



**Valore Australis:
Constructions of Australian Military Heroism from Sudan
to Vietnam, 1885–1975**

Bryce Scott Abraham

BA (Hons)(*Newcastle*)

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in History

The University of Newcastle, Australia

August 2019

This research was supported by an Australian Government Research Training Program (RTP)
Scholarship

Abstract

‘Hero’ has become one of the most popular labels in Australian society. Once the domain of an elite few, the title of ‘hero’ is now frequently applied to athletes, community volunteers, fictional characters, and media personalities. Even in the martial sphere, a traditional haven of the ‘heroic’, the label has been appropriated to incorporate all current and former service personnel irrespective of service history and deployment status. In doing so, modern society fails to give a full appreciation as to what was considered ‘heroic’ in days and wars past; such flagrant usage does not recognise ‘heroism’ as an elusive social construct, one that is often difficult to quantify. Yet contemporary military forces have attempted to do just that, to define and institutionalise heroism through the bestowal of medals and decorations.

For a state that venerates its martial heritage as the foundation of nationhood, though, the notion of military heroism in Australia has received limited scholarly attention. Through the lens of honours and awards—most notably that of the Victoria Cross—this thesis navigates the shifting constructions of heroism throughout Australia’s war history from the colonial period to the end of the Vietnam War. Drawing upon official records, award recommendation files, newspaper and press accounts, private letters, and personal records, it blends actions on the battlefield with social perceptions and representations of heroism at home to explore the military, political and social dimensions of martial heroism. In doing so, it argues that these three dimensions have variously acted as stimuli to influence the forms of martial heroism throughout the last century and a half: the socially romanticised heroism of the Victorian age became more tactical and aggressive amid the warfare of the World Wars while, after 1945 as the civilian soldier morphed into the contemporary regular, ‘heroism’ become increasingly professionalised. This thesis thus offers a deeper, more rounded appreciation of the Australian military experience and the place of martial heroism in the national consciousness.

Statement of Originality

I hereby certify that the work embodied in the thesis is my own work, conducted under normal supervision.

The thesis contains no material which has been accepted, or is being examined, for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. I give consent to the final version of my thesis being made available worldwide when deposited in the University's Digital Repository, subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968 and any approved embargo.

Bryce Scott Abraham

22 August 2019

Acknowledgements

A product of four years' research, writing, anxiety and editing, this thesis has had many supports along the way. My supervisors, Dr Kate Ariotti and Dr James Bennett, have guided me through the research, writing, restructuring and editing of this thesis with wisdom, patience, and kindness. Their reassurances and encouragement have given me confidence, their good humour lightened the burden, and the opportunities they provided through teaching and research assistance have helped shape my career aspirations. On an individual level, Kate's incisive feedback and ability to see the 'bigger picture' have strengthened the thesis and provided an unrelenting source of inspiration. James' reflective insight and guidance also helped ease my entry into the historical profession, and his eagle eyedness smoothed out many an embarrassing typo (at one point it looked like this thesis was going to be a history of marital heroism ... whoops!). I am deeply thankful to them both.

The thesis journey is an arduous, painstaking and stressful one, which is often made more difficult by financial strain. I am grateful to a number of bodies for helping to relieve some of that burden. The support of an Australian Postgraduate Award/Research Training Program Scholarship, and two generous top-up grants from the Centre for the History of Violence at the University of Newcastle, have made these last four years possible. For that, I offer my sincere thanks to the Australian government, the University of Newcastle, and Professor Philip Dwyer. An Australian Bicentennial Scholarship from the Menzies Australia Institute at King's College London and a Postgraduate Research Support Grant from the Royal Historical Society facilitated an insightful research trip to London. The award of an Army History Research Grant by the Australian Army History Unit also provided valuable time in archives in Canberra, Melbourne and Sydney. I'm appreciative to each of these bodies for breathing confidence into my project and for encouraging a fresh postgrad with big ideas.

I will never cease to be in awe of the scholars and academic titans who show enthusiasm and kindness to postgraduate researchers. In particular, I am indebted to Professor Joanna Bourke (Birkbeck/Newcastle), Professor Carl Bridge (King's College London), Dr Rhys Crawley (Australian War Memorial), Dr Sarah Midford (La Trobe), Professor Peter Stanley (UNSW Canberra), Dr Rosalie Triolo (Monash), and Dr Bart Ziino (Deakin) for their sage advice, kind encouragement, and sharing of research materials. For much the same reason, I am thankful to current and former crew in the Military History Section at the Australian War

Memorial—Peter Burness AM, Dr Lachlan Grant, Dr Meleah Hampton, and the indefatigable Dr Karl James most of all.

Any good historian or work of historical research owes a debt of gratitude to the wonderful work of archivists and librarians. I, and this thesis, are no different. I'm particularly grateful to the kind souls of the University of Newcastle's Auchmuty Library for their diligence and patience in fielding my incessant requests for journal articles and interlibrary loans. For their professionalism and support, thanks are also owed to the staff in the Australian War Memorial's Research Centre, the British Library, Imperial War Museum, Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, National Archives of Australia, National Library of Australia, Royal Air Force Museum, State Libraries of New South Wales and Victoria, and The National Archives in Kew. Credit is especially due to the staff and volunteers behind that wonderous resource, Trove, without which this thesis would be far less rich and, perhaps, interesting.

Thanks, also, to my PhD compatriots, fellow sessionals and all-round wonderful humans Jordan Beavis, Honae Cuffe, Rob Elliott, Dirk Gibb, Peter Hooker, Dr Michael Kilmister, Dr Jan McLeod, Pearl Nunn, Mikael Pierre, Leah Riches, Brian Roach, Caroline Schneider, Michele Seah, Elicia Taylor, Dr Ken Thornton, and Laura Ticehurst for the encouragement, feedback, food and friendship. Without you all, this adventure through Thesis Land would have been far less enriching, and considerably lonelier. Jordan's infectious enthusiasm and cheerleading were a particular source of support and reassurance as I wrangled with the thesis over the final few months.

To my family—the Abrahams, Battens, Copases and Goodmans—I am thankful for the support and encouragement, for the patience in enduring my obsessions with history, heroism and book fairs, and for never failing to keep me humble (my sister, Melanie, not-so-politely declined to read this thesis since it is 'about the war'; meanwhile, I think Mum's still working her way through Chapter One). Questionable reading practices aside, Mum (Lynn) has been an unwavering source of support and reassurance, for which I'm immensely grateful. My nan, Valma Batten, also deserves particular mention. Her endless love and generosity have been one of the greatest sources of inspiration and confidence in my life. It seems only fitting that, since this thesis was submitted the day prior to Nan's 90th birthday, 'Valore Australis' be dedicated to her.

Above all, though, I am thankful, grateful and just generally indebted to my wife, Jade. This journey would not have been possible without her. Jade has provided infinite support, encouragement, empathy, love, and even acted as a sounding board. She has kept me sane,

dedicated, and ensured I had a life outside of the thesis. I can only endeavour to match the exceptional level of support and enthusiasm as Jade nears the end of her own PhD odyssey.

Contents

Abstract	i
Acknowledgements	iii
List of Tables and Figures	viii
Abbreviations	ix
Glossary	xi
Introduction	1
Section 1: Colonial Era	
<i>Chapter One</i>	
The Hero Comes to Australia: Martial Culture and Colonial Heroism from Settlement to South Africa, 1788–1902	20
Section 2: First World War	
<i>Chapter Two</i>	
Dawn of a New Era: German New Guinea and Gallipoli, 1914–15	49
<i>Chapter Three</i>	
Valour of a Bygone Era: Sinai and Palestine, 1916–18	74
<i>Chapter Four</i>	
‘[M]aterially Conducive to the Gaining of a Victory’: Heroism in the Trenches and at Home, 1916–30s	94
Section 3: Second World War	
<i>Chapter Five</i>	
Valour in the Desert: North Africa and the Middle East, 1939–42	127
<i>Chapter Six</i>	
Strategic and Unconventional: Heroism in Europe, 1939–45	149
<i>Chapter Seven</i>	
Valour in the Pacific: Heroism in the War Against Japan, 1941–45	173
Section 4: Cold War	
<i>Chapter Eight</i>	
Policies, Politics and Patrols: The Korean War and the Move Towards Professionalised Heroism, 1946–53	200
<i>Chapter Nine</i>	
Valour in the Jungle: Standards, Quotas and Controversies in the Vietnam War, 1962–72	223

Conclusion	249
Appendix A: Members of the Australian Forces Officially Recommended or Considered for the Victoria Cross	254
Appendix B: Members of the Australian Forces Officially Recommended or Considered for the George Cross	261
Bibliography	263

List of Tables and Figures

2.1	The process for award recommendations during the First World War, as it Applied to infantry battalions and light horse regiments	62
3.1	The hierarchy of British Commonwealth gallantry decorations during the First World War	79
4.1	The distribution by rank of AIF recommendations for the VC on the Western Front	107
4.2	Troedel & Cooper, 'Enlist in the Sportsmen's 1000,' Sportsmen's Recruiting Committee of Victoria, 1917, H2001.34/3a, State Library of Victoria, Melbourne	118
5.1	An example of the earlier format army W.3121 recommendation form	141
5.2	An example of the revised W.3121 recommendation form phased in for use by the army from February 1943	141
6.1	The quantity of British honours and awards (including subsequent award Bars) distributed during the world wars for distinguished leadership and gallantry in action	151

Abbreviations

1ATF	1st Australian Task Force
1RAR	1st Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment
2nd AIF	Second Australian Imperial Force
3RAR	3rd Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment
6RAR	6th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment
AA&QMG	Assistant Adjutant and Quartermaster General
AATTV	Australian Army Training Team Vietnam
ARRC	Associate of the Royal Red Cross
ACNB	Australian Commonwealth Naval Board
AIF	Australian Imperial Force
AN&MEF	Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force
ANZAC	Australian and New Zealand Army Corps
ARVN	Army of the Republic of (South) Vietnam
AWM	Australian War Memorial
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BCFK	British Commonwealth Forces Korea
BEF	British Expeditionary Force
CinC	Commander-in-Chief
DAA&QMG	Deputy Assistant Adjutant and Quartermaster General
DCM	Distinguished Conduct Medal
DFC	Distinguished Flying Cross
DFM	Distinguished Flying Medal
DSC	Distinguished Service Cross
DSM	Distinguished Service Medal
DSO	Distinguished Service Order
EEF	Egyptian Expeditionary Force
GC	George Cross
GOC	General Officer Commanding
LHCMA	Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, King's College London
MBE	Member of the Order of the British Empire
NAA	National Archives of Australia

NZEF	New Zealand Expeditionary Force
OBE	Officer of the Order of the British Empire
RAAF	Royal Australian Air Force
RAN	Royal Australian Navy
RANVR	Royal Australian Naval Volunteer Reserve
RRC	Royal Red Cross
RSSAILA	Returned Sailors' Soldiers' and Airmen's Imperial League of Australia
SASR	Special Air Service Regiment
SOE	Special Operations Executive
SWPA	Southwest Pacific Area
TNA	The National Archives, United Kingdom
VC	Victoria Cross
WO2	Warrant Officer Class II

Glossary

Bar: A second or subsequent award of a decoration. Denoted by a metal bar (or clasp) on the ribbon of the original award.

Conspicuous Gallantry Medal (Flying): Second-tier gallantry award. Instituted in 1942 to recognise airmen for heroism of a standard above that required for the Distinguished Flying Medal but below the Victoria Cross.

Conspicuous Gallantry Medal (Naval): Second-tier gallantry award. Instituted in 1855 and, following an abeyance after the Crimean War, re-instituted in 1874 to recognise the heroism of naval ratings of a standard below that required for the Victoria Cross.

Distinguished Conduct Medal: Second-tier gallantry award. Instituted in 1854 to recognise the heroism of non-commissioned officers and ordinary ranks in the army. Eligibility for the award was extended to naval ratings and airmen in 1942 for feats of heroism performed on land.

Distinguished Flying Cross: Third-tier award for distinguished leadership or heroism in the air. Instituted in 1918 as an award to recognise commissioned and warrant officers of the air force. Eligibility was extended to the Fleet Air Arm in 1941 and to army officers in 1942 for feats of heroism performed in air operations.

Distinguished Flying Medal: Third-tier decoration awarded for heroism or devotion to duty in the air. Instituted in 1918 as an award to recognise ranking airmen in wartime.

Distinguished Service Cross: Third-tier award for distinguished leadership or heroism at sea. Originally instituted as the Conspicuous Service Cross in 1901, it was renamed in 1914 and awarded to naval officers (commissioned and warrant) up to the rank of lieutenant commander. This included personnel in the Royal Naval Air Service and Fleet Air Arm, as well as men of the Merchant Navy operating in support of wartime operations. Eligibility was extended to air force officers in 1940 and army officers in 1942 for services in operations at sea.

Distinguished Service Medal: Third-tier gallantry decoration. Instituted in 1914 to recognise the heroism or distinguished services of naval ratings in wartime. Eligibility was extended to air force personnel in naval support roles from 1940, and to soldiers and men of the Merchant Marine for operational services at sea in 1942.

Distinguished Service Order: Instituted in 1886 as a single-level order to recognise the wartime leadership of officers from all services (including the Merchant Navy from 1942). Most commonly awarded to majors and lieutenant colonels (or equivalent), from the First World War it was expected that more junior officers should have performed an act of gallantry to secure the award. Second only to the Victoria Cross when awarded to officers for heroism.

George Cross: Premier award in the United Kingdom and formerly in the British Empire for heroism in non-warlike circumstances or for heroics not in the face of the enemy. Established in 1940 and awarded for instances of most conspicuous heroism in circumstances of tremendous danger. Counterpart to the Victoria Cross.

George Medal: Second-tier award for heroism in non-warlike circumstances or for heroics not in the face of the enemy. Instituted in 1940 to recognise the bravery of civilians and military personnel not under direct fire from the enemy, but of a standard below that required for the George Cross.

Mentioned in Despatches: Fourth-tier and most junior of military awards. Variations of the 'mention' have a long history, but the modern award was formalised in the early nineteenth century and used to recognise distinguished leadership, bravery or meritorious services in active military operations.

Military Cross: Third-tier decoration for heroism or distinguished leadership in action. Instituted in 1914 and originally awarded to army officers (including those appointed by warrant) up to the rank of captain. Eligibility was extended to air force officers for actions on land in 1931, and to officers ranked major (or equivalent) from 1953.

Military Medal: Third-tier decoration for heroism or distinguished leadership in action. Established in March 1916, the medal was initially intended to recognise non-commissioned officers and other ranks in the army. Eligibility was extended to women from June 1916 and to airmen for heroism on land in 1942.

Order of St Michael and St George: British order of chivalry established in 1818 and traditionally awarded in respect of distinguished foreign or diplomatic service. Split into three grades (in descending order): Knight/Dame Grand Cross (GCMG); Knight/Dame Commander (KCMG/DCMG); and Companion (CMG).

Order of the Bath: British order of chivalry founded in 1725 (and reconstituted to its present form in 1815). Awarded in either the Civil or Military division and split into three grades (in descending order): Knight/Dame Grand Cross (GCB); Knight/Dame Commander (KCB/DCB); and Companion (CB). Traditionally bestowed on senior military officers and civil servants for exceptional services.

Order of the British Empire: Order of chivalry instituted in 1917. Awarded in either the Civil or Military division and split into five grades (in descending order): Knight/Dame Grand Cross (GBE); Knight/Dame Commander (KBE/DBE); Commander (CBE); Officer (OBE); and Member (MBE). More widely distributed than any other British order, it recognises distinguished, valuable or meritorious services to society.

Royal Red Cross: An award to nurses for exceptional services or devotion. Established in 1883 with a single class (Member, RRC), a second and lower class (Associate, ARRC) was instituted in 1915. The award was most commonly granted for meritorious services, but it was occasionally used to recognise bravery and was one of the few decorations to which women were eligible in wartime services.

Victoria Cross: The premier award for martial heroism in the United Kingdom and formerly in the British Empire. Established in 1856 and awarded, according to its Royal Warrant, for ‘most conspicuous bravery, or some daring or pre-eminent act of valour or self sacrifice, or extreme devotion to duty in the presence of the enemy’. Counterpart to the George Cross.

Introduction

On a hot and dusty morning on 11 June 2010, five Afghan police and twenty-five soldiers from Australia's elite Special Air Service Regiment (SASR) made an assault into Tizak, a Taliban compound in the Shah Wali Kot District of Kandahar Province, Afghanistan. Their objective was to capture or kill a senior Taliban commander. Almost immediately the lead assault team was pinned down by intense small arms, machine gun and rocket fire. The reserve assault team, providing fire support from a helicopter, landed to make a flanking attack through an orchard alongside the compound.¹ According to the patrol commander 'fig trees were exploding around us' as the team advanced up elevated terrain.² Despite the intensity of enemy fire, Corporal Benjamin (Ben) Roberts-Smith—who had left his body armour on the helicopter since it restricted his ability to fire—engaged and drew fire from a Taliban machine gun. This act allowed the patrol commander to throw a grenade and silence the post. Roberts-Smith then rushed forward to kill the fighters manning the two remaining machine guns. His actions eased the volume of fire and enabled the initial assault team to reignite their advance.³ The assault lasted ten strenuous hours, during which the target and approximately sixty Taliban were killed and the compound cleared.⁴ Lieutenant Colonel Paul Burns, the SASR's commanding officer, greeted the men as they returned to base. 'The most impressive thing', Burns recalled, was that Roberts-Smith 'wanted to know what next—after a hard day's fighting.'⁵

In the aftermath of the Tizak raid, Roberts-Smith was praised for demonstrating 'extreme devotion to duty and the most conspicuous gallantry' and was awarded the Victoria Cross for Australia.⁶ The medal was instituted in the Australian Honours System in 1991 as the successor to the Victoria Cross (VC), the premier award for martial heroism in the United Kingdom and formerly for the British Empire. The Victoria Cross for Australia was thus laden with a legacy and a social currency that placed particular expectations on its recipients. Indeed, in the aftermath of Roberts-Smith's investiture he was, as Chris Masters remarks, transmogrified from 'secret soldier to civic superman': he was named the number-one ticket

¹ Craig Blanch and Aaron Pegram, *For Valour: Australians Awarded the Victoria Cross* (Sydney: NewSouth Publishing, 2018), 462; Chris Masters, *No Front Line: Australia's Special Forces at War in Afghanistan* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2017), 338–41.

² 'Sergeant Pete', quoted in Masters, *No Front Line*, 341.

³ Blanch and Pegram, *For Valour*, 462; 'Victoria Cross for Australia (VC)', *Commonwealth of Australia Gazette*, 24 January 2011.

⁴ Masters, *No Front Line*, 345.

⁵ Lieutenant Colonel Paul Burns, quoted in Masters, *No Front Line*, 347.

⁶ 'Victoria Cross for Australia.'

holder for the Fremantle Dockers Football Club in 2012; appears in the song 'Lest We Forget' on country singer Lee Kernaghan's *Spirit of the Anzacs* album; and in 2015 was featured on a postage stamp.⁷ He is also the patron of a number of service charities, served as Chair of the National Australia Day Council from 2014 to 2017, and is frequently at the forefront of the Australian War Memorial's commemorative initiatives.⁸

Roberts-Smith represents the face of modern conflict, contemporary military celebrity, and martial heroism in Australia. During this shift from soldier to superman (or perhaps because of it), reports of Roberts-Smith's combat prowess have become somewhat sanitised. The violent and confronting nature of his actions on the battlefield is downplayed, while more comfortable virtues such as courage, mateship, and sacrifice are emphasised in its place. The over exuberant focus on the celebrity aspect of military heroism obscures the realities of war. As historian Peter Stanley recently argued:

The emphasis on 'Anzac VC heroes' ensures that Australia sees glory in its war history rather than the horrific reality. Focusing on VCs helps us rise above the ruck of suffering and victimhood that characterised military work...⁹

While Stanley refers more to contemporary commemorations of the First World War, his words also hold true for modern martial heroes. In Roberts-Smith's case, there has been minimal popular or media engagement with the aggressive nature of his feat nor why his specific actions were recognised by the Australian Defence Force. Instead, there is an inherent assumption, and acceptance, that he simply was heroic. This trend is symptomatic of military commemoration in Australia.

'Hero' has become one of the most popular labels in Australian society. Once the domain of an elite few, the title of 'hero' is now frequently applied to athletes, community volunteers, fictional characters, and media personalities. Even in the martial sphere, a traditional haven of the 'heroic', the label is often appropriated to include all current and former service personnel irrespective of service history and deployment status. Such flagrant usage

⁷ Masters, *No Front Line*, 480; 'Roberts-Smith the No 1 Ticket Holder at Freo,' *WAtoday*, 20 March 2012, <https://www.watoday.com.au/sport/afl/robertssmith-the-no-1-ticket-holder-at-freo-20120320-1vgri.html>; Suzanne Siminot, 'Gold Coast's Lee Kernaghan's Anzac album "Incredibly Emotional" to Make,' *Gold Coast Bulletin*, 30 March 2015, <https://www.goldcoastbulletin.com.au/entertainment/gold-coasts-lee-kernaghans-anzac-album-incredibly-emotional-to-make/news-story/6e144c5e4960e0d62d3545fd57effe71>; 'Australian Legends The Victoria Cross (2015),' Australia Post website, accessed 1 June 2019, <https://auspost.com.au/content/corp/collectables/stamp-issues/australian-legends-the-victoria-cross/>.

⁸ Blanch and Pegram, *For Valour*, 464; 'About the National Australia Day Council,' National Australia Day Council LTD, accessed 1 June 2019, <https://www.australiaday.org.au/nadc/about-the-nadc/>.

⁹ Peter Stanley, 'Australian Heroes: Some Military Mates Are More Equal Than Others,' in *The Honest History Book*, ed. David Stephens and Alison Broinowski (Sydney: NewSouth Publishing, 2017), 205.

removes all nuanced consideration of what it means to be 'heroic'. Indeed, despite the enthusiasm of Australians for their martial heritage, there is minimal awareness of what was deemed courageous in days and wars past. Modern society fails to recognise 'heroism' as an evolving social construct, one that is often difficult to quantify.

Military forces have their own methods of defining and institutionalising heroism: the bestowal of medals and decorations. Historian Edward Madigan hints at the pragmatic rationale behind the creation and award of military honours, arguing that 'notions of courage and soldierly conduct' have a direct influence on the performance of soldiers on the battlefield and, therefore, the outcome of military campaigns.¹⁰ Until the late 1980s Australia used the British system of military honours and awards. For two centuries, British ideas, practices and policies filtered into the Antipodes and influenced how Australians viewed, recognised and understood heroism. Australian manifestations of, and social responses to, heroic acts may have had their own distinctive features, but heroism more broadly was understood and recognised in an Imperial context. This flow of British ideals and martial culture dates to the colonisation of Australia from 1788. Not until the mid-nineteenth century, however, did Britain make a concerted attempt to institutionalise martial heroism. Despite a historical precedent in ancient Rome and the adoption of military decorations in Prussia and France in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Britain was reluctant to establish individual forms of recognition—at least at the level of the non-commissioned officer or for ordinary ranks and naval ratings.¹¹ As the importance of class and patronage pervaded the British establishment during the Georgian and Victorian eras, the few forms of recognition open to military personnel in the British Empire were monopolised in favour of officers from the staff corps; men, often of privilege, who were remote from the battlefield.¹²

The catalyst for reform was Britain's chaotic experience in the Crimean War. When Britain went to war against Russia in 1854 it had not fought a continental conflict in almost four decades. Yet British doctrine, training and standards had evolved little in the meantime. The officers selected for command appointments had limited leadership experience, and British

¹⁰ Edward Madigan, "'Sticking to a Hateful Task": Resilience, Humour, and British Understandings of Combatant Courage, 1914–1918,' *War in History* 20, no. 1 (2013): 78. As Rex Clark continues, the conferral of decorations and medals can be attributed to one of two reasons: to recognise and reward notable acts, or to serve as an incentive to inspire others. Rex Clark, 'Medals, Decorations and Anomalies,' *British Army Review* 32 (1969): 47.

¹¹ Bryan Perrett, *For Valour: Victoria Cross and Medal of Honor Battles* (London: Cassell, 2003), 1–3.

¹² Scott Hughes Myerly, *British Military Spectacle: From the Napoleonic Wars through the Crimea* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996), 82–83; Perrett, *For Valour*, 2–3; Melvin Charles Smith, *Awarded for Valour: A History of the Victoria Cross and the Evolution of British Heroism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 27–28.

logistics were notoriously unreliable.¹³ The British lacked adequate support services, such as land transport, medical facilities and food, as well as basic equipment, which proved disastrous for the wounded and sick.¹⁴ British soldiers and sailors complained about their situation bitterly, and press reports of mounting casualties and deficient leadership were widely distributed at home. Crimea evolved into a ‘people’s war’—one not so much against Russia, but against the British government for the perceived lack of support and recognition extended to its own military.¹⁵

At the same time as newspapers printed stories highlighting neglect and inefficiency, they also promoted the gallant deeds of individual soldiers and sailors. In December 1854, London’s *Times* published a scathing editorial of the British system of recognition that neglected men such as a Captain Low of the 4th Light Dragoons who, at the Battle of Balaklava, ‘is said to have performed prodigies of personal valour, which belong rather to the warfare of the middle ages than to our day’.¹⁶ Such narratives conveyed the unrecognised state of heroism performed by regimental officers and ordinary ranks, thus generating the impetus for a public campaign for recognition. The Duke of Newcastle, the Secretary of State for War at the commencement of the Crimean conflict, was aware of the inspirational influence of awards. ‘The value attached by soldiers to a little bit of ribbon,’ he wrote in an 1855 letter to Prince Albert, ‘is such as to render any danger insignificant and any privation light if it can be obtained’.¹⁷ The Distinguished Conduct Medal and the Conspicuous Gallantry Medal had been created in 1854 and 1855 as awards to recognise the gallantry of army ordinary ranks and naval ratings, respectively.¹⁸ However, they failed to capture the public imagination or mollify concerns over recognition as the medals perpetuated a class and rank divide. There was a tendency to preference senior (and long serving) non-commissioned officers for award over the more junior ranks, while subalterns remained overlooked.¹⁹ Accordingly, with the support

¹³ Norman Rich, *Why the Crimean War? A Cautionary Tale* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1985), 126.

¹⁴ Orlando Figes, *The Crimean War: A History* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2010), 204.

¹⁵ Michael Crook, *The Evolution of the Victoria Cross: A Study in Administrative History* (London: Midas Books, 1975), 6–7; John Sweetman, ‘“Ad Hoc” Support Services during the Crimean War, 1854–6: Temporary, Ill-Planned and Largely Unsuccessful,’ *Military Affairs* 52, no. 3 (1988): 135; Stefanie Markovits, ‘Rushing into Print: “Participatory Journalism” during the Crimean War,’ *Victorian Studies* 50, no. 4 (2008): 559–86.

¹⁶ ‘London, Wednesday, December 6, 1854,’ *Times* (London), 6 December 1854.

¹⁷ ‘Henry Pelham, Duke of Newcastle, to Prince Albert, 20 January 1855,’ in *The Life of Henry Pelham, Fifth Duke of Newcastle, 1811–1864*, ed. John Martineau (London: John Murray, 1908), 248–249.

¹⁸ Peter Duckers, *British Gallantry Awards 1855–2000* (Oxford: Shire Publications, 2013), 33–37.

¹⁹ P.E. Abbott, *Recipients of the Distinguished Conduct Medal, 1855–1909* (London: J.B. Hayward and Son, 1975), xii–xiii; Matthew Richardson, *Deeds of Heroes: The Story of the Distinguished Conduct Medal, 1854–1993* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword Military, 2012), 5–6; Crook, *Evolution of the Victoria Cross*, 6; Duckers, *British Gallantry Awards*, 10.

of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, the Duke of Newcastle recommended the creation ‘of a cross of military merit.’²⁰ The VC was thus instituted in 1856 as a means to restore morale, pacify a critical public, and recognise wartime heroism irrespective of rank, class, or branch of service. It was an award that, as the Duke of Newcastle declared before the House of Lords, would serve as ‘an object of ambition to every individual in the service, from the General who commands down to the privates in the ranks’.²¹

The dire conditions of the Crimean War had instigated attempts to institutionalise and define martial heroism within the British Empire. Popular perceptions of wartime heroics only grew in status and significance over subsequent decades and, despite additions to the British honours system over the next century, heroic achievement in the British Empire became associated first and foremost with the VC. The medal has since achieved a near mythic status, which is why the basic design, name and essence of the medal were retained when Australia transitioned to its own system of honours late in the twentieth century. The significance accorded to the VC and martial heroics also explains the privileged status, social currency, and celebrity that modern heroic figures like Ben Roberts-Smith experience (or perhaps endure) today. Roberts-Smith represents the modern generation of martial heroes, but in this respect he is a descendant of more than a century of attempts to understand, interpret and define wartime heroism.

Between the Boer War (1899–1902) and Vietnam (1962–72), ninety-one Australian military personnel were awarded the VC.²² These men were recognised for saving life under fire, rushing machine gun posts, leading destructive bombing raids, inspiring stoic defences, or for exuding extreme professionalism and leadership in some of the most trying of operational conditions. While their stories have been well documented, these men and their actions are commonly treated in a vacuum, with minimal context or critique regarding their ‘heroism’. Such isolated treatment tends to overlook the vagaries of honours systems. American scholar William Ian Miller, in analysing representations of courage in the memoir of Vietnam War

²⁰ ‘Duke of Newcastle to Prince Albert.’

²¹ 136 UK Parl. Deb. (3d ser.) (1856) 1064–65.

²² It is generally accepted that there have been one hundred Australian recipients of the VC. However, this figure includes four recipients of the Victoria Cross for Australia and five men who, although either Australian-born or associated with Australia, won their VCs while in the service of British or South African forces. The latter five include: James Rogers (South African Constabulary, 1901); Wilbur Dartnell (Royal Fusiliers, 1915); Arthur Sullivan and Samuel Pearse (Royal Fusiliers, 1919); and Hughie Edwards (Royal Air Force, 1941). As this thesis is chiefly concerned with the Australian experience of martial heroism, then with the exception of comparative or contextual purposes, only personnel serving in or on attachment to Australian military forces—including naval and aerial units—are included with the scope of research. Peter Stanley, ‘A Hundred in a Million,’ *Griffith Review*, no. 48 (2015): 263; Anthony Staunton, *Victoria Cross: Australia’s Finest and the Battles They Fought* (Melbourne: Hardie Grant Books, 2005).

veteran Tim O'Brien, observed that 'medals may mark one as a beneficiary of a medals spoils system more than as a distinguished soldier.'²³ Bravery medals are often the subject of dispute, because honours systems are vulnerable to the interpretations, whims, and inconsistencies of human behaviour. Why, for instance, were these ninety-one Australian personnel recognised with the VC while at least eighty-nine of their comrades were recommended for but denied the award?

This thesis employs the system for military honours and awards as a lens to explore representations of Australian martial heroism from the colonial engagements of the nineteenth century to the end of the Vietnam War. The decision to place the VC—and, to a lesser extent, the George Cross and other awards for heroism—at the core of analysis is not because the award or its subsidiaries are subject to more stringent processes and thus less likely to be corrupted, but because of its perceived status and significance as the pinnacle of martial heroism. The Imperial system of honours and awards also offer an innovative and illuminating way of exploring historical instances of, and attempts to reward, wartime heroics. It is this representation, the physical manifestations of martial heroism and social responses to the same, with which this history is concerned.

The thesis focuses on a key question: how and by what means did the recognition and reverence of martial heroism alter during and between Australia's wartime engagements from the colonial period to the end of the Vietnam War? In considering this issue, the thesis raises subsequent questions regarding heroism and society in total war, femininity and the heroic construct, as well as race and martial masculinity. For instance, how was heroism and martial masculinity constructed during the colonial period, and how and why have these constructs evolved since? Is it a case of external influences—such as society, politics and the press—shaping the contemporaneous ideal, or heroism and martial manliness being responsive to the situation on the battlefield? Or is it perhaps a combination of factors?

In considering these sub-questions, various issues arise. For instance, the world wars reoriented towards a more aggressive, violent and tactical paradigm of heroism, yet the social reverence of personnel recognised for heroic feats remained intense during the war years. Were violent acts of heroism only acceptable in a society geared towards total war, when there was mass social mobilisation and pervasive propaganda at home? Similarly, did the ideological conflicts of the Cold War forge a new era in Australian understandings or recognition of martial heroism? The emergence of the professional soldier during this time raises related questions.

²³ William Ian Miller, *The Mystery of Courage* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 32.

Further, given the predominance of the Anglo-Saxon male and particular ideas of masculinity within the military forces of the British Empire, did traditional understandings of gender and race alienate prisoners of war, women and Indigenous Australians from perceptions of, and efforts to recognise martial heroism? And, in doing so, has it denied appropriate social recognition of their efforts? Addressing these issues offers innovative insights into the shifting social, cultural and military notions of martial heroism in the Australian experience of war.

The historiography of Australian military heroism

The hero is a recurrent figure in Australian war writing. Historical and fictional literature on war attracts significant popular interest in Australia, as martial achievement has been constructed as a central tenet of Australian nationalism. The fundamental premise of many of these works, as cultural and literary historian Robin Gerster observes, is ‘that Australians excel, even revel, in battle.’²⁴ This is because popular remembrance of war in Australia is grounded in the mythology of the Anzac legend. As a colonial settler society, Australia conspicuously lacked a foundational myth upon which to pin a distinct national archetype at the turn of the twentieth century. A lack of romanticism and unease over controversial tactics meant the Boer War failed to provide the impetus for a nation-building narrative; the First World War instead filled this void.²⁵ The gushing prose of British journalist Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett and the initiatives of Charles Bean as war correspondent and, later, Australia’s official historian of the war, saw the invasion of the Gallipoli peninsula on 25 April 1915 represented as the ‘birth place’ (or ‘baptism’) of the Australian nation.²⁶

Bean (among others) viewed and subsequently portrayed the First World War as providing evidence of an Australian national character. By overlaying the perceived characteristics of the ‘bushman’ on the soldier, Bean sought to identify the Australian ‘digger’ as a distinct archetype who epitomised and legitimised the young nation. He also sought to distinguish the Australian national type from Britain by stressing the supposedly classless, egalitarian nature of the Australian forces and, therefore, Australian society. Heroic figures and other distinguished personnel were central to Bean’s narrative; individuals like Albert Jacka—who won the VC at Gallipoli in 1915—were invoked to represent the epitome of the Australian

²⁴ Robin Gerster, *Big-noting: The Heroic Theme in Australian War Writing* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1987), 2.

²⁵ Henry Reynolds, *Unnecessary Wars* (Sydney: NewSouth, 2016), 186–95; Carolyn Holbrook, ‘Nationalism and War Memory in Australia,’ in *Australia and the Great War: Identity, Memory and Mythology*, ed. Michael J.K. Walsh and Andrekos Varnava (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2016), 220–21.

²⁶ Holbrook, ‘Nationalism and War Memory in Australia,’ 222.

soldier. ‘Anzac’ has heavily influenced Australian war writing, as it provides the prism through which Australians view their national identity and understand their martial history.²⁷ Partly for this reason, memory of war has attracted considerable scholarly interest in Australia in recent decades.²⁸ The significance of ‘Anzac’ has also meant that heroic figures appear in Australian writing on war to bring excitement to the page and breathe life into a battle scene, as well as in deference to the nation-building narrative of war. A critical approach to martial heroism, however, has long been missing amongst the cornucopia of popular literature on Australia at war. Heroism, its relationship with the bestowal of medals, honours and awards, and the innate sense of masculinity that permeates the two remains relatively untouched in Australian military historiography.

Studies on courage, in military settings and beyond, have attracted marginally greater scholarly interest. The literature tends to be more philosophical, as meditations on the subject focus on the individual and view courage as a psychological manifestation or form of mental endurance. Canadian author T. Robert Fowler, for instance, argues martial courage is the ability to overcome emotions during battle to perform one’s duty. J.L. Gallagher, a decorated Canadian infantry officer of the Second World War, agrees with this assessment, adding: ‘courage is the ability to function despite the fear.’²⁹ In his notable study, *The Anatomy of Courage* (1945), British physician Lord Moran defined courage as ‘a moral quality... [as] will power.’³⁰ He observed, though, that the individual is not infallible; ‘courage’ could waiver with extended exposure to the frontlines. Soldiers had to be observed and rested so that, in a statement that indicates the masculine nature of war and heroism, ‘he might once more quit himself like a man.’³¹ Such studies say little about the socially constructed nature of ‘heroism’, though. The primary concern is how and by what means courage dwindles or is sustained on the battlefield, rather than the expression of courage in specific heroic acts.³²

²⁷ Bill Gammage, ‘The Role of the Army in Shaping the Australian Nation to 1939,’ in *Armies and Nation Building: Past Experiences – Future Prospects*, ed. David Horner (Canberra: Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, 1995), 15.

²⁸ See, for example, Alistair Thomson, ‘Memory as a Battlefield: Personal and Political Investments in the National Military Past,’ *Oral History Review* 22, no. 2 (1995): 55–73; Alistair Thomson, *Anzac Memories: Living with the Legend*, new ed. (Clayton: Monash University Publishing, 2013); Bruce Scates, ‘In Gallipoli’s Shadow: Pilgrimage, Memory, Mourning and the Great War,’ *Australian Historical Studies*, no. 119 (2002): 1–21; Jay Winter, *Remembering War: The Great War between Memory and History in the Twentieth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006).

²⁹ T. Robert Fowler, ‘Courage Under Fire: Defining and Understanding the Act,’ *Canadian Army Journal* 13, no. 1 (2010): 37.

³⁰ Lord Moran, *The Anatomy of Courage* (London: Constable, 1945), 67.

³¹ Moran, *The Anatomy of Courage*, ix.

