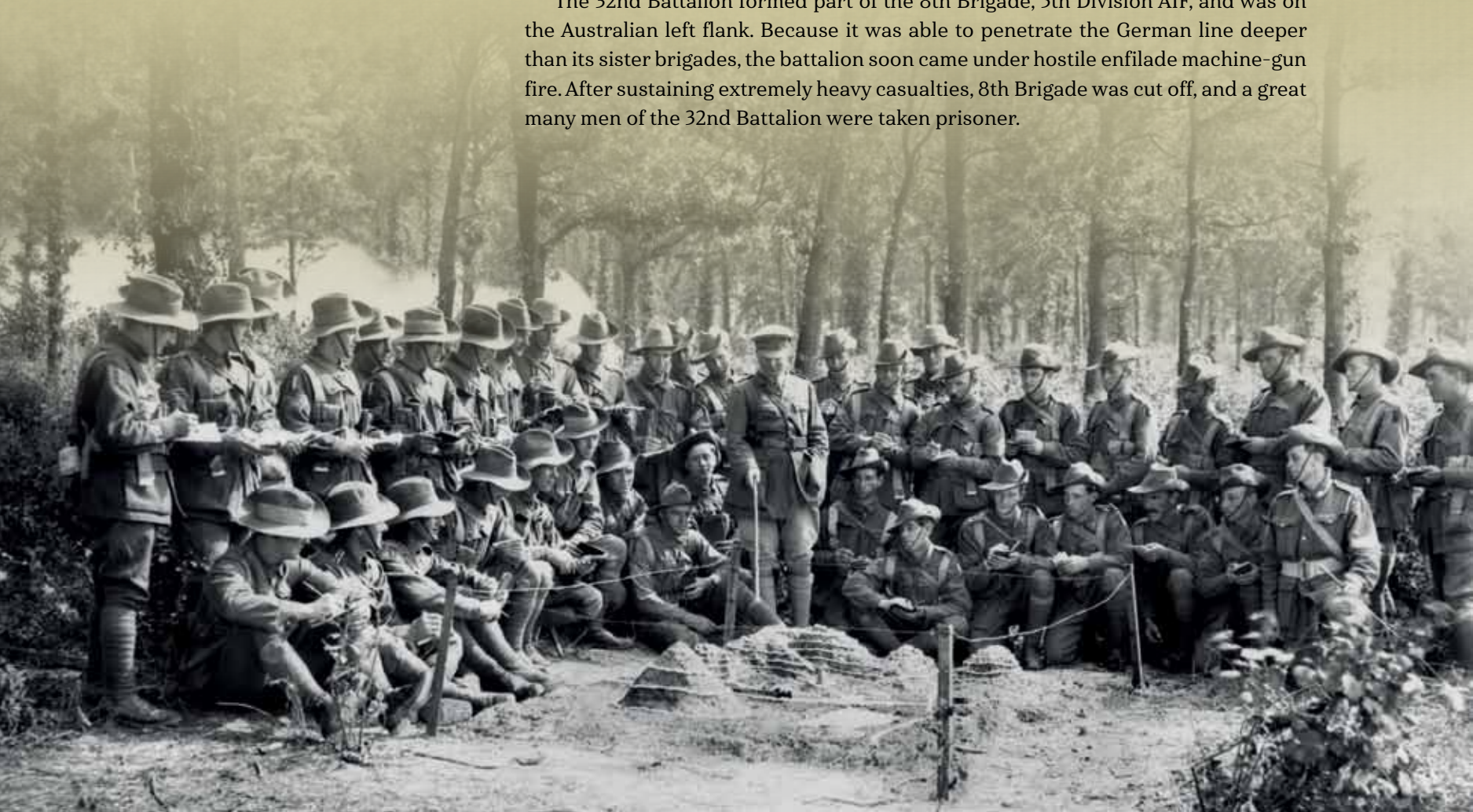
Australia's 5th Division AIF was crippled by the bloody disaster at Fromelles, putting it out of action for several months. Those at home were horrified as the casualty lists came through.