³² See also Jessica Meyer, ‘“Gladder to be Going Out Than Afraid”: Shellshock and Heroic Masculinity in Britain, 1914–1919,’ in *Uncovered Fields: Perspectives in First World War Studies*, ed. Jenny MacLeod and Pierre Purseigle (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 207; and Miller, *Mystery of Courage*. For similar ruminations on heroism and

Military forces perceive courage in terms of operational performance and outcomes. Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig, the Commander-in-Chief of the British Expeditionary Force during the First World War, argued that '[m]en are not brave by nature'; it is military discipline and training that enable a soldier to perform feats of heroism.³³ Historians and military strategists have furthered Haig's premise to argue that training, comradeship, leadership and discipline foster a 'fighting spirit' that enables soldiers to cope with the stress of battle and act courageously.³⁴ Indeed, John Baynes and Jonathan Fennell suggest that there is a distinct connection between morale and combat effectiveness—units experiencing low morale are susceptible to 'cowardly' acts like desertion, while those with high morale and cohesion are more likely to foster courage and inspire acts of heroism.³⁵ Insofar as the military establishment is concerned, courage is integral to morale, esprit de corps and thus group (or unit) performance in battle. Heroism is the physical manifestation of that courage and, according to Haig and the Gulf War commander General Sir Peter de la Billière, heroic acts more readily arise through effective training and efficient leadership.³⁶ According to this argument the professional soldier, sailor or airman, subject to years of instruction and immersed in a military environment, would adjust to the stress of war and perform 'heroic' exploits more readily than the recently enlisted volunteer. The high instance of decorations to professional soldiers, and the disproportionate representation of officers in honours lists (and among the ranks of VC winners, in particular), would indicate that there is an element or truth to this argument, or at least something worthy of exploration. However, minimal further study has been undertaken into the connections between professional soldiering, civilian volunteers and wartime heroism.

courage outside of a martial context see Scott T. Allison and George R. Goethals, *Heroes: What They Do and Why We Need Them* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), especially 108–34; and Zeno E. Franco, Kathy Blau, and Philip G. Zimbardo, 'Heroism: A Conceptual Analysis and Differentiation Between Heroic Action and Altruism,' *Review of General Psychology* 15, no. 2 (2011): 99–113.

³³ Sir Douglas Haig, quoted in John Keegan and Richard Holmes, *Soldiers: A History of Men in Battle* (London: Guild Publishing, 1985), 39.

³⁴ Keegan and Holmes, *Soldiers*, 39; S.L.A. Marshall, *Men Against Fire: The Problem of Battle Command in Future War* (1947; repr., Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1978), 22; Edward Madigan, 'Courage and Cowardice in Wartime,' *War in History* 20, no. 1 (2013): 4–6; Elmar Dinter, *Hero or Coward: Pressures Facing the Soldier in Battle* (London: Frank Cass, 1985), 1–2, 87–111; Jonathan Fennell, *Combat and Morale in the North African Campaign: The Eighth Army and the Path to El Alamein* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), especially 219–40.

³⁵ John Baynes, *Morale: A Study of Men and Courage. The Second Scottish Rifles at the Battle of Neuve Chapelle, 1915* (London: Cassell, 1967), 7; Jonathan Fennell, 'Courage and Cowardice in the North African Campaign: The Eighth Army and Defeat in the Summer of 1942,' *War in History* 20, no. 1 (2013): 113, 122.

³⁶ Peter de la Billière, *Supreme Courage: Heroic Stories from 150 Years of the Victoria Cross* (London: Abacus, 2005), 15–16.

The military has, as historian John Horne writes, been constructed as ‘a source of masculine authority and a privileged arena for male activity.’³⁷ Masculinity and gender in war has attracted significant scholarly interest, including analyses of Victorian and Edwardian martial manliness, masculinity in the trenches and its representations at home, the intrinsically masculine Anzac legend, and groups—such as wounded soldiers and prisoners of war—that were typically perceived as at odds with ideas of proactive, martial masculinity.³⁸ The body of literature is rich and growing but has only just begun to explore minority representation and whether or how the non-masculine clashed with ideas of martial heroism. Indeed, although a recent trend has increasingly drawn attention to the experiences of women and Indigenous Australians at war, the dominance of the masculine Anglo-Saxon archetype has left these two groups largely underrepresented in the historiography of heroism.³⁹ This is curious given that, as Gary Mead points out, gender perceptions often led to disparity in rank, status and awards. For instance, women often received civil, rather than military, decorations for their heroism or meritorious services in wartime.⁴⁰ Similarly, others have raised questions as to the possibility of racial discrimination in award practices to Indian and Māori soldiers.⁴¹ Research remains to be undertaken on this issue in the Australian experience.

³⁷ John Horne, ‘Masculinity in Politics and War in the Age of Nation-States and World Wars, 1850–1950,’ in *Masculinities in Politics and War: Gendering Modern History*, eds. Stefan Dudink, Karen Hagemann and John Tosh (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 31.

³⁸ See, for example: Graham Dawson, *Soldier Heroes: British Adventure, Empire and the Imagining of Masculinities* (London: Routledge, 1994); Martin Crotty, *Making the Australian Male: Middle-Class Masculinity, 1870–1920* (Carlton South: Melbourne University Press, 2001); Stephen Garton, ‘War and Masculinity in Twentieth Century Australia,’ *Journal of Australian Studies* 22, no. 1 (1998): 86–95; Linzi Murrie, ‘The Australian Legend: Writing Australian Masculinity/Writing “Australian” Masculine,’ *Journal of Australian Studies* 22, no. 1 (1998): 68–77; Kate Hunter, ‘More than an Archive of War: Intimacy and Manliness in the Letters of a Great War Soldier to the Woman He Loved, 1915–1919,’ *Gender & History* 25, no. 2 (2013): 339–54; Bart Ziino, ‘Eligible Men: Men, Families and Masculine Duty in Great War Australia,’ *History Australia* 14, no. 2 (2017): 202–17; Marina Larsson, *Shattered Anzacs: Living with the Scars of War* (Kensington: University of New South Wales Press, 2009); Christina Twomey, ‘Emaciation or Emasculation: Photographic Images, White Masculinity and Captivity by the Japanese in World War Two,’ *Journal of Men’s Studies* 15, no. 3 (2007): 295–310; Agnieszka Sobocinska, ‘“The Language of Scars”: Australian Prisoners of War and the Colonial Order,’ *History Australia* 7 (2010): 1–19.

³⁹ See, for example: Kirsty Harris, *More than Bombs and Bandages: Australian Army Nurses at Work in World War I* (Newport: Big Sky Publishing, 2011); Melanie Oppenheimer, ‘Opportunities to Engage: The Red Cross and Australian Women’s Global War Work,’ in *Australians and the First World War: Local-Global Connections and Contexts*, ed. Kate Ariotti and James E. Bennett (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 85–101; Victoria Haskins, ‘The Girl Who Wanted to Go to War: Female Patriotism and Gender Construction in Australia’s Great War,’ *History Australia* 14, no. 2 (2017): 169–86; Noah Riseman, *Defending Whose Country?: Indigenous Soldiers in the Pacific War* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2012); Philippa Scarlett, *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Volunteers for the AIF: The Indigenous Response to World War One*, 3rd ed. (Macquarie: ACT Indigenous Histories, 2015); Joan Beaumont and Allison Cadzow, eds., *Serving Our Country: Indigenous Australians, War, Defence and Citizenship* (Sydney: NewSouth, 2018).

⁴⁰ Gary Mead, *Victoria’s Cross: The Untold Story of Britain’s Highest Award for Bravery* (London: Atlantic Books, 2015).

⁴¹ Smith, *Awarded for Valour*, 61–63; Glyn Harper and Colin Richardson, *In the Face of the Enemy: The Complete History of the Victoria Cross and New Zealand* (Auckland: Harper Collins Publishers, 2006), 271–276.

The most attention afforded martial heroism in the Australian context comes from disciplines outside of history and concerns the contemporary experience. Narelle Biedermann, an academic and former military nurse, interviewed thirteen individuals to gauge perceptions of heroism among decorated personnel in the contemporary Australian Defence Force. The overwhelming perception was that training and instinct saw these people perform heroically. They also generally felt uncomfortable at having been singled out for recognition and, according to Biedermann, downplayed their actions in comparison to previous feats of recognised heroism.⁴² The responses appear to stem from how these individuals viewed themselves in comparison to the ‘Anzac legend’. ‘Anzac’, it would seem, is the benchmark upon which all martial achievement is measured in Australia. Indeed, Sarah Midford (one of the few historians to engage with Australian representations of martial heroism) has explored the classical dimension to depictions of the heroic in Australia to argue that the tale of the Anzacs has become almost a Homeric epic and Gallipoli transformed into the Australian *Iliad*.⁴³ Others have considered how, because of the reverence and weight of ‘Anzac’, a chasm has surfaced between Australian military personnel and the society they serve. Modern professional servicemen and women are placed on an unrealistic, heroic pedestal as popular memory clings to a romanticised version of martial heroism and wartime achievement.⁴⁴ The result is a disconnect between military understandings of martial heroism and social perceptions of the same. An increasing awareness of the traumatic effects of war has meant that Australian society emphasises more comfortable virtues such as selflessness, devotion and sacrifice in its martial heroes, but in doing so overlooks the violence, aggression and pragmatism inherent in military heroics.⁴⁵ These studies elucidate the contemporary perceptions, and pressures, of martial heroism, but are for the most part limited to the post-Cold War era.

Scholarly literature regarding medals for gallantry or distinguished performance is also rather limited. Historians have explored the honours systems in the British Commonwealth

⁴² Narelle Biedermann, ‘Courage When it Really Counts: Observations from the Modern ADF,’ *Australian Defence Force Journal* 172 (2007): 73–81.

⁴³ Sarah Midford, ‘Constructing the “Australian *Iliad*”: Ancient Heroes and Anzac Diggers in the Dardanelles,’ *Melbourne Historical Journal* 39 (2011): 59–79. See also Sarah Midford, ‘From Achilles to Anzac: Classical Receptions in the Australian Anzac Narrative’ (PhD thesis, University of Melbourne, 2016).

⁴⁴ James Brown, *Anzac’s Long Shadow: The Cost of Our National Obsession* (Collingwood: Redback, 2014); Chris Masters, *Uncommon Soldier: Brave, Compassionate and Tough, the Making of Australia’s Modern Diggers* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2012).

⁴⁵ Tony Vonthoff, ‘Military Heroism: An Australian Perspective,’ *Australian Defence Force Journal* 169 (2005): 33–39; Christina Twomey, ‘Trauma and the Reinvigoration of Anzac: An Argument,’ *History Australia* 10, no. 3 (2013): 85–108.

broadly, including public perceptions of national honours and biases in award practices, but the mechanics and idiosyncrasies of military awards have attracted less interest.⁴⁶ Michael Crook's *The Evolution of the Victoria Cross* (1975) is a notable exception. Based on extensive archival research, Crook's administrative history illuminates the technical aspects of the VC and its conferral—the debates surrounding the medal's establishment, shifts in eligibility and criteria, and decisions that have influenced the pattern of award. Notably, Crook has identified that the first few decades of the VC's existence were fraught with alteration and change, and that the award has often been subject to the interpretation and whims of senior officers. The book is a seminal work on the VC and offers valuable insights into the British systems and processes for military honours, but it does have its limitations. Crook's analysis barely extends beyond the nineteenth century. This is understandable given issues with archival access, though it leaves a significant void that is yet to be adequately addressed.⁴⁷ Research into the Australian experience, moreover, is limited to the bureaucratic and technical processes for award on the Western Front during the First World War and, to a lesser extent, the policy decisions and 'quota' system that restricted recognition during the Vietnam War.⁴⁸ That similar policies and processes existed in previous and later conflicts has garnered little attention.

Of any British or Commonwealth award, the VC has attracted the most sustained interest. A diverse and voluminous body of literature has been published on the medal and its recipients. However, as historian Melvin Charles Smith argues, material related to the VC is typically 'little more than anecdotal recollections supported by swathes of purple prose.'⁴⁹ This is primarily due to the social standing of the VC and the researchers attracted to the subject. A review of international literature relating to the VC shows that works on the subject tend to reside in at least one of four broad categories: reference works; writings that verge on the

⁴⁶ See, for example: Karen Fox and Katie Pickles, 'Success in Their Own Right: Dames on Top of the New Zealand Royal Honours System, 1917–2000,' *History Now* 11, no. 1 (2005): 24–30; Karen Fox, "'A Pernicious System of Caste and Privilege': Egalitarianism and Official Honours in Australia, New Zealand and Canada,' *History Australia* 10, no. 2 (2013): 202–26; Karen Fox and Samuel Furphy, 'The Politics of National Recognition: Honouring Australians in a Post-Imperial World,' *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 63, no. 1 (2017): 93–111.

⁴⁷ It is understood that a host of records concerning the VC in the First World War were destroyed when London was bombed in 1940, while files on the Second World War were only just beginning to enter the open period at the time of Crook's research. Victoria D'Alton, 'Behind the Valour: A Technical, Administrative and Bureaucratic Analysis of the Victoria Cross and AIF on the Western Front, 1916–1918' (MA thesis, University of New South Wales, 2010), 13; William Spencer, *Medals: The Researcher's Guide* (Kew: The National Archives, 2008), 133.

⁴⁸ D'Alton, 'Behind the Valour'; Isobelle Barrett Meyering, 'Victoria Crosses: The Vagaries of Valour' (summer scholarship paper, Australian War Memorial, 2009); Ian McNeil, *To Long Tan: The Australian Army and the Vietnam War, 1950–1966*, vol. 2 of *The Official History of Australia's Involvement in Southeast Asian Conflicts 1948–1975* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1993), 564; Ashley Ekins, *Fighting to the Finish: The Australian Army and the Vietnam War 1968–1975*, vol. 9 of *Official History of Australia's Involvement in Southeast Asian Conflicts 1948–1975* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2012), 808–14.

⁴⁹ Smith, *Awarded for Valour*, 3.

hagiographic; regional or national studies, typically limited by war or service branch; and biographies. The first and last of these categories tend to dominate.⁵⁰ Such publications are popular with readers but are for the most part limited in that they tend to offer minimal analysis, fail to contextualise the actions of recipients, and nor do they adequately recognise ‘heroism’ as a social construct. To this end they serve a useful purpose, though are not sufficiently critical to advance understandings of the processes behind the award and the nature of heroism itself.

Although popular literature on the VC predominates, scholarly studies do exist. Aside from Crook’s administrative history, Hugh Halliday has explored policy debates surrounding specific award recommendations (primarily Canadian airmen in the Second World War) to critique popular perceptions of the VC and challenge the idea that awards are an automatic or inevitable outcome of bravery.⁵¹ Journalist and writer Gary Mead has likewise highlighted the political dimension of the VC, and the contradictions and hypocrisy at times inherent in award processes.⁵² In doing so, he rightly questions the lack of awards to women, though his methodology and sometimes polemical argument detract from his thesis. Glyn Harper and Colin Richardson, in tracing New Zealand’s association with the VC from the New Zealand Wars to Afghanistan, have also demonstrated the need for more nuanced national and inter-empire studies of heroism and military awards.⁵³

These studies have, understandably, focused on the battlefield and the processes behind the decisions to reward heroism. But the approach has meant that the social responses to, or reverence of heroic figures has received less attention. Melvin Charles Smith is one of the few to have engaged with both the relationship between warfare and military awards and the social dimension of heroism. In his 2000 PhD thesis and the subsequent book from this research, *Awarded for Valour* (2008), Smith employs the VC as a lens to explore British understandings of martial heroism and its evolution since the 1850s.⁵⁴ Smith’s work is the most important research undertaken on the VC and modern British understandings of wartime heroism. Most

⁵⁰ See, for example: O’Moore Creagh, *The Victoria Cross, 1856–1920*, vol. 1 of *The V.C. and D.S.O. Book* (1924; repr., Sussex: Naval and Military Press, 2001); Lionel Wigmore, *They Dared Mightily* (Canberra, Australian War Memorial, 1963); John Frayn Turner, *VCs of the Second World War* (South Yorkshire: Pen & Sword, 2004); Max Arthur, *Symbol of Courage: The Men Behind the Medal* (London: Pan Books, 2005); Kevin Brazier, *The Complete Victoria Cross: A Full Chronological Record of all Holders of Britain’s Highest Award for Gallantry* (South Yorkshire: Pen & Sword, 2010); Michael C. Madden, *The Victoria Cross: Australia Remembers* (Warriewood: Big Sky Publishing, 2018).

⁵¹ Hugh Halliday, *Valour Reconsidered: Inquiries into the Victoria Cross and Other Awards for Extreme Bravery* (Toronto: Robin Brass Studio, 2006).

⁵² Mead, *Victoria’s Cross*.

⁵³ Harper and Richardson, *In the Face of the Enemy*.

⁵⁴ Melvin Charles Smith, “‘Missis Victorier’s Sons’: A History of the Victoria Cross and the Evolution of the British Concept of Heroism” (PhD thesis, Auburn University, 2000); Smith, *Awarded for Valour*.

notably, he argues that the dominant trends in the VC's award during the late nineteenth century were driven by social understandings of the heroic and demonstrates that heroism in the British Empire became far more aggressive and tactical during the First World War. However, Smith's study is ambitious—spanning over 150 years, sixty wars or engagements, and some 1,300 VC recipients—and it shows. His reliance on dominant trends and statistical patterns neglects the experience in smaller campaigns or theatres, such as the Sinai and Palestine front in the First World War. His analysis of the post-1918 period is also brief and cursory. Smith's work is an insightful analysis of the predominate understandings of British and empire heroism through the latter half of the nineteenth century and into the First World War but has left the field open for significant further research. The Second World War, engagements of the early Cold War period, and the Southeast Asian conflicts of the 1960s remain underrepresented. So too are specific national studies that explore the relationship between heroism and national identity.

Sources and structure

By navigating the shifting constructions of martial heroism from Australia's colonial engagements to the end of the Vietnam War, this thesis draws upon scholarship on war, courage, masculinity, and the VC to fill a significant lacuna in our understanding of wartime heroism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It illuminates the relationship between warfare, strategy, medallic recognition and understandings of heroism, and addresses an issue of contemporary relevance by offering a deeper, more rounded appreciation of the Australian military experience and the place of martial heroism in the national consciousness. Significant attention is devoted to battlefield heroics and how the military command has defined and reinterpreted martial heroism over time. Understandings of heroism in the operations at sea and in the air, as well as the idiosyncrasies of award policies within the Royal Australian Navy and Royal Australian Air Force, are also considered. However, for pragmatic reasons the principal focus is on soldiers and land operations. The Australian Army and its antecedents were the largest service during Australia's military engagements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, sustained the most casualties, and received the greatest number of honours and awards, including the lion's share of VCs. The Korean and Vietnam conflicts, moreover, were ground wars, in which aerial and naval units primarily occupied roles in support of land operations.

This study also draws upon recent historiographical trends in war history to blend actions on the battlefield with social perceptions and representations of heroism at home to explore the military, political and social dimensions of martial heroism. Indeed, the thesis

specifically seeks to explore and analyse the reciprocal relationship between social and military conceptions of martial heroism in Australia. It therefore offers insights into the martial culture that existed in Australia and the British Empire during the period of investigation, and into the systems and processes that govern the recognition of heroic acts and valuable services. The thesis also engages with the 'social currency' of the VC and martial 'heroes' to explore the use of these men in wartime propaganda, the perceived significance of martial recognition in broader society, and the social pressure exerted on military personnel to conform to this elevated ideal.

Reflecting this dichotomy between social and military perceptions of heroism, 'Valore Australis' is a social and cultural history of war that incorporates elements of operational military history. It draws upon these three dominant strands of historiography for a methodological model that is grounded in empirical archival research. Military honours and awards—most notably that of the VC—act as both a lens and a parameter. This is done, in part, to guide and define the scope. But also because the Australians awarded military decorations, or recommended for them, provide a solid framework within which a comprehensive analysis of martial heroism can be achieved. By examining the actions of these individuals and how they are represented, what was perceived to be the epitome of military heroism at any given time and, importantly, what was not, can be unpacked. This thesis will, therefore, engage with the theoretical implications of working with the social constructs of heroism and masculinity. Furthermore, while this history is not intended to be a transnational study, it adopts similar methods to place Australian martial heroism and the VC within the firm context of the British Empire. Britain and the other Dominions provide a valuable framework of comparison to gauge where Australian experiences developed in tandem with, or in response to broader empire trends, but also where and by what means that experience diverged. This comparative context also helps define the parameters of research, as the Vietnam War was the final conflict in which Australia made use of Imperial awards before gradually transitioning to its own national honours system over the following two decades.

In tracing ideas of and responses to Australian martial heroism, this thesis has drawn from a wealth of primary source material located in archives and libraries across Australia and the United Kingdom. Central to this study are award recommendation files, which document the actions and circumstances for which individuals are nominated for awards in recognition of heroic or valuable services. These invaluable sources provide insights into the arbitrary nature of heroism and what was and was not perceived as heroic at any particular time. Recommendation files have traditionally been underused in studies of heroism and military

honours because a considerable number of British records concerning the VC and other First World War era awards were destroyed during the Blitz on London in 1940.⁵⁵ Australian award recommendation files, predominantly housed in the Australian War Memorial and the Canberra branch of the National Archives of Australia, are among the few comprehensive collections that remain in existence. This reinforces the appropriateness of the study's national framework. There are, nevertheless, limitations to these records. Recommendations could be altered at any level of the military hierarchy with no explanation required, so it is not always readily apparent why one was downgraded or rejected, and another awarded. Further, as historians Charles Bean and Chaz Bowyer have discovered, the content of an award recommendation does not always accurately portray the actions, individual or context it is intended to reflect.⁵⁶ This is not so much a problem for the purposes of this thesis, as the research is not directly concerned with the accuracy of the recommended actions, but rather what was perceived to be, and represented as, heroic.

Other official military and government records also provide a platform to explore institutional perceptions of, or responses to, martial heroism. These include unit diaries, military memoranda, service records, and correspondence. Interdepartmental communications, and correspondence between officers and headquarters, provide some of the most interesting insights into award processes, decisions and policies. For instance, War Office, Admiralty and Air Ministry files from the Second World War, archived at The National Archives in the United Kingdom, contain considerable correspondence regarding decisions to award or reject recommendations for the VC. These records highlight that perceptions of heroism are individual and at times arbitrary, while institutional memory is not infallible and can account for continuity errors in policies and practices.

Private papers and letters offer a rare insight into how men and their families conceived of heroism and masculinity, either that of their own or others, on the war fronts and at home. Letters by decorated personnel, where they exist, are diverse and vary in quality, but in some cases they provide a glimpse into how these men (and occasionally women) felt about their actions and awards. These sources are useful to the historian in that they can convey the immediate responses of the person concerned. However, historical studies have indicated the unreliability of such sources and the need to approach them with caution. Letters and personal papers can include elements of self-censorship and the writer can distort, skew or misrepresent

⁵⁵ D'Alton, 'Behind the Valour,' 13; Spencer, *Medals*, 133.

⁵⁶ Chaz Bowyer, *For Valour: The Air VCs* (London: W. Kimber, 1978), 335–41; D'Alton, 'Behind the Valour,' 75.

certain experiences or events.⁵⁷ Indeed, letters home during wartime often sought to disguise or minimise the difficult experiences to pacify loved ones.⁵⁸ Nevertheless, as historian Michael Roper suggests, ‘reading between the lines’ of these records can reveal just as much information as what is written on the page.⁵⁹

Magazines and newspaper accounts shed light on social understandings of martial heroism. Such accounts, written in both wartime and peace by correspondents, military personnel, civilians, and returned veterans, provide insights into representations of military heroism as it shifted throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. These sources can also reveal how the press represented, and the public responded to, the grant of honours and awards, the processes for recognition, and to reports on heroic figures. Newspapers and magazine articles have their limitations as sources as they often rely on circumstantial evidence and rumour and can sensationalise or misrepresent their subject. However, given the significance of newspapers to the cultural life of Australians for much of the twentieth century, news and magazine articles are the most valuable indicators available to historians to measure popular attitudes.⁶⁰

This thesis is structured to allow for both a longitudinal and cross-sectional assessment of the military, social, and cultural notions of martial heroism in Australia from the colonial period to the Vietnam War. It is divided into four chronological sections, with each consisting of thematic chapters. Section 1, Chapter One provides the contextual framework. It traces the fledgling notions of martial culture and understandings of heroism that flowed into the Australian colonies from Britain during the nineteenth century. It explores how Australia’s early martial heroes manifested as exclusively British and imperial in outlook, but with the rise of a nascent sense of Australian nationalism late in the century the Sudan expedition of 1885 and Boer War less than two decades later became the testing cases for Australia’s quest for a national heroic archetype. Sudan proved a disappointment as the New South Wales Contingent saw little action; the Boer War provided Australia with its first legitimate martial heroes—but ones recognised under a paradigm that was firmly British.

⁵⁷ Alistair Thomson, ‘Anzac Stories: Using Personal Testimony in War History,’ *War & Society* 25, no. 2 (2006): 13.

⁵⁸ Martyn Lyons, ‘French Soldiers and Their Correspondence: Towards a History of Writing Practices in the First World War,’ *French History* 17, no. 1 (2003): 82.

⁵⁹ Michael Roper, *The Secret Battle: Emotional Survival in the Great War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), 64.

⁶⁰ See Jerry W. Knudson, ‘Late to the Feast: Newspapers as Historical Resources,’ *Perspectives* 31, no. 7 (1993), <https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/october-1993/late-to-the-feast>.

The effect of the First World War on Australian society, writes historian Joan Beaumont, ‘was so profound that its memory dominates the national political culture even today’.⁶¹ The war also accounted for two-thirds of the ninety-one VCs awarded to Australians, and caused significant shifts in the recognition and reverence of wartime heroism. The First World War is the focus of Section 2. Chapter Two considers the first eighteen months of Australia’s First World War, from its outbreak to the capture of German New Guinea and the operations at Gallipoli. It argues that Australian understandings of martial heroism during this time shifted away from the Victorian paradigms that had characterised the colonial period to instead emphasise aggressive and sustained tactical actions that reflected the nature of the new battlefields. The aggressive, tactical paradigm, however, diverged following the withdrawal from the Gallipoli peninsula. Chapter Three explores Australian and empire operations in the Sinai and Palestine to suggest that, in the mounted mobile warfare of the desert, Australian light horsemen experienced a regression to Victorian era heroics. The chapter also demonstrates the profound influence senior commanders wield over both the recognition and paradigm of heroism in wartime. Chapter Four builds on Melvin Smith’s research to analyse the violent, tactical heroism that settled on the Western Front from 1916. It also looks beyond the battlefield and war fronts to explore the use of heroic figures in wartime propaganda, and how VC winners—upheld as paragons of martial masculinity during the war years—resettled into civilian life in the aftermath of conflict.

The Second World War is the focus of Section 3. After two decades of relative peace, the process for recognising military heroism was no longer familiar. Australian forces, like those of the British Empire more broadly, had to grapple with the mechanics of the recommendation process and determine an appropriate standard for heroism in the light of an increasingly mechanised war. Chapter Five focuses on the attempts to define and refine heroism during the campaigns in North Africa and the Middle East, as heroic recognition became ever more bureaucratic and subject to restrictive quotas. Chapter Six considers Australian and empire operations in Europe to argue that conceptions of heroism were realigned, and the honours system adjusted, to recognise the ascendancy of aircraft. It explores how awards were used strategically to recognise aircrew engaged in specific operations, and the ways in which the bombing campaigns instigated attempts to define and codify less conventional forms of heroism. From 1942, Australia’s attention was firmly fixed on the

⁶¹ Joan Beaumont, ‘Australia,’ in 1914-1918-online, International Encyclopaedia of the First World War, ed. Ute Daniel, Peter Gatrell, Oliver Janz, Heather Jones, Jennifer Keene, Alan Kramer, and Bill Nasson, issued by Freie Universität Berlin, Berlin, 18 March 2015. doi: 10.15463/ie1418.10581.

Pacific. Australia's war against Japan, the focus of Chapter Seven, was fought alongside the United States in the South West Pacific with almost no involvement from Britain. For the first time, Australians were almost entirely responsible for the administration of Imperial honours and awards in a theatre of operations. Early administrative mishaps and unusual policy decisions led to a sense of anxious cautiousness in the way Australians approached awards in the South West Pacific, such that the process for recognition was lengthened and the standards for award heightened.

Section 4 turns to Australia's hot engagements of the Cold War. In the wake of the Second World War, the Australian government instigated a gradual process of professionalising the nation's armed services. Chapter Eight navigates Australian operations in the Korean War to argue that, as the Australian forces implemented these reforms, official conceptions of heroism also become progressively more professionalised. Senior officers and the service departments proved relatively well attuned to this shift in focus, but their efforts were impeded by government bureaucracy and inertia that restricted recognition and proved deleterious to morale on the fighting front. Similar themes again arose in the Vietnam War, the subject of Chapter Nine. The continued emphasis on professional soldierly characteristics saw more complex expressions of heroism recognised in Vietnam. The trend was partly the result of operational demands and the forces committed. This chapter, however, places a greater emphasis on award policies and practices as the flow of honours in Vietnam was most heavily influenced by an inflexible award quota, one that tended to inflate the standards for recognition. So much so that grievances with the operational scale is often portrayed as a defining feature of Australia's Vietnam War.

In tracing constructions of Australian martial heroism from the colonial period to the end of the Vietnam War, this thesis provides the first comprehensive and critical analysis of military heroism in Australia. It identifies consistency and deviations from the empire experience of wartime heroics, sheds light on national approaches to and processes of medallic recognition, and reflects on the perceived significance of heroic figures in Australian society. It also demonstrates that the concept of martial 'heroism' was quite subjective, malleable, and at times political, and seeks to understand the place of prisoners of war, women and Indigenous peoples in historical understandings of heroism and military service. In addressing this issue of significant contemporary relevance, the thesis offers a deeper appreciation of Australian military history and the place of martial heroism in the national consciousness.

Chapter One

The Hero Comes to Australia: Colonial Heroism and Martial Culture from Settlement to South Africa, 1788–1902

The tales here told are written, not to glorify war, but to nourish patriotism. They represent an effort to renew in popular memory the great traditions of the Imperial race to which we belong.

– The Rev. W.H. Fitchett, *Deeds That Won the Empire* (1897)¹

On 20 June 1861 some two thousand regular army and volunteer militiamen were reviewed in Melbourne's Albert Park by the Governor of Victoria, Sir Henry Barkly, in honour of Queen Victoria's 42nd birthday. The 'most interesting part in the ceremonial', the Melbourne *Argus* proclaimed, was when Lady Barkly presented the VC to Private Frederick Whirlpool of the Hawthorn and Kew Rifle Volunteers.² A Liverpudlian by birth, Whirlpool had risked heavy rifle fire to carry several wounded men from the battlefield while serving with the 3rd Bombay European Regiment in the Indian Mutiny (1857–58).³ His lifesaving efforts typified VC awards of the late nineteenth century. However, the investiture itself is of greater significance: Whirlpool's VC presentation was the first to publicly occur on Australian soil.⁴ The VC had existed for but five years by Whirlpool's investiture, but such was the social significance of the medal and the intensity of British martial culture in the Australian colonies that the ceremony attracted over thirteen thousand spectators.⁵ The event was not an isolated incident either. In a similarly impressive affair in Sydney's Domain three years later, the Governor of New South Wales, Sir John Young, pinned the VC to Captain of the Foretop Samuel Mitchell before a crowd of ten thousand. The award was for a comparable feat of lifesaving heroics during the Tauranga Campaign, part of the New Zealand Wars, while Mitchell was attached to

¹ W.T. Fitchett, *Deeds That Won the Empire: Historic Battle Scenes*, 3rd ed. (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1897), v.

² 'The Review,' *Argus* (Melbourne), 21 June 1861.

³ 'War-Office, 21st October, 1859,' *London Gazette*, 21 October 1859.

⁴ Sergeant John Park and Private Alexander Wright were to be invested with their Crimea VCs in a public ceremony in 1857 after their unit, the 77th Regiment of Foot, had been stationed in Sydney. However, the 77th was ordered to India before the ceremony could occur and the medals were instead presented in private. Craig Wilcox, *Red Coat Dreaming: How Colonial Australia Embraced the British Army* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 67–68.

⁵ 'The Review.'

HMS *Harrier* in the Australia Station.⁶ But little could compare to that first investiture. As Lady Barkly remarked to Whirlpool:

I cannot but feel doubly proud that on this the first occasion on which the highest distinction British valour can attain is bestowed in Australia, I should have to affix it to a volunteer uniform, and in the presence of comrades so capable of appreciating your heroic exploits.⁷

Public pride was robust as Whirlpool was both a British soldier and an Australian volunteer too.

The tale of Frederick Whirlpool highlights the entwined nature of British and colonial Australian culture and identity during the nineteenth century. Australian settlers may have been geographically distant from Britain, but they remained European in their cultural outlook and identified themselves in terms of ‘Britishness’ and empire. Although this perception waned at times and conflated with the colonies’ pursuit for a distinct Australian archetype as the nineteenth century drew to a close, empire remained a prominent component of self-identity. This was particularly so in the martial sphere, where the military triumphs of empire were celebrated, imperial heroes venerated, and defeats shouldered with a heavy burden. While the valorous figures of empire were revered, it was the potential for home grown heroes that preoccupied many and martial culture and heroic sentiment inexorably became tangled with questions of nationhood and a national archetype. This chapter analyses the transference of British social norms and cultural ideals to the Australian colonies in the nineteenth century. In doing so, it explores the martial culture and fledgling conceptions of heroism that manifested in the colonies to argue that perceptions of the military hero reflected, first, ideas of ‘Britishness’ and empire, and later became tied up with a desire for a distinct national (heroic) archetype.

Early martial culture in the colonies

A sense of ‘Britishness’ and empire were central tenets of identity for many white settlers in the Australian colonies in the nineteenth century. Although Antipodean settlers were geographically remote from the British Isles they remained, as Donald Denoon suggests, ‘self consciously European’, being linked through a shared history, culture, religion and race.⁸ These

⁶ ‘Presentation of the Victoria Cross, and Distribution of Prizes of the N.S.W. Rifle Association,’ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 September 1864; ‘War Office, July 23, 1864,’ *London Gazette*, 26 July 1864.

⁷ Quoted in ‘The Review.’

⁸ Donald Denoon, ‘Understanding Settler Societies,’ *Historical Studies* 18, no. 73 (1979): 512–13.

linkages alienated colonised peoples and migrants of non-Anglo-Celtic descent, but drew British settlers into the network of empire and imperialism. Colonial Australian society was thus reassured, and almost comforted, by their ‘whiteness’ and ‘Britishness’, which helps to explain the entwined nature of the British Empire and the filtering of British cultural norms and social ideals into the Australian colonies.⁹

Cultural linkages were particularly prominent in the martial sphere. Britain’s military presence in Australia dates to 1788 with the arrival of the First Fleet, when a detachment of 212 marines landed with the convicts, sailors and administrators to establish a British settlement along the east coast of the Australian continent.¹⁰ In 1790 responsibility for defence was handed over to the British Army, which maintained a garrison in Australia for eighty years, while the Royal Navy conducted regular patrols of Australasian waters. By Peter Stanley’s estimation some twenty thousand British soldiers, sailors and marines passed through the continent up to 1913.¹¹ The redcoats (as British soldiers were colloquially known) were an important fixture in colonial Australia. But their duties were neither active nor exciting. The fledgling colony lacked the action of India, the adventure of North America, and the familiarity of home in Britain. Violent skirmishes with Indigenous peoples did occur but were not frequent during the early years of settlement and, as European settlers pushed the boundaries of the frontier regions, confrontation became more often than not one-sided reprisals that involved paramilitary mounted police and squatters.¹² The irregular nature of frontier conflict with Aboriginal peoples also meant that Europeans did not perceive it to be war, or to constitute heroic work.¹³ Convict insurrection—such as that at Castle Hill in 1804—provided some outlet for action, but such incidents were short-lived affairs. A posting to the Australian colonies provided little to no opportunity for martial glory or advancement within the services. It is perhaps unsurprising that, of the initial group of marines, most returned to Britain at the end of their service commitment. The same was true of the infantrymen.

⁹ Kate Darian-Smith, ‘Images of Empire: Gender and Nationhood in Australia at the Time of Federation,’ in *Britishness Abroad: Transnational Movements and Imperial Cultures*, ed. Kate Darian-Smith, Patricia Grimshaw and Stuart Macintyre (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2007), 156.

¹⁰ Peter Stanley, *The Remote Garrison: The British Army in Australia 1788–1870* (Kenthurst: Kangaroo Press, 1986), 9–10; Ian Kuring, *Red Coats to Cams: A History of Australian Infantry, 1788 to 2001* (Loftus: Australian Military History Publications, 2004), 3–4.

¹¹ Stanley, *Remote Garrison*, 7.

¹² Richard Broome, ‘The Struggle for Australia: Aboriginal–European Warfare, 1770–1930,’ in *Australia: Two Centuries of War and Peace*, ed. Michael McKernan and Margaret Browne (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1988), 94–97; John Connor, *The Australian Frontier Wars, 1788–1838* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2002), 22.

¹³ Broome, ‘Struggle for Australia,’ 109–16; Ken Inglis, *The Australian Colonists: An Exploration of Social History, 1788–1870* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1974), 167.

A sizeable minority did, nonetheless, remain. With large parcels of affordable land and a more temperate climate, the Australian colonies provided many other opportunities that were unobtainable in Britain.¹⁴ Precise numbers of soldier-settlers are unknown, but almost a quarter of the original marines—some fifty men—settled in Sydney, while at least two thousand soldiers are known to have settled in Australia between 1839 and 1851.¹⁵ It is possible that some of these men tired of colonial life and returned to Britain or relocated elsewhere. Regardless of their fate, colonial Australia boasted a sizable soldier and veteran community, as waves of immigration from the 1820s onwards brought countless old soldiers to the continent.¹⁶ As historian Ken Inglis wrote: ‘The society of New South Wales had a military stamp.’¹⁷ The abundance of soldiers, both active and old, gave rise to something of a ‘veteran culture’ within the colonies. Hotels, landmarks and properties were named for battles, regiments or officers in homage to the landlord’s service or as a (perhaps entrepreneurial) response to a region’s soldier population.¹⁸ Old soldiers also assumed prominent roles in society, with a number active in business, politics and community affairs, and swelled the ranks of the police services, military volunteers, and later the rifle club and army cadet movements.¹⁹ ‘Veteran culture’ gave rise to a sense of martial veneration in early nineteenth century Australia. But with little to no opportunity for martial heroics at home, inspiration was drawn from the empire’s military ventures abroad—specifically, Wellington and Waterloo.

New South Wales, as a sparsely populated and lightly defended outpost of empire, followed the Napoleonic Wars with trepidation.²⁰ The Duke of Wellington’s victory at the Battle of Waterloo therefore brought both relief and celebration. News of the battle reached Sydney in January 1816, seven months after its end. The *Sydney Gazette* jubilantly reported on the ‘brilliant and most important victories obtained by ... the illustrious Duke of Wellington’ and published the field marshal’s despatch on the front page.²¹ In honour of Wellington and his victory, a ball was held in Sydney’s new General Hospital and Governor Lachlan

¹⁴ Ulbe Bosma, ‘European Colonial Soldiers in the Nineteenth Century: Their Role in White Global Migration and Patterns of Colonial Settlement,’ *Journal of Global History* 4, no. 2 (2009): 331–33; R.E. Montague, ‘The Royal Veterans in Australia,’ *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society* 68, no. 3 (1982): 242–46.

¹⁵ Stanley, *Remote Garrison*, 14; Wilcox, *Red Coat Dreaming*, 69–70.

¹⁶ Wilcox, *Red Coat Dreaming*, 69–70; Christine Wright, ‘Military Settlers: Men of the Royal Veteran Companies and Royal Staff Corps (1825),’ *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society* 95, no. 2 (2009): 158–59.

¹⁷ Inglis, *Australian Colonists*, 215.

¹⁸ See, for example, ‘Old Sydney,’ *Truth* (Brisbane), 11 July 1909; ‘Publicans’ Licenses Granted the 17th September, 1831,’ *Colonial Times* (Hobart), 21 September 1831.

¹⁹ Wilcox, *Red Coat Dreaming*, 71.

²⁰ Inglis, *Australian Colonists*, 212–14; Wilcox, *Red Coat Dreaming*, 25.

²¹ J.T. Campbell, ‘Government and General Orders,’ *Sydney Gazette*, 20 January 1816.

Macquarie conducted a military review in Hyde Park.²² Hobart hosted similar public celebrations, but the reverential trend grew beyond ceremonies to the naming of landmarks, establishments and even roads.²³ By the 1850s there were Waterloo and Wellington-inspired landmarks in Sydney, Hobart, Perth, Adelaide, and across regional settlements.²⁴ The reverence of Waterloo was unprecedented. While news of the naval Battle of Trafalgar and Viscount Nelson's death on the cusp of victory had spread through New South Wales a decade before that of Waterloo, the events failed to garner the same response.²⁵ Perhaps the colony was too new, and the perception of the Royal Navy's omnipotence too great, for Trafalgar to attract the social gravitas that later solidified around Waterloo. After all, it was Wellington and Waterloo that had, as the *Hobart Town Gazette* put it, 'rescued all Europe from the ambition and tyranny of Napoleon'.²⁶

Commemoration of Waterloo in the colonies peaked between the late 1820s and early 1830s, but thereafter fell into decline. The migration of old soldiers and rotation of the 40th and later 28th Regiments of Foot (both battle-hardened at Waterloo) to Australia provided a tangible attachment to the Napoleonic Wars.²⁷ However, as the regiments moved to other fields of the empire and the soldiers ceased recounting their tales of war, gore and valour, the tyranny of time and distance saw popular reverence of the battle fade. Australia's fledgling martial culture dissipated almost as gradually as it had appeared. The decades of relative peace that followed Waterloo contributed to the battle's decline in popular memory, as did the increasing divide between settlers and redcoats. Immigration to Australia from the 1840s predominantly derived from the upper working and lower middle classes of British and Irish society—the most vocal critics of the army in Britain.²⁸ The arrival of these settlers contributed to the rise in criticism of the army in the Australian colonies, and the simultaneous decline in martial reverence. As the redcoats were used to quell civil unrest, enforce order and—as Peter Stanley puts it—act as the 'versatile symbols of officialdom', the popular attitude towards the army during this peace was not a particularly enthusiastic one.²⁹ In an 1845 article from the *Geelong Advertiser and Squatters' Advocate*, for instance, an anonymous writer questioned what

²² 'Sydney,' *Sydney Gazette*, 20 January 1816.

²³ 'Hobart Town,' *Hobart Town Gazette*, 26 April 1817.

²⁴ Wilcox, *Red Coat Dreaming*, 30.

²⁵ 'London,' *Sydney Gazette*, 20 July 1806; 'Death of Admiral Lord Viscount Nelson,' *Sydney Gazette*, 3 August 1806.

²⁶ 'Hobart Town,' *Hobart Town Gazette*, 4 October 1817.

²⁷ Wilcox, *Red Coat Dreaming*, 27–28.

²⁸ Wilcox, *Red Coat Dreaming*, 4.

²⁹ Peter Stanley, 'British Soldiers in Colonial Australia,' in *Before the Anzac Dawn: A Military History of Australia to 1915*, ed. Craig Stockings and John Connor (Sydney: NewSouth, 2013), 41–42.

‘complication of wickedness’ had led to such ‘truly enormous’ sums being devoted to the maintenance of the British Army after decades of peace.³⁰ Perceived as deficient in ability, lacking in use, and a hefty financial burden, the redcoats personified a complex and often strained relationship between Britain’s military establishment and the empire’s colonists.

In the Australian colonies, as in Britain itself, soldiers were often regarded with indifference at times when they were not explicitly needed.³¹ The press, for instance, served to both glorify soldiering—the ‘life certainly has its charms: the rank it gives him abroad, where the profession of arms is that of princes and nobles almost exclusively’, published the *Sydney Gazette* in 1835—and demonise the men of the services, reporting on tales of flagrant theft and ‘pitiable ... intoxication’ while on campaigns abroad.³² In spite of this indifference, the British Army occupied a significant role in the social consciousness of empire. As sea power and the maritime state defined the age, popular belief was invested in the Royal Navy, and not the British Army, for the empire’s protection and preservation.³³ The Royal Navy thus came to be represented as the omnipotent and unshakable embodiment of the British Empire itself. However, historian Stephanie Barczewski argues that the army was necessary to counterbalance the might of the navy in the minds of the people. As the British Army was the chief instrument used in consolidating the empire, it was more easily able to embody the characteristics of British stoicism and to experience defeat; factors which softened ideas of omnipotence and helped reinforce popular perceptions of the British Empire as a global moralising agent.³⁴ This is why the revival of martial culture from the Crimean War (1854–56) onwards reflected the centrality of the army, while the colonial perception of the military resonated as more a sense of empire and triumph than an innate militaristic sentiment.

The Victorian soldier-hero and the resurgence of martial culture

Martial culture fell into decline across the British Empire in the 1830s but experienced a revival from the Crimean War as press reports drew attention to the plight of the average soldier and sailor. Significantly, the attention of the press led to the establishment of the VC and a burgeoning romanticism of the medal as Britain’s preeminent symbol of heroism and martial achievement. As the award investitures of Frederick Whirlpool and Samuel Mitchell attest,

³⁰ British Friend, ‘Cost of the British Army,’ *Geelong Advertiser and Squatters’ Advocate*, 29 October 1845.

³¹ Spiers, *Army and Society*, 72–73.

³² ‘A Soldier’s Life,’ *Sydney Gazette*, 13 June 1835; ‘Some Passages in the Life of an Old Soldier,’ *Launceston Courier*, 6 February 1843.

³³ Stephanie Barczewski, *Heroic Failure and the British* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 14; Wilcox, *Red Coat Dreaming*, 2.

³⁴ Barczewski, *Heroic Failure*, vii, 4–20.

public reverence of the VC rapidly spread across the empire. This is because the medal's recipients were seen to reflect popular ideals of heroic attainment and manhood.

At the end of the Crimean War, the Admiralty, Horse Guards and War Office were tasked with selecting the first recipients of the VC and, thereby, with defining and institutionalising British heroism. The service departments were swift to dismiss retrospective, foreign and indirect claims that bypassed the chain of command and, in a contentious move contrary to the wishes of Queen Victoria, indoctrinated a view that the VC was an order, and thus only available to the living.³⁵ The question of posthumous awards plagued the VC throughout the nineteenth century, but it was made clear at the time that only a live Victorian soldier or sailor could be a hero. The services instead emphasised a sense of character, determination and volunteerism as intrinsic aspects of martial heroism. These characteristics echoed core social values that permeated mid-nineteenth century Britain, in which individualism, courageous fortitude and character (the proverbial 'stiff upper lip') were central tenets of British masculinity. Take popular literary representations from the period, particularly story papers such as in the *Boys' and Girls' Penny Magazine* and later *Boy's Own Paper* that played a role in shaping masculinity among youth: protagonists became more individualistic and the tales more adventurous and worldlier.³⁶ As worldly adventure raised frontier and militaristic imagery, the literary fictions and popular construct invoked what John Horne has argued is a 'cultural representation of dominance – power expressed as authority.'³⁷ These three notions—heroism, militarism, and power—in turn converged as a hotbed of male activity, and had the effect of alienating women and femininity from the War Office's vision of martial heroism. Thus, the perception of heroism during and as rewarded following the Crimean War was influenced by a sense of romantic militarism as a fusion of the idealistic and practical, while masculine stoicism was subsumed within the ideal.

The popular enthusiasm for wartime heroes that followed was directly related to the resurgence of martial culture and a redefining of British masculinity; a process that began with Crimea and continued during the Indian Mutiny of 1857–58. The mutiny erupted as a rebellion by Bengal Army sepoys against the colonial rule of the British East India Company.³⁸ That the

³⁵ Geoffrey Mundy, Under-Secretary of State for War, to Colonel O'Connor, 16 October 1856, WO 98/2, TNA; Colonel Mundy to the Admiralty, 20 February 1856, WO 6/130, TNA; Jonathan Peel to John Godfrey, draft response, 13 May 1856, WO 32/7300, TNA.

³⁶ Smith, *Awarded for Valour*, 6; Kelly Boyd, 'Knowing Your Place: The Tensions of Manliness in Boys' Story Papers, 1918–39,' in *Manful Assertions: Masculinities in Britain Since 1800*, ed. Michael Roper and John Tosh (London: Routledge, 1991), 145–46.

³⁷ Horne, 'Masculinity in Politics and War,' 22.

³⁸ Saul David, *The Indian Mutiny: 1857* (London: Penguin, 2003), 78–96.

enemy were non-white and non-Christian is significant, for it facilitated the emergence from the mid-nineteenth century of the Anglo-Saxon soldier-hero; a figure infused with an evangelical undercurrent and Victorian manly ideal. As horrific narratives of violence and massacre filtered through the press, the Indian Mutiny was portrayed in Britain ‘as a confrontation with savagery’.³⁹ This perception cast the mutineering sepoys as barbaric—a ‘savage and infuriate crew’, as the *Berkshire Chronicle* labelled them—and the British imperial forces as a civilising and moralising agent.⁴⁰ Military adventure converged with Christian piousness to forge a new *beau idéal* of British manhood: the powerful and authoritative Anglo-Saxon soldier, instilled with both martial prowess and a particular Christian zeal and moral piety.⁴¹

Historian Olive Anderson has situated the emergence of this figure within the broader social shift in attitudes towards the British Army. Through the powerful voice of print media, the ‘brutal and licentious soldiery’ of previous decades had been replaced by an adulating, almost affectionate perception of the army.⁴² Thus emerged what Graham Dawson has labelled the ‘masculine pleasure-culture of war’; romanticised connotations of imperial adventure and anything martial pervaded British culture and society throughout the Victorian and Edwardian eras.⁴³ Christian militarism, then, ‘justified’ colonial power as a religious and moral necessity. In doing so, it constructed ‘heroism’ as innately militaristic: the domain of the self-righteous and formidable (ideally Anglo-Saxon) soldier, who fought for Queen, Empire and God. As power and dominance were central components of the soldier-hero construct, acts that demonstrated aggression, cunning and stoicism were thereafter favoured for the award of the VC. Lieutenant Hugh Gough, for instance, was awarded the medal in 1858 for leading a mounted party against a large sepoy force and capturing two guns.⁴⁴ Through his actions, Gough had exemplified the powerful masculine archetype by achieving a tactical victory against a numerically superior (colonial) force. This proactive, hypermasculine construction of heroism was to influence award practices for much of the next fifty years.

The significance of Christianity to the British soldier-hero, however, alienated indigenous and colonised peoples across the empire. For instance, although eligibility for the VC was extended to the military forces of the East India Company in October 1857, loyal

³⁹ John Peck, *War, the Army and Victorian Literature* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1998), 132.

⁴⁰ ‘The Mutiny in India – Massacre of the English at Delhi,’ *Berkshire Chronicle* (Reading), 4 July 1857.

⁴¹ Dawson, *Soldier Heroes*, 82–83.

⁴² Olive Anderson, ‘The Growth of Christian Militarism in Mid-Victorian Britain,’ *English Historical Review* 86, no. 338 (1971): 46.

⁴³ Dawson, *Soldier Heroes*, 236.

⁴⁴ ‘War-Office, 24th December, 1858,’ *London Gazette*, 24 December 1858.

Indian personnel were neglected in the amendment and were thus interpreted as ineligible.⁴⁵ This was despite an early recommendation for *Duffadar* Gunkut Ras Deokur who, alongside Lieutenant William Kerr, had played a leading role in the capture of a sepoy-held fort at Kolapore. Kerr was awarded the VC; Deokur was not. The official justification was, ironically, that Indian soldiers were not under the purview of the Crown and were already eligible for the Indian Order of Merit, a local gallantry award introduced by the East India Company in 1837.⁴⁶ The award carried a pecuniary allowance and land grant so was more valuable than the VC, but it did not attract the same social currency or romanticised connotations.

The War Office evidently sought to preserve a distinct vision of white British heroism. Melvin Smith, however, opines that the exclusion of Indian personnel resulted not from pure racism but from a sense of moral indignation over the native mutiny.⁴⁷ Smith's interpretation is not without merit as Able Seaman William Hall, a black Nova Scotian, was awarded the VC for his determined efforts in manning a 24-pounder gun against the walls of Lucknow in 1857. West Indian soldiers Samuel Hodge and William Gordon were also recipients of the VC, both rewarded for their heroics along the Gambia River in 1866 and 1892, respectively—Hodge for cleaving through stockades during the capture of Tubabecolong, and Gordon for saving his officer's life at the storming of Toniataba.⁴⁸ By Victorian thinking, however, subjugated colonial peoples did not equate in status with free persons of colour. Indian personnel eventually became eligible for the VC in 1911, but indigenous populations continued to sit awkwardly against British expectations of martial heroism and manliness for much of the twentieth century.⁴⁹

The resurgence of martial culture and adulation for the soldier-hero found social resonance in (white) Australia. As Martin Crotty has argued, martial culture initially manifested in Australia as a response to British cultural and strategic emphases and flourished through the middle-class in the late nineteenth century.⁵⁰ Amid growing tensions in Europe, for instance, citizen soldiery experienced a revival in Britain and the United States from the 1840s. This gave rise to volunteer militias; community-organised units of citizen 'soldiers' who were partially supplied and trained by government or private benefactors for local

⁴⁵ Lord Panmure, 'Amending Warrant: Eligibility of Indian Establishment (White Only), 29 October 1857,' in *Awarded for Valour*, by Melvin Smith, 209–10.

⁴⁶ Crook, *Evolution of the Victoria Cross*, 119; Smith, *Awarded for Valour*, 61–62.

⁴⁷ Smith, *Awarded for Valour*, 61.

⁴⁸ John Glanfield, *Bravest of the Brave: The Story of the Victoria Cross* (Stroud: The History Press, 2005), 49–50; 'War-Office, February 1, 1859,' *London Gazette*, 1 February 1859; Creagh, *Victoria Cross*, 83.

⁴⁹ Lord Haldane, 'War Office, 12th December, 1911,' *London Gazette*, 12 December 1911.

⁵⁰ Crotty, *Making the Australian Male*, 12.

defence.⁵¹ The volunteer movement gained some traction in the colonies during the Crimean War but fell into decline with the end of the conflict and the perceived threat of attack, only to rise again from the 1860s amid Britain's heightened tensions with France and with the New Zealand Wars raging just across the Tasman. The result was to become a familiar pattern for the volunteer movement: significant growth during 'war scares' followed by rapid decline in periods of peace.⁵² Instead, there was greater enthusiasm for rifle clubs. Colonial Australia boasted a strong gun culture, so there was a natural progression towards structured clubs that promoted competition and camaraderie. Sydney established the first organised rifle club in the early 1840s, and the movement expanded across the continent over the next few decades.⁵³ Such was the enthusiasm that Andrew Kilsby has labelled the movement 'a (predominantly male) national pastime.'⁵⁴ The volunteer and rifle movements developed almost in unison from the 1860s, as both initiatives were connected to ideas of national defence.

Aside from basic pragmatism, the success of the militia and rifle club movements was because both came to be tied to contemporary ideas of masculine development. Victorian masculinity was closely associated with work, an imperial 'worldliness' and Christian piety that often expressed manliness through action, power and dominance. Perhaps unsurprisingly, this manifestation of masculinity was most prominent in the martial domain. The reason for this, as John Tosh has suggested, is that threats to empire or region provoked a harsher local definition of masculinity. Thus the significance of the rifle club and volunteer movements, as men had to 'be produced who were tough, realistic, unsqueamish and stoical.'⁵⁵ This notion of masculinity demarcated strict gender roles. The male represented the defender of empire and protector of kin, which contrasted with depictions of the pious, moral yet vulnerable woman. Frontier regions, such as the interior of Australia, were therefore a prominent source of anxiety. The frontier offered a testing ground for imperial manliness but also provoked heightened fears of feminine vulnerability. The settler-colonial man—the Australian man—had to be prepared for threats interior or external.

⁵¹ Craig Wilcox, *For Hearths and Homes: Citizen Soldiering in Australia, 1854–1945* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1998), 8; M. Austin, 'The Foundation of Australia's Army Reserves: 1788–1854 (Part 1),' *Defence Force Journal*, no. 33 (1982): 6–7.

⁵² Wilcox, *For Hearths and Homes*, 8–9; Jeffrey Grey, *A Military History of Australia*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 22; Stanley, *Remote Garrison*, 76.

⁵³ Andrew Kilsby, 'The Rifle Clubs,' in Stockings and Connor, *Before the Anzac Dawn*, 148; 'Riflemen of Sydney,' *Australian* (Sydney), 24 April 1843.

⁵⁴ Kilsby, 'Rifle Clubs,' 148.

⁵⁵ John Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities in Nineteenth-Century Britain: Essays on Gender, Family and Empire* (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2005), 193–94.

Frontier anxiety, however, had as much to do with the environment as it did indigenous peoples. The as yet unexplored areas of the continent, the different climate, and the foreign landscape stimulated as much excitement as it did apprehension. In this the frontier was paradoxical; while British colonial masculinity was almost inherently tied with the frontier, the environment of the Antipodes provoked fears over possible physical and moral degeneration.⁵⁶ The body and the environment came to be emphasised from the late nineteenth century as the nexus between racial decline and moral depravity. As British society witnessed a rise in the middle-classes and their role in national and empire governance during this period, youth and their capacity to ensure the future prosperity of the empire were increasingly the subject of focus, particularly given the supposed threat moral and corporeal decay posed to their masculine development. Contemporaneous thinking theorised that Australian youth were even more susceptible to these dangers. The Australian continent, with its expansive frontier, sub-tropical north, and substantial Indigenous population, suggested an inferior physical and social environment in which to cultivate masculine youth.⁵⁷

Various initiatives were introduced in the colonies from the 1870s to counteract the ‘threats’ of degeneration and cultivate the empire’s male youth. The simultaneous democratisation and secularisation of British society during this era meant a growth in education and literacy, and an increasing emphasis on the moralising role of schools.⁵⁸ The number of secondary schools in Australia grew exponentially in the latter half of the century, while education institutions shifted away from Christian instruction to instead promote sport and athleticism as the ideal means of masculine development. The evolution of the education system was, however, a slow and uneven one that, as Martin Crotty suggests, only took hold late in the century once schools and headmasters began to stress character development through sport and ‘play’ as a central tenant of the curriculum.⁵⁹ Games of physical endurance, moral discipline and teamwork were used in Australian schools from the 1860s for the purpose of cultivating the ideal youth and encouraging ‘gentlemanly’ behaviour. Such was the significance of sport and athleticism to curb supposed effeminate qualities and perceived degeneration that sporting games such as rugby and cricket were compulsory in most

⁵⁶ Crotty, *Making the Australian Male*, 28; Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities*, 195.

⁵⁷ Crotty, *Making the Australian Male*, 11, 19–20; Martin Crotty, ‘Frontier Fantasies: Boys’ Adventure Stories and the Construction of Masculinity in Australia, 1870–1920,’ *Journal of Australian Colonial History* 3, no.1 (2001): 57.

⁵⁸ Crotty, *Making the Australian Male*, 41–46.

⁵⁹ Crotty, *Making the Australian Male*, 42–43.

Australian schools by 1880.⁶⁰ These sports promoted competition, encouraged confidence, taught strategy, endurance and leadership, and fostered teamwork. Sport was also meant to instil a sense of grace in defeat when it inevitably came, for the true test was one of character: how a man conducted himself in trying circumstances.

Violence and aggression were accepted and at times encouraged within schoolyard sport. Violence on the sports field was thought to instil the stoic British character, provide an outlet for nervous energy, and be integral to masculine development. It was only tolerated up to certain levels though; restraint was an important lesson for manhood, too.⁶¹ However, as British cultural militarism came to be fused with the education system late in the century, violence and team sport also came to be perceived as preliminary training for war. The sportsground came to be seen as a surrogate for the battlefield, so much so that historian J.A. Mangan has likened schoolyard sports to ‘training grounds for imperial battlefields’.⁶² The practicalities of schoolyard sport and cultural militarism also explain the rise of the cadet movement. Military-style drill had been used in Australian schools as early as the 1850s to encourage physical fitness and discipline, but not until the 1860s did the first modern cadet units appear.⁶³ The cadets arose as a social organisation with strong connections to both military and educational institutions, and sated middle-class ideas on character development in providing a structured and disciplined environment for secondary school age boys to cultivate military training, drill and rifle skills.⁶⁴ The structure and objectives of the cadets saw the organisation become almost a juvenile extension of the rifle and volunteer movements, to the extent that cadets were at times viewed as a potential supplement to volunteer corps.⁶⁵ While the latter was perhaps no more than a faint political fancy of a few, the adult and adolescent schemes did experience something of a symbiotic relationship; when enthusiasm surged or waned for the volunteers, often too did interest in the cadets.⁶⁶

The cadets and sporting initiatives were the practical manifestations of an education system that was, according to Crotty, ‘designed to produce a hardy and resilient boy’; a

⁶⁰ Martin Crotty, ‘The Making of the Man: Australian Public Schoolboy Sporting Violence, 1850–1914,’ *International Journal of the History of Sport* 20, no. 3 (2003): 4; Crotty, *Making the Australian Male*, 42–43.

⁶¹ Crotty, ‘Making of the Man,’ 4–5.

⁶² J.A. Mangan, *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School: The Emergence and Consolidation of an Educational Ideology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 138.

⁶³ Craig Stockings, *The Torch and the Sword: A History of the Army Cadet Movement in Australia* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2007), 7–8.

⁶⁴ Craig Stockings, ‘A Survey of Military, Educational and Community Expectations of the Cadet Movement in Australia, 1866–2006,’ *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 52, no. 2 (2007): 237.

⁶⁵ Stockings, ‘Survey of Military,’ 238–39; Crotty, *Making the Australian Male*, 83.

⁶⁶ Craig Stockings, ‘Australia’s Boy Soldiers: The Army Cadet Movement,’ in Stockings and Connor, *Before the Anzac Dawn*, 180–81; Crotty, *Making the Australian Male*, 83; Klisby, ‘Rifle Clubs,’ 151–52.

masculine youth who was stoic, reliable, disciplined, and capable of wielding a rifle in the heat of battle if need be.⁶⁷ But he also had to be one who possessed a British character and valued Anglo-Australian principles. The school curriculum was devised with these principles in mind and provided a theoretical and instructional framework to the practical initiatives. Graeme Davison has argued that Australian schoolteachers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries ‘took a keen interest in the cultivation of hero-worship’; youth were encouraged, urged even, to model themselves after the empire’s soldiers, explorers and martial heroes.⁶⁸ Indeed, pupils were provided lessons on heroic or inspiring figures within the empire’s and Australia’s modern history. The examples were not exclusively martial in form, but Francis Drake, Viscount Nelson and Wellington filled out the list.⁶⁹ Instruction in courageous tales of empire and colonial Australia suited middle-class objectives, as it nurtured youth who were versed in British triumphs and sacrifices, understood their heritage, and provided a source of inspiration. These initiatives in masculine development, nevertheless, came almost a century after British settlement in Australia, when the younger generations were seeking to identify themselves as distinct, or at least as semi-unique, within the empire.

Nascent nationalism and the quest for a hero

Most non-Indigenous Australians still firmly identified themselves and the colonies as British by the late nineteenth century. This is hardly surprising as migration to Australia remained overwhelmingly by those of Anglo-Celtic descent.⁷⁰ However, with masculine education and inter-empire sporting contests beginning to cast doubt on theories of degeneration in the Antipodes, and with the steady rise in the population of local-born Anglo-Australians, so arose a nascent quest for a sense of Australian nationalism from the 1870s. This sense of nationalism was not an independence movement, nor one that sought to position Australia as separate from the British Empire. Rather, it developed mostly through the agency of the younger and middle-class citizenry of colonial society as an effort to move away from Australia’s convict origins and portray Australians as distinct and unique within the empire—a quest for what historian W.K. Hancock has described as ‘independent Australian Britons’.⁷¹ The movement towards a

⁶⁷ Crotty, ‘Making of the Man,’ 2.

⁶⁸ Graeme Davison, *The Use and Abuse of Australian History* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 2000), 23.

⁶⁹ Craig Campbell, ‘Schooling in Australia,’ in *Schooling in Oceania*, ed. Craig Campbell and Geoffrey Sherington (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2007), 44.

⁷⁰ Adele Perry, ‘Whose World Was British? Rethinking the “British World” from an Edge of Empire,’ in *Britishness Abroad: Transnational Movements and Imperial Cultures*, ed. Kate Darian-Smith, Patricia Grimshaw and Stuart Macintyre (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2007), 140.

⁷¹ W.K. Hancock, *Australia* (London: E. Benn, 1930), 68.

national archetype was reflected in literary works of the era, such as boys' story papers and adventure annuals. Australian adventure stories of the 1870s often featured a European settler protagonist who surmounted threats posed by the Antipodean environment or Aboriginal peoples. Martin Crotty argues that this narrative shifted over a few short decades to instead emphasise a hero who was 'indubitably Australian, built like an Antipodean Hercules, militarist and nationalist.'⁷²

The nationalist movement, however, needed a central heroic archetype: a figure akin to the protagonists featured in the later story papers, one that resonated with the colonists and their perception of collective self. The inward turn for a heroic archetype was somewhat problematic—as Ken Inglis has aptly observed, colonial Australian society 'provided so little scope for heroism'.⁷³ The previously venerated archetypes, the warrior-heroes of Nelson and Wellington, were hardly individuals on which to build a national identity somewhat distinctive from Britain. But Australia's own warrior-heroes did not yet exist and so the civil sphere seemed to be the inevitable domain of the heroic figure. The democratisation of nineteenth century British society had inspired attempts by the British government to institutionalise civilian (or at least non-warlike) heroism. The Albert Medal was created in 1866 to recognise acts of courage in saving life at sea. The medal was split into two grades the following year, and extended to lifesaving on land in 1877.⁷⁴ Similarly, there was a brief period between 1858 and 1881 when eligibility for the VC was extended to acts of 'conspicuous courage ... under circumstances of extreme danger' in the absence of an enemy presence.⁷⁵ The War Office had vehemently opposed the extension and, according to Michael Crook, appeared to seek its suppression as 'a kind of guilty secret', though six awards from two separate incidents were made under the clause.⁷⁶ The six VCs, however, went to British Army personnel, while only three awards of the Albert Medal Second Class were made to Australians in the nineteenth century: William Yaldwyn for rescuing six people in floodwaters at Charleville, Queensland, in 1886; William Borland for saving the lives of two sailors in 1891 following an explosion in Sydney Harbour; and Hereward Hewison for saving his brother from a shark attack at

⁷² Crotty, 'Frontier Fantasies,' 57.

⁷³ Inglis, *Australian Colonists*, 240.

⁷⁴ 'Whitehall, May 1, 1877,' *London Gazette*, 1 May 1877. The first- and second-class distinctions were, in 1917, altered to the Albert Medal in Gold and the Albert Medal, respectively, as the phrase 'second class' was 'no longer appropriate and demeaned both the act and the decoration.' John Price, *Everyday Heroism: Victorian Constructions of the Heroic Civilian* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 33.

⁷⁵ Jonathan Peel, 'Warrant Extending the Victoria Cross to Cases of Conspicuous Courage and Bravery Displayed under Circumstances of Danger but Not before the Enemy,' in Crook, *Evolution of the Victoria Cross*, 284.

⁷⁶ Crook, *Evolution of the Victoria Cross*, 146.

Newcastle Beach in 1894.⁷⁷ All three men garnered attention in the press, but their notability extended little beyond their local regions.⁷⁸

Other empire figures with a prominent Australian connection, like the seafarers James Cook and Arthur Phillip, provoked a similar dilemma. Although commemorated via various monuments, they had lost currency with each passing generation and were but a distant memory by the late nineteenth century. A relatable, living figure was instead needed. Politicians, governors and bureaucrats struggled to conform to these criteria. While important, influential figures, their work was rarely romanticised, often not relatable, and political figures were not easily recommended to the younger generations as people to emulate. The sedentary and bureaucratic nature of their work also clashed with the proactive masculinity of the day. Popular literary works, however, signalled a potential alternative: writer Barbara Baynton and poet Banjo Paterson emphasised the bush and the characteristics of rural Australian life, while poet Henry Lawson promoted mateship and egalitarianism as Australian attributes. The *Bulletin*, a prominent Sydney magazine, further fuelled such sentiments by publishing works of ardent nationalism, adopting the masthead 'Australia for the Australians'.⁷⁹ Such literary works highlighted the popular romanticism that shrouded the Australian frontier and bush life.

Explorers and pioneers thereby emerged as national heroic figures, while bushmen and rural workers manifested as something of a national archetype. There is a certain irony in the latter being predominantly of the working-class given that the nationalist push developed through middle-class agency. However, the expansive popular romanticism of egalitarian rural life, and the physical hardships it demanded, meant the working-class profession was easier to construct as proactive, masculine and distinct.⁸⁰ Explorers, though generally of the middle-class, also conformed to this hardy, proactive masculinity and in doing so acted, according to historian Graeme Dawson, as 'surrogates for the warriors Australia did not have.'⁸¹ Indeed, military imagery veiled many an expedition, while explorers themselves were often attributed with the characteristics commonly applied to soldiers: courage, loyalty, strength, and stoicism.

⁷⁷ 'Whitehall, February 10, 1887,' *Edinburgh Gazette*, 15 February 1887; 'Board of Trade, Whitehall Gardens, November 16, 1892,' *London Gazette*, 18 November 1892; 'Board of Trade, Whitehall Gardens, July 8, 1895,' *Edinburgh Gazette*, 16 July 1895.

⁷⁸ See, for example, 'The Recent Charleville Flood,' *Brisbane Courier*, 3 August 1886; 'Reward for Bravery,' *Daily Telegraph* (Sydney), 18 November 1892; 'The Encounter with a Shark,' *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 December 1894.

⁷⁹ Mark Peel and Christina Twomey, *A History of Australia* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 113.

⁸⁰ Russel Ward, *The Australian Legend*, 2nd ed. (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1980), especially 145–206. Ward's analysis and argument has been subject to considerable debate over the decades, but his book remains a seminal work on bush culture in the Australian consciousness.

⁸¹ Davison, *Use and Abuse*, 23.

The *Port Phillip Gazette*, for instance, described Ludwig Leichhardt's expedition across the north-east of Australia as one of 'extraordinary courage' and 'devotion', while John McDouall Stuart was publicly praised for his 'heroic endurance' in reaching the centre of the continent.⁸² It probably helped that prominent explorers such as Watkin Tench, Charles Sturt and Thomas Mitchell were military men, while the Prussian-born Leichhardt was known to celebrate the anniversary of Waterloo so as to pay tribute to 'the memory of the deeds of our illustrious heroes'.⁸³

While explorers offered Australia's closest alternative to the martial warrior-heroes of empire, they were less potent figures in terms of nationalism and nation-building. There is a key reason for this: settler-colonialism. Explorers and pioneers contributed to cartographic and geographical knowledge, but unlike the empire's heroic military figures their achievements did not extend the territory of the empire or necessarily culminate in glory. A number of expeditions, such as that of Burke and Wills, Alfred Gibson, and Leichhardt's second excursion into the interior, ended in mysterious, disastrous or disappointing circumstances. The unknown or futile fates of these explorers were difficult to glorify or fête as feats of heroic failure, let alone contribute to nationalist fervour. Explorers also struggled to conform to nineteenth century thinking on nationhood. Nationalism was redefined in Western Europe during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to emphasise history and heritage.⁸⁴ As a settler society, Anglo-Australia lacked this historical connection. Western conceptions of nationalism were also intimately linked with war and armed struggle, to the extent that conflict provided both the 'ultimate test and opportunity' for nationhood.⁸⁵ Such thinking was engrained in colonial Australia. As Ken Inglis has argued, contemporaries of the nineteenth century perceived that 'Australia could not have adequate heroes until men shed blood for their country.'⁸⁶ Australia's frontier conflicts were not popularly perceived as a struggle for the nation—at least on the part of the settlers—meaning the colonies were devoid of a glorified nation-building narrative. Explorers and pastoralists suited domestic purposes of national sentiment and identity, but

⁸² 'The Exploration of the Interior,' *Port Phillip Gazette*, 22 April 1846; 'Exploration of the Interior,' *South Australian Advertiser* (Adelaide), 26 October 1860.

⁸³ Ludwig Leichhardt, *Journal of an Overland Expedition in Australia, from Morton Bay to Port Essington, a Distance of Upwards of 3000 Miles, during the Years 1844–1845* (London: T. & W. Boone, 1847), 327.

⁸⁴ Stefan Berger, 'Introduction: Towards a Global History of National Historiographies,' in *Writing the Nation: A Global Perspective*, ed. Stefan Berger (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 5–6. See also Mark McKenna, 'The History Anxiety,' in *The Commonwealth of Australia*, vol. 2 of *The Cambridge History of Australia*, ed. Alison Bashford and Stuart Macintyre (Port Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 561–80.

⁸⁵ Dawson, *Soldier Heroes*, 1.

⁸⁶ Inglis, *Australian Colonists*, 253.

Australia needed a heroic archetype that could withstand international scrutiny—one that could only be born of war.

Testing grounds: Sudan and the Boer War

Opportunity arose with the Sudan expedition of 1885. The conflict began as a Sudanese Arab uprising against British-sponsored Egyptian rule, culminating in the ten-month siege of the Anglo-Egyptian garrison at Khartoum. In February 1885 news reached Australia of the fall of Khartoum and the death of the British commander, Major General Charles Gordon. The reaction was one of deep-seated moral outrage and public indignation, as Gordon represented the quintessential soldier-hero of empire.⁸⁷ As a result, the acting Premier of New South Wales, William Dalley, bypassed parliamentary authority to offer a contingent to avenge Gordon's death.⁸⁸ The offer was duly accepted on 14 February, despite simultaneous proposals from Victoria, Queensland, South Australia and Canada being declined, ostensibly as only New South Wales was capable of raising a force at such short notice.⁸⁹ The New South Wales Contingent was criticised in some quarters but aroused sufficient support for the all-volunteer force to be operational within a fortnight. The 770-man contingent, under the command of Colonel John Richardson, embarked from Sydney amid considerable fanfare on 3 March.⁹⁰ Such was the excitement over the event that Louis Heydon, the Member for Yass Plains, declared before the New South Wales Parliament that 'this country has [now] risen to the stature of nationhood ... here our history may truly [be] said to begin.'⁹¹

The New South Wales Contingent landed in north-eastern Sudan on 29 March and was attached to the Suakin Field Force.⁹² Strategic shifts in London, however, meant the fighting was virtually over by the time the contingent disembarked. Aside from minor skirmishes at Tamai and Takdul, the infantry saw little action and the artillery none at all. Most of the contingent's time was devoted to training, labour or guard duties, before the force was embarked for home on 17 May.⁹³ Although the Sudan expedition proved a disappointment, the

⁸⁷ 'The Fall of Khartoum,' *Tasmanian News* (Hobart), 6 February 1885; 'General Gordon's Mission to Khartoum,' *Maitland Mercury*, 14 February 1885.

⁸⁸ Lord Augustus Loftus to Earl of Derby, telegram, 12 February 1885, B3756, 1885/3424, National Archives of Australia (hereafter NAA), Melbourne.

⁸⁹ Earl of Derby to Lord Augustus Loftus, telegram, 14 February 1885, B3756, 1885/3424, NAA, Melbourne; Chris Coulthard-Clark, 'The Dispatch of the Contingent,' in *But Little Glory: The New South Wales Contingent to the Sudan, 1885*, ed. Peter Stanley (Canberra: Military Historical Society of Australia, 1985), 20; Earl of Derby to Marquess of Lansdowne, telegram, 19 February 1885, B3756, 1885/3424, NAA, Melbourne.

⁹⁰ Ken Inglis, *The Rehearsal: Australians at War in the Sudan 1885* (Adelaide: Rigby, 1985), 46, 49–60.

⁹¹ *New South Wales Parliamentary Debates*, vol. 16, 20 March 1885, 179.

⁹² Inglis, *Rehearsal*, 93–94.

⁹³ Inglis, *Rehearsal*, 102, 113, 127; Grey, *Military History of Australia*, 49.

exercise did generate some currency. The contingent garnered the battle honour ‘Suakin 1885’, the first to be awarded to an Australian unit, while monuments to Gordon and Dalley were soon erected in Melbourne and Sydney respectively.⁹⁴ The expedition also resulted in the first medals awarded directly to members of an Australian military unit for active service. Two campaign medals, the Egypt Medal and Khedive's Star, were struck, while Richardson and the artillery commander, Lieutenant Colonel Warner Spalding, were Mentioned in Despatches and appointed Companion of the Order of the Bath and Companion of the Order of St Michael and St George respectively.⁹⁵ The expedition also established a precedent for Australia's external conflicts over the next sixty years by employing a volunteer citizen force, and demonstrated colonial Australia's ability and willingness to assist the empire in military engagements under the right circumstances. However, as no Australian battle-worn martial hero or heroic archetype emerged from the Sudan, the expedition proved disappointing.