British General Richard Haking had argued for the attack, believing it might threaten the German-held Auber's Ridge, south of Lille, thereby allowing the Allies to achieve a much-needed breakthrough at the Sugar Loaf Salient. The British had already made two costly and unsuccessful attempts at the same point in 1915. The 'Sugar Loaf' was a heavily manned and fortified position from which the German machine gunners had an uninterrupted view of the Allied front and flanks. Haig initially rejected Haking's proposal, but a member of Haig's staff convinced him to reconsider, suggesting an artillery demonstration at Fromelles might be enough to convince the Germans to believe a major attack was impending, thereby deterring them from transferring troops up to the Somme. Meeting with the British First Army commander, General Charles Monro, who also favoured Haking's plan, Haig was convinced that this diversionary tactic could work.

Haking's plan involved preceding the attack with three days of intense shelling. At 6 pm on 19 July, after a seven-hour artillery bombardment and with three-and-a-half hours of daylight remaining, the newly arrived and inexperienced 5th Division AIF, along with the British 61st Division, attacked at Fromelles.

The 32nd Battalion formed part of the 8th Brigade, 5th Division AIF, and was on the Australian left flank. Because it was able to penetrate the German line deeper than its sister brigades, the battalion soon came under hostile enfilade machine-gun fire. After sustaining extremely heavy casualties, 8th Brigade was cut off, and a great many men of the 32nd Battalion were taken prisoner.

Below: Non-commissioned officers of the 8th Brigade being trained in map reading prior to their involvement in the Battle of Fromelles. South Australian Corporal Heuzenroeder and Sergeant Gordon DCM are among the group. They would both survive Fromelles but many of their comrades would not, with more than 718 casualties suffered in one 24-hour period. AWM [E02832].





Above: A German collecting station on the morning of 20 July 1916. Private Andreas Voitkun, 32nd Battalion, a Latvian Russian ship engineer from Riga, is seated on the right side of the square box. Voitkun migrated to Australia with his wife Emily and three children in 1913 with another two children born in Australia prior to his enlistment in the AIF in 1915. Wounded by shrapnel to his right leg and left arm, Voitkun spent the rest of the war as a German prisoner of war. Often acting as an interpreter, he was fluent in German, Russian and French. Back in Port Pirie, his wife Emily did not receive news of her husband's whereabouts until January 1917. Having survived the war Voitkun returned to his family in in 1919 and worked at the lead and oil smelters in Port Pirie, living among a small community of Latvian Russians who settled there in the early 20th century. Extracts from Voitkun's memoirs were published in 1962. In them he reveals that while captive he read Tolstoy's *War and Peace*; a book he reread annually until his death in 1971. AWM [C535318]. Portrait of Andreas courtesy of Flora Gouer.

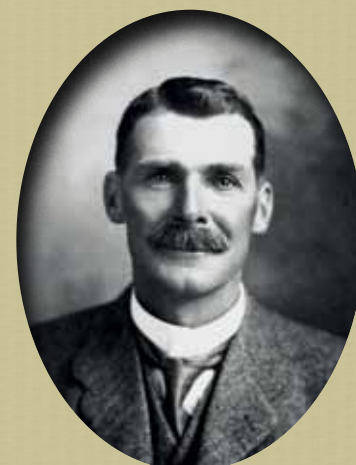
At about 4 am on 20 July 1916, Private Geoffrey Middleton Adamson of Tanunda, then with the 32nd Battalion, was forced to retreat under heavy machine-gun fire during the Battle of Fromelles. Adamson became lost in the darkness and got caught in German wire in No Man's Land. When he regained consciousness, he discovered a man groaning alongside him. After losing consciousness again, he was aroused some time later by 'something cold' on the side of his face. To his horror, that 'something cold' was a dead man's elbow now resting on his face. He recognised the owner as a lance corporal from A Company he had seen several times, but whose name he did not know.