A second chance would arise little more than a decade later. The Boer War erupted in October 1899 after several years of tension between Britain and the two Boer republics, Orange Free State and the South African Republic (also known as the Transvaal), over issues of economics, immigration and sovereignty.⁹⁶ The reaction from the Australian colonies was more sedate than it had been for the Sudan. Craig Wilcox suggests that Australia's politicians were cautious as the war posed no direct threat to the empire, while popularly the conflict lacked the ‘emotional spark’ provided by an event like Gordon's death.⁹⁷ Nonetheless, the colonies systematically—though not without some resistance—offered contingents of men. A detachment of New South Wales Lancers, training in Britain on the outbreak of war, were the first Australians to reach the front in November and were soon followed by the first contingents from all six colonies.⁹⁸ Despite the dampened popular enthusiasm, there was still an expectation in Australia that the war would produce capable martial heroes. In farewelling the Queensland contingent, Premier James Dickson expressed his hope ‘that there would be not a few Victoria Crosses and other rewards awaiting’ the men.⁹⁹ Similarly, the *Melbourne Punch*, in writing of Victoria's contingent, referred to ‘the gallant officers who are going forth to

⁹⁴ Kuring, *Red Coat to Cams*, 16; Inglis, *Rehearsal*, 152–55.

⁹⁵ Michael Downey, ‘The Medals of the Contingent,’ in Stanley, *But Little Glory*, 55, 66, 69.

⁹⁶ R.L. Wallace, ‘The Boer War, 1899–1902,’ in *For Queen and Empire: A Boer War Chronicle*, ed. Ralph Sutton (Ryde: New South Wales Military Historical Society, 1974), 15–17; Craig Wilcox, *Australia's Boer War: The War in South Africa, 1899–1902* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2002), 12–21.

⁹⁷ Craig Wilcox, ‘Australians in the Wars in Sudan and South Africa,’ in Stockings and Connor, *Before the Anzac Dawn*, 221.

⁹⁸ Jean Bou, *Light Horse: A History of Australia's Mounted Arm* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 38–40.

⁹⁹ ‘Queensland Soldiers,’ *Telegraph* (Brisbane), 2 November 1899.

achieve the Victoria Cross', while a Rockhampton man was sent off with the well wishes that he 'return safe and sound with the Victoria Cross attached to his breast.'¹⁰⁰ The Citizens' Life Assurance Company even pledged an annuity of £52 a year (approximately \$8,000 in 2018) for life to the first Australian VC.¹⁰¹ The expectation of martial glory was not limited to the public either. A Private Walker of New South Wales was reported in a Bathurst newspaper as having remarked: 'Here's at the Boers. I hope I return with the Victoria Cross.'¹⁰²

The colonies were not long in waiting. On 30 January 1900 the *Singleton Argus* reported on the exploits of local man Thomas (Tom) Morris, a trooper in the Lancers. During an action the previous month, Morris was alleged to have 'coolly returned, under a fearful fire' and collected a Trooper Harrison, whose horse had been shot from under him. According to one observer, had it not been for Morris' actions 'Harrison would have been either captured or shot.'¹⁰³ The *Singleton Argus* published a follow-up two days later, announcing that Morris had been recommended for the VC for his 'rescue in the teeth of a hail of bullets.'¹⁰⁴ The tale of Morris' recommendation spread across New South Wales over the following few days, and was even reported in Queensland and in Britain.¹⁰⁵ As accounts of Morris' actions reached his brother Percy, then also in South Africa and serving with the New South Wales Mounted Infantry, the latter was duly given 'three ringing cheers' by his battalion 'in compliment of being a brother of one who had won a V.C.'¹⁰⁶

There was some misunderstanding, as the ovation bestowed on Percy Morris suggests, that a recommendation was a certainty for award. Indeed, this was assumed by a number of press outlets, with the *Newcastle Morning Herald* going so far as to claim that Morris had 'ascended to the ranks of recognised British heroes.'¹⁰⁷ Per the eighth clause of the Royal Warrant instituting the VC, recommendations for the award were to progress through the military chain of command and be subject to review at the War Office or Admiralty. According to Melvin Smith, this arrangement provided the service departments the 'opportunity to define

¹⁰⁰ 'A Military Ball,' *Melbourne Punch*, 26 October 1899; 'The Transvaal Contingent,' *Morning Bulletin* (Rockhampton), 21 October 1899.

¹⁰¹ 'The Victoria Cross,' *Adelaide Observer*, 30 December 1899.

¹⁰² 'The Bathurst Boys,' *National Advocate* (Bathurst), 26 October 1899.

¹⁰³ 'News from Trooper Chilcott,' *Singleton Argus*, 30 January 1900.

¹⁰⁴ 'Letters from Our Boys,' *Singleton Argus*, 1 February 1900.

¹⁰⁵ See, for example, 'Recommended for a V.C.,' *Bathurst Daily Free Press and Mining Journal*, 3 February 1900; 'An Australian and the V.C.,' *Dubbo Dispatch*, 6 February 1900; 'The Victoria Cross,' *Toowoomba Chronicle*, 6 February 1900; 'The Victoria Cross,' *Queensland Times* (Ipswich), 8 February 1900; and 'Recommended for the V.C.,' *Yorkshire Telegraph and Star* (Sheffield), 30 March 1900.

¹⁰⁶ 'Letters from Our Boys.'

¹⁰⁷ 'A Victoria Cross to New South Wales,' *Newcastle Morning Herald*, 7 February 1900.

the form of heroism they wished to institutionalize.’¹⁰⁸ While the process for recommendations during the Crimea War was unique—submissions were invited direct from ships and regiments to the Admiralty or Horse Guards—from the Indian Mutiny onwards VC recommendations were processed strictly through the military hierarchy.¹⁰⁹ For the army, nominations originated in the battalion or regiment and were processed through to brigade, division, corps, army and theatre commands, as appropriate. The naval services adopted a similar procedure. Although this process has become more stringent and bureaucratic over time—particularly since the First World War (see Chapter Two)—the fundamental aspects have remained the same for the last 160 years. At each level, the recommendation is subject to scrutiny by the formation commander and their senior staff officer and, if approved, processed onwards. At any one of these stages, however, the recommendation can be altered to another award or rejected outright with no explanation required.¹¹⁰ Being recommended for reward was no minor feat, but it was certainly no guarantee of award.

Tom Morris was invalided home in June and was honoured as a returning hero. The press in Hobart, Melbourne and throughout New South Wales reported on the ‘gallant young Lancer’, while Singleton organised a grand civic reception.¹¹¹ Although some press accounts conceded that the VC was yet to be confirmed, Morris was fêted and reported as ‘Australia’s first V.C. Hero’.¹¹² As the months wore on with no announcement from London, however, it became clear that Morris was not to be awarded the VC. The *Freeman’s Journal*, a Sydney-based tabloid, attributed the snub to rank and class prejudice.¹¹³ This argument appears to hold little weight, particularly as a VC to Sergeant Arthur Richardson, a Canadian rancher and Mountie, had been gazetted six weeks prior to the *Freeman’s* article.¹¹⁴ Aside from the abundance of rumours and excited press reports, there is no evidence that Morris was officially recommended for the VC; the case proved to be one of premature attribution.

It was not the only one. Private Alexander Kruger of the Western Australian Mounted Infantry gained attention from June 1900 as the second Australian to be ‘recommended’ for the VC. At Slingsfontein in February, Kruger was among a party of twenty Western Australians

¹⁰⁸ Smith, *Awarded for Valour*, 43.

¹⁰⁹ Crook, *Evolution of the Victoria Cross*, 41–42.

¹¹⁰ D’Alton, ‘Behind the Valour,’ 57–79.

¹¹¹ ‘How Morris Saved Harrison and Earned His V.C.,’ *Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers’ Advocate* (Parramatta), 30 June 1900; ‘Victoria Cross,’ *Mercury* (Hobart), 2 July 1900; ‘Trooper Tom Morris,’ *Australasian* (Melbourne), 30 June 1900; ‘Enthusiastic Reception at Singleton,’ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 July 1900.

¹¹² ‘Australia’s First V.C. Hero,’ *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners’ Advocate*, 11 July 1900.

¹¹³ ‘Australians and the V.C.,’ *Freeman’s Journal* (Sydney), 27 October 1900.

¹¹⁴ ‘War Office, September 14, 1900,’ *London Gazette*, 14 September 1900.

atop a hill when they came under attack from a Boer force several hundred strong.¹¹⁵ Early on Lieutenant Geoffrey Hensman was shot in the hip while out in an exposed position. Kruger ‘scrambled across the rocks in the face of a withering fire’, bound the officer’s wounds, and attempted to conceal their position as best he could.¹¹⁶ Although thrice grazed by bullets, Kruger remained with Hensman for several hours and fired upon any Boer who came near; he later claimed to have killed fifteen of the enemy.¹¹⁷ The Western Australians withdrew with Hensman as night fell, but the officer later died of his wounds. For his part, Kruger was rumoured to be a candidate for the VC. He accordingly received enthusiastic—if less sustained—attention in the Australian press, though like Morris no award was forthcoming.¹¹⁸ It would seem that such was the popular anticipation and excitement for local heroes that unsubstantiated rumours gained traction in the Australian colonies.

Not until 13 November 1900, four months after Morris’ return, was the first VC to an Australian announced by the War Office. Trooper John Bisdee of the Tasmanian Imperial Bushmen was with a detachment escorting British supply troops on a foraging patrol near Warmbad in September when they were ambushed on a narrow pass.¹¹⁹ Six of the eight men, including both officers, were wounded and several of their horses bolted. Under heavy rifle fire, Bisdee dismounted and pushed the patrol’s wounded and now unhorsed commander onto his own steed. He was soon forced to mount behind the officer, who was in no fit state to ride unassisted. The pair then rode clear of the scene.¹²⁰ Meanwhile, Lieutenant Guy Wylly—who had relinquished his own horse to a more seriously wounded corporal—covered the withdrawal until retrieved by Trooper Francis Groom. Bisdee and Wylly were credited with saving men ‘from death or capture’ and were awarded the VC. Groom received the Distinguished Conduct Medal (DCM), an award instituted in 1854 as Britain’s first military decoration for heroism; it was second only to the VC for other ranks in the army.¹²¹ Wylly’s award, however, was gazetted ten days after Bisdee’s. The reason for the delay is not clear, though Wylly’s rank—

¹¹⁵ Wilcox, *Australia’s Boer War*, 66.

¹¹⁶ ‘Colonial V.C.’s,’ *Geelong Advertiser*, 6 October 1900.

¹¹⁷ ‘Colonial V.C.’s.’; ‘A Volunteer “V.C.”,’ *South Australian Register* (Adelaide), 6 August 1900; Wilcox, *Australia’s Boer War*, 67.

¹¹⁸ See, for example, ‘Two Gallant Australians,’ *Age* (Melbourne), 25 June 1900; ‘Trooper Kruger,’ *Portland Guardian*, 29 June 1900; and ‘Trooper Kruger’s Heroism,’ *Armidale Chronicle*, 7 July 1900.

¹¹⁹ ‘War Office, November 13, 1900,’ *London Gazette*, 13 November 1900.

¹²⁰ Captain E.W. Brooke to unnamed staff officer, 3 September 1900, WO 32/7446, TNA.

¹²¹ Colonel Thomas Hickman to unnamed staff officer, 11 September 1900, WO 32/7447, TNA; Wilcox, *Australia’s Boer War*, 152; Sidney Herbert, ‘Warrant Granting Annuities and Gratuities to Non-commissioned Officers and Men of the Army Serving Under the Command of Field-Marshal Lord Raglan,’ *London Gazette*, 12 December 1854; Duckers, *British Gallantry Awards*, 33–37.

there often being a greater expectation on officers to perform valiantly—and the circumstances of the ambush may have been factors.¹²²

The lifesaving—or, to borrow Melvin Smith's term, 'humanitarian'—element of Bisdee and Wylly's VCs hints at the heroic paradigm that existed during the Boer War. Awards to Australians in South Africa were dominated by exploits that involved the saving or safeguarding of life. Captain Neville Howse of the New South Wales Army Medical Corps, for example, was awarded the VC in June 1901 for having galloped out under rifle fire to collect a grievously wounded trumpeter the previous July. Howse's horse was killed as he dressed the soldier's wounds, so he carried the trumpeter some twenty yards to a place of safety. He thus performed the earliest actions by an Australian that were to result in the award of a VC.¹²³ Two further VCs were won by men in the Australian colonial contingents, while a sixth Australian received the medal while serving with the South African Constabulary. All three mirrored the humanitarian pattern of award. At Brakpan in May 1901, Lieutenant Frederick Bell of the Western Australian Mounted Infantry relinquished his horse to a dismounted trooper and, on foot, covered the retirement of his men. Likewise, during an engagement at Geelhoutboom the following November, Lieutenant Leslie Maygar, a Victorian Mounted Rifleman, passed his steed to another and withdrew on foot as Boers fired from less than two hundred yards.¹²⁴ Sergeant James Rogers—now with the South African Constabulary after an earlier tour with the Victorians—thrice rode out under sustained fire during a skirmish near Thaba 'Nchu in June 1901 to retrieve stranded men.¹²⁵

Similar patterns are evident among bestowals of other honours and awards, including those of the 'Queen's Scarf'. Eight khaki scarves, crocheted by Queen Victoria, were sent to South Africa in 1900 for presentation to the 'most distinguished private soldiers'.¹²⁶ One each was allocated to Australia, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa for award to someone who had demonstrated 'gallant conduct in the field', while the remainder were later granted to British servicemen.¹²⁷ Australia's recipient, Private Alfred du Frayer, was recognised for rescuing a wounded man after the latter's horse had been shot during an ambush in April 1900.

¹²² Bisdee blamed Captain Brooke and Wylly for the ambush, opining that the party 'were led ... into a veritable death trap' because of the officers' incautiousness. See Bruce Montgomery, 'VC Hero Made Room on His Horse for Two,' *Australian* (Sydney), 2 September 1996; Wilcox, *Australia's Boer War*, 152.

¹²³ 'War Office, June 4, 1901,' *London Gazette*, 4 June 1901; Michael Tyquin, *Neville Howse: Australia's First Victoria Cross Winner* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1999), 21.

¹²⁴ 'War Office, October 4, 1901,' *London Gazette*, 4 October 1901; 'War Office, February 11, 1902,' *London Gazette*, 11 February 1902.

¹²⁵ 'War Office, April 18, 1902,' *London Gazette*, 18 April 1902.

¹²⁶ Lord Roberts, 'War Office, June 17, 1902,' *London Gazette*, 17 June 1902.

¹²⁷ Roberts, 'War Office'; Ian Uys, *Victoria Crosses of the Anglo-Boer War* (Knysna: Fortress, 2000), 103–4.

Although the specifics behind the British awards are unclear, the three other empire scarves were presented for similar lifesaving exploits.¹²⁸

Acts of ‘humanitarianism’ were obviously not a uniquely Australian phenomenon. Rather, the emphasis on saving life under fire reflected developments within the broader British paradigm of heroism. The proactive, hypermasculine construct of the mid-nineteenth century had gradually shifted as Britain fought dozens of wars on the periphery and frontier regions of the empire against non-white foes. Through these engagements, ideas of Orientalism and racial hierarchies came to permeate British society and their perceptions of the racial ‘other’ for much of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Edward Said, a pioneering scholar on European racial discourses, has argued that ‘Orientalism’ enabled the Western world to exoticise, simplify, misrepresent and often demonise the ‘other’, which thereby bolstered (self)perceptions of inherent European superiority.¹²⁹ Orientalism, coupled with social Darwinist discourse, provided the theoretical basis for the ‘humanitarian’ paradigm, as it could be seen that being vulnerable and stranded on the battlefield or abandoning a comrade to the whims of a ‘native’ force symbolically ceded power to that foe—a reprehensible act for the masculine and proud white Briton. However, there was also a practical dimension to lifesaving heroics. Basic pragmatism—that is, a soldier captured or killed sapped the fighting force—provided one rationale. But conflict with non-European forces also highlighted different cultural approaches to warfare. With this came the realisation that certain peoples (such as the Zulus) showed little mercy to the living or dead, at least by European understandings.¹³⁰

Humanitarian actions thus came to dominate the awarding of the VC in the late nineteenth century. Lifesaving acts, for instance, went from constituting little more than a third of the VCs awarded during the 1850s–1870s to almost sixty percent of those bestowed between 1880 and 1904.¹³¹ The dominance of lifesaving heroics, however, did not completely obscure recognition for tactical courage. South African Corporal John Clements received the VC for forcing a party of Boers to surrender in February 1900, despite being seriously wounded himself.¹³² Similarly, among the Australian contingents, Corporal Harold (Pompey) Elliott was awarded the DCM for his role in orchestrating a successful ambush in February 1901.¹³³ Nonetheless, the heroic paradigm had largely shifted from aggressive and symbolic combat

¹²⁸ Les Hetherington, ‘Winning the Queen’s Scarf,’ *Wartime* no. 13 (2001): 48–49; Uys, *Victoria Crosses*, 103–8.

¹²⁹ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin Classics, 2003), 7–8, 31–73.

¹³⁰ Smith, *Awarded for Valour*, 80–81.

¹³¹ Smith, *Awarded for Valour*, 96.

¹³² ‘War Office, June 4, 1901.’

¹³³ Wilcox, *Australia’s Boer War*, 169.

heroics prior to the Boer War to instead emphasise a kind of national humanitarianism: the saving of fellow (white) Britons from the racial 'other'.

That the Boers were white and culturally similar to Europeans was not lost on some of the British commanders. Lord Kitchener, who came to South Africa as chief of staff to the commander-in-chief, Lord Roberts, and served as theatre commander from November 1900, ardently sought to discourage lifesaving heroics. In a June 1901 letter to the Under-Secretary of State for War, Kitchener made clear his view. 'I think that some steps should be taken', he wrote, 'to discourage recommendations for the Victoria Cross in civilized warfare in cases of mere bringing in of wounded and dismounted men.'¹³⁴ Kitchener's letter came in response to a series of recent recommendations for humanitarian exploits, and drew a clear racial distinction between opponents: the (white) Boers, unlike the 'uncivilised' adversaries of the past, would treat British wounded and prisoners humanely. Kitchener also took exception to the efficacy of humanitarian actions, arguing that they often led to further casualties. It is thus unsurprising that the VC recommendation for Private Edmund Sweeney of the Queensland Imperial Bushmen was rejected in favour of a DCM. While under fire near Bethal in May 1901, the horse of a Corporal Adams was wounded so Sweeney 'offered to give Adams a lift out of action.' As Adams mounted the horse, Sweeney was shot and fell to the ground. Sweeney, expressing he 'was done', urged Adams to save himself; Adams fled to safety.¹³⁵ Sweeney survived despite enduring a night alone on the veld, but that he became a casualty in attempting to rescue another prejudiced his chances of higher award.¹³⁶ Kitchener's attempts to reform the heroic paradigm proved limited as recommendations for lifesaving acts continued to be processed and approved, and the issue was to arise again during the First World War. Kitchener did, however, ensure certain conditions were imposed to restrict awards to only those he deemed sufficiently worthy.

The prevalence of humanitarian heroics saw notions of saving life under fire enter the popular consciousness as a romanticised stereotype. The VC race is a prominent example. The race came to Australia via Britain as a military competition in the 1880s, and popular enthusiasm for the event saw civilian iterations continue until at least the late 1940s. It saw mounted competitors bound hurdles, collect a dummy at the end of a field, and gallop back to

¹³⁴ Lord Kitchener to Under-Secretary of State for War, 26 June 1901, WO 32/7463, TNA.

¹³⁵ Major General Sir Ian Hamilton, Military Secretary, minute note, July 1901, WO 32/7463, TNA.

¹³⁶ Wilcox, *Australia's Boer War*, 202; Hamilton, minute note.

the starting line. The fastest man was the winner.¹³⁷ The New South Wales Lancers even competed against British regulars in a VC race prior to embarking for South Africa.¹³⁸ The humanitarian theme also pervaded popular literature. A fictional tale published as a newspaper series in regional New South Wales just as the Boer War broke out told of a man who had ‘stormed the king’s kraal with only four white men’ and carried out a wounded colonel. In saving the officer, he ‘won the Victoria Cross’.¹³⁹ Similarly, in 1901 Banjo Paterson, then a war correspondent in South Africa, penned ‘The Victoria Cross’, a poem that tells of a wounded soldier and his ambitious comrade:

A valiant comrade crawling near
 Observed his most supine behaviour,
 And crawled towards him—‘Eh! what cheer?’
 ‘Buck up,’ says he, ‘I’ve come to save yer!’

‘You get up on my shoulders, mate!’
 And if we live beyond the firing
 I’ll get a V.C., sure as fate,
 Because our blokes is all retiring.

‘It’s fifty pounds a year,’ says he;
 ‘I’ll stand you lots of beer and whisky.’
 ‘No,’ says the wounded man, ‘not me;
 I won’t be saved—it’s far too risky!’

‘I’m fairly safe behind this mound,
 I’ve worn a hole that seems to fit me;
 But if you lift me off the ground
 It’s fifty pounds to one they’ll hit me!’

So off towards the firing line
 His mate crept slowly to the rear, oh!
 Remarking: ‘What a selfish swine!
 He *might* have let me be a hero!’¹⁴⁰

Paterson was obviously aware of the dominant conditions of the VC’s award, and the regard in which the common soldier held the medal, even if only for the financial reward.¹⁴¹

The pervasiveness of lifesaving heroics raises a pertinent question: how was it that some rescuers were awarded the VC, others the DCM or Mention in Despatches, and men like

¹³⁷ ‘Morpeth,’ *Maitland Mercury*, 20 April 1886; ‘Victoria Cross Race,’ *Sydney Mail*, 4 November 1893; ‘Tug-of-War Championship,’ *Sunday Times* (Sydney), 13 November 1904; ‘£126 Raised at King Island Sports Meeting,’ *Mercury* (Hobart), 25 April 1949.

¹³⁸ ‘The Lancers in England,’ *Evening News* (Sydney), 23 October 1899.

¹³⁹ ‘The Heart of a Hero: Chapter IV,’ *Western Champion* (Parkes), 27 October 1899.

¹⁴⁰ A.B. Paterson, ‘The Victoria Cross,’ *Worker* (Wagga Wagga), 16 June 1900.

¹⁴¹ The annuity attached to the VC in 1900 was £10 per annum but could be increased to as much as £50 depending on the recipient’s personal circumstances. Crook, *Evolution of the Victoria Cross*, 187–89.

Morris and Kruger nothing at all? Howse's biographer, Michael Tyquin, argues that humanitarian heroics 'were numerous, but few received appropriate recognition.'¹⁴² He recounts the case of Surgeon-Major Thomas Fiaschi and a Trooper McPherson of the Lancers who, in December 1899, galloped out to assist a wounded captain. The pair carried the officer 'some 400 yards', but he died as they were bringing him in. Their actions went unrecognised, despite a favourable report from a senior officer.¹⁴³ Tyquin attributes the overlooking of such cases to 'the vagaries of the honours system'.¹⁴⁴ The process for honours and awards could certainly be arbitrary. However, there are two principal differences between this case and the six awarded the VC: the officer died in the rescue attempt, and the burden of effort was on two men rather than one. Boer-era rescues that resulted in the VC appear to have been predominantly solo ventures, and the death of the 'rescued' often seems to have precluded higher-level awards. Paterson also pinpoints a key criterion in his poem: 'our blokes is all retiring'. One overwhelming commonality between the VC actions is that they occurred after the British force had been overwhelmed and was retiring—the prime conditions under which a wounded or stranded man could be killed or captured. Accordingly, rescues during more favourable tactical conditions commonly resulted in lesser awards. Private Robert Corkhill of the Western Australian Mounted Infantry, for instance, was awarded the DCM for carrying a wounded corporal from the battlefield at Diamond Hill (a British victory) in June 1900.¹⁴⁵

However, the above conditions do not explain the lack of recognition afforded Morris and Kruger. In Kruger's case, that the officer he safeguarded later died may have obstructed any high-level award, though historical researcher Michael Downey suggests that no recognition was forthcoming due to a strained relationship between Kruger and his commanding officer.¹⁴⁶ This is a possibility, for as Melvin Smith has argued officers in the field 'served as a lens through which the authorities back in London saw heroism.'¹⁴⁷ The multi-layer procedure for recommendations was conceived with integrity in mind, but by its very design the process was fallible. Recommendations and the award (or not) of a decoration were subject to individual interpretation and bias, as officers measured battlefield actions against their own individual conception of 'valour'. Officers could embellish, downplay or disregard certain exploits as they deemed fit. Accordingly, and as Isobelle Barrett Meyering

¹⁴² Tyquin, *Neville Howse*, 12.

¹⁴³ Tyquin, *Neville Howse*, 11–12.

¹⁴⁴ Tyquin, *Neville Howse*, 22.

¹⁴⁵ Ronald Austin, *Australian and New Zealand Honours and Awards of the Boer War, 1899–1902* (McCrae: Slouch Hat Publications, 2010), 19.

¹⁴⁶ Michael Downey, 'Private Alexander Kruger – A Near V.C.,' *Sabretache* 21, no. 4 (1980): 28.

¹⁴⁷ Smith, *Awarded for Valour*, 149.

has argued, '[w]hat was treated as an exceptional act in one context was ... an ordinary one' in another.¹⁴⁸

The situational context is a significant point, and one that had ramifications for Morris. In a letter to the Brisbane *Truth* published in October 1900, an anonymous Lancer asserted that 'Morris was never recommended for a V.C.', and nor were his actions 'even worthy of one'. The Lancer claimed that Morris' party were 'very nearly out of' the Boer's range when Harrison's horse fell from the effects of an earlier wound; Morris 'simply stopped, and without turning his horse let Harris up behind'.¹⁴⁹ It is difficult to verify the Lancer's words, but he does provide a plausible explanation. The five VCs of the Australian contingents were reported as either in the thick of the action or within two hundred yards of the enemy. Morris, at some four hundred yards according to contemporaneous accounts, was perhaps too far from the Boers to be considered in imminent danger.¹⁵⁰ James Rogers, the Victorian in the South African Constabulary, was the closest to Morris in range. He was reported to be between close proximity and up to four hundred yards from the Boers throughout his rescue attempts. Rogers' recommendation was close-run. Lieutenant General Lord William Seymour, acting Military Secretary at the War Office (under whose purview administration for honours and awards fell), thought Rogers' recommendation to be 'a doubtful case' and suggested further input from Lord Kitchener.¹⁵¹ Kitchener opined that Rogers was deserving of either the VC or DCM, but indicated no preference.¹⁵² The decision fell to Lord Roberts, now head of the British Army. Roberts, himself a VC winner and known to be more lenient than some of his contemporaries when it came to the medal, judged the recommendation to be 'a V.C. case.'¹⁵³ The heroic paradigm at the time of the Boer War evidently revolved around lifesaving feats, though ones that had to occur under specific conditions. Actions recognised as the pinnacle of heroism—those potentially worthy of the VC—had to be successful, occur during a retirement while under fire, and be carried out in close proximity of the enemy.

The Boer War ended in May 1902 just as the first unified Australian units began to arrive in South Africa. As the six Australian colonies had federated as the Commonwealth of Australia in January 1901, the new federal government raised the Australian Commonwealth Horse as Australia's first national expeditionary force; an opportune exercise of nation-

¹⁴⁸ Barrett Meyering, 'Victoria Crosses,' 8.

¹⁴⁹ A Lancer, letter to the editor, *Truth* (Brisbane), 14 October 1900.

¹⁵⁰ 'News from Trooper Chilcott.'

¹⁵¹ Lord William Seymour to Lord Roberts, minute note, 3 January 1902, WO 32/7475, TNA.

¹⁵² Lord Kitchener to the Under-Secretary of State for War, 21 February 1902, WO 32/7476, TNA.

¹⁵³ Lord Roberts, minute note, 25 March 1902, WO 32/7476, TNA. On Roberts' leniency see Smith, *Awarded for Valour*, 82–99.

building.¹⁵⁴ Like the Sudan before it, however, the Boer War proved a disappointment in this regard. The problem here was not from lack of action, but public unease over controversial tactics—such as the establishment of concentration camps and the razing of Boer farms—employed in the latter stages of the war.¹⁵⁵ Even among soldiers the war lacked the romanticism and excitement of battles past, so much so that Corporal John Abbott claimed that the conflict seemed like ‘a larrikin heaving half a brick at a policeman.’¹⁵⁶ Nonetheless, Australia had achieved its first legitimate empire heroes. All six VCs were widely celebrated in the Australian press, and Howse, Bisdee and Rogers were invested with their medals in grand public ceremonies in Australia.¹⁵⁷ Among the attendees at Howse’s investiture were Alfred Heathcote and John Paton, both of whom had won VCs in the Indian Mutiny.¹⁵⁸ The presence of Heathcote and Paton thereby provided a connection with the empire heroes of old and the Commonwealth heroes of new.

Conclusion

Australia’s first martial heroes emerged from the Boer War just as the colonies federated. These men duly represented the heroic figures of the old colonies, the new nation, and the omnipresent empire. For more than a century the colonies had grappled with perceptions of the ‘heroic’, while simultaneously enduring an erratic, anxious and complex relationship with military forces and martial culture. Fluctuations in public opinion often reflected the context of the times: early martial culture as a celebration of Waterloo; the rise of the volunteer, cadet and rifle club movements amid tense geopolitical situations; and the development of schoolyard sport and the masculine citizen soldier to combat a perception of racial degeneration. Australia’s early martial heroes thus manifested as exclusively British and imperial in outlook, which reflected the cross-empire transference of British cultural norms and social ideals during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This paradigm was to shift somewhat with the rise of a nascent sense of Australian nationalism. Western thinking on nationhood was firmly grounded in war, so the Sudan expedition and Boer War became the testing cases for

¹⁵⁴ Wilcox, *Australia’s Boer War*, 325–27; Robert Wallace, *The Australians at the Boer War* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1976), 386–87.

¹⁵⁵ Reynolds, *Unnecessary Wars*, 186–95.

¹⁵⁶ J.H.M. Abbott, quoted in Carolyn Holbrook, *Anzac: The Unauthorised Biography* (Sydney: NewSouth, 2014), 20.

¹⁵⁷ ‘The Coronation,’ *Times* (London), 13 August 1902; ‘War Won Decorations,’ *Age* (Melbourne), 19 September 1902. Maygar received his VC from Lord Kitchener in South Africa, while Wyllly and Bell were invested in the United Kingdom by King Edward VII and the Prince of Wales respectively. Staunton, *Victoria Cross*, 11, 15; ‘Court Circular,’ *Times* (London), 26 July 1901.

¹⁵⁸ ‘The First Victoria Cross in New South Wales,’ *Daily Telegraph* (Sydney), 5 December 1901.

Australia's burgeoning nationalism and quest for a heroic archetype. Although the Sudan expedition proved a disappointment, the Boer War led to the new nation's first martial heroes. These men were, nevertheless, recognised under a paradigm that was firmly British. The battlefield and the heroics recognised on it clearly reflected the broader empire experience; only at the social level could more individual, and national, forms of reverence emerge—a phenomenon that was to similarly exist during the First World War.

Chapter Two

Dawn of a New Era: German New Guinea and Gallipoli, 1914–15

Can we read such words and not be affected; lifted out of ourselves; glowing with pride and enthusiasm; and, although sorrowing for our glorious sons killed in action, at the same time rejoicing that Australia can produce such heroes?

– A. Knight, *Argus* (Melbourne), 8 October 1915¹

Just before dawn on 25 April 1915 the first wave of Australian soldiers landed ashore near Ari Burnu as part of the Anglo-French invasion of the Gallipoli peninsula. The first boats hit the beach as rifle fire opened from the Ottoman forces on the ridge above. Some contemporaries credited Lance Sergeant Joseph Stratford of the 9th Battalion as the first man ashore. He dashed through the scrub and scaled the ridge towards the enemy, but was killed during the fighting that day.² Accounts collected months later by the Red Cross Enquiry Bureau investigating Stratford's death told a tale of daring and sacrifice. Stratford 'threw himself on a machine gun and was riddled with bullets', one man said. Another witness claimed to have read in an Australian newspaper that Stratford 'had been recommended for the V.C.' Similar reports were heard by a third soldier, who added that 'a French officer said that [Stratford] ought to receive the V.C.'³ After belated confirmation of Stratford's death was sent to his parents, the loss of the soldier was lamented in his hometown of Lismore, New South Wales. The local press reported his death as one of heroic sacrifice, writing that 'the brave, upright, soldier' may well have been the first ashore; he was thus 'one of those heroes whose names Australia can never allow to die.'⁴

Despite these valorised accounts Stratford never did receive the VC, nor does it appear that any recommendation was submitted in his favour. The reports on Stratford's actions and death reflect the chaos and confusion that reigned during the invasion of the Gallipoli peninsula and in its immediate aftermath. Although the disastrous campaign has become central to Australian nationalism, no individual Australian 'hero' emerged from that first day. The First World War saw the dawn of industrial warfare and, consequently, a new era in British Empire

¹ A. Knight, letter to the editor, *Argus* (Melbourne), 8 October 1915.

² Peter Stanley, *Lost Boys of Anzac* (Sydney: NewSouth, 2014), 103.

³ Statements of Privates Kean, Fazackerley and Robey, Australian Red Cross Wounded and Missing Enquiry Bureau file on Joseph Stratford, 1DRL/0428, Australian War Memorial, Canberra (hereafter AWM, and only noted for files that do not use the 'AWM' series prefix).

⁴ 'Obituary: Sergeant Joseph Henry Stratford,' *Northern Star* (Lismore), 29 November 1916.

conceptions of heroism. The unprecedented scale of the conflict, as well as the mass casualties, expansive propaganda campaigns, and mobilisation of the public precipitated a change in what was militarily considered 'heroic', both within the British Empire more broadly and in Australia specifically. This chapter considers the first eighteen months of Australia's First World War, from its outbreak, to the capture of German New Guinea, and the operations at Gallipoli. In doing so, it argues that Australian understandings of martial heroism during this time shifted away from the Victorian paradigms that had characterised the colonial period, to instead emphasise aggressive and sustained tactical actions to reflect the nature of the new battlefields.

Outbreak of war

Australia became embroiled in the First World War upon Britain's declaration of war against Germany on 4 August 1914. Unlike the reservations over the Boer War, the announcement was met with almost universal support. Australia was, for the first time, joining in on war against a European power. The declaration came during a federal election campaign and received bipartisan support from Prime Minister Joseph Cook's Liberal government and the Labor Opposition of Andrew Fisher. Fisher—who regained the prime ministership at the election—echoed the general public sentiment when he declared that Australia would help defend Britain 'to our last man and our last shilling.'⁵ The decision by Cook's Cabinet, however, was not just an act of blind loyalty. It was in Australia's strategic interests to preserve the British Empire and ensure the balance of power in Europe remained favourable to Britain. In accordance with pre-war defence planning, the vessels of the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) were placed at the disposal of the British Admiralty. After similar proposals by Canada and New Zealand, Cook's Cabinet also offered an expeditionary force of 20,000 men—soon named the Australian Imperial Force (AIF)—to the British government.⁶ Australia's initial commitment joined New Zealand's to form the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC), commanded by Lieutenant General William Birdwood of the British Indian Army. As the Defence Act 1903 restricted Australia's military forces to home defence, the AIF's recruits had to be sourced from volunteers. By December, 52,561 men had enlisted.⁷

⁵ Fisher, quoted in 'Australian Patriotism,' *Age* (Melbourne), 1 August 1914.

⁶ Joan Beaumont, *Broken Nation: Australians in the Great War* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2013), 12–16; Ernest Scott, *Australia During the War*, vol. 11 of *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–1918*, 7th ed. (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1941), 11.

⁷ Michael McKernan, *Australians at Home: World War I* (Scoresby: Five Mile Press, 2014), 3.

Such early enthusiasm for the war can be explained by Edwardian militarism, which had spread throughout the British Empire in the decade after the Boer War. Edwardian militarism saw the martial culture that had flourished in the late Victorian era assume a greater intensity and significance. In Australia, militaristic influences permeated literature, the school curriculum, sporting ventures, children's toys, and even fashion. The Reverend William Henry Fitchett, in the preface to his highly popular *Deeds That Won the Empire*—a prominent example of imperial Victorian and Edwardian martial literature—wrote that such initiatives sought 'not to glorify war, but to nourish patriotism' and promote the 'finer qualities' of individual character; attributes such as 'heroic fortitude', 'loyalty to duty', and passionate patriotism.⁸ And yet war was still perceived as almost a national necessity. Armed conflict represented a test of nationhood, of national endurance, and of manhood. Lord Roberts captured such sentiments when, in 1904, he wrote that:

Without war ... a nation is in risk of running to seed. And where a war is a just one ... its benefit to the nation is great. It prevents decadence and effeminacy. It corrects the selfishness and querulousness which are inevitably bred by a long peace. Without the preparation for an armed defence ... an empire would slip into habits dangerous for itself and dangerous for the whole of humanity.⁹

Roberts conjured a highly masculine vision of imperial defence and militarism, one Australians also adopted. Fears over Japanese militarism and recurrent anxiety about Australia's geographical isolation from Britain provoked concerns over defence early in the twentieth century. Successive federal governments accordingly promoted membership of the militia, volunteers and rifle clubs until 1911, when compulsory service in the cadets and Citizens Forces was instituted for males aged twelve to twenty-six.¹⁰ Although the success of the scheme is debatable (exemptions and evasions were common), of the AIF's 1914 enlistees almost two-thirds of the infantry and three-quarters of the light horse had some form of previous military experience.¹¹

Much of Australia was thus gripped by a patriotic and expectant fervour on the outbreak of war—Union Jacks were flown across cities, nationalistic songs reverberated through public spaces, and much of the press encouraged patriotic zeal and martial sentiment.¹² Opposition to

⁸ Fitchett, *Deeds That Won the Empire*, v–vi.

⁹ Lord Roberts, quoted in J.M. Robertson, *Essays Towards Peace* (London: Watts & Co., 1913), 26.

¹⁰ John Barrett, *Falling In: Australians and 'Boy Conscription,' 1911–1915* (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1979), 69–70; Craig Wilcox, 'Edwardian Transformation,' in Stockings and Connor, *Before the Anzac Dawn*, 260–69.

¹¹ Beaumont, *Broken Nation*, 32.

¹² L.L. Robson, *The First A.I.F.: A Study of Its Recruitment, 1914–1918* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1970), 24.

the war did exist, but the few were drowned out by the vocal many. Australia's newspapers late in 1914 published official despatches and reports from the Western Front alongside editorials and popular works of patriotism.¹³ As if to inspire visions of glory, the press also reported on the heroics performed during the early fighting in Europe. Of note are the accounts regarding the VC awarded to Lieutenant Norman Holbrook, commander of the submarine HMS *B11*. Holbrook and his crew had piloted the *B11* under five rows of mines at the entrance to the Dardanelles (the strait alongside the Gallipoli peninsula) to sink the Ottoman battleship *Messudiyeh* on 13 December. Holbrook was hailed in the Australian press for his 'great bravery and determination' and, in June 1915, the landlocked town of Germanton in southern New South Wales was renamed Holbrook in honour of the submariner and his early connection to Gallipoli.¹⁴ Australia was primed for the next generation of martial heroes; Australian men were expected to provide the national 'baptism' of fire and deliver martial glory.

German New Guinea

As the AIF formed and martial fervour continued to build, the Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force (AN&MEF) was raised at the request of the War Office to seize the wireless station in German New Guinea. New Zealand was detailed to do the same in Samoa.¹⁵ Composed of one infantry battalion and six naval companies, the AN&MEF landed in the German colony on 11 September. Naval parties of twenty-five men were sent ashore at Herbertshöhe (now Kokopo) and Kabakaul to penetrate inland. The Kabakaul party soon came under fire, so further sailors and a machine gun section were put ashore.¹⁶ Around this time an unseen sniper mortally wounded Able Seaman William Williams, who had been covering the communications route to the coast. Captain Brian Pockley of the Army Medical Corps withdrew some two hundred metres under the threat of further concealed riflemen to tend to Williams. After doing what he could, Pockley charged two sailors with carrying Williams back to the *Berrima* and handed over his Red Cross brassard to ensure they made the journey safely.

¹³ Peter Stanley, 'Part III Society,' in John Connor, Peter Stanley, and Peter Yule, *The War at Home*, vol. 4 of *The Centenary History of Australia in the Great War* (South Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2015), 148.

¹⁴ 'Victoria Cross,' *Argus* (Melbourne), 24 December 1914; 'Renaming Germanton,' *Argus* (Melbourne), 19 June 1915.

¹⁵ Beaumont, *Broken Nation*, 28–29; S.S. MacKenzie, *The Australians at Rabaul: The Capture and Administration of the German Possessions in the Southern Pacific*, vol. 10 of *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–1918*, 10th ed. (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1941), 23.

¹⁶ John Connor, 'The Capture of German New Guinea,' in Stockings and Connor, *Before the Anzac Dawn*, 293–95; David Stevens, *In All Respects Ready: Australia's Navy in World War One* (South Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2014), 58–59.

The men did so, but Pockley himself was fatally shot while returning to the lead party.¹⁷ Seaforth Mackenzie, the official historian of Australia's operations in New Guinea, wrote that, in relinquishing his Red Cross emblem and 'thus protecting another man's life at the price of his own,' Pockley 'afforded a noble foundation for those of the Australian Army Medical Corps in the war.'¹⁸

Australia's first casualties of the war provoked impassioned responses. One man, writing aboard the *Berrima*, remarked that Williams and Pockley 'were heroes' but the mortal wounding of 'our Dr. Pockley' had left him enraged and homicidal; as he wrote, to 'wield the bayonet and drive it home with all my might into the murderer of a non-combatant ... was my consummate wish.'¹⁹ Newspapers across Australia reported on Pockley's actions and death; one, the *Adelaide Express and Telegraph*, portrayed his death as one of sacrifice and 'unselfish bravery'.²⁰ Pockley's father, F. Antill Pockley, compiled a record of such accounts and combined them with the recollections of men who had served with his son. He used this material to write Sir George Reid, Australian High Commissioner to the United Kingdom, and petition that his son be considered for the VC. Pockley senior compared his son's actions to those of Neville Howse in the Boer War. To reinforce his case, though, Pockley emphasised his erroneous belief that Brian 'went three times to wounded men under heavy fire' (as opposed to Howse's once) despite the risk of 'almost certain death'. He also pressed a key consideration of which he had only recently learned; that the VC 'is sometimes awarded after death.'²¹ This was true, as the War Office's perception of the VC being an order for the living—indoctrinated after the Crimean War and perpetuated over subsequent decades—had recently been relaxed.

The ban on posthumous bestowals had been variously challenged without success in the late nineteenth century. The debate was renewed in 1902 when the War Office received a letter from a Mrs Atkinson seeking a VC for her son who had died in the Boer War. She included a note from the adjutant of her son's battalion, who acknowledged the late soldier would have been recommended had he lived. The issue split the senior officers and public servants consulted, but gained the sympathy of Lord Roberts. Roberts petitioned King Edward VII to revise the policy on posthumous awards. The King reluctantly relented, with the caveat that only recommendations from South Africa were to be considered; six posthumous VCs,

¹⁷ MacKenzie, *Australians at Rabaul*, 58–59; Stevens, *In All Respects Ready*, 59–60.

¹⁸ MacKenzie, *Australians at Rabaul*, 59.

¹⁹ Quoted in L.C. Reeves, *Australians in Action in New Guinea* (Sydney: Australasian News Company, 1915), 39.

²⁰ 'His Life for a Sailor,' *Express and Telegraph* (Adelaide), 22 September 1914.

²¹ F. Antill Pockley to Sir George Reid, 26 February 1915, AWM33, 23.

including that to Sergeant Alfred Atkinson, were gazetted in August 1902.²² Eager to capitalise on this success, Roberts then took up the case of six earlier recommendations. Between 1857 and 1897 the names of six men were published in the *London Gazette* with the note that each ‘would have been recommended ... for the Victoria Cross had they survived.’²³ King Edward twice refused consent for the awards. In 1906 a letter from the widow of one of the men swayed the King’s position, and the VCs were granted the following January.²⁴ No longer did the empire hero have to be a living embodiment of imperial achievement; a martyred figure was now acceptable too. Although posthumous awards were not enshrined in the VC’s Royal Warrant until 1920, the precedent was a monumental one. Industrialised warfare saw some twenty-five percent of the empire’s (and twenty-two percent of the AIF’s) VCs awarded posthumously during the First World War.²⁵

Pockley, though, was not one of them. Reid, clear that any formal recommendation should come through official channels, forwarded Antill Pockley’s letter to George Pearce, the Australian Minister for Defence.²⁶ Pearce assured them that the late captain’s ‘special act of bravery’ was under consideration.²⁷ In the end Pockley was granted the only other form of recognition open to posthumous bestowal, that of a Mention in Despatches. Not until 1979 were other forms of reward, such as the middle tiers of bravery decorations, able to be awarded posthumously.²⁸ The prospect was considered by the British parliament and army authorities during the First World War but did not come to fruition.²⁹ This restriction similarly provoked debate and limited the opportunity to recognise particular acts of wartime heroism.

As it was, Pockley was one of fourteen Mentioned in Despatches for the operations in New Guinea. Only one medal was granted, a Distinguished Service Order (DSO) going to Lieutenant Thomas Bond.³⁰ The DSO had been instituted in 1886 as a single-level order to recognise the distinguished leadership of more senior officers (major and lieutenant commander or above), but could also be awarded to junior officers for particularly exemplary

²² See minute notes, WO 32/7478, TNA; Anthony Staunton, ‘The First Posthumous Victoria Crosses,’ *Sabretache* 28 (1987): 3–6.

²³ See, for example, ‘War Office, May 2, 1879,’ *London Gazette*, 2 May 1879.

²⁴ Crook, *Evolution of the Victoria Cross*, 86–88; see also minute notes, WO 32/7498, WO 32/7499 and WO 32/7500, TNA.

²⁵ Of the 628 VCs awarded during the war, approximately 155 were posthumous. In the AIF, the figure stood at 14 from 63 awards.

²⁶ Sir George Reid to George Pearce, 15 April 1915, AWM33, 23.

²⁷ George Pearce to Sir George Reid, 28 August 1915, AWM33, 23.

²⁸ P.E. Abbott and J.M.A. Tamplin, *British Gallantry Awards*, 2nd ed. (London: Nimrod Dix & Co, 1981), xx.

²⁹ General Sir Ian Hamilton to A.J.G. Symons, 30 August 1916, HAMILTON 7/7/8, Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, King’s College London (hereafter LHCMA).

³⁰ ‘Admiralty, 11th January, 1916,’ *London Gazette*, 11 January 1916.

leadership or gallantry in action—it was, in effect, the subaltern’s DCM.³¹ Bond, who had gone ashore with the reinforcements, commanded a reinforced half company of naval reservists. In the final advance towards the wireless station, Bond and his men had seized the last of the German trenches and captured some thirty prisoners before claiming the station itself.³² Formal recognition, however, was slow in coming. Bond’s DSO and the Mentions were the first gallantry awards to Australians during the war, but were not gazetted until January 1916. Naval historian David Stevens argues this was because the War Office regarded these operations as ‘the minor seats of War’ and was reluctant to bestow official recognition.³³ Such thinking was to arise again later in the war during the so-called ‘sideshow’ campaign in the Sinai-Palestine. Nonetheless, Bond and his contemporaries in New Guinea foreshadowed the types of heroism that would be recognised during the Gallipoli campaign—aggressive leadership and, to a lesser extent, humanitarianism: practically an inverse of the heroic archetype promoted during the Boer War.

The Dardanelles

Not long after most of the AN&MEF’s men had returned to Australia in 1915 did the AIF go into action at Gallipoli. The campaign was conceived by the British War Council as a means to place further pressure on Germany and its allies while relieving some of the strain on Russia. Naval operations against the Dardanelles began in February 1915, but after making limited progress Winston Churchill, then First Lord of the Admiralty, pressed for a land campaign. From this grew an ambitious—and ultimately ill-conceived—invasion plan. The ANZAC, having spent some months training in the Egyptian desert, was to join British, Indian and French soldiers in this venture.³⁴ The men of the AIF were landed near Ari Burnu (now Anzac Cove) in successive waves from 4:30am on 25 April. The British and French went ashore at Cape Helles on the southern tip of the peninsula soon after.³⁵ The Australians scaled the steep cliffs and began to penetrate inland, but the rough terrain, chaotic landing, and Ottoman rifle fire took a toll. Forced to dig-in far short of the day’s objective, the fighting that afternoon

³¹ ‘The Statutes of the Distinguished Service Order,’ MLMSS 15, Box 4, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney.

³² MacKenzie, *Australians at Rabaul*, 64–66; Stevens, *In All Respects Ready*, 61.

³³ Stevens, *In All Respects Ready*, 62.

³⁴ Beaumont, *Broken Nation*, 65–66; Robin Prior, *Gallipoli: The End of the Myth* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 13–15, 30–34.

³⁵ Joan Beaumont, ‘Australia’s War,’ in *Australia’s War, 1914–18*, ed. Joan Beaumont (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1995), 10; Prior, *Gallipoli*, 112–13.

descended into what was to become a familiar pattern of warfare on the peninsula: ferocious firefights, bomb throwing duels, and hand-to-hand combat.³⁶

Not until 8 May did the first comprehensive account of the Gallipoli invasion reach Australia. Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett, a British correspondent who had observed the ANZAC landings from a ship offshore, cloaked his account in glorified imagery to both allay pre-war apprehensions and obscure the tactical failures of the day. 'The Australians rose to the occasion', he declared, and having charged the Turks with 'cold steel' and scaled the cliffs, 'were happy because they knew they had been tried for the first time and had not been found wanting.'³⁷ It was from this account, and subsequent initiatives by Australia's official war correspondent and later official historian Charles Bean, that the 'Anzac mythology' was forged and flourished as Australia's national foundation myth; the young nation's symbolic 'baptism' of fire. The mythology justified Australia's place within the British Empire and attempted to impose a uniquely Australian spin on social perceptions of the 'hero'—even if such notions were to remain grounded in the framework of empire.

However, no Australian VC or individual 'hero' did emerge from that first day. This despite twelve VCs awarded to men involved in the Cape Helles operations: six went to crewmen of the landing ship *River Clyde* during the ill-fated landing at V Beach; while the remainder, dubbed the 'six VCs before breakfast' by the press, were gained by men of the 1st Battalion, Lancashire Fusiliers at the hotly contested W Beach.³⁸ The discrepancy between British and ANZAC troops may be explained by the more strenuous defences around Cape Helles and perhaps because, like the tale of Joseph Stratford, confusion and mystery surrounded the deeds and fate of many AIF men on 25 April. A number of other awards, however, were granted for actions on the first day and the few that followed. Major Charles Brand, for instance, received the DSO for directing men amid the confusion on the beach that morning and, later, for spearheading an attack that resulted in the destruction of three Ottoman guns.³⁹ Similarly, Private Sidney Diamond was awarded the DCM for taking lead of the men in his section after most of his unit's officers had become casualties.⁴⁰ Leadership, endurance and stoicism under fire were common attributes among the early awards for Gallipoli. But there

³⁶ Prior, *Gallipoli*, 115–18.

³⁷ Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett, 'Australians at the Dardanelles,' *Argus* (Melbourne), 8 May 1915.

³⁸ Stephen Snelling, *Gallipoli*, VCs of the First World War (Trowbridge: Wrens Park Publishing, 1999), 9–18, 29–44. The War Office was reluctant to grant six VCs to the Lancashires, so initially only three were gazetted. However, mounting public pressure and lobbying by senior officers saw the final three approved in March 1917. See WO 32/4995, TNA.

³⁹ 'Companions of the Distinguished Service Order,' *London Gazette*, 3 July 1915.

⁴⁰ 'Distinguished Conduct Medals,' *London Gazette*, 6 September 1915.

were also elements of the humane. Privates John Gregg-Macgregor and Cedric Rosser received DCMs for their ‘conspicuous bravery and self sacrifice in attending to wounded’.⁴¹ While fortitude and combat prowess were to permeate the heroic paradigm on the peninsula, humanitarianism was not completely obscured.

As the men scaled the cliffs above, the Australian submarine HMAS *AE2* was submerged beneath the Dardanelles. Commanded by Lieutenant Commander Henry Stoker—a Royal Navy officer on loan to the RAN—and crewed by a mix of Australian and British sailors, the *AE2* was tasked with sinking mine laying ships and harassing enemy vessels in the Sea of Marmora.⁴² The task was a hazardous one, as the narrow Dardanelles was heavily defended by fortifications, guns and searchlights on both banks, while the strait itself was peppered with over three hundred sea mines.⁴³ Only a week earlier, HMS *E15* had run aground and been disabled by Ottoman shellfire while similarly attempting to penetrate the straits; the entire crew was captured or killed.⁴⁴ It took Stoker and his crew some ninety minutes to bypass the mines, and almost six hours to navigate beyond the Narrows at Chanak. By this point, the *AE2* had ventured further into the strait than any allied vessel since the outbreak of war.⁴⁵

Cabled reports of the *AE2*’s voyage were jubilantly received by the general staff. Commodore Roger Keyes, chief of staff to the naval commander at Gallipoli, enthusiastically wrote of the *AE2* to his wife. ‘The Australian submarine had done the finest feat in Submarine History’, he declared, and ‘was going to torpedo all the ships bringing reinforcements, provisions, ammunition etc, making for Gallipoli.’⁴⁶ Keyes clearly verged on hyperbolic (the *AE2* sailed with just eight torpedoes), but he ordered HMS *E14* under Lieutenant Commander Edward Boyle to follow up on the *AE2*’s success. The *AE2* spent the next five days avoiding Ottoman fire and harassing shipping, though mechanical problems and unfortunate aiming left the crew frustrated at the lack of enemy ships sunk. In the end, the *AE2* was rammed and fired upon by the torpedo boat *Sultanhisar* on 30 April. With the pressure hull punctured, Stoker had little choice but to scuttle the submarine. All thirty-two crew became prisoners of war.⁴⁷

⁴¹ Recommendation for Privates John Gregg-Macgregor and C.H.G. Rosser, AWM28, 2/368.

⁴² T.R. Frame and G.J. Swinden, *First In, Last Out: The Navy at Gallipoli* (Kenthurst: Kangaroo Press, 1990), 75–76.

⁴³ Prior, *Gallipoli*, 35.

⁴⁴ Frame and Swinden, *First In, Last Out*, 72; Stevens, *In All Respects Ready*, 114–15.

⁴⁵ Frame and Swinden, *First In, Last Out*, 76–84; Stevens, *In All Respects Ready*, 115–16.

⁴⁶ Roger Keyes to wife, 26 April 1915, in *The Keyes Papers: Selections from the Private and Official Correspondence of Admiral of the Fleet Baron Keyes of Zeebrugge*, vol. 1, ed. Paul G. Halpern (London: Navy Records Society, 1972), 128.

⁴⁷ Stevens, *In All Respects Ready*, 119–21; Kate Ariotti, *Captive Anzacs: Australian POWs of the Ottomans during the First World War* (Port Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 14.

While the crewmen of the *AE2* marched into captivity, Boyle's *E14* had breached the Dardanelles. Over a three-week period, *E14* was credited with sinking two gunboats and a military transport before absconding back through the strait. The entire crew was decorated: Boyle received the VC, his two lieutenants the Distinguished Service Cross (DSC), and every rating the Distinguished Service Medal (DSM).⁴⁸ Boyle's VC reflected the esteem in which the *E14* was held—though a personal award it, like many other decorations to commanding officers, acknowledged the contribution of the entire crew. Yet nothing was immediately forthcoming for the men of the *AE2*. Of Boyle's VC, Keyes remarked:

isn't it splendid! ... They gave it to him ... on the strength of a wire we sent on the night of the 14th saying that he deserved the greatest credit for his persistent enterprise in remaining in the Sea of Marmora, hunted day and night ...⁴⁹

Keyes implies the awards were made on the strength of the *E14*'s offensive patrols and elusiveness. However, Boyle's official citation stressed his command of the submarine during its journey through the Dardanelles.⁵⁰ Lieutenant Commander Martin Nasmith and HMS *E11* were similarly directed to navigate the strait and wreak havoc in the Marmora after Boyle's return. *E11* became the third vessel to make it through, and over nineteen days was credited with the destruction of a gunboat, three transport ships, an ammunition ship, and three store ships. Like the crew of the *E14*, Nasmith was awarded the VC, his officers the DSC, and his ratings the DSM. The decorations reflected the *E11*'s offensive operations.⁵¹ Boyle, Nasmith and others undertook further successful patrols in the Marmora over the following months, though few additional decorations were granted. These early operations, being among the first of their kind, were valued as much for their uniqueness and symbolism as their tangible impact.

There is a long tradition in British military history of celebrating or rewarding 'firsts'. Stretching as far back as Crimea, the VC has often been bestowed for unique or novel acts of heroism. This is because such deeds are deemed to have exhibited a superior degree of aggressiveness, leadership, endurance or determination by their very uniqueness. The practice of rewarding 'firsts' continued into the First World War. British naval aviators, Flight Sub-Lieutenant Reginald Warneford and Squadron-Commander Richard Bell Davies, were awarded VCs in 1915 for being, respectively, the first to shoot down a Zeppelin airship and the

⁴⁸ 'Admiralty, 21st May, 1915,' *London Gazette*, 21 May 1915. The DSC and DSM were recently instituted as third-tier bravery awards for naval officers and ratings respectively, being created to recognise distinguished leadership and gallantry below that required for the DSO or Conspicuous Gallantry Medal but above a Mention in Despatches.

⁴⁹ Roger Keyes to wife, 19 May 1915, in *The Keyes Papers*, 138–39.

⁵⁰ 'Admiralty, 21st May, 1915.'

⁵¹ 'Admiralty, 24th June, 1915,' *London Gazette*, 24 June 1915.

first to perform an aerial combat rescue; that is, landing to collect a downed pilot while under fire.⁵² The *AE2*, as the first vessel to navigate the Dardanelles and penetrate the Sea of Marmora, represented a significant symbolic victory in a similar vein. Indeed, the decision not to evacuate the Australian and New Zealand troops after the failure of the first day was partly based on the *AE2*'s success.⁵³ The lack of recognition therefore raises questions.

Aside from the more limited tactical gains, the key difference between the *AE2* and the British submarines is that the former was caught. As Aaron Pegram has argued, there was 'a certain stigma associated with capture' at the time of the First World War. This was because British perceptions of captivity were often associated with cowardice or incompetence, when in reality capture commonly resulted from sheer bad luck.⁵⁴ In transitioning from combatant to captive, prisoners of war were also perceived to shift from masculine participant to a more culturally ambiguous or effeminate construction as passive detainee. Kate Ariotti argues this sense was particularly acute for men who, like the crew of the *AE2*, were captive in the Ottoman Empire. As British Orientalism pervaded perceptions of the Ottoman Turks as the racial 'other', prisoners were deemed to have ceded power to an 'inferior' foe.⁵⁵ The seemingly 'passive' prisoner thus clashed with the heroic archetype of the masculine, proactive combatant.

Such perceptions were to persist for much of the war and, in terms of recognition, were reinforced by army regulations. Formal policy dictated that award recommendations for prisoners would only be entertained if tendered by a Court of Enquiry investigating the circumstances of capture. However, after negative comment in the British press drew attention to French practices that were more sympathetic to captivity, the Army Council, the peak administrative body of the British Army, relaxed its position from February 1917.⁵⁶ The council directed that a prisoner may be recommended for award, 'provided the act ... was unconnected with the circumstances in which he was taken prisoner.'⁵⁷ Similar, though perhaps less strict, policy was adopted by the Admiralty. The council's instruction was further clarified in a Western Front memorandum in August, which explicitly barred recommendations for 'acts

⁵² 'Admiralty, 10th June, 1915,' *London Gazette*, 11 June 1915; 'Admiralty, 1st January, 1916,' *London Gazette*, 1 June 1916.

⁵³ Frame and Swinden, *First In, Last Out*, 82–84.

⁵⁴ Aaron Pegram, 'Bold Bids for Freedom: Escape and Australian Prisoners in Germany, 1916–18,' in *Beyond Surrender: Australian Prisoners of War in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Joan Beaumont, Lachlan Grant and Aaron Pegram (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2015), 21.

⁵⁵ Ariotti, *Captive Anzacs*, 32.

⁵⁶ Lieutenant General Sir Francis Davies, minute note, 24 February 1917, WO 32/5396, TNA.

⁵⁷ 'Proceedings of the Army Council, Saturday, 24th February 1917,' WO 32/5396, TNA.

of gallantry connected with ... capture.’⁵⁸ It was only from mid-1918, with the Entente and allied armies now fighting a defensive war amid the German Spring Offensive, that the War Office relented to consider heroic acts where the individual had been captured ‘through no fault of his own.’⁵⁹ Thus, in April 1919, recognition finally came for the *AE2*. Stoker was awarded the DSO, his first lieutenant the DSC and three senior ratings the DSM. Four senior crewmen were also Mentioned in Despatches.⁶⁰ But the VC remained elusive. A correspondent for London’s *Daily Telegraph*, writing in 1929, lamented that the ‘D.S.O. which came [Stoker’s] way ... must have been a poor consolation for the loss of the highest military honour, so worthily earned.’⁶¹ Captivity had left Stoker and his crew not only isolated from the conduct of the war, but also ideas of heroism.

Operations on the peninsula

Recognition was more immediate and forthcoming for the men atop the peninsula. The AIF fared comparatively well at Gallipoli with respect to honours and awards. Although accounting for just one-tenth of the British force and approximately twenty percent of its casualties, the Australians achieved nine of the thirty-five VCs (25.7 percent) awarded during the land campaign. In comparison, the New Zealand Expeditionary Force (NZEF) gained a solitary VC for four percent of the men and seven percent of the casualties.⁶² The awards to the Australians reflect the ferocity of the engagements in which the AIF fought, but may also be explained by the culture of recognition cultivated by Sir William Birdwood. As corps commander and, from September 1915, as head of the AIF, Birdwood encouraged recommendations for honours and awards. He also promoted the publication of names in Army Corps Orders and the award of Commander’s Commendation cards to reward ‘good and gallant’ conduct that did not attain the standard for a decoration.⁶³ Birdwood’s approach to awards reflected his command style: personable to the average soldier.

While similarly under Birdwood’s corps, the New Zealanders (and some Australians) were subject to the divisional and administrative command of the more reticent British officer Major General Alexander Godley, commander of the mixed New Zealand and Australian

⁵⁸ Major General William Peyton, ‘Memorandum Regarding Recommendations for Honours and Rewards,’ 4 August 1917, AWM25, 391/45.

⁵⁹ Colonel Malcolm Graham to Major General Harold Ruggles-Brise, 2 June 1918, WO 32/5396, TNA.

⁶⁰ ‘Honours for Miscellaneous Services,’ *London Gazette*, 22 April 1919; Ian Pfennigwerth, *Bravo Zulu: Honours and Awards to Australian Naval People*, vol. 1 (West Geelong: Echo Books, 2016), 33–34.

⁶¹ ‘V.C.’s Visit to War Play,’ *Daily Telegraph* (London), 11 November 1929.

⁶² War Office, *Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire during the Great War, 1914–1920* (London: HM Stationary Office, 1922), 284–87; Snelling, *Gallipoli*.

⁶³ Lieutenant General Sir William Birdwood to Brigadier General Harold Walker, 8 June 1915, AWM25, 391/22.

Division at Gallipoli. Glyn Harper and Colin Richardson maintain that Godley ‘did not rate the VC that highly’ and ‘had little time for bravery decorations’.⁶⁴ It is difficult to establish the veracity of these charges, though Godley did face severe criticism in the New Zealand parliament in 1917 for his alleged reluctance to reward the men on the frontlines.⁶⁵ Moreover, Godley does appear to have harboured a preference for knighthoods and orders of chivalry, as well as a greater inclination to reward staff officers.⁶⁶ Birdwood and Godley retained an association with the Australian and New Zealand forces for the duration of the war. Both went to the Western Front in 1916 as commander of I Anzac Corps and II Anzac Corps respectively and, although both shifted from tactical command of the Dominion forces in 1918, remained as the administrative heads of the AIF and NZEF until war’s end. Senior formation commanders like Birdwood and Godley were in a position to influence matters of honours and awards, such as how decorations are perceived and whether medals are awarded. Birdwood and Godley exercised significant influence over this process for the AIF.

The procedure for award recommendations became more stringent during the First World War. Recommendations still needed to be processed through the chain of command, but were now guided by a specific procedure and pro forma as directed by the Military Secretary’s branch of the War Office (see figure 2.1). The department required all recommendations to be completed on Army Form W.3121, and include details on: the individual’s name, rank and unit; particulars of the deed(s) and award for which recommended; the date; and the signature of the recommending officer.⁶⁷ In the case of bravery decorations, completing W.3121 was often the task of the battalion or regimental adjutant. Care had to be taken in drafting the form, as an incorrectly completed or insufficiently detailed recommendation could result in rejection or downgrading to a lesser award. For example, Lance Corporal Cyril Besanko of the 4th Australian Infantry Battalion was recommended for the VC in August 1915 for ‘materially assisting in battling back repeated bomb attacks’.⁶⁸ The recommendation was brief and vague, leading divisional headquarters to request further particulars from the battalion commander.⁶⁹ The request appears to have gone unsatisfied, as the recommendation was rejected. Choice of wording was also crucial, which is the likely explanation why common threads or phrases—

⁶⁴ Harper and Richardson, *In the Face of the Enemy*, 91, 92.

⁶⁵ Harper and Richardson, *In the Face of the Enemy*, 93–99.

⁶⁶ Harper and Richardson, *In the Face of the Enemy*, 92.

⁶⁷ Military Secretary’s Branch, *Instructions Regarding Recommendations for Honours and Rewards* (France: Army Printing and Stationary Services, 1918), 2–3, 18; Spencer, *Medals*, 139.

⁶⁸ Recommendation for Lance Corporal Besanko, AWM28, 2/295.

⁶⁹ Deputy Assistant Adjutant and Quartermaster General (DAA&QMG), 1st Division, to Lieutenant Colonel C.M. MacNaghten, 19 August 1915, AWM28, 2/47 PART 3.

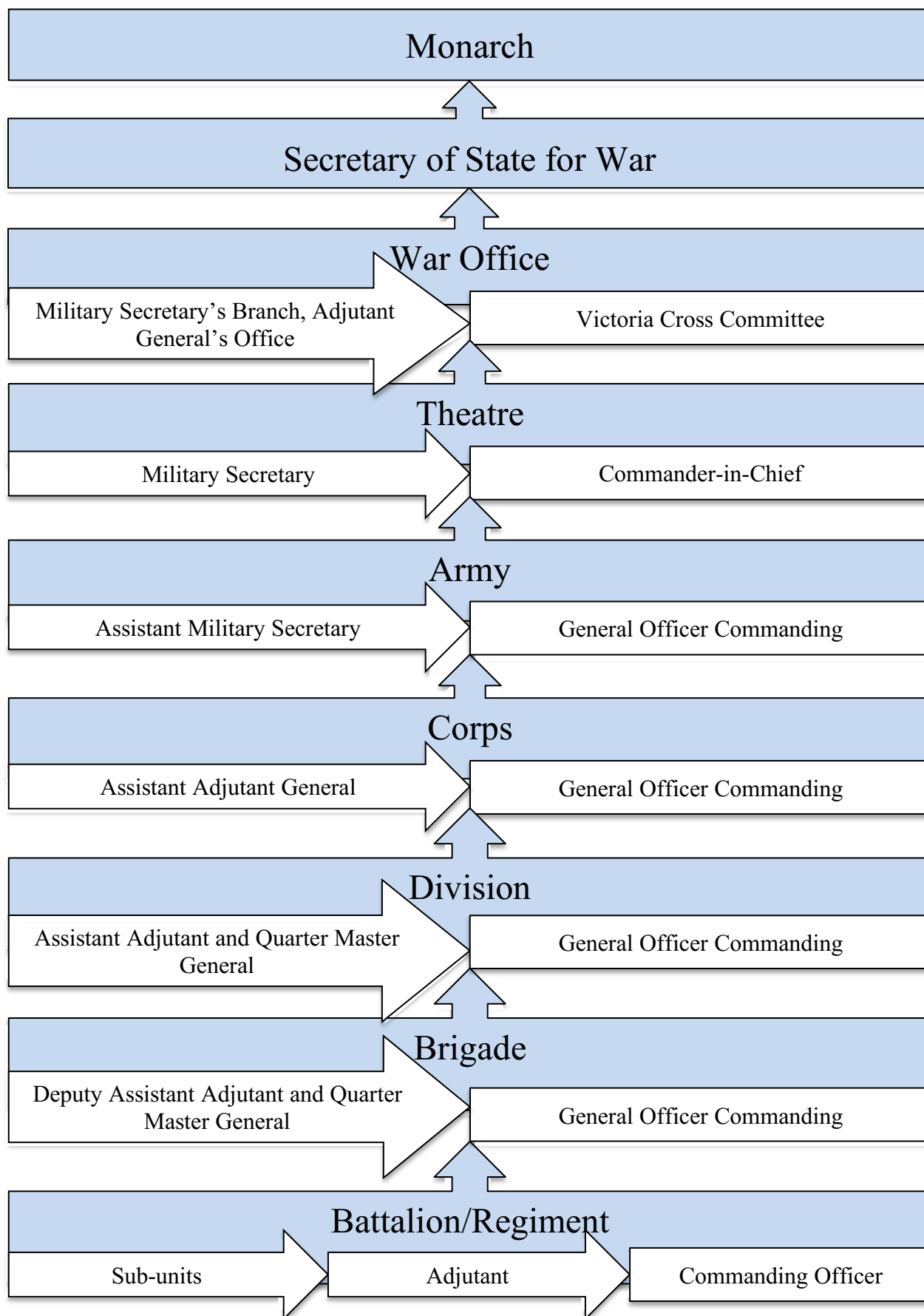


Figure 2.1: The process for award recommendations during the First World War, as it applied to infantry battalions and light horse regiments.

such as ‘conspicuous bravery’, ‘coolness’ and ‘determination’—were embedded in recommendations.⁷⁰ However, instructions regarding, and the process for, recommendations were often misunderstood. In August 1915, for instance, a memorandum clarifying the correct procedure for recommendations was sent to the 1st Australian Division.⁷¹ The circular evidently did little to redress persistent problems, as a further clarifying memorandum followed just eight days later.⁷²

Once completed at the battalion level, though, recommendations on W.3121 would be processed along the military hierarchy. That is until—and if—it reached theatre headquarters, of which there were three of relevance to Australians during the First World War: the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force (Gallipoli); the Egyptian Expeditionary Force (Sinai-Palestine); and the British Expeditionary Force (France and Belgium). From June 1915, delegated authority permitted recommendations for awards below the level of the VC to be approved, subject to regulatory restrictions and limitations, within the appropriate theatre.⁷³ VC recommendations were subject to a more strenuous review process in London. The VC Committee, a board established within the War Office shortly after the outbreak of war, reviewed all army recommendations for the VC to maintain a superior and consistent standard of award. The committee was initially composed of the Military Secretary, Permanent Under-Secretary of State for War, and Director of Personal Services, but the latter was replaced by the Deputy Chief of the Imperial General Staff in late 1916.⁷⁴ Recommendations endorsed by the committee were reviewed by the Secretary of State for War before proceeding to the final arbiter for award: King George V. It is important to note that recommendations could be altered at any one of these levels. The reviewing officer had the prerogative to upgrade, downgrade or reject a recommendation as they thought warranted, with no explanation required. However, as Isobelle Barrett Meyering’s research indicates, it was less common (at least within the AIF) for recommendations to be altered beyond divisional headquarters. For the sixty-three VCs awarded to the AIF, some seventy-three further recommendations were rejected—at least forty of which were altered at the brigade or divisional level.⁷⁵

⁷⁰ Barrett Meyering, ‘Victoria Crosses,’ 5.

⁷¹ AA&QMG, ANZAC, to General Officer Commanding (GOC) 1st Division, 22 August 1915, AWM25, 391/22.

⁷² DAA&QMG, ANZAC, to GOC 1st Division, 30 August 1915, AWM25, 391/22.

⁷³ DAA&QMG, ANZAC, to GOC 1st Division, 20 June 1915, AWM25, 391/22.

⁷⁴ Crook, *Evolution of the Victoria Cross*, 217–18.

⁷⁵ Barrett Meyering, ‘Victoria Crosses,’ 17. Eighteen were altered at brigade, twenty-two at division and thirteen at corps. The source of change for the remaining twenty is uncertain. Of the total recommended Barrett Meyering provides a comprehensive list of seventy, but I have been able to conclusively verify three more to raise the figure to seventy-three (see Appendix A).

Despite the criticism levelled at Godley, it was at his instigation that the first Australian VC of the war was approved. By mid-May the fighting at Gallipoli had reached an impasse, as both the Anglo-French and Ottoman forces occupied entrenched positions. In the early morning of 19 May, however, the Ottoman army launched a major assault against the ANZAC lines. The brunt of the Ottoman 5th Division fell on Courtney's Post, a strategic position occupied by the 14th Battalion.⁷⁶ After a ten-metre stretch of trench was overrun, Lieutenant Wallace Crabbe was sent to assist in its recapture. He ordered Lance Corporal Albert Jacka and three others to rush the trench. Jacka was first through, but the second man fell wounded and forced the others to withdraw. Crabbe and Jacka then devised a plan by which Crabbe and others would engage the Ottomans from the northern end of the trench while Jacka made his way southward. Having done so, Jacka climbed out into no man's land and leapt down into the trench. He shot five Ottoman soldiers and bayoneted a further two to retake the trench.⁷⁷ Crabbe later recalled that, afterward, he found Jacka 'flushed by the tremendous excitement' and, with an unlit cigarette in his mouth, the lance corporal remarked: 'Well, I managed to get the b____s sir.'⁷⁸ Crabbe subsequently recounted the incident for Lieutenant Colonel Richard Courtney, commanding officer of the 14th, and verbally recommended Jacka for award. According to Jacka's biographer, Ian Grant, Courtney fell ill soon after without completing the necessary paperwork. It was only by chance that Godley, as divisional commander, heard of Jacka's exploits and pressed Courtney to submit a formal recommendation.⁷⁹

Jacka's VC was gazetted on 24 July, for which he received the 'heartiest congratulations' of Defence Minister George Pearce, Birdwood, and the theatre commander, General Sir Ian Hamilton.⁸⁰ Jacka's feat was widely reported on in the British and Australian press, to the extent that he gained something of a cult following among soldiers and the general public. The regional Victorian newspaper *Korong Vale Lance*, for instance, could hardly contain its excitement:

It is with pride and exaltation we announce that one of our Wedderburn boys, Pte. Albert Jacka, has gained the V.C. ... Wedderburn is justly proud of Pte Jacka and his grandly heroic performance, and not being able to render congratulations

⁷⁶ Prior, *Gallipoli*, 125–26.

⁷⁷ Lieutenant K. Wallace Crabbe to Charles Bean, n.d., AWM38, 3DRL606/8/1; Charles Bean, *The Story of ANZAC from 4 May, 1915, to the Evacuation of the Gallipoli Peninsula*, vol. 2 of *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–1918*, 11th ed. (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1941), 148–50.

⁷⁸ Crabbe to Bean. The blanked word is often rendered as 'buggers', and occasionally as 'bastards'.

⁷⁹ Ian Grant, *Jacka, VC: Australia's Finest Fighting Soldier* (South Melbourne: Macmillan, 1989), 28.