On his arrival at the hospital, Adamson met a sergeant from A Company, who guessed it must have been Lance Corporal Arthur Hurtle Morphett. Adamson thought the dead man had been hit by a machine-gun bullet. He described him as being 'over six feet tall, well-built, handsome and with a good complexion, clean-shaven, a close-clipped dark-brown moustache and the same coloured hair'. He could not clearly describe the man's eye colour, but thought it may have been either hazel or brown. He hadn't been able to go through the dead man's pockets or take his ID disc because of his close proximity to the German parapets. Adamson wrote to the Red Cross asking if they could send him a small photograph of Lance Corporal Morphett, so that he could 'give a more definite answer'.

In a letter dated 1 August 1917, Morphett's father wrote thanking the Red Cross for their letter, and enclosed a photo of his son. Five months later, Private Adamson wrote to the Red Cross to confirm that the man lying dead next to him in No Man's Land that day had indeed been Lance Corporal Morphett.



Above: Geoffrey Middleton Adamson was the son of a Mount Pleasant policeman. He enlisted on 8 July 1915 and embarked aboard HMAT *Geelong* in November 1915. Wounded in action at Fromelles he 'hung on the wire' for two days. Despite this he returned to the front and was wounded another three times, the last on 7 August 1918 by gas shell. Charged with several misdemeanours throughout the war, including forfeiture of 12 days pay due to being AWOL, Geoffrey returned to Australia in March 1919 having served 3 years and 177 days overseas. He died in February 1985 aged 87 years.



Above: Arthur Hurtle Morphett was a grazier from Woods Point near Murray Bridge, who enlisted in the 32nd Battalion in June 1915 and embarked overseas on 18 November aboard HMAT *Geelong*. Appointed lance corporal on 26 May 1916 he was reported missing in action on 20 July 1916 but later confirmed killed in the Battle of Fromelles. He was 38 years of age. He has no known grave and is honoured on the VC Corner Cemetery and Memorial at Fromelles. AWM [P09291.469].

Five unidentified Australian Pioneers make a duckboard bridge across the waterlogged trenches to enable supplies to be brought forward to the men at the front. AWM [E00210].



REGINALD INWOOD

Reginald Roy Inwood was born in Adelaide on 14 July 1890. He was schooled in Adelaide and later in Broken Hill. He worked as a miner until his enlistment in the 10th Battalion on 24 August 1914, aged 24 years. Embarking for overseas aboard HMAT *Ascanius* in October 1914, he was among the men of the 10th Battalion who landed at Anzac Cove on 25 April 1915 and one of a rare number who fought with the battalion for the entire duration of the war. Awarded the Victoria Cross for his actions in the battle of Menin Road near Polygon Wood in September 1917, he returned to Broken Hill in August 1918 to 'a hero's welcome'. He married Mabel Collins but the couple divorced in 1921 after Roy had difficulty settling and finding work. After short stints in Tasmania and on Kangaroo Island he returned to Adelaide where he took up work as a city council labourer – a position, which apart from a period serving as a Warrant Officer Class 1 with the Provost Corps during World War II, he held for 33 years. He married Evelyn Owens in 1927. After Evelyn's death, he married Louise Elizabeth Gates in 1942. He had no children. Roy always marched on Anzac Day with the 10th Battalion who named the Other Ranks Mess at Torrens Parade Ground the Roy Inwood Club (re-located to Keswick Barracks in 1999). He died on 23 October 1971 aged 81 years and was given a military funeral. He is buried in West Terrace Cemetery. His two brothers, Harold and Robert, also served with the AIF; the latter killed in action at Pozières.



Below: Australians lie wounded on Menin Road, just outside Ypres near Birr Cross, 20 September 1917. Photo by Frank Hurley. State Library of New South Wales [a479035].