⁸⁰ Lieutenant Colonel W.B. Lesslie, Routine Orders, 29 July 1915, AWM27, 368/23.

personally to him do so to his parents and relatives. We trust that his noble deed will not pass unhonored by an admiring public.⁸¹

The *Lance* was vindicated: Jacka duly claimed the gold watch and £500 (approximately \$51,472 in 2018 terms) reward offered by Melbourne businessman John Wren for the first Australian VC of the war and, as the conflict dragged on, he was to be prominently featured in propaganda and recruitment initiatives.⁸² Interest in Jacka was only enhanced by press accounts on the laconic and casual manner in which he greeted Crabbe following his homicidal feat—a reaction that radiated informality, cool aggression, masculinity, and soldierly prowess. These characteristics, combined with Jacka’s rural background, readily lent themselves to Charles Bean’s depiction of the stereotypical Australian ‘digger’; the masculine bushman-cum-soldier.⁸³ Bean, despite Jacka’s objections, sought to portray Jacka as the exemplar of his archetype, later going so far as to claim that the average Australian, ‘Englishman, or Frenchman ... pictured the Australian soldier as being exactly the sort of man that Jacka was—strong, completely confident, [and] entirely fearless’.⁸⁴

Jacka’s VC, however, did more than enhance the local notability of the award. It had also reinforced an aggressive, offensive and tactical element within contemporary perceptions of martial heroism. Jacka had displayed a ruthless brutality that altered the circumstances of battle to engineer a victory, an act which Barrett Meyering suggests set the tone for future awards to the AIF.⁸⁵ This is a fair assessment. Jacka’s highly publicised actions served as a tangible source of inspiration and were indicative of the nature of trench warfare experienced by Australians at Gallipoli and, later, on the Western Front.

Fighting on the peninsula settled into static warfare of attrition throughout May and June, which limited the opportunity for frontline heroics. Actions that were rewarded during this period occurred mostly as part of small-scale or defensive operations. VCs, for instance, were awarded to three British officers and an Irish sergeant for reinvigorating attacks or rallying men to repel Ottoman assaults.⁸⁶ In the AIF, Lance Corporal Charles Grimson of the 1st Light Horse Regiment won the DCM under similar circumstances. On the night of 28/29 May, the Ottoman 5th Division detonated a mine underneath Quinn’s Post, causing part of the

⁸¹ ‘For Valour,’ *Korong Vale Lance*, 17 July 1915.

⁸² Grant, *Jacka, VC*, 33–35; Reserve Bank of Australia, ‘Pre-Decimal Inflation Calculator,’ Reserve Bank of Australia website, accessed 1 June 2019, <https://www.rba.gov.au/calculator/annualPreDecimal.html>.

⁸³ Grant, *Jacka, VC*, 187–88.

⁸⁴ Charles Bean, ‘Albert Jacka,’ *Reveille* (Sydney), 31 January 1932.

⁸⁵ Barrett Meyering, ‘Victoria Crosses,’ 11.

⁸⁶ ‘War Office, 24th July, 1915,’ *London Gazette*, 24 July 1915; ‘War Office, 1st September, 1915,’ *London Gazette*, 1 September 1915.

trench system to collapse and splitting the Australian force in two. The explosion was followed by an above ground assault. Grimson clambered over the divide and, finding three Ottoman soldiers, took them prisoner. According to his recommendation, he then ‘boldly entered the remainder of the trench’ and ‘induced ... some eleven or twelve’ more to surrender.⁸⁷ Grimson’s action, reminiscent of Jacka at Courtney’s, was credited with relinking the Australian force at Quinn’s Post.⁸⁸ That Grimson took prisoners rather than left corpses—arguably a less aggressive feat—may explain why he was not considered for the VC. Extant records are unclear as to why the DCM was thought most appropriate; the case reinforces the vagaries of frontline valour, and the highly subjective, fluid notion of heroism.

Heroism at Lone Pine

Not until the Battle of Lone Pine did the AIF gain its next VCs, with seven awarded over three days of vicious fighting. The battle, which saw the 1st Australian Brigade attack the heavily fortified Ottoman position at Lone Pine, was intended to divert attention from a British assault on the Sari Bair range. The Australians captured the main trench at Lone Pine on 6 August. Despite fierce and repeated Ottoman counter-attacks over the next few days the AIF retained Lone Pine, but at a cost of some 2,200 casualties.⁸⁹ Michael McKernan writes that ‘things were at their most hazardous’ on that first day, yet no VCs were awarded for the efforts on the 6th.⁹⁰ Charles Bean provides a pragmatic explanation: ‘the battalions of the 1st Brigade lost so heavily that few witnesses of its efforts remained.’⁹¹ A lack of witnesses, or officers able to write and submit recommendations for awards, was one of the most serious limitations of the British honours system during the twentieth century. So much so that numerous commentators, including Bean and the historian Hugh Halliday, have suggested that countless valorous acts went unsung due to a lack of eyewitnesses or conclusive supporting evidence.⁹²

That being said, the 2nd Battalion unit historians, Frederick Taylor and Timothy Cusack, claim that four of their battalion’s men were recommended for the VC for 6 August.⁹³ After the battalion’s machine gun section had almost entirely become casualties during a counter-attack, Captain John Pain was ordered to bring the weapon back into action at a critical

⁸⁷ Recommendation for Lance Corporal C. Grimson, AWM28, 2/135 PART 1.

⁸⁸ War diary, 1st Light Horse Regiment, 29 May 1915, AWM4, 10/6/1.

⁸⁹ Prior, *Gallipoli*, 169–71.

⁹⁰ Michael McKernan, *Gallipoli: A Short History* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2010), 144.

⁹¹ Bean, quoted in Dudley McCarthy, ‘Keysor, Leonard Maurice (1885–1951),’ *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, accessed 4 October 2017, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/keysor-leonard-maurice-6946>.

⁹² McKernan, *Gallipoli*, 144; Halliday, *Valour Reconsidered*, 54.

⁹³ F.W. Taylor and T.A. Cusack, *Nulli Secundus: A History of the Second Battalion, A.I.F., 1914–1919* (1942; repr., Swanbourne: John Burridge Military Antiques, 1992), 138.

section of the line. Assisted by Privates William Goudemey, James Montgomery and William Nichol, Pain positioned the gun in an exposed position above the trenches—later resting the tripod atop the shoulders of the three privates—to allow a commanding field of fire over the Ottomans massing below. Despite bullets and bombs flying around them, the men maintained fire until the gun was damaged and Pain and Montgomery wounded.⁹⁴ The crew were credited with firing some 750 rounds, which according to Pain’s recommendation ‘was of the greatest service in repelling the counter-attack.’⁹⁵ Taylor and Cusack claim all four were considered for the VC, but no extant record appears to verify that the men were recommended for the award. Rather, Pain received the Military Cross, Nichol and Gondemy the DCM, while Montgomery (who died on 11 August) was posthumously Mentioned in Despatches.⁹⁶

Curiously, Private John Hamilton of the 3rd Battalion was awarded the VC for a similar act three days later. During a bombing attack by an Ottoman force, Hamilton and five others were ordered onto the parapet to fire at the enemy and prevent their advance across the open. Protected by just a few sandbags, Hamilton repositioned himself onto the exposed parapet to secure a better firing position. He remained on the parapet, sniping at enemy bomb throwers and directing his compatriots on where to lob their own bombs, for six hours until the attack was repulsed.⁹⁷ Hamilton was praised for his inspirational influence in ‘inflicting severe losses ... and encouraging the defence.’⁹⁸ Like the 2nd Battalion quartet, Hamilton had occupied an exposed position and been instrumental to the defence of his sector of the line. The principal difference, though, was that Hamilton’s was a solo feat. The emphasis on individual achievement in this case, however, did not bar group actions from recognition.

At the height of the Ottoman counter-attacks, the 7th and 12th Battalions from the 2nd Brigade were sent to reinforce the position at Lone Pine. Four VCs were subsequently won by men of the 7th Battalion—three of them in a joint action. Supported by ten men, Lieutenant Frederick Tubb thrice repulsed fierce Ottoman assaults on 9 August. On each occasion, the barricade blocking the enemy from Tubb’s post was destroyed and had to be rebuilt. The defence exacted a heavy toll: by the third attack only the wounded Tubb and Corporals William Dunstan and Alexander Burton—both of whom had been conspicuous throughout the fight—remained. Burton was killed in the final rush, but no further attacks were made.⁹⁹ Afterwards,

⁹⁴ Bean, *Story of ANZAC*, 547–48; Taylor and Cusack, *Nulli Secundus*, 137–38.

⁹⁵ Recommendation for Captain J.H.F. Pain, AWM28, 2/292.

⁹⁶ Taylor and Cusack, *Nulli Secundus*, 138.

⁹⁷ Snelling, *Gallipoli*, 159–60.

⁹⁸ Major General Harold Walker to ANZAC Headquarters, 29 August 1915, AWM28, 2/294.

⁹⁹ Bean, *Story of ANZAC*, 560–61; Snelling, *Gallipoli*, 155–58.

Tubb wrote in his diary that the action had been ‘a ding-dong scrap’, but Burton ‘deserved the highest award for his gallant action for three times filling a breach in the parapet’.¹⁰⁰ Lieutenant Colonel Harold Elliott, the battalion’s commanding officer, agreed. Tubb, Dunstan and Burton were each awarded the VC. Like Hamilton, what seems to have particularly distinguished the trio was the sustained nature of their action. The longevity of these feats signalled a distinct break from previous decades; the determined defences may have been reminiscent of Victorian stoicism, but many a nineteenth century VC was won in minutes.

The nature of trench warfare saw the sustained nature of one’s actions become integrated into the heroic paradigm. It was under such conditions, for instance, that the 7th Battalion’s fourth VC went to Lieutenant William Symons. Over twelve hours, Symons led a small party of men to retake and consolidate the position on the battalion’s exposed right flank. According to Bean, on assigning Symons with this task Elliott had handed the lieutenant his own revolver with the remark: ‘I don’t expect to see you again, but we must not lose that post.’¹⁰¹ The party repelled multiple attacks and two attempts to set fire to their post—the trench being enclosed by a timber roof—but Symon’s ‘coolness and determination’ was credited with compelling ‘the enemy to discontinue their attacks.’¹⁰² Beyond Lone Pine, Second Lieutenant Hugo Throssell of the 10th Light Horse Regiment received the VC for a similar feat of perseverance and determination. Throssell led his men in an assault on Hill 60 on 29/30 August. After seizing a section of trench, and although wounded multiple times during the day, Throssell maintained the position and encouraged his men for over six hours despite repeated counter-attacks. Throssell’s recommendation attributed his efforts to keep ‘up the spirits of the party’ as ‘largely instrumental in saving the situation’.¹⁰³

The longevity of Private Leonard Keysor’s actions was also a deciding factor in the award of his VC. Keysor, a 1st Battalion man and keen amateur cricketer, was recognised for what Lionel Wigmore described as ‘one of the most spectacular individual feats of the war.’¹⁰⁴ For some fifty hours, Keysor worked to smother or catch and return any Ottoman bomb that landed in his trench. He was twice wounded but successfully defended a critical section of trench with his own accurate throwing.¹⁰⁵ Keysor, however, was not alone in this feat. According to Lance Corporal James Tallon:

¹⁰⁰ Frederick Tubb, diary, 10 August 1915, PR04808.

¹⁰¹ Bean, *Story of ANZAC*, 562.

¹⁰² ‘War Office, 15th October, 1915,’ *London Gazette*, 15 October 1915.

¹⁰³ Recommendation for Second Lieutenant Hugh Throssell, AWM28, 2/145.

¹⁰⁴ Wigmore, *They Dared Mightily*, 37.

¹⁰⁵ ‘War Office, 15th October, 1915.’

There were others in the trench as well, but Keysor was a great bomb-thrower, and he and [Private Alfred] McShane and myself had a hot time of it. We were on the job almost continually for three days, until we were fairly dropping with the strain of it, and our arms ached like anything.

McShane, killed when a bomb exploded prematurely, went unrecognised but Tallon, who was grievously wounded in the same blast, received the DCM. Of his award, Tallon remarked: 'I didn't know I'd done anything out of the ordinary 'till ... I had been gazetted'.¹⁰⁶ It is a cliché to characterise those recognised for heroism as humble and modest. But in many instances this appears to be the case: individuals assumed they had performed no more than their duty, or at least did what needed to be done in the circumstances. Their actions are recognised because they proved militarily advantageous, occurred at an opportune or crucial moment, or prominently echoed social ideals of the heroic. In this case, Keysor was selected as the most conspicuous contributor towards the defence of his section of the line.

The prominence of officers among those recognised is another curiosity to note. During the First World War, commissioned ranks constituted just five percent of the AIF's fighting force.¹⁰⁷ Yet at Gallipoli officers accounted for forty-four percent of the AIF's (and fifty-one percent of the empire's) VCs. This pattern was less dominant on the Western Front, at thirty-six percent in the AIF, but still reflected a disproportionate distribution. Gulf War general and VC researcher, Sir Peter de la Billière, argues that officers are disproportionately represented in honours and awards as they 'have a greater motivation to act bravely, and greater opportunities to demonstrate courage, by virtue of their position and their responsibilities as leaders.'¹⁰⁸ Although perhaps oversimplified, de la Billière's analysis strikes at the crux of the phenomenon: officers are accorded greater opportunity to affect change in battle, and to be observed as having done so. But there were limits to such recognition. Sir Ian Hamilton, the theatre commander at Gallipoli, had been recommended for the VC as an acting major general in the Boer War for his distinguished leadership while commanding a brigade during the Battle of Elandsplaagte in October 1899. As a general officer, Hamilton was thought too senior for the award. Lord Wolseley, then Commander-in-Chief of the Forces, judged that, as the VC 'has never been conferred on an officer so high in rank ... it would not be desirable to establish a

¹⁰⁶ 'Fought with Private Keysor, V.C.,' *Sydney Morning Herald*, 5 May 1916.

¹⁰⁷ Jean Bou and Peter Dennis, *The Australian Imperial Force*, vol. 5 of *The Centenary History of Australia in the Great War* (South Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2016), 21–23.

¹⁰⁸ De la Billière, *Supreme Courage*, 15.

precedent'.¹⁰⁹ The decision went against the VC's establishing Royal Warrant, which had directed that 'with a view to place all persons on a perfectly equal footing' only 'the merit of conspicuous bravery' would be considered in determining award.¹¹⁰ Yet Wolseley was imposing a restriction on officers in higher formation commands: senior officers existed not to fight, but lead.

Heroism thus became the domain of junior officers. Captain Alfred Shout of the 1st Battalion was accordingly recognised for leading two attacks that regained lost ground after an Ottoman counter-attack at Lone Pine on 9 August. Shout and Captain Cecil Sasse each led small parties to clear sections of trench after the initial attack. Joining forces later in the day, the pair bombed and shot their way further along the trench before Shout was mortally wounded. Shout received the VC and Sasse the DSO.¹¹¹ The discrepancy in award was presumably because Shout was killed—the VC, as one of the few awards now able to be conferred posthumously, recognised Shout as having made the ultimate sacrifice. Both officers, nevertheless, successfully regained ground and, in doing so, signalled the type of actions that were to be recognised on the Western Front: aggressive tactical heroics. With the failure of the land campaign, the AIF was withdrawn from the Gallipoli peninsula in December 1915. The campaign, however, had bequeathed a distinct legacy that came to be lionised by the Australian public.

Commemorating 'heroic and glorious deeds'

Historians have written about the philanthropic agency of community organisations to alleviate the suffering of the wounded, the captive, and the bereaved during the First World War.¹¹² Communities similarly mobilised to assist or commemorate 'heroic' soldiers and their families, beginning with those from Gallipoli in 1915. Not long after news reached Australia of Alfred Shout's death, a public subscription was launched in Sydney to honour his 'heroic and glorious deeds' by purchasing a house for his widow and daughter.¹¹³ Supported by the Returned Soldiers' Association (forerunner of the Returned and Services League), some £500 was raised

¹⁰⁹ Major General Sir Coleridge Grove, Military Secretary, to General Sir Redvers Buller, Commander-in-Chief in South Africa, 7 July 1900, HAMILTON 2/4/11, LHCMA.

¹¹⁰ 'War Department, February 5, 1856.'

¹¹¹ 'War Office, 15th October, 1915'; Bean, *Story of ANZAC*, 564–65.

¹¹² See, for example, Melanie Oppenheimer, *All Work. No Pay: Australian Volunteers in War* (Walcha: Ohio Productions, 2003); Bruce Scates, 'The Forgotten Sock Knitter: Voluntary Work, Emotional Labour, Bereavement and the Great War,' *Labour History*, no. 81 (2001): 29–51; and Ariotti, *Captive Anzacs*, 83–89, 96–103.

¹¹³ A.G. Stephens, letter to the editor, *Western Champion* (Parkes), 28 September 1916.

in the first month.¹¹⁴ At the instigation of local citizens, a memorial plaque to Shout was also unveiled at Darlington Town Hall by the governor-general, Sir Ronald Munro Ferguson, in November 1915.¹¹⁵ The presence of a vice-regal representative signalled the esteem in which VC winners were popularly held. Indeed, public admiration for these men was such that the decision to post Shout's VC to his widow rather than present the medal in a formal ceremony drew criticism in the press. In a scathing editorial, Sydney's *Sunday Times* remarked that posting the medal was a dishonour to Shout and a lost opportunity to boost recruitment.¹¹⁶ Alexander Burton's father also received his son's VC by post.¹¹⁷ William Dunstan, however, was invested with his VC outside Government House, Melbourne. The grand public ceremony occurred only a few days after Rose Shout had collected her husband's medal from the post office.¹¹⁸ Clearly, there was an institutional divide between living heroes and relatives of the valorised dead, one the public did not share.

The authorities evidently learnt from this mistake as Elizabeth Dartnell was presented with her husband's VC by Munro Ferguson in a ceremony at Government House, Melbourne, in October 1916.¹¹⁹ The Melbourne-born William (Wilbur) Dartnell, who had been working in South Africa on the outbreak of war, was killed in September 1915 while serving with the British Army in the East Africa campaign. He had been among a detachment operating near Maktau, British East Africa (now Kenya), when it was ambushed by a numerically superior German force. After a tense firefight, and while the remainder of the British force retired, Dartnell stayed behind in an attempt to safeguard the wounded. His body was later found flanked by seven dead German soldiers.¹²⁰ Dartnell's determination and sacrifice were reminiscent of the heroics performed in the colonial conflicts of the nineteenth century. But the posthumous presentation of his VC, attended by former prime minister Sir Edmund Barton and the Governor of Victoria, ensured his deeds were not forgotten.

Some of the initiatives to honour decorated soldiers built upon commemorative practices to memorialise the dead. However, it is clear that these schemes went beyond the norm, which highlights the burgeoning social currency of institutionally recognised 'heroes' during the early stages of Australia's First World War. The public had, for the most part, become enmeshed in Gallipoli and the efforts of Australian soldiers and sailors through the

¹¹⁴ 'Captain Shout Memorial Fund,' *Sunday Times* (Sydney), 1 October 1916.

¹¹⁵ 'Captain Shout, V.C.,' *Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 November 1915.

¹¹⁶ 'The Sorrow and the Cross,' *Sunday Times* (Sydney), 4 June 1916.

¹¹⁷ 'Victoria Cross Heroes,' *Kyneton Guardian*, 15 June 1916.

¹¹⁸ 'Honour to the Brave,' *Argus* (Melbourne), 10 June 1916.

¹¹⁹ 'Melbourne Notes,' *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 October 1916.

¹²⁰ Gerald Gliddon, *The Sideshows, VCs of the First World War* (Gloucestershire: Sutton Publishing, 2005), 6–7.

tales of heroism and sacrifice published in the press and in works of popular patriotism. In *V.C. Heroes of the War* (1916), G.A. Leask declared of the Australians at Gallipoli: 'Whole chapters could be written about the exploits in general of these famous Colonial troops. They are splendid fighters.'¹²¹ Such accounts, replete with adulatory and glorified prose, served to instil and inspire public perceptions of battlefield heroism. Indeed, despite the casualty lists then beginning to filter into Australia, there was still an expectation of national and individual glory; an anticipation from the public that Australian men would prove themselves 'worthy' of the empire and perform heroically in battle. In June 1915 one enlistee was farewelled from Lismore, New South Wales, with the wish that 'when he came back he would be still more—D.S.O. or VC.'¹²²

Conclusion

The First World War precipitated warfare not previously experienced by Australians. The mobile nature of late nineteenth century conflict, often fought on horseback or in open terrain, was replaced during the capture of German New Guinea and the operations on Gallipoli by the agency of the infantryman. Trench warfare increasingly came to dominate Australian experiences of the frontline, which in turn influenced notions of martial heroism. New Guinea and Gallipoli reflected an emphasis on actions that, in their context, proved militarily advantageous. Feats that exhibited aggressive leadership or combat prowess were the most common manifestations of this paradigm. Equally, though, Gallipoli also highlighted aspects, such as captivity, that tainted perceptions of the heroic. The types of heroism rewarded early in the conflict thus represented an inverse of the Boer War; humanitarian and life-saving feats, while not entirely abandoned, had receded in favour of tactical heroics. Socially romanticised acts reminiscent of the nineteenth century, nonetheless, had not entirely disappeared—the masculine stoicism of defensive actions echoed the qualities of the idealised late Victorian man. Even at home Edwardian militarism remained alive. The pattern for recognised martial heroism, however, split following the withdrawal from the Gallipoli peninsula. Sustained actions and tactical heroics continued to be fostered amid the trench warfare of the Western Front. But for the Australians who fought in the desert campaigns, the mounted and mobile warfare of the Sinai and Palestine signalled a regression to fading remnants of Victorian valour.

¹²¹ G.A. Leask, *V.C. Heroes of the War* (London: George G. Harrap, 1916), 14.

¹²² 'Sergeant W. Stratford,' *Northern Star* (Lismore), 24 June 1915.

Chapter Three

Valour of a Bygone Era: Sinai and Palestine, 1916–18

I must say we are faring much better under the new regime than the old. We have got more 'Immediate Decorations' in the last three months than we got in the whole of the preceding eighteen though we had much harder work really.

– Lieutenant General Sir Harry Chauvel, February 1918¹

As a diversionary prelude to the Third Battle of Gaza, men from the Desert Mounted Corps and British XX Corps were sent to capture the Ottoman outpost at Beersheba (now Be'er Sheva in modern day Israel) on 31 October 1917. The town, or more specifically its water wells, was imperative for immediate and future British operations in Palestine. But as the sun began to set on that first day, and with the British and Dominion forces yet to secure the wells, the 4th Australian Light Horse Brigade was ordered into the fray. The light horsemen led a frontal assault on the entrenched Ottoman positions leading into the town. Spearheaded by the 4th and 12th Light Horse Regiments, the men and their horses charged over six kilometres of ground while subject to artillery, machine gun and small arms fire. The assault was a resounding success. In mere minutes, the light horsemen had secured the wells and carried Beersheba. The nature of the mounted assault occasioned comparisons to the charge of the Light Brigade in the Crimean War, an event almost exactly sixty-three years earlier. In a stirring and evocative post-war account, an Adelaide newspaper was at pains to connect the two: 'Between our riders and Beersheba was a network of Turkish trenches, bristling like porcupines with bayonets. Emulating the charge of the Light Brigade in the Crimea, our daredevils got busy'.²

Such comparisons sought to invoke and reappropriate the glory traditionally associated with mounted warfare. In the light of these accounts it would seem that popular enthusiasm for conventional representations of martial glory was very much still alive. Yet the military establishment itself had moved on. The charge of the Light Brigade, though a disastrous failure, occasioned a solitary award of the VC and was lionised over subsequent decades as an instance of heroic sacrifice. The victorious assault on Beersheba was less fortunate. Three of the officers who spearheaded the charge were recommended for the VC, yet not one received the award. Empire heroism had been remoulded and reformed over the intervening decades—the glory of

¹ Harry Chauvel to Sybil Chauvel, 3 February 1918, PR00535, AWM.

² Walter Teare, 'The Grand Bayonet Steeplechase,' *Sport* (Adelaide), 13 June 1935.

traditional mounted warfare no longer conformed to modern and increasingly industrialised notions of valour. This chapter considers the heroic paradigm amid Australian and empire operations in the Sinai Desert and Palestine, and the bearing both the nature of warfare and senior officers had on understandings of heroism and, consequently, medallic recognition. In adopting this underrepresented experience and theatre as a lens, this chapter argues that the shift towards tactical and aggressive heroics as manifested at Gallipoli was slow to filter into the desert campaigns. Once it did, though, mounted soldiers in the Sinai and Palestine campaign struggled to attain the standards of contemporary valour.

Problems of deficient recognition and malleable heroism

Following the withdrawal from Gallipoli, the Australians returned to Egypt where the AIF was reorganised and expanded. The infantry grew from two divisions to five, while the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Light Horse Brigades joined the New Zealand Mounted Rifles Brigade to form the Australian and New Zealand (Anzac) Mounted Division under the command of Major General Henry (Harry) Chauvel. The division was rounded out by batteries from the British Royal Horse Artillery. The expansion of the AIF was occasioned by a significant influx of volunteers from Australia, but was hastened by operational exigencies as much of the AIF's infantry and artillery were slated for service on the Western Front.³ The infantry divisions began embarking for France from March 1916. The bulk of the mounted formations, however, were to remain in Egypt. As the Suez Canal remained vital to Britain's strategic interests, the Anzac Mounted Division was subsumed by the Egyptian Expeditionary Force (EEF) under General Sir Archibald Murray in order to provide for the defence of Egypt and the Suez.⁴

The static defensive arrangement along the Suez was short-lived, as in April the War Office approved a proposal by Murray to extend the line of defence and clear the Sinai Peninsula of any Ottoman threat.⁵ Despite the shift to offensive operations, the War Office made clear that the desert campaign remained a secondary consideration. Murray was reminded that the EEF 'is in a sense a general strategic reserve for the Empire', while to the War Office and British government in general 'France is the main theatre of the war.'⁶ This somewhat

³ Beaumont, *Broken Nation*, 158–61; Bou, *Light Horse*, 150.

⁴ Bou, *Light Horse*, 149–54; Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery* (London: Atlantic Highlands, 1986), 258.

⁵ Jeffrey Grey, *The War with the Ottoman Empire*, vol. 2 of *The Centenary History of Australia in the Great War* (South Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2015), 90–91; Henry Gullett, *The Australian Imperial Force in Sinai and Palestine, 1914–1918*, vol. 7 of *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–1918*, 10th ed. (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1941), 51–52.

⁶ Quoted in Gullett, *Australian Imperial Force*, 41.

dismissive attitude to the war in the Sinai and Palestine did not diminish throughout the conflict; the campaign remained dwarfed by the Western Front, and received minimal political or public commentary. Nevertheless, the Anzac Mounted Division assumed a leading role in the Sinai operations, taking part in the battles of Romani, Magdhaba and Rafa. With the Sinai cleared of Ottoman influence by February 1917, the operational focus turned to southern Palestine.⁷ However, by this time there was a growing sense of dissatisfaction within the Anzac Mounted Division over Murray's supposed lack of recognition for the division's efforts, particularly in terms of honours and awards.

The Battle of Romani appears to be the original source of contention. The battle, fought from 3–5 August 1916, was intended to check the advance of an Ottoman-German force from the German Pasha I group as it advanced towards the Suez. Major General Henry Lawrence held tactical command at Romani, while Chauvel was responsible for the forward positions.⁸ Romani, involving the 52nd (Lowland) and Anzac Mounted Divisions, was fiercely fought but resulted in a British victory. Chauvel and his division were ordered in pursuit of the enemy force to capitalise on the initial success. The exhausted men made minimal gains, however, and Chauvel drew criticism from Murray, who considered 'that the higher strategical and tactical handling ... left very much to be desired'.⁹ The Anzac Mounted Division had, nonetheless, played a prominent role in the victory, suffering over seventy percent of the total British casualties.¹⁰ Chauvel and his division at first received significant praise from Lawrence and Murray, who according to Chauvel sent a 'frightfully complimentary' cable to London.¹¹ Murray's subsequent despatch to the War Office, however, passed over the role played by the division. Henry Gullett, the official historian of Australia's contribution to the Sinai and Palestine, noted the contradiction in Murray's despatch, arguing that earlier reports gave the impression 'the Anzac Mounted Division fought Romani almost alone.'¹² Chauvel was also surprised, and described the report as 'a horrible blow'.¹³ The ill feeling was only exacerbated

⁷ Bou, *Light Horse*, 156–60.

⁸ Alec Hill, *Chauvel of the Light Horse: A Biography of General Sir Harry Chauvel, GCMG, KCB* (1978; repr., Loftus: Australian Military History Publications, 2008), 73–74; Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, *The First World War in the Middle East* (London: Hurst & Company, 2014), 107–8.

⁹ General Sir Archibald Murray to Lieutenant General Sir Alexander Godley, 14 December 1916, GODLEY 3/192, LHCMA.

¹⁰ The exact figures are disputed, but the Anzac casualties are recorded as being between 837 and 900 and total empire casualties between 1,130 and 1,202. R.M. Downes, 'Part II – The Campaign in Sinai and Palestine,' in *Gallipoli, Palestine and New Guinea*, vol. 1 of *Official History of the Australian Army Medical Services, 1914–1918*, 2nd ed. (Melbourne: Australian War Memorial, 1938), 581n; Hill, *Chauvel of the Light Horse*, 82.

¹¹ Harry Chauvel to Sybil Chauvel, 23 August 1916, PR00535, AWM.

¹² Gullett, *Australian Imperial Force*, 192.

¹³ Harry Chauvel to Sybil Chauvel, 29 December 1916, PR00535, AWM.

by the modest share of honours awarded to the division; Gullett went so far as to label the list 'discriminating and unfair'.¹⁴

The shift in Murray's representation of Romani appears to be the result of friction between himself and Chauvel. According to Chauvel's biographer, Alec Hill, Chauvel was aware that Murray intended to recommend him for recognition following Romani, but for a lesser honour than Chauvel felt was warranted. Hill surmised the award was to be the DSO, a comparatively junior reward for someone of Chauvel's rank and position.¹⁵ Murray later admitted, however, that he intended to recommend Chauvel for substantive promotion to major general 'for Distinguished Service in the Field', a move 'which we in the army consider a greater reward than that of any decoration.'¹⁶ Not knowing this (or perhaps despite it), Chauvel felt affronted by the recommendation and thought it a slight to the men of the Anzac Mounted Division, particularly once he was made aware that Murray intended to nominate Lawrence for a knighthood.¹⁷ Chauvel let his grievances be known, and petitioned Murray to recommend he similarly be knighted. Murray thought the request indignant and decided Chauvel would receive no reward at all.¹⁸

The strained relationship between the two generals persisted over the following months, during which the Anzac Mounted Division received comparatively few awards for its efforts. Relations improved marginally from January 1917, when Murray recommended Chauvel be knighted in recognition of his contribution to the battles of Magdhaba and Rafa. But the damage had been done, and issues over honours and deficient recognition became a defining feature of the AIF's desert campaign.¹⁹ This was perhaps heightened by the sharp contrast between their situation and what had been a rather liberal approach by Birdwood at Gallipoli, an approach that continued on the Western Front and of which the light horsemen were well aware by virtue of published honours lists.²⁰ While the scale and nature of warfare between the two theatres is hardly comparable, the disparity in recognition highlights the general bitterness felt by the light horsemen in having previously experienced a commander who was more willing to recognise and reward, and the apparent monopolisation of martial glory in favour of those who fought on the Western Front. A sense of bitterness persisted until Murray was relieved of command of

¹⁴ Gullett, *Australian Imperial Force*, 192.

¹⁵ Hill, *Chauvel of the Light Horse*, 95.

¹⁶ Murray to Godley, 14 December 1916; General Sir Archibald Murray to Major General Harry Chauvel, 14 December 1916, GODLEY 2/193, LHCMA.

¹⁷ Harry Chauvel to Sybil Chauvel, 17 December 1916, 24 December 1916, 27 January 1917, PR00535, AWM.

¹⁸ Murray to Godley, 14 December 1916; Murray to Chauvel, 14 December 1916.

¹⁹ Grey, Gullett and Hill each devote multiple pages to the subject. See Grey, *War with the Ottoman Empire*, 110–11, 147–48; Gullett, *Australian Imperial Force*, 191–93; Hill, *Chauvel of the Light Horse*, 95–96.

²⁰ Harry Chauvel to Sybil Chauvel, 29 December 1916, 19 February 1917, PR00535, AWM.

the EEF in June 1917 and replaced by General Sir Edmund Allenby, latterly commander of the British Third Army in France.

Allenby's attitude to honours and awards was more favourable. The new commander-in-chief demonstrated a greater willingness to reward and recognise, a matter Chauvel noted with satisfaction. Chauvel had now been promoted to command the Desert Mounted Corps, but he was quick to bring to notice the grievances of his old division. He wrote to Allenby's Military Secretary, Lieutenant Colonel Lord Dalmeny, in September 1917, arguing that 'with the exception of the 5th. Mounted Brigade and some Yeomanry companies', the Anzac Mounted Division 'were absolutely the only troops engaged with the enemy on this Front and yet they see that they have again got a very small portion indeed of the hundreds of Honours'. Chauvel conceded that his recommendations 'were modest ones under all circumstances and in that perhaps I am partly to blame', but to press his point he attached a list of thirty-two men he had recommended for reward during Murray's tenure, but for each of whom the intended award had been either rejected or severely downgraded.²¹ Lord Dalmeny noted in response that Allenby was unable to interfere with the decisions made by the previous commander-in-chief, but that the general himself inspected all recommendations with 'every sympathetic consideration'.²² It would appear that this was so, as in February 1918 Chauvel recorded his pleasure at the increased flow of decorations in a letter to his wife: 'I must say we are faring much better under the new regime than the old. We have got more "Immediate Decorations" in the last three months than we got in the whole of the preceding eighteen though we had much harder work really.'²³

Indeed, extant recommendation files from the Anzac Mounted Division indicate Allenby's willingness to recognise, and a comparative reluctance on Murray's part to do so. Awards per regiment experienced an exponential increase after Allenby assumed command, some—like the 3rd Light Horse Regiment—by over four hundred percent.²⁴ However, such increases in award also generally correlate with a rise in casualties; a signifier of fierce fighting and thus the conditions that foster awards. Accordingly, it is more useful to look at the quantity of awards in relation to battle-related casualty statistics. Even then a more favourable rate is discernible under Allenby, but less distinctly so. The 1st Light Horse Regiment, for example,

²¹ Major General Sir Harry Chauvel to Lieutenant Colonel Lord Dalmeny, 28 September 1917, 2DRL/0793, AWM.

²² Lieutenant Colonel Lord Dalmeny to Major General Sir Harry Chauvel, 29 September 1917, 2DRL/0793, AWM.

²³ Chauvel to Chauvel, 3 February 1918.

²⁴ Statistics compiled from AWM28, 2 & AWM4.

Tier 1	Victoria Cross (1856)		
Tier 2	Distinguished Service Order (1886; commissioned officers)	Distinguished Conduct Medal (1854; Army enlisted ranks)	Conspicuous Gallantry Medal (1855; Naval ratings)
Tier 3	Distinguished Service Cross (1901; Naval officers ¹ ranked lieutenant commander or below)	Military Cross (1914; Army officers ¹ ranked captain or below)	Distinguished Flying Cross (1918; Air Force officers)
	Distinguished Service Medal (1914; Naval ratings)	Military Medal (1916; Army enlisted ranks)	Distinguished Flying Medal (1918; Air Force enlisted ranks)
Tier 4	Mention in Despatches (early nineteenth century)		

¹ Includes warrant officers

Figure 3.1: The hierarchy of British Commonwealth gallantry decorations during the First World War. The year of establishment, and general eligibility for the second and third tiers (the VC and despatches being open to all ranks), are indicated in parentheses.

received one award for every 5.48 casualties under Murray. With Allenby, the rate increased to one per 4.02 men killed or wounded.²⁵ The discrepancy between the generals' practices is further evident by the types of award favoured by the two. Decorations for staff or senior officers, such as the DSO and orders of chivalry, experienced a high rate of approval under Murray. Yet awards for junior officers and enlisted ranks—the Military Cross, DCM and Military Medal (see figure 3.1)—were few with greater rates of rejection. The 2nd Light Horse Regiment, for example, received four DSOs during Murray's command, yet just one DCM and two Military Medals.²⁶ Traditionally honours do disproportionately favour officers, but not to such a significant extent. Murray's professional background—a talented staff officer with limited command experience (and, thereby, minimal contact with junior ranks)—may well have influenced his perception of heroism and ideas on awards.²⁷ Allenby, conversely, was a hot-headed cavalryman with extensive command experience, and demonstrated a greater

²⁵ Statistics compiled from AWM28, 2 and AWM4.

²⁶ Figures compiled from AWM28.

²⁷ J.E. Edmonds, 'Murray, Sir Archibald James (1860–1945),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H.C.G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), accessed 12 December 2017, doi: 10.1093/ref:odnb/35155.

inclination to reward junior ranks.²⁸ Under Allenby, the 2nd Light Horse Regiment received three DCMs and thirteen Military Medals for three DSOs.²⁹ A similar pattern is evident within the award of the VC: although Murray only granted two crosses, both went to officers. Allenby, in comparison, awarded thirteen VCs; nine were bestowed on non-commissioned men and other ranks.³⁰

By virtue of the recommendation process, numerous individuals are involved in the decision as to whether to grant a medal or bestow recognition. Accordingly, higher or lower rates of approval cannot be solely attributed to one person. Theatre commanders like Murray and Allenby are, however, in a unique position to influence awards and foster particular forms of recognition. But Allenby's command in the desert had broader implications than an increase in the flow of awards; he engineered a shift in the prevailing heroic paradigm.

The paradigm shifts

The Gallipoli campaign established the standard for tactical and aggressive heroics. But the paradigm had diverged on leaving the peninsula: the Western Front solidified the idea of tactical heroism, while Palestine demonstrated a regression to romanticised heroics. The latter can largely be attributed to both the emphasis on cavalry and mounted warfare within the desert, and Murray's antiquated outlook on awards. Both VCs awarded during his command, for instance, were resonant of the late Victorian archetype. Lieutenant Francis (Frank) McNamara of the Australian Flying Corps received the first VC of the desert campaign. Along with three other aviators, McNamara executed a bombing raid on an Ottoman railway junction near Gaza on 20 March 1917. He successfully dropped three bombs but was severely wounded in the thigh when the fourth prematurely exploded. Bleeding and in pain, McNamara manoeuvred his aircraft to head back to base when he realised Captain Douglas Rutherford had been forced to land with mechanical problems. In spite of his wound, McNamara landed to rescue Rutherford as Ottoman cavalry drew near. McNamara's one-seater Martinsyde was damaged as he attempted to take off with Rutherford clutching to the wing struts, so the pair set fire to the aircraft to prevent it falling into enemy hands and dashed over to Rutherford's two-seater B.E.2c. As Rutherford repaired the engine, McNamara fired his revolver at the Ottoman cavalry. McNamara soon after managed to start the engine and, although weak from

²⁸ Mark Urban, *Generals: Ten British Commanders Who Shaped the World* (London: Faber and Faber, 2005), 218–19.

²⁹ Figures compiled from AWM28.

³⁰ Anthony Staunton, 'Victoria Crosses of the Palestine Campaign,' *Sabretache* 49, no. 3 (2008): 7–14.

blood loss, managed to fly the plane some seventy miles back to base. He lost consciousness shortly after landing.³¹

McNamara was credited with saving Rutherford from being captured or killed and he became the sole Australian, and lone airman, to receive the VC in Palestine.³² His actions thus correspond to the romanticised humanitarian ideal of the late Victorian period, albeit in a more modern context. Had his aircraft been a horse, McNamara would not have been out of place among Boer War-era VCs. The VC to Second Lieutenant John Craig of the Royal Fusiliers reflected similar characteristics. After an Ottoman force had overrun an advanced post at Umbrella Hills, southwest of Gaza, on 5 June, Craig organised and led a rescue party to retrieve the dead and wounded.³³ Subject to rifle and machine gun fire throughout, one of Craig's men and the medical officer among the party were themselves soon wounded. Craig brought in the first man but was shot on returning for the medical officer; the pair withdrew behind some shelter and waited for help to arrive. Craig's efforts to retrieve and shelter the wounded men were acknowledged in his VC citation as 'the means of saving their lives.'³⁴

The circumstances of McNamara and Craig's awards indicate a distinct Victorian legacy in the heroic paradigm of Murray's Palestine. They are not the only decorations that do so. However, as no further Anzac recommendations for the VC were submitted during Murray's command, and it is uncertain whether any British unit did so—British award recommendation records for the First World War were destroyed during the bombing of London in 1940—it is pertinent to look at honours beyond the VC.³⁵ In this case, bestowals of the Military Cross and DCM; the awards to Second Lieutenant Frederick Cox and Sergeant Spencer Gwynne, respectively, of the 10th Light Horse Regiment. During the Battle of Magdhaba in December 1916, Cox was leading a charge against an Ottoman redoubt when Second Lieutenant Alexander Martin's horse was killed from under him just seventy yards short of the target. On seeing this, Gwynne went to Martin's assistance and safeguarded the officer until Cox arrived with a spare horse to convey Martin to safety. As the DCM recommendation for Gwynne noted: 'the three were subjected to a very heavy fire and it was very courageous and gallant of Gwynne to act as he did—he undoubtedly shared with 2/Lt Cox

³¹ Recommendation for Lieutenant Frank McNamara, 26 March 1917, AWM28, 2/116; Chris Coulthard-Clark, *McNamara, VC: A Hero's Dilemma* (Fairbairn: Air Power Studies Centre, 1997), 36-43.

³² Recommendation for Lieutenant Frank McNamara.

³³ Staunton, 'Victoria Crosses of the Palestine Campaign,' 8.

³⁴ 'War Office, 2nd August, 1917,' *London Gazette*, 2 August 1917.

³⁵ Spencer, *Medals*, 133.

in saving 2/Lt Martin's life.'³⁶ The incident was almost a classic example of late Victorian martial humanitarianism.

The pattern of award shifted once Allenby assumed command in Palestine. The quantity of gallantry decorations spiked under Allenby, and not just within the AIF: thirteen VCs were awarded under his command, while a further six recommendations for the award were submitted in favour of men from the AIF or associated units. The actions for which awards were granted also shifted, as there was an obvious rejection of humanitarian and Victorian era awards from this point. Three of the unsuccessful VC recommendations, for example, were submitted in recognition of lifesaving feats: those on behalf of Major the Honourable Richard Preston, and Sergeants William Bowman and Albert James. Preston, Officer Commanding B Battery, Honourable Artillery Company in the Australian Mounted Division, was among a mounted patrol undertaking reconnaissance near Beersheba on 1 September 1917 when the party came under close range rifle fire.³⁷ As the patrol withdrew a Private Hodgson had his horse shot from under him. Preston galloped across some two hundred yards under incessant enemy fire to retrieve Hodgson.³⁸ Chauvel remarked upon Preston's feat in a letter to his wife; the only VC recommendation he made comment on in his private correspondence.³⁹ Although he praised Preston's efforts, he concluded that the 'V.C. has been given for less in times gone by but I doubt if it will cover one nowadays.'⁴⁰ Preston instead received a Bar (a second award) to his previously conferred DSO.⁴¹

The recommendations for Bowman and James suffered similar fates. The sergeants, of the 8th and 7th Light Horse Regiments respectively, were forwarded for separate incidents in November 1917. Bowman volunteered to recover two wounded men after one of his regiment's squadrons was forced to retire during an engagement near Barqusya. Assisted by a trooper, Bowman succeeded in bringing in one man but had to venture out once more to rescue his

³⁶ Recommendation for Sergeant Spencer Gwynne, 24 December 1916, AWM28, 2/145. Cox's Military Cross also recognised his leadership during the assault. See recommendation for Second Lieutenant Frederick Cox, AWM28, 2/145.

³⁷ The Australian (originally Imperial) Mounted Division was raised in January 1917 with two Australian light horse brigades, two British Yeomanry brigades, and four batteries of British artillery. However, following protests from the Australian government, the division was renamed and officially became an AIF unit from June 1917. Thereafter the British units (excepting the artillery) were gradually phased out and replaced by Australian brigades—Preston and his artillerymen formed part of the division for almost the entirety of its existence. Bou, *Light Horse*, 162–65.

³⁸ Recommendation for Major the Honourable Richard Preston, 6 September 1917, AWM28, 2/127.

³⁹ The Chauvels were acquainted with the Preston family as Richard's father, the 14th Viscount Gormanston, was a previous Governor of Tasmania. Harry Chauvel to Sybil Chauvel, 6 September 1917, PR00535, AWM.

⁴⁰ Chauvel to Chauvel, 6 September 1917.

⁴¹ 'War Office, 18th March, 1918,' *Edinburgh Gazette*, 21 March 1918.

companion, who had been wounded.⁴² James, meanwhile, was credited with saving the life of a grievously wounded officer at Tel el Khuweilfe. The officer was hit by rifle fire while out on an isolated ridge. According to James' subsequent recommendation, the officer's situation was critical as 'there was every probability of his bleeding to death if not attended to at once.' Realising this, and with no stretcher-bearer available, James carried the lieutenant some forty yards over ground 'continually swept' by rifle, machine gun and shell fire to receive medical care.⁴³ It appears neither recommendation progressed much beyond brigade level before being reassessed and downgraded; both sergeants received the DCM.⁴⁴

Allenby had evidently sought to reorient recognised heroism in Palestine. Although humanitarian actions were not completely discarded from the awards system, they were relegated to a lesser place in the medallic hierarchy as if to subtly discourage life-saving feats. Such a break from Murray's paradigm was in line with the conditions imposed on the Western Front by Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig, Commander-in-Chief of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) and Allenby's former commander. Haig, like Lord Kitchener almost two decades before him, considered humanitarian heroism to be out of place in modern European warfare. He argued that attempts to save life under fire sapped the fighting strength of the field force, detracted from the primary task and, indeed, often resulted in 'unnecessary loss of life.'⁴⁵ John Craig's VC-winning feat is a good example of Haig's concern: in attempting to aid wounded comrades, Craig and two of his men became casualties themselves.

Accordingly, in August 1916 instructions circulated by Haig's General Headquarters to all British and Dominion units on the Western Front directed a shift in the criteria for the VC. The relaying memorandum sent to units of the AIF declared that from now on

the V.C. will only be given for acts of conspicuous gallantry which are materially conducive to the gaining of a victory. Cases of gallantry in life saving, of however fine a nature, will not be considered for the award of the V.C.⁴⁶

The instruction was clarified a month later when Haig had his Military Secretary, Major General William Peyton, circulate a supplementary directive. 'In future,' Peyton wrote, 'the Victoria Cross or other immediate reward will not be given for the rescue of wounded, excepting to those whose duty it is to care for such cases.'⁴⁷ Haig sought to circumvent awards

⁴² Recommendation for Sergeant James Bowman, 15 November 1917, AWM28, 2/127.

⁴³ Recommendation for Sergeant A.E. James, 28 November 1917, AWM28, 2/142 PART 2, AWM.

⁴⁴ 'Australian Force,' *London Gazette*, 28 March 1918.

⁴⁵ Major General William Peyton to Fourth Army Headquarters, 2 November 1916, AWM25, 391/2.

⁴⁶ Deputy Assistant Adjutant and Quartermaster General, 2nd Australian Division, to divisional sub-units, 29 August 1916, AWM25, 391/2, AWM.

⁴⁷ Major General William Peyton to Second Army Headquarters, 29 September 1916, AWM25, 391/2, AWM.

on a humanitarian basis, and instead emphasise aggressive and proactive tactical heroics—acts that would gain ground and reignite movement on the frontline.

Haig's directive bequeathed a significant legacy. British conceptions of martial heroism shifted from a focus on stoic defiance, noble determination, and romanticised humanitarianism to a central concern with what Victoria D'Alton describes as 'aggressive, merciless and hostile' acts.⁴⁸ This shift in emphasis, as Allenby's move to Palestine demonstrates, filtered into other theatres of war. Two VCs were granted under Allenby for humanitarian feats, but both met Haig's exception on 'those whose duty it is to care for such cases': stretcher-bearers and medical personnel. The first was a posthumous award to Captain John Russell, a medical officer attached to the Royal Welch Fusiliers who, at Tel el Khuweilfe in November 1917, diligently tended to the wounded in the open and under fire until killed. The second recognised Private James Duffy, a stretcher-bearer with the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, for his efforts in bringing in the wounded at Kereina Peak in December 1917.⁴⁹ Humanitarian acts had shifted from being the dominant cause for award under Murray, to constituting just fifteen percent of the VCs bestowed by Allenby; a figure only marginally higher than that on the Western Front for 1917.⁵⁰

The decline in humanitarian heroism encouraged the rise of aggressive, offensive and tactical heroics. Ten of the VCs conferred under Allenby (that is, seventy-seven percent) displayed elements of tactical and aggressive heroism. Each man was credited with exemplifying an offensive spirit that altered the circumstances of battle to fundamentally contribute towards victory or turn the tide on an Ottoman assault. Take the actions of Private Samuel Needham of the Bedfordshire Regiment as an example. Near Kefr Kasim in September 1918, Needham was among a patrol that was attacked by a sizeable Ottoman force and pushed back in confusion. Needham was described as then having run 'back and fired rapidly at a body of the enemy at point-blank range.' His actions were credited with checking the Ottoman advance and enabling his patrol to reorganise and withdraw.⁵¹ Allenby, influenced by Haig's initiatives on the Western Front, had reoriented the dominant British conceptions of heroism in Palestine from romanticised Victorian notions to practical and tactical heroics. The lifesaving feats of Preston, Bowman and James thus no longer attained the standard for modern valour. Had their actions occurred under Murray's command, it is plausible they may well

⁴⁸ D'Alton, 'Behind the Valour,' 125.

⁴⁹ Staunton, 'Victoria Crosses of the Palestine Campaign,' 10–12.

⁵⁰ Gliddon, *Sideshow*, 139–209; Smith, *Awarded for Valour*, 157.

⁵¹ 'War Office, 30 October 1918,' *London Gazette*, 30 October 1918.

have. The emphasis on offensive and tactical heroism had significant ramifications for the state of medallic recognition. But, more importantly, the shift (and Haig and Allenby's rationale for it) highlights the primary driver of change: the nature of warfare.

Warfare and heroism juxtaposed

From the Battle of Romani in August 1916 to the October 1918 capture of Damascus, the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Australian Light Horse and New Zealand Mounted Rifles Brigades were involved in almost every major operation in the Sinai and Palestine. It is therefore surprising that the only Australian VC of the campaign went to McNamara, a pilot, while the New Zealanders received no cross at all. In contrast, fifty-three VCs were awarded to men of the AIF on the Western Front.⁵² The scale of operations between the two theatres does much to explain the discrepancy. However, as the AIF garnered almost thirteen percent of the 410 VCs awarded on the Western Front from the arrival of Australian forces in March 1916 to war's end yet accounted for less than seven percent of the crosses in Palestine, there are underlying issues that warrant closer examination. Indeed, even if one considers operations and awards on a broader scale the discrepancy between the theatres is significant. At its height, the EEF attained approximately one-fifth of the fighting strength of the BEF.⁵³ And yet the men fighting in Palestine received only one VC for every twenty-seven bestowed on the Western Front between 1916 and 1918. What one can see from this inter-theatre discrepancy is that the nature of warfare had much to do with instigating and driving changes to recognised heroics—Haig and Allenby's efforts to reorient the heroic paradigm were triggered by the operational demands of the battlefield.

On face value, the concept of Palestine as a 'sideshow' campaign appears to be a credible explanation for its comparatively few VCs. Much of the British War Cabinet and military command considered the Western Front the principal theatre of war, leading the BEF to maintain an almost complete monopoly on men and resources until 1917. To underscore this point, from August 1916 (when operations in the Sinai increasingly turned towards the offensive) the War Office imposed a strict intra-theatre quota on the award of decorations for officers. The allocation of DSOs could not exceed ten per calendar month, while no more than twenty Military Crosses could be awarded during the same period. Awards for the ordinary ranks, such as the DCM and Military Medal, could be bestowed 'without limit' so long as

⁵² Staunton, *Victoria Cross*, 51.

⁵³ Ulrichsen, *First World War in the Middle East*, 98; War Office, *Statistics of the Military Effort*, 62–64f.

standards were maintained.⁵⁴ This operational quota aligned with that imposed in the Mesopotamian campaign (in modern-day Iraq) and on the Salonika Front in the Balkans, yet was far more modest than the quota allocated to the Western Front. From April 1917 the BEF received up to two hundred DSOs and five hundred Military Crosses each month, with no restrictions on other operational decorations.⁵⁵ No numerical restraint was imposed on the VC, but that the Western Front accounted for eighty-two percent of the VCs awarded during the First World War indicates the primacy of the operations in France and Belgium.⁵⁶

Britain's strategic foci, however, shifted after David Lloyd George became prime minister in December 1916. Lloyd George was an advocate for the strategic importance of 'sideshow' campaigns. He theorised that neutralising Germany's allies in the secondary theatres of war would cripple Germany on the Western Front.⁵⁷ In retrospect Lloyd George's strategic outlook was misguided, but it did have significant implications for the desert campaign. Specifically, he sought to reinvigorate the offensive in Palestine. Momentum had stalled at Gaza, after Murray had twice failed to take the city in early 1917. Henry Gullett opines in the Australian official history that Murray 'was the wrong man for Egypt.'⁵⁸ Lloyd George evidently arrived at the same conclusion, as he sought to replace Murray with an aggressive field commander capable of reigniting the campaign: Allenby.⁵⁹

Lloyd George instructed Allenby to seize Jerusalem by the end of 1917 'as a Christmas present for the British nation.'⁶⁰ In a reversal of earlier policy, Allenby was empowered to request reinforcements to ensure this objective. His force subsequently grew by three infantry divisions and two aircraft squadrons, while the EEF was reorganised into three corps: Chauvel's Desert Mounted Corps of three mounted divisions; XX Corps of four infantry divisions; and XXI Corps of three infantry divisions.⁶¹ Operations in Palestine thereafter shifted to a greater offensive tempo; precipitating a rise in the award of gallantry decorations. In a reflection of this change in conditions, the War Office raised the award quotas in Palestine to twenty-five DSOs and sixty Military Crosses per calendar month from November 1917. Lloyd George's efforts to reorient the strategic emphasis had gained traction, as there was an

⁵⁴ War Office, *Statistics of the Military Effort*, 558.

⁵⁵ War Office, *Statistics of the Military Effort*, 558.

⁵⁶ Staunton, 'Victoria Crosses of the Palestine Campaign,' 14.

⁵⁷ Bou, *Light Horse*, 171; Ulrichsen, *First World War in the Middle East*, 109.

⁵⁸ Gullett, *Australian Imperial Force*, 24.

⁵⁹ Sir Archibald Wavell, *Allenby, a Study in Greatness: A Biography of Field Marshal Viscount Allenby of Megiddo and Felixstowe, G.C.B., G.C.M.G.* (London: George G. Harrap, 1940), 184.

⁶⁰ Wavell, *Allenby*, 186.

⁶¹ Bou, *Light Horse*, 165–66; Michael Molkenstin, *Fire in the Sky: The Australian Flying Corps in the First World War* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2012), 100.

almost simultaneous reassessment of recognition in other secondary theatres of war. In January 1918 quotas on the Italian Front rose to twenty DSOs and sixty Military Crosses per month, while in Mesopotamia they increased to twenty and forty, respectively.⁶² The effect this had on the VC is less clear. Despite the spike in Palestine, the twenty-two VCs awarded in Mesopotamia were granted by mid-1917, while the two in Salonika arose from operations in 1916 and 1918, respectively.⁶³ In contrast, 174 VCs were awarded on the Western Front in 1917 (the BEF's *annus horribilis*) and a further 203 in 1918.⁶⁴ Clearly the Western Front did not lose its centrality, nor did the strategic shift towards the 'sideshows' unilaterally alter the state of institutionalised recognition. What this instead indicates is that heroic recognition—and the award of the VC in particular—was dependent on the specific conditions of battle and the conduct of war.

The Third Battle of Gaza in November 1917 opened Allenby's offensive crusade. The battle was preceded by an assault on the garrison at Beersheba, the southernmost point in the Ottoman line of defence, by the Desert Mounted Corps and XX Corps on 31 October. The capture of Beersheba (and its water wells) was integral to immediate and future operations in Palestine as Allenby's plan to seize Gaza required the two corps to take Beersheba and then thrust north-west towards Gaza while the XXI Corps made a frontal assault on the city. The objective was to unravel the Ottoman defences and encircle Gaza.⁶⁵ The Battle of Beersheba is significant, however, for it underscored the shift from Victorian to contemporary notions of heroism in the desert campaign.

Allenby's plan saw the infantry assault Beersheba from the south-west and the mounted units from the east, which required an extended night march by the Desert Mounted Corps.⁶⁶ Chauvel and his men accomplished this task but the assault stalled as the New Zealand Mounted Rifles Brigade was held up at Tel el Saba, a strategic hill riddled with entrenched Ottoman defenders. It was late afternoon before the tel fell, by which time the immediate capture of Beersheba was imperative if the town's wells were to be intact to supply future operations. Chauvel decided on a mounted charge to take the town and detailed Brigadier General William Grant and his 4th Light Horse Brigade with the task. Supported by artillery, the 4th and 12th Light Horse Regiments spearheaded the charge and galloped over some six

⁶² War Office, *Statistics of the Military Effort*, 558.

⁶³ Gliddon, *Sideshows*, 48–138, 210–222.

⁶⁴ Smith, *Awarded for Valour*, 157, 161.

⁶⁵ Jean Bou, 'Cavalry Combat: Mounted Warfare in Palestine,' in *The AIF In Battle: How the Australian Imperial Force Fought, 1914–1918*, ed. Jean Bou (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2016), 22; Ulrichsen, *First World War in the Middle East*, 111.

⁶⁶ Grey, *War with the Ottoman Empire*, 141.

kilometres of ground while subject to shell, machine gun and rifle fire.⁶⁷ The charge was a resounding success—the wells were secured intact, while over 1,200 Ottoman troops and twelve field guns were captured for sixty-eight Australian casualties.⁶⁸ Chauvel thought the charge ‘a very brilliant performance’, and Allenby was so impressed he decorated Grant with a Bar to his DSO the very next day.⁶⁹

Majors James Lawson, Eric Hyman and Cuthbert Fetherstonhaugh, who led squadrons in the charge, were recommended for the VC.⁷⁰ Lawson and Hyman commanded the lead squadrons of the 4th and 12th Regiments, respectively. It was to them that the brunt of the Ottoman defences fell. Lawson and Hyman’s squadrons dismounted to engage the foremost trenches and redoubt, as B and C Squadrons of both regiments charged beyond to capture the town.⁷¹ Lawson and his men were credited with disabling a machine gun post and with having killed or captured almost one hundred Ottoman troops.⁷² Likewise, Hyman’s men rushed the redoubt which, according to his recommendation, enabled ‘the Regt to carry on the assault and complete the capture of Beersheba’. Some sixty Ottoman dead were later found in the trenches assaulted by Hyman’s squadron.⁷³ Featherstonhaugh, leading B Squadron of the 12th Regiment, galloped ahead during the charge to support Hyman’s assault on the redoubt. Featherstonhaugh and his foremost men closed the gap to such an extent that they were ‘mingling with the leading Sqdn’. The effect of this, wrote Fetherstonhaugh’s commanding officer, made ‘the pressure so heavy as to quickly overcome the enemy’.⁷⁴ Fetherstonhaugh, however, had his horse shot from under him forty yards short of the redoubt. Now dismounted, and with the bulk of his squadron moving beyond into the town, Featherstonhaugh continued to direct men in the immediate vicinity and used ‘his revolver with good effect’ until he was shot in both legs.⁷⁵ The three majors were recommended on symbolic grounds, with their

⁶⁷ Bou, ‘Cavalry Combat,’ 22–24; Grey, *War with the Ottoman Empire*, 142–43.

⁶⁸ Neil Smith, *Men of Beersheba: A History of the 4th Light Horse Regiment, 1914–1919* (Melbourne: Mostly Unsung Military History Research and Publications, 1993), 119–27.

⁶⁹ Harry Chauvel to Sybil Chauvel, 1 November 1917, PR00535, AWM.

⁷⁰ Journalist Paul Daley claims Staff Sergeant Arthur Cox was also recommended for the VC for his actions during the charge. However, while a DCM recommendation for Cox (which was awarded) exists, I have found no evidence to suggest that the recommendation was originally for a VC. Paul Daley, *Beersheba: A Journey through Australia’s Forgotten War* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2009), 110–11; Recommendation for Staff Sergeant Arthur Cox, 1 November 1917, AWM28, 2/138.

⁷¹ Bou, *Light Horse*, 175.

⁷² Recommendation for Major James Lawson, 1 November 1917, AWM28, 2/138.

⁷³ Recommendation for Major Eric Hyman, 2 November 1917, AWM28, 2/127.

⁷⁴ Recommendation for Major Cuthbert Fetherstonhaugh, 2 November 1917, AWM28, 2/127

⁷⁵ Gullett, *Australian Imperial Force*, 398; Recommendation for Fetherstonhaugh.

respective leadership credited as the catalyst towards victory. Despite the recommendations being endorsed by Grant, all three were downgraded to the DSO.⁷⁶

Four VCs were awarded for the operations around Beersheba, but only one for the assault on the town itself. This went to a British infantryman, Corporal John Collins of the Royal Welch Fusiliers. As his unit suffered heavy casualties during the morning, Collins repeatedly ventured out to retrieve the wounded. His actions shifted to the offensive later that afternoon—something his citation was clear to point out—when, during the final assault, he was described as having ‘bayoneted fifteen of the enemy’ and, supported by a machine gun section, led the consolidation of his section of the line.⁷⁷ The three other VCs—which included medical officer John Russell—all went to officers. Major Alexander Lafone of the London Yeomanry was posthumously recognised for leading a stoic defence on Hill 720. Although vastly outnumbered, Lafone and his men weathered repeated attacks over seven hours until Lafone was killed and his men almost completely wiped out.⁷⁸ Lieutenant Colonel Arthur Borton was decorated for his efforts a week after the Battle of Beersheba for leading his unit, the 2/22nd (County of London) Battalion, in attack at Tel el Sheria. Like the trio at Beersheba, Borton led from the front and the inspirational example set by what was described as his ‘conspicuous bravery and leadership’ was credited as being instrumental in securing a tactical victory.⁷⁹

These examples indicate that the nature of warfare and the rank, position and casualty status of the intended recipient all had a bearing on the recognition of martial heroism within the British Empire. We know that officers tend to be disproportionately represented in honours lists by virtue of their position of leadership. But the above examples also suggest that, like the actions at Gallipoli, an emphasis was placed on sustained combat roles. An emphasis that inherently preferenced slow-moving infantry over mobile mounted units. Hugo Throssell, the Gallipoli VC, is a paragon of this paradigm. Throssell’s sustained heroics while fighting in an unmounted infantry role led him to become the only light horseman awarded the VC in the First World War.⁸⁰ The defining features of Throssell’s VC—along with those awarded to Lafone, Borton and others in Palestine—appear to be that he occupied a position of leadership, and his actions occurred over an extended period while he occupied a combatant infantry role.

⁷⁶ Recommendation for Lawson; Recommendation for Hyman; Recommendation for Major Cuthbert Fetherstonhaugh, 2 November 1917, AWM28, 2/147; ‘To Accompany List No. 316, Appointments, Commissions, Rewards Etc. Dated 6th November, 1917,’ AWM28, 2/410.

⁷⁷ ‘War Office, 18th December, 1917,’ *London Gazette*, 18 December 1917.

⁷⁸ ‘War Office, 18th December, 1917.’

⁷⁹ ‘War Office, 18th December, 1917.’

⁸⁰ Snelling, *Gallipoli*, 229.

That many such actions resulted in the wounding or death of the awardee is also a significant point to note. Contrast these characteristics with the three majors at Beersheba: only Fetherstonhaugh was wounded, and the charge itself was over in a matter of minutes. The casualties resulting from the charge had also been comparatively light, an outcome perhaps unsurprising as the British and Dominion forces vastly outnumbered the Ottoman garrison.⁸¹ While Lawson, Hyman and Fetherstonhaugh undoubtedly influenced the success of the charge at Beersheba, their actions were not in the appropriate situational context nor of the sustained nature to warrant higher recognition.

Successful operations do tend to yield a greater portion of honours. The Battle of Lone Pine at Gallipoli, for instance, prompted nine VC recommendations from the AIF. Seven of these were awarded, for a success rate of seventy-eight percent; a figure significantly higher than the AIF's average of forty-seven percent for the entire war.⁸² But Lone Pine evolved into a significant, sustained and costly battle. Beersheba, although important, was but the preliminary assault in a much greater operation. It is apparent from these operations that a distinct divide existed between trench and mounted warfare, at least in terms of medallic recognition. Trench warfare of attrition ensured constant and close contact with the enemy. Palestine, conversely, was typified by the fluid and mobile nature of its operations, wherein the opportunity to perform valorous acts was more restricted. The rapid nature of mounted warfare also meant there were fewer prospects for mounted soldiers to be recognised under a paradigm of heroism that emphasised sustained heroics within an infantry or ground troop role.

McNamara's VC was an exception to this rule. His aerial rescue occurred prior to the arrival of Allenby and the modern standard of heroism, but his actions and award demonstrated the potential to recognise heroics amid less conventional warfare. The First World War, as the first conflict to make use of aircraft and aerial warfare on a mass scale, resulted in the first nineteen airmen VCs. McNamara is somewhat unique among this group as his VC was, after that to naval aviator Squadron Commander Richard Bell Davies, one of only two granted for an aerial rescue. All but one of the seventeen others recognised pilots engaged in combat operations.⁸³ What solidified McNamara's award, however, was the unique context and circumstances of his actions. Aerial rescues obviously had some precedent, with at least three in Palestine alone in the fortnight prior to McNamara's feat.⁸⁴ Indeed, as aviation historian

⁸¹ Bou, *Light Horse*, 175.

⁸² Statistics compiled from AWM28.

⁸³ See Bowyer, *For Valour*, 23–162.

⁸⁴ Coulthard-Clark, *McNamara, VC*, 32.

Michael Molkenntin argues, the saving of downed airmen was not an uncommon practice in Palestine as rescues had official sanction.⁸⁵ In each of these other cases, though, the rescuer tended to be rewarded with the DSO or Military Cross (if anything), depending on the circumstances.⁸⁶ McNamara's rescue, however, was distinguished by the strong enemy presence, and by the fact that he was wounded. As Douglas Rutherford wrote in support of McNamara's recommendation:

I consider that in view of ... the very heavy rifle fire from close range of the advancing enemy the risk of Lieut. MacNamara [*sic*] being killed or captured was so great that even had he not been wounded, he would have been justified in not attempting my rescue – the fact of his being already wounded makes his action one of outstanding gallantry ...⁸⁷

The severity of McNamara's wound and his persistence to rescue Rutherford despite it distinguished his actions from other rescue attempts. There is more to be said about this, as Melvin Smith indicates a relationship between the award of the VC and being wounded. Smith notes that the British Army suffered a casualty rate of approximately thirty-one percent during the First World War. Yet, among VC recipients, the rate stood closer to forty-seven percent; reinforcing the heightened element of danger arising from heroic exploits.⁸⁸ Among Palestine's fifteen VCs, fifty-three percent became casualties during their actions, while four (twenty-seven percent) were killed.⁸⁹ The casualty rate is perhaps an issue that further weakened the claim of the AIF recommendations. Of the seven, only two were wounded: McNamara and Fetherstonhaugh. It is plausible that the lower number of casualties gave the impression that these actions were less sustained and less hazardous than that which had become the standard at Gallipoli and on the Western Front.

Historian Jean Bou argues the Palestine campaign demonstrated the limited striking power of mounted troops against prepared positions.⁹⁰ Mounted units proved most effective in open warfare (where speed created an advantage), or when used in concert with infantry for their shock value; a tactic to physically and psychologically overwhelm the enemy. Such warfare often characterised the fighting in the desert campaigns.⁹¹ However, when confronted

⁸⁵ Michael Molkenntin, *Australia and the War in the Air*, vol. 1 of *The Centenary History of Australia in the Great War* (South Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2014), 138.

⁸⁶ Halliday, *Valour Reconsidered*, 139–40.

⁸⁷ Captain Douglas Rutherford, witness statement, 3 April 1917, AWM28, 2/116.

⁸⁸ Smith, *Awarded for Valour*, 139.

⁸⁹ Gliddon, *Sideshow*, 139–209.

⁹⁰ Bou, *Light Horse*, 173.

⁹¹ Bou, 'Cavalry Combat,' 28–29, 35.

by emplacements or entrenched defences—warfare that dominated the Western Front—mounted soldiers found themselves at a severe disadvantage. Even Sir Philip Chetwode, who commanded both mounted and infantry corps in Palestine, conceded in 1916 that ‘modern firepower has ... put an effective check on the mounted employment of masses of cavalry’.⁹² The First World War was thus the domain of the infantryman: it was to him that the brunt of the fighting fell.⁹³ It is unsurprising then that the heroic paradigm was remoulded to preference the infantryman and the type of warfare he faced. As it was, the last mounted soldier to receive the VC was cavalryman Charles Garforth, a corporal in the British Army’s 15th (The King’s) Hussars. Fighting in France in 1914, Garforth facilitated the withdrawal of his squadron at a critical moment and, during later engagements, twice went to the rescue of unhorsed men.⁹⁴ In doing so he demonstrated elements of determination and humanitarianism; valour of an increasingly bygone era. Modern, industrial warfare as seen in Europe dictated dangerous, aggressive and tactical heroics against the entrenched machine gun and pillbox—a mode of heroism to which mounted formations, like those in Palestine, could not readily conform.

Conclusion

The Sinai and Palestine campaign presents a unique case study in the history of British and Dominion military heroism. After experiencing war in the trenches at Gallipoli, which saw the rise of a mode of heroism characterised by sustained and aggressive actions, the Australian light horse transitioned into a theatre characterised by mounted warfare, movement, and a regression to Victorian notions of heroism. Such a paradigm can largely be attributed to the commander-in-chief, Sir Archibald Murray, whose attitude to honours reflected that of an earlier era, wherein martial glory was monopolised by officers in command and staff positions. Sir Edmund Allenby’s arrival in the theatre in June 1917 from the Western Front brought with it his conceptions of heroism and medallic recognition that had been reoriented to a more pragmatic, contemporary and liberal pattern of award. The war in the desert thus manifested as almost an intermediary in the evolution of the heroic paradigm during the First World War. British Empire notions of heroism pulled away from a lingering Victorian legacy to move towards a more contemporary and proactive construction. At the core of this rift were the nature and demands of the modern battlefield. The trench-based industrial warfare of the First World

⁹² Major General Sir Philip Chetwode, quoted in Bou, ‘Cavalry Combat,’ 25.

⁹³ Robert Stevenson, ‘The Battalion: The AIF Infantry Battalion and its Evolution,’ in Bou, *The AIF in Battle*, 39.

⁹⁴ Brian Best, ‘Charles Garforth: The Last Mounted Cavalry VC,’ *Journal of the Victoria Cross Society*, no. 25 (2014): 7–9.

War stressed the significance of the infantryman and unmounted combatant. It was towards them that the heroic paradigm shifted. This process of modernisation and the nature of warfare it favoured is the primary cause for the low success rate of VC recommendations for the men of the Australian light horse. It was not an issue of deficient bravery on behalf of the troopers, but rather the enhanced standards for recognition and the altered heroic construct that was more suited to the demands of the Western Front.

Chapter Four

‘[M]aterially Conductive to the Gaining of a Victory’: Heroism in the Trenches and at Home, 1916–30s

... in future the V.C. will only be given for acts of conspicuous gallantry which are materially conducive to the gaining of a victory.

Cases of gallantry in saving life, of however fine a nature, will not be considered for the award of the V.C.

– Memorandum, 2nd Australian Division, 29 August 1916¹

On 5 October 1918, in the AIF’s final battle of the First World War, the 6th Brigade was tasked with capturing the village of Montbrehain.² Beginning at dawn, the battle raged for some fourteen hours before the village was seized and the line consolidated. On at least three occasions during the advance, elements of the 24th Battalion were held up by fierce machine gun fire. On the first instance, Second Lieutenant George Ingram and another officer led attacks from the flanks to overcome a German post. At least six machine guns were captured, and forty-two German troops killed; Ingram himself accounted for eighteen of the dead.³ Despite sustaining severe casualties throughout the day, Ingram and his men overcame further machine guns, a fortified quarry, and a house being used as a machine gun emplacement to capture additional German hardware and more than sixty prisoners. Ingram’s ‘magnificent courage and resolution’ was credited with being instrumental to the success of the day—he became the fifty-third Australian to receive the VC on the Western Front, and the AIF’s sixty-third and final VC of the war.⁴

Ingram’s leadership and the extent of his men’s achievements reflect the realities of warfare and heroism on the Western Front in the latter stages of the First World War. Junior leaders such as Ingram had, by 1917, become chiefly responsible for British tactics on the battlefield; amid the stalemate of trench warfare, it fell to subalterns and non-commissioned officers to instigate or inspire a break in the deadlock and facilitate movement on the frontlines. Yet for the BEF it was a slow transition to this mode of warfare and the types of heroism it

¹ DAA&QMG, 2nd Australian Division, to divisional sub-units, 29 August 1916, AWM25, 391/2.

² Robert Stevenson, *The War with Germany*, vol. 3 of *Centenary History of Australia in the Great War* (South Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2015), 198.

³ Charles Bean, *The Australian Imperial Force in France during the Allied Offensive, 1918*, vol. 6 of *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–1918* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1942), 1037; Recommendation for Second Lieutenant George Ingram, 27 October 1918, AWM28, 1/122 PART 2.

⁴ Recommendation for Ingram; Staunton, *Victoria Cross*, 195.

inspired. Unlike the Australian experience at Gallipoli (a campaign ripe for aggressive heroics from the onset), the AIF disembarked in France amid the beginnings of a change, but one in which the last echoes of Victorian valour still sounded. By the time of the AIF's arrival, the war on the Western Front had deteriorated into a static stalemate. The fighting manifested as trench warfare of attrition on a front that stretched some seven hundred kilometres across Belgium, north-eastern France and into the south-western flank of Germany. This chapter argues that it was the conditions of trench warfare—the close proximity of combatants, vicious fighting, and a need by the higher echelons to reignite the offensive—that fostered the enduring shift towards aggressive tactical heroics. As Victoria D'Alton has observed, the Western Front afforded the very 'arena where valour could be noticed'.⁵

The violent, tactical heroism that manifested in France and Flanders had implications beyond the frontline. Such a brutal form of valour led to a harsher definition of masculinity among the armed forces, and the Australian public came to accept the replacement of romanticised, late Victorian notions of heroism with more aggressive and violent heroics due to the influence of extensive propaganda campaigns that demonised the enemy and lauded battlefield prowess. Accordingly, this chapter also considers conceptions of martial heroism beyond the battlefield and war fronts to suggest that, from 1917, war heroes became entangled in the politics of recruitment and propaganda in Australia, while VC winners were upheld as a paragon of martial masculinity in Australia and the British Empire more broadly.

Fading remnants of Victorian valour

An almost sentimental Victorian approach to warfare permeated the British Army that went to war in 1914. The small professional force that initially deployed to Europe paled in comparison to the armies raised by its continental counterparts and, being designed for colonial warfare, it was unprepared for the tribulations of the trenches.⁶ Early wartime notions of heroism similarly suffered from romanticised sentimentalism. Men such as Lance Corporal William Fuller of the Welsh Regiment, one of the war's earliest recipients of the VC, were recognised for heroics that were reminiscent of the conflicts of a bygone era. In September 1914, Fuller advanced one hundred yards to retrieve a mortally wounded captain from the battlefield.⁷ Having done so, he dashed back to collect the officer's rifle to, as Max Arthur puts it, 'prevent it falling into enemy

⁵ D'Alton, 'Behind the Valour,' 56.

⁶ Hew Strachan, *The First World War* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2014), 45.

⁷ 'War Office, 23rd November, 1914,' *London Gazette*, 23 November 1914.

hands.’⁸ The retreat from Mons in August and September 1914 garnered a string of VCs representative of such heroic ideals. Actions that reflected perseverance against an overwhelming enemy force, the saving of life, and preventing the capture of military hardware—thus denying the enemy ‘the trophy of his victory’, as Melvin Smith has described it—were all rewarded during this period.⁹ This is not to say that a pragmatic or tactical dimension to empire heroism did not exist at this point. But a distinct late Victorian undercurrent pervaded many awards on the Western Front through 1914 and 1915.

By 1916, however, empire conceptions of heroism were in transition. Hints of a shift are evident from early AIF recommendations in France. The 1st and 2nd Australian Divisions were the first to arrive on the Western Front in March 1916. They were soon joined by the 4th and 5th Divisions in June, while the 3rd Division deployed in November after a period of training in Britain.¹⁰ The Australian divisions were sent to a quiet sector of the front near Armentières in northern France to adjust to conditions on the Western Front. The area had not experienced major operations for a year, but trench raids and patrols were common.¹¹ On 30 May, a party of Germans raided a section of the line at Cordonnerie Farm held by the 11th Battalion; 116 Australians were killed, wounded or captured for the loss of just eight Germans.¹² In the aftermath of the raid, Private William Cox of the 1st Pioneer Battalion was posthumously recommended for the VC. Cox had been attached to the 2nd Australian Tunnelling Company, which was tasked with digging a mine towards the German lines around Cordonnerie. Prior to the attack, Cox was at the head of a mine shaft manning a pump bringing air to the men below. In spite of the dangers from the preliminary artillery bombardment and the raiders that followed, Cox was said to have ‘remained at his post until killed’ by a German bomb. Lieutenant Colonel Edmund Nicholson, Cox’s commanding officer, wrote that ‘[h]is body was discovered still seated at his pump with one foot on either side, as if in the action of actually pumping. It is evident that his devotion was the cause of losing his life.’¹³ Nicholson’s final line says it all: Cox’s stoic devotion—a trait often portrayed as uniquely British—and heroic sacrifice were to be admired.

⁸ Arthur, *Symbol of Courage*, 193.

⁹ Smith, *Awarded for Valour*, 113.

¹⁰ Charles Bean, *The Australian Imperial Force in France, 1916*, vol. 3 of *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–1918*, 12th ed. (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1941), 150, 176.

¹¹ Peter Pedersen, *The Anzacs: Gallipoli to the Western Front* (Camberwell: Penguin Books, 2010), 130; Stevenson, *War with Germany*, 82–83.

¹² Pedersen, *Anzacs*, 135.

¹³ Recommendation for Private William Cox, 4 June 1916, AWM28, 1/2.

In the official history, however, Charles Bean provides a different version of events. According to Bean, the German raiders lobbed bombs down the mine shaft, which forced Cox and the others out from their post. Cox, being the first to emerge, was bayoneted through the stomach and fell back down the shaft. The second man suffered a similar fate, before the remaining five were taken prisoner.¹⁴ With the men variously killed or captured, it is unclear whether Nicholson based Cox's recommendation on the state of the private's body or if he was privy to alternate information. Either way it seems stoic devotion, a characteristic that had led to many awards during the nineteenth century and in the early stages of the First World War, was in this case no longer sufficient for the VC as Cox's recommendation was downgraded to a Mention in Despatches.

The operative heroic paradigm, however, had not completely moved on. In another raid on 25/26 June, this time perpetrated by the Australians, eighty-two men from the 5th Brigade rushed a German trench to the south of Armentières. The raiders destroyed two bomb stores and captured four men, only for a dozen Australians to fall casualty to a German artillery barrage during their withdrawal.¹⁵ After escorting one of the prisoners to Australian lines, Private William Jackson returned to no man's land to rescue the wounded. Despite the danger of artillery and machine gun fire, Jackson brought in one man before venturing out again. He was assisting Sergeant Hugh Camden bring in a grievously wounded private when an artillery shell landed nearby. Jackson's right arm was blown off, the private wounded a second time, and Camden knocked unconscious. Jackson went for help. He had his wound dressed, gathered some men, and went out to retrieve Camden and the private. Jackson found the pair just outside the Australian lines, returning with the assistance of others.¹⁶

Jackson and Camden were recommended for the DCM. As was Sergeant William Fisk. Fisk had organised stretcher parties and personally brought in three men in the aftermath of the raid; he was cited as being instrumental in the recovery of the wounded.¹⁷ Camden and Fisk received the DCM, but it seems Jackson's actions were thought particularly distinguished as his DCM recommendation was later superseded by one for the VC.¹⁸ Presumably, it was Jackson's more junior rank and the severity of his wound that set him apart. The life-saving heroics displayed here were not exactly throwbacks to the classic rescues of the Boer War like some of those in Palestine. However, they were still representative of a type of action that

¹⁴ Bean, *Australian Imperial Force in France, 1916*, 217n.

¹⁵ Bean, *Australian Imperial Force in France, 1916*, 260–61.

¹⁶ Recommendations for Sergeant Hugh Camden and Private William Jackson, 18 July 1916, AWM28, 2/72.

¹⁷ Recommendation for Sergeant William Fisk, 18 July 1916, AWM28, 2/72.

¹⁸ Staunton, *Victoria Cross*, 51.

dominated the heroic paradigm in the late nineteenth century and one that was beginning to come under increasing criticism.

Nevertheless, award recommendations for the saving of life continued to arise as the AIF took part in three major operations in France in 1916. The actions at Fromelles, Pozières and Mouquet Farm yielded a further nineteen recommendations for the VC. The majority arose from the fighting around Pozières in July and August, of which ten were in recognition of humanitarian exploits. The reported actions varied from a single instance of one or two rescues, to multiple recoveries over several days. Only two recommendations resulted in the award of the VC: those to Private Martin O'Meara and Sergeant Claud Castleton. Over four days of fierce fighting, and while variously working as a battalion scout, O'Meara repeatedly went to the aid of wounded men. Writing in support of his recommendation, two officers estimated that O'Meara rescued 'at least 20 men' despite the continual threat of artillery fire and while 'under conditions that are indescribable.'¹⁹ Castleton too was credited with multiple rescues. On the night of 28/29 July, after the 5th Brigade's attack on the German lines was pushed back, Castleton thrice ventured into no man's land to recover the wounded. He was killed bringing in his third man.²⁰

There is a certain curiosity in these two awards, as some of the downgraded recommendations were for almost identical exploits. In Castleton's case, surely it was death that cemented his claim as he was the only fatality forwarded for humanitarian heroics. For O'Meara it is, comparatively, less clear. Only a fortnight before O'Meara's actions, Corporal Stanley Carpenter was similarly cited for tending to and recovering the wounded during four days of heavy operations. Carpenter was clearly prolific as his commanding officer attributed the battalion's low rate of 'missing' men (often those who were killed or wounded and stranded in no man's land) to his efforts.²¹ Yet Carpenter received the DCM. The recommendations were subject to different battalion, brigade and division commanders, but Carpenter's appears to have been approved at all three levels without comment. What seems to most separate Carpenter is the brevity of his recommendation and that it lacked the detail often appreciated in such matters. O'Meara's base citation was also brief—in fact, it was even shorter than Carpenter's—but his recommendation was, uniquely, accompanied by witness statements from no less than seven officers; the detail filled five forms.²²

¹⁹ Lieutenant W.J. Lynas, recommendation for Private Martin O'Meara, 16 August 1916, AWM28, 2/101.

²⁰ Recommendation for Sergeant Claud Castleton, 25 August 1916, AWM28, 1/69.

²¹ Recommendation for Corporal Stanley Carpenter, 1 August 1916, AWM28, 1/5 PART 1.

²² Recommendation for O'Meara.

The problem here harks back to a crucial element in award recommendations, particularly those for the VC: detail and specifics. Poor quality, vague or brief citations caused the rejection of many recommendations. There are two prominent examples of this arising from Pozières: those of Albert Jacka and Francis Goodwin. Jacka, the Gallipoli VC, had since been commissioned a second lieutenant. On 7 August, after the Australian lines had been overrun and some forty men in the rear captured, he rallied the seven able-bodied men under his command to rush the enemy. Jacka's assault turned the tide on what had been a dire situation—the line was retaken, and some fifty Germans made prisoner. Every man in Jacka's platoon became a casualty; Jacka himself sustained seven wounds and spent almost three months in hospital.²³ Many of Jacka's contemporaries believed his actions warranted a Bar to his VC. Indeed, Bean opined that 'Jacka's counter-attack ... stands as the most dramatic and effective act of individual audacity in the history of the A.I.F.'²⁴ He was instead recommended for the DSO, which was downgraded to the Military Cross.²⁵ Although several commentators have passionately argued that Jacka was the victim of class bias or personal prejudice,²⁶ the most probable explanation is the recommendation: less than fifty words in length and devoid of context or specifics, it is, as Jacka's biographer wrote, 'quite colourless.'²⁷

Goodwin's case met a similar fate. Goodwin is unique as he was twice recommended for the VC during operations around Pozières: first as a regimental sergeant major for his actions from 23–27 July and again three weeks later, by which time he had been commissioned a second lieutenant. In the first instance he was forwarded for his 'gallant work' in gathering valuable intelligence during a patrol near Mouquet Farm, supervising the supply of rations, and helping to recover and evacuate the wounded, all the while under heavy fire and reportedly without sleep or rest for three days. The intended award was at first downgraded to the DCM, and later again to the Military Cross.²⁸ The second recommendation, though clear in acknowledging Goodwin's 'invaluable work' in myriad areas, stressed his efforts to rescue multiple men over two days of operations. Once again, the award was downgraded and Goodwin received a Bar to his Military Cross.²⁹ As was the case with Jacka's DSO, Goodwin's first recommendation was vague and imprecise. The second recommendation was more

²³ War diary, 48th Battalion, 8 August 1916, AWM4, 23/65/7; Grant, *Jacka, VC*, 76–8, 85–7.

²⁴ Bean, *Australian Imperial Force in France, 1916*, 720.

²⁵ Recommendation for Second Lieutenant Albert Jacka, 11 August 1916, AWM28, 1/180 PART 1.

²⁶ See, for example, Robert Macklin, *Bravest: How Some of Australia's Greatest War Heroes Won Their Medals* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2008), 51; Grant, *Jacka, VC*, 79–82.

²⁷ Grant, *Jacka, VC*, 80.

²⁸ Recommendation for Regimental Sergeant Major Francis Goodwin, 31 July 1916, AWM28, 1/5 PART 2.

²⁹ Recommendation for Second Lieutenant Francis Goodwin, 7 September 1916, AWM28, 1/8 PART 1.

detailed, but was submitted just days after official policy had moved beyond rewarding humanitarian heroics. Detail was not a guarantor of award, of course, but it did lend greater confidence to a recommendation and, for the assessing officer, conjured a more vivid image of the actions for which the nominee was cited. Clearly conceptions of empire heroism were in flux—the requirement for award was raised as both actions and recommendations were more involved than ever before. Trench warfare on the Western Front demanded more from the infantryman than the veld had of the mounted trooper less than two decades before; fleeting heroics or laconic recommendations were no longer sufficient to secure recognition.

The heightened standard of heroism can partly be attributed to the Military Medal. The award was instituted in March 1916 to recognise instances of bravery, distinguished leadership or valuable services performed in the field by men from the ranks, but of a standard below that required for the DCM. The medal came as part of an initiative to maintain the standards of extant decorations, yet still grant adequate recognition for services on the frontlines. In this sense, the Military Medal was created to be a widely disseminated and effective instrument of recognition. Over 120,000 were awarded during the First World War for some 25,000 DCMs and 628 VCs (of which only 346 went to ordinary and non-commissioned ranks).³⁰ The Military Medal was open to all personnel ranked sergeant and below and to all arms of the army. From June 1916, this included women. It was the first gallantry decoration to which women were eligible; martial achievement and wartime recognition were thus nudged ever so slightly from an exclusively masculine domain.³¹ The institution of the Military Medal as a third-level award for bravery cemented a four-tiered system (see figure 3.1 in previous chapter) for the recognition of wartime heroism. Accordingly, the standard for the DCM and, by extension, the VC were raised. General Birdwood, by now in command of I ANZAC Corps, noticed the heightened requirements in September 1916: ‘It is I think common knowledge such acts, as in previous wars have undoubtedly been thought worthy of the Victoria Cross, are now relegated to lower classes of rewards, e.g., the Distinguished Conduct Medal and even the Military Medal.’³² The VC had thus become much harder to obtain. This would explain the burgeoning emphasis on sustained heroics, and the importance of detail and depth in award recommendations.

³⁰ Abbott and Tamplin, *British Gallantry Awards*, 82, 226; ‘War Office, 31st March, 1919,’ *London Gazette*, 31 March 1919.

³¹ Duckers, *British Gallantry Awards*, 44–46.

³² Lieutenant General Sir William Birdwood to Assistant Military Secretary, Second Army, 10 September 1916, AWM25, 391/45.

Heroism in transition

It was amid these conditions that Haig had his Military Secretary circulate the directive on the VC and humanitarian heroics in August 1916. The immediate legacy of the directive was a distinct decline in the recognition of life-saving heroics, a further heightened standard for heroism, and the rise of aggressive and tactical actions. But there is a broader context in which the directive must be considered. Haig ascended to the command of the BEF in December 1915 as a replacement to Field Marshal Sir John French. French, whose hold on the top post had been tenuous, administered the BEF through a defensive war in an attempt to stem the tide of the German southward advance. Political dissatisfaction with the conduct of the BEF and increasing tensions between French and senior cabinet ministers saw French replaced by Haig, then commander of the First Army.³³ Haig was now under pressure to vindicate his appointment and reorient the BEF to operate on an offensive footing. As Keith Jeffery has argued, with the possibility of a peace settlement increasingly unlikely from late 1916, the only avenue that remained to secure victory or ensure defeat was a decisive campaign on the Western Front.³⁴ Encouraging aggressive and tactical actions—what can be considered ‘war winning’ heroics—while simultaneously deterring acts that potentially sapped the fighting strength and led to unnecessary casualties provided one means to do this. Haig thus attempted to use the VC, the quintessential symbol of heroic achievement in the British Empire, as an instrument to disrupt the stalemate that had descended on the Western Front and wage an offensive war.

Haig was determined that the British honours system be responsive to the demands of the modern battlefield. In this sense Haig’s directive had an immediate effect. As the initial instruction was disseminated along the military chain of command, clarifying (or, more accurately, interpretive) features were added. Of significance is the memorandum sent to the units under the 2nd Australian Division. The memorandum repeated the instruction on lifesaving heroics but went on to declare that ‘the V.C. will only be given for acts of conspicuous gallantry which are materially conducive to the gaining of a victory.’³⁵ In essence, consideration would only be given to feats of heroism that directly contributed or led to a tactical victory. Heroic defeats or romanticised acts of sacrifice were now far less likely to receive recognition. Birdwood admitted as much in 1917. He reputedly informed Major Henry Murray that had the First Battle of Bullecourt been a success, Murray would have received a

³³ J.P. Harris, *Douglas Haig and the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 184–85.

³⁴ Keith Jeffery, *1916: A Global History* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 365–69.

³⁵ DAA&QMG, 2nd Australian Division, to divisional sub-units.

Bar to the VC he had won near Gueudecourt earlier in the year rather than that to his DSO. As Murray later reflected: 'It is not the practice to give the VC to a man who had been in a losing battle.'³⁶

One of the most prominent examples of this tension is the disastrous Battle of Fromelles, fought on 19–20 July 1916. Even prior to the August directive on the VC, Haig and his staff had sought to encourage an offensive spirit among the empire forces on the Western Front. Around March, General Headquarters ordered all units to increase the frequency of trench raids. The intent was to cultivate an aggressiveness ahead of the offensives planned for later in the year.³⁷ Already the importance of operational success and the offensive was explicit; neither of which came to fruition at Fromelles. Fromelles was the first major operation in which the Australians fought on the Western Front. The battle, designed to prevent German reserves being reallocated to the main British offensive on the Somme, saw the British 61st (2nd South Midland) Division and Australian 5th Division attack the defences held by the 6th Bavarian Reserve Division near the village of Fromelles. Planning for the attack, however, was rushed and the conditions far from optimal. The result was what has been described as 'the bloodiest 24 hours in Australia's military history'; the 5th Division suffered 5,533 casualties, while the already understrength South Midlanders sustained 1,547 killed or wounded.³⁸

Lieutenant General Sir Richard Haking, the British commander of XI Corps responsible for Fromelles, attributed the failure of the assault to inexperience and a lack of 'offensive spirit' in the two divisions.³⁹ It is unsurprising then that few honours were distributed in the aftermath of the battle, despite posthumous recommendations for the VC to two officers in the 5th Division. Major Arthur Hutchinson was forwarded for his 'gallant leadership' in directing two companies of the 58th Battalion. The final sentence of Hutchinson's recommendation, however, revealed something problematic: 'His life and the lives of his men were gallantly given in the hope of aiding the attack of the 61st Division, which unfortunately was not made.'⁴⁰ The recommendation conceded that the assault was a failure and, indeed,

³⁶ Harry Murray, quoted in George Franki and Clyde Slatyer, *Mad Harry: Australia's Most Decorated Soldier* (Sydney: Kangaroo Press, 2003), 104.

³⁷ Aaron Pegram, "'Nightly Suicide Operations': Trench Raids and the Development of the AIF,' in Bou, *The AIF in Battle*, 194.

³⁸ Rachael Brown, 'Fallen Diggers Honoured in Fromelles,' ABC News, 23 July 2012, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2012-07-21/fallen-diggers-honoured-in-fromelles/4145576>; Stevenson, *War with Germany*, 88–91.

³⁹ Haking, quoted in Stevenson, *War with Germany*, 92. Contemporary scholarship tends to agree that inexperience was a contributing factor, but also attributes the failure to deficient planning and command at the corps and divisional levels. See Beaumont, *Broken Nation*, 189–90, 195–96; Stevenson, *War with Germany*, 92.

⁴⁰ Recommendation for Major Arthur Hutchinson, 3 August 1916, AWM28, 1/255 PART 2.

Hutchinson's sacrifice had been in vain. Hardly the inspirational heroic tale that Haig sought to cultivate. Lieutenant John Lees of the 30th Battalion was also praised for his leadership. Although twice wounded, Lees directed his platoon under intense machine gun and artillery fire while holding a sap 'nearest the enemy parapet'. He died at the post. Here too, Lees' commanding officer seems affronted by the sacrifice under such conditions. He concluded the recommendation with almost a judgement: 'his death is deeply deplored.'⁴¹ Although both were supported for the VC at divisional level, Lees was Mentioned in Despatches and Hutchinson received no recognition at all; his recommendation instead bears the inquisitive mark, 'No trace of award'.⁴²

The few honours that were granted for Fromelles reflected localised tactical success. Sergeant Francis Law of the 31st Battalion received a DCM for leading the capture of a German machine gun. A Military Cross went to Captain John Murray of the 53rd for consolidating a captured German post, while Corporal Patrick Mealey of the 54th received the Military Medal for his bombing work.⁴³ In each of these recommendations any hint of operational failure was all but obscured. The demands of the Western Front saw the demise of romanticised heroics and the rise of aggressive actions in their stead, to the extent that Melvin Smith has likened the post-1916 recipient of the VC to 'a homicidal maniac, eager to kill until killed himself.'⁴⁴ Smith's analogy is simplistic, but from late 1916 onwards bestowals of the VC on the Western Front were typified by the rushing of machine gun posts, the consolidation of ground, and the death or capture of enemy combatants. Actions that, at their core, reflected the elements inherent in Albert Jacka's feat at Gallipoli: aggression, ruthlessness, and tactical success.

This aggressive operational paradigm was, nonetheless, at odds with what many of the ordinary men on the frontlines perceived to be heroic. Among those frequently singled out for praise were the stretcher-bearers and other personnel who cared for the wounded. Writing just after the invasion of Gallipoli in April 1915, 2nd Field Ambulance bearer Private Ralph Goode noted with pride that 'the infantry say we are all heroes.'⁴⁵ This was not an uncommon view. In an interview with wounded Australians less than three months later, writer Alice Grant Rosman remarked to the men, 'I hope you'll get a few V.C.'s'. In response, a Private Bishop reflected: 'The chaps who deserve 'em are our stretcher-bearers ... I reckon they earn a V.C.'

⁴¹ Recommendation for Lieutenant John Lees, 3 August 1916, AWM28, 2/82.

⁴² Recommendation for Hutchinson.

⁴³ Recommendation for Sergeant Francis Law, 3 August 1916, AWM28, 2/82; recommendations for Captain John Murray and Corporal Patrick Mealey, 3 August 1916, AWM28, 1/255 PART 1.

⁴⁴ Smith, *Awarded for Valour*, 205.

⁴⁵ Ralph Goode, quoted in Mark Johnston, *Stretcher-Bearers: Saving Australians from Gallipoli to Kokoda* (Port Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 9.

about a dozen times a day carrying in the wounded under fire. Never saw anything like it in my life.’⁴⁶ Such praise was not confined to the ordinary ranks. Lieutenant General Sir John Monash, who led the 3rd Division from 1916 before succeeding Birdwood in command of the unified Australian Corps in May 1918, wrote that there ‘was no finer example of individual self-sacrifice ... than the Stretcher-bearer service, which suffered exceedingly in its noble work ... and exposed itself unflinchingly to every danger.’⁴⁷ Such perceptions highlight that the heroic paradigm endorsed by the military establishment did not always reflect what was socially or systematically revered.

Stretcher-bearers and other medical personnel were still able to be recognised for heroism under Haig’s operational paradigm (remembering the caveat for ‘those whose duty it is to care for such cases’). But as A.G. Butler lamented in the official history of Australia’s medical services in the war, the exception was widely misunderstood and often disregarded, particularly within the AIF. Butler attributed this to a rigid interpretation of Haig’s directive and confusion over the specific meaning of the exception.⁴⁸ This is not to say that recommendations for life-saving heroics ceased outright. Indeed, between the circulation of Haig’s directive in August 1916 to war’s end, at least fourteen recommendations with a humanitarian element were submitted for the VC within the AIF. But such cases failed for the most part to garner support or approval, even when the exception was met. The latter affected two men in particular: Private Arthur Carson (serving as Carlson), a Norwegian-born stretcher-bearer in the 2nd Battalion, and Major William Johnston of the 3rd Field Ambulance.

During the Second Battle of Bullecourt in May 1917, Carson went to the assistance of a fellow stretcher-bearer after the latter’s companion was killed. As the pair carted a man in, other wounded sheltering nearby called out for their attention.⁴⁹ Despite the continual threat of machine gun and sniper fire, Carson ventured out up to three more times to singlehandedly carry in these men. On the final journey, Carson was giving aid to one man when another bearer going to their assistance was killed. ‘Nothing daunted’, the recommendation noted, Carson carried the soldier on his back until a bullet struck the Norwegian in the hip. Still, Carson managed to drag himself and his patient back to the Australian lines.⁵⁰ Carson’s commanding

⁴⁶ Alice Grant Rosman, ‘South Australian Wounded in England,’ *Advertiser* (Adelaide), 22 July 1915.

⁴⁷ John Monash, *The Australian Victories in France in 1918* (1920; repr., Collingwood: Black Inc, 2015), 287.

⁴⁸ A.G. Butler, *Special Problems and Services*, vol. 3 of *Official History of the Australian Army Medical Services, 1914–1918* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1943), 1045.

⁴⁹ Recommendation for Private Arthur Carlson, May 1917, AWM28, 1/24 PART 1; Charles Bean, *The Australian Imperial Force in France, 1917*, vol. 4 of *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–1918*, 11th ed. (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1941), 496–97.

⁵⁰ Recommendation for Carlson; Johnston, *Stretcher-Bearers*, 303.

officer praised his ‘acts of cold, deliberate courage’ and recommended he be awarded the ‘D.C.M. as it is understood that the V.C. will not be granted for life saving.’ The brigade commander, Brigadier General William Lesslie, obviously possessed a deeper understanding of Haig’s caveat and, drawing parallels to a recent British award, recommended Carson for the VC as the ‘instructions issued on the subject are not intended to debar a stretcher bearer’.⁵¹ A more senior officer evidently disagreed as Carson received the DCM. In the Australian official history, Bean was critical of the decision to downgrade Carson’s award, writing ‘[t]hese actions obviously merited the highest military award ... But ... through a mistaken application’ of Haig’s directive ‘that reward was not granted.’⁵² Butler agreed, though conceded that in this instance ‘more lives were lost than saved by rescue, which might have been left till nightfall.’⁵³ Were Carson a combatant this would have been the type of action that Haig and the High Command had sought to discourage, a matter that may well have prejudiced the recommendation.

Johnston’s case is similarly murky. His recommendation originated from the Battle of Passchendaele in September 1917, when he was attached as regimental medical officer to the 12th Battalion during operations near Hooze in western Belgium. After German heavy artillery had caused mass casualties, depleted the available stretcher-bearers and led to an overcrowding of the Regimental Aid Post, Johnston ventured out to tend to the wounded stranded in the open.⁵⁴ Although subject to artillery and rifle fire throughout, Johnston persisted until severely wounded himself some hours later. Praised for his ‘self-sacrificing devotion to duty’, Johnston was recommended for the VC by Brigadier General Gordon Bennett, commander of the 3rd Brigade. It was at division or corps headquarters that ‘VC’ was crossed out and ‘DSO’ substituted in its place.⁵⁵ Once again a misinterpretation of Haig’s directive endured, which is curious because Johnston’s actions bear a striking similarity to those of Captain Noel Chavasse, a British medical officer. Less than a week prior to Johnston’s efforts at Hooze, the War Office had announced the posthumous award of a Bar to the VC Chavasse had won on the Somme. He was the second of only three men to receive the VC twice.⁵⁶ Chavasse’s second award resulted from his persistent efforts the previous month near Wietje (less than four kilometres

⁵¹ Recommendation for Carlson.

⁵² Bean, *Australian Imperial Force in France, 1917*, 498n.

⁵³ A.G. Butler, *The Western Front*, vol. 2 of *Official History of the Australian Army Medical Services, 1914–1918* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1940), 147n.

⁵⁴ Recommendation for Major William Johnston, 8 October 1917, AWM28, 1/32 PART 2; Bean, *Australian Imperial Force in France, 1917*, 784.

⁵⁵ Recommendation for Johnston.

⁵⁶ The other two were British surgeon Arthur Martin-Leake (1902 and 1914) and New Zealand infantryman, Charles Upham (1941 and 1942). Crook, *Evolution of the Victoria Cross*, 96–97.

from Hooge), where for two days he tended to and carried in the wounded until he was killed.⁵⁷ In both cases the officers had cared for casualties while exposed and under debilitating fire until artillery and rifle fire put an end to their efforts. And yet the level of recognition was not uniform. There are key differences between the two cases—Chavasse's death being a prominent one—but the award to Chavasse should have been signal enough to the Australian authorities that medical personnel were included within the rubric of contemporary heroism.

Two Australians did receive the VC in the later stages of the war for actions involving a humanitarian element, though in both cases the lifesaving feat was a minor component in a grander (tactical) action. At Polygon Wood in September 1917, after the advance of the 31st Battalion had been checked by machine gun fire, Private Patrick Bugden twice led small parties of men to capture the German pillboxes responsible. In between these tactical feats, Bugden was credited with saving five wounded men under fire and with going to the rescue of a captured Australian. It was in the midst of performing another 'dangerous mission' that Bugden was killed.⁵⁸ The second VC went to Sergeant Percy Statton, who commanded a Lewis machine gun section in the 40th Battalion during the operations near Proyart in northern France in August 1918. By this stage of the war the Germans had been forced onto a defensive footing, one which precipitated a dramatic spike in the flow of gallantry awards to British combatants as movement on the front afforded a greater opportunity for tactical heroics. Early during the assault, after part of the 40th Battalion had been held up by machine gun fire, Statton brought his Lewis gun to bear on the German gunners to reignite the battalion's momentum. He performed a similar feat later in the day. After the 37th Battalion on the left found fierce opposition from four machine guns, Statton gathered three men, rushed the two closest posts and forced the remaining gun teams to withdraw.⁵⁹ Soon afterwards, one of Statton's men was badly wounded and a second killed when another machine gun opened fire from nearby. Statton was forced to withdraw, but under the cover of darkness that night he returned to collect the two men.⁶⁰ In both of these cases the humanitarian was but an afterthought in the recommendation—inspirational tactical heroics had become the entrenched standard.

The actions of men such as Bugden and Statton reflect the realities of the battlefield from late 1917. The sustained and influential nature of their exploits was integral for recognition. But so too was tactical leadership. To place this in context, as war on the Western

⁵⁷ 'War Office, 14th September, 1917,' *London Gazette*, 14 September 1917.

⁵⁸ Recommendation for Private Patrick Bugden, 2 October 1917, AWM28, 1/281 PART 1.

⁵⁹ Recommendation for Serjeant Percy Statton, 17 August 1918, AWM28, 1/168 PART 1.

⁶⁰ Wigmore, *They Dared Mightily*, 140.

Rank	Number recommended	Number awarded	Success rate %
Private	39	16	41.0
Lance Corporal	11	3	27.3
Corporal	13	6	46.2
Sergeant	14	9	64.3
Sergeant Major	1	0	0
Second Lieutenant	7	3	42.9
Lieutenant	25	10	40.0
Captain	5	5	100
Major	3	1	33.3
Totals	118	53	44.92

Table 4.1: Distribution by rank of AIF recommendations for the VC on the Western Front. Source: AWM28, Recommendation Files for Honours and Awards, AIF, 1914–18 War.

Front wore on British and Dominion generals increasingly sought innovative means to break the stalemate. Thus, in the latter stages of the war aircraft and tanks were deployed in concert with artillery barrages to support assaults by infantry. Yet, as historian Robert Stevenson notes, ‘British tactics were firmly in the hands of junior leaders’.⁶¹ The leadership of non-commissioned men and junior officers had the potential to bring some order to the chaos of the battlefield and inspire men to fight (or fight harder) towards the objective. To a great extent it was on these junior leaders that heroism and tactical success hinged in the latter part of the war. It perhaps then comes as little surprise that men ranked between corporal and captain constituted 55 percent of those in the AIF recommended for, and 62.3 percent of those awarded, the VC on the Western Front. As table 4.1 highlights, captains and sergeants experienced the highest success rates when it came to VC recommendations at this time. Granted, the rate of approval for second lieutenants and lieutenants was little different to that of a private. But what is significant here is how many junior officers were being recommended for and awarded the VC.

Inspirational leadership had emerged as a key consideration of tactical heroism. This may explain why in some instances the ranking soldier tended to receive higher recognition. Take, for instance, the case of Lieutenant Clifford Sadlier and Sergeant Charles Stokes of the 51st Battalion at Villers-Bretonneux. On 24/25 April 1918, after the left flank of their company

⁶¹ Stevenson, ‘The Battalion,’ 57.

had been halted by concentrated machine gun fire, the by now wounded Sadlier gathered his platoon's bombing section and, supported by Stokes, led the bombers against the machine guns. The section killed the crew of two guns but became casualties themselves in the process. On his own, Sadlier neutralised a third gun as Stokes singlehandedly captured a fourth. With a second wound, Sadlier was unable to continue; Stokes assumed charge of the platoon and led it through to the end of the action.⁶² In the aftermath of the battle, Sadlier was credited with 'clearing the flank, and allowing the Battalion to move forward'. He was recommended for the Military Cross, which was later upgraded to the VC.⁶³ Yet Stokes received the DCM.⁶⁴ The discrepancy is curious as, aside from Sadlier's wounding, both men demonstrated leadership and arguably made a similar contribution to the tactical success of the action. Perhaps Sadlier, as the officer in command, was thought to have instigated success by inspiring the men of his platoon, including Stokes. Either way, the senior soldier was accorded the greater recognition in this case, which was not an isolated occurrence. Second Lieutenant Arthur Blackburn won the VC at Pozières in 1916 for leading fifty men to clear some 370 yards of trench in what he later described as 'the biggest bastard of a job I have ever struck'.⁶⁵ Blackburn was adamant that Sergeant Robert Inwood, killed in the final stages of the action and described as his 'right-hand man throughout', 'should have got a similar decoration.'⁶⁶ Inwood's contribution went unrecognised, though his brother Reginald was awarded the VC at Polygon Wood in 1917.

It would appear that occupying positions of leadership afforded these men the opportunity to inspire the soldiers under their command and to make tangible contributions to the outcome of operations. However, awards to men of superior rank were often also granted as recognition to the unit as a whole. This is why battalions view VCs as such a source of pride—the medal is perceived as a mark of distinction that reflects glory on the unit. And, indeed, such a view is held by many VC recipients themselves. Blackburn expressed as much in 1918: 'I have always regarded the winning of that decoration not as any reward for what I personally did, but as a reward for the bravery and gallantry of those men whom it was my privilege to lead.'⁶⁷

⁶² Recommendation for Lieutenant Clifford Sadlier, 5 May 1918, AWM28, 1/229; Recommendation for Sergeant Charles Stokes, 5 May 1918, AWM28, 1/229.

⁶³ Recommendation for Sadlier; 'War Office, 11th July, 1918,' *London Gazette*, 11 July 1918.

⁶⁴ 'Australian Force,' *London Gazette*, 3 September 1918.

⁶⁵ Recommendation for Lieutenant Arthur Blackburn, 29 July 1916, AWM28, 1/5 PART 3; Arthur Blackburn to Guy Fisher, 4 September 1916, 3DRL/6392, AWM.

⁶⁶ Bean, *Australian Imperial Force in France, 1916*, 512; Arthur Blackburn to Mary Inwood, 4 December 1917, 1DRL/0375, AWM.

⁶⁷ Arthur Blackburn, quoted in Andrew Faulkner, *Arthur Blackburn, VC: An Australian Hero, His Men, and Their Two World Wars* (Kent Town: Wakefield Press, 2008), 116.

Masculinity, gender and heroism in the trenches

The recognition of aggressive heroics over the saving of life demarcated a harsher definition of masculinity on the frontlines. Pre- and early war notions of masculinity in Australia were predicated on ideas of duty, service and the martial man. Such perceptions largely persisted throughout the war, but grew to such a feverish state that, during enlistment crises, military service became tied up with ideas of good citizenship as broader civic society came to depict the soldier as the embodiment of the masculine, patriotic man.⁶⁸ Such direct and gendered representations pervaded the social experience of the war in Australia—blunt propaganda appealed to a masculine sense of duty; average citizens (typically young women) handed non-enlisted men white feathers symbolic of cowardice; while war correspondents such as Charles Bean beat the drum of war with their glorified prose. Historian Jessica Meyer has found that the situation in Britain was not too dissimilar. In her study of British masculinity in the First World War, Meyer argues that letters of condolence became a particularly potent medium in which both military and civilian communities constructed the idealised heroic male as a dutiful, stoic and patriotic martial figure.⁶⁹ Wartime Anglo-Australian society thus produced, as Bart Ziino suggests, ‘a civic order with (male) military service at its apex.’⁷⁰ This social construction and its associated expectations of loyalty and duty had resonance in the trenches, though manifested in specific ways.

The writings and recollections of personnel who served at the front provide a window into how these individuals constructed their own experience and perceptions of heroic manliness. In his interviews with Australian veterans of the First World War in the 1980s, historian Alistair Thomson found that those who assumed active combat roles often recalled feeling a collective sense of duty, loyalty and in some cases a quiet fortitude to overcome or mask fear.⁷¹ One old soldier, Bill Langham, reflected that fear was pervasive: ‘I don’t give a damn who it is. Whether he’s a VC winner or what he is, he’s scared’.⁷² Harry Murray, the Gueudecourt VC, echoed similar sentiments. Writing post-war, Murray acknowledged the terror and almost overwhelming sense of self-preservation he felt at Mouquet Farm in 1916; a

⁶⁸ Joan Beaumont, ‘Australian Citizenship and the Two World Wars,’ *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 53, no. 2 (2007): 175.

⁶⁹ Jessica Meyer, *Men of War: Masculinity and the First World War in Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 89.

⁷⁰ Ziino, ‘Eligible Men,’ 203.

⁷¹ Alistair Thomson, ‘A Crisis of Masculinity? Australian Military Manhood in the Great War,’ in *Gender and War: Australians at War in the Twentieth Century*, eds. Joy Damousi and Marilyn Lake (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 136–42.

⁷² Langham, quoted in Thomson, ‘A Crisis of Masculinity?,’ 139.

battle for which he was awarded the DSO. During a retirement, Murray fleetingly considered leaving a wounded man to save himself:

It was then that I fought the hardest battle of my life, between an almost insane desire to continue running and save my own life, or to comply with the sacred traditions of the A.I.F. and stop to help a wounded comrade.⁷³

Murray did carry the soldier out, but his internal struggle was at odds with how others perceived the man in battle. Former lance corporal Bert Knowles wrote that at Bullecourt in April 1917 Murray was cool and in command, ‘strolling along as if death was something which came with old age.’⁷⁴ These accounts by Langham and Murray reinforce what others, such as Lord Moran and William Miller, have argued about ‘courage’—it is the ability or psychological endurance to persevere despite an innate sense of fear.⁷⁵ These recollections, and the personal significance lent to such memories, also acknowledge that a masculine sense of duty and fortitude was paramount for many men in the trenches.

Frontline masculinity could also manifest as a desire to prove oneself, either as simply capable in combat or outright heroic. The latter is particularly relevant to those thought to be ‘medal chasers’; individuals who, for whatever reason, go out of their way to find dangerous situations in an effort to perform acts worthy of recognition. According to biographer John Ramsland, it was amid the carnage of Passchendaele in 1917 that Joseph Maxwell saw his ‘chance for fame and glory’.⁷⁶ A problematic soldier out of the line, Maxwell had been noted for his leadership potential while serving at Gallipoli and on the Somme, though had earned no individual mark of distinction. Passchendaele was the turning point: within thirteen months he was commissioned and decorated no less than four times, with the VC arising from his exploits in October 1918 during the operations to breach the Hindenburg Line.⁷⁷ Maxwell was determined to make a name for himself and establish his masculine prowess. Maurice Buckley similarly felt compelled to prove himself. Early service with the 13th Light Horse Regiment saw Buckley contract venereal disease in one of Cairo’s brothels and sent home in disgrace. Quarantined at a military barracks outside of Melbourne, Buckley deserted in January 1916. He re-enlisted four months later under the alias of Gerald Sexton.⁷⁸ In little more than two years, Buckley had risen to sergeant in charge of a Lewis gun section and, in one of the final

⁷³ Harry Murray, ‘His Hardest Battle: When Discipline Mastered Fear,’ *Reveille*, 1 December 1935, 33.

⁷⁴ Bert Knowles, ‘Bullecourt Tragedy: Retrospect,’ *Reveille*, April 1930, 15.

⁷⁵ Moran, *Anatomy of Courage*, x, 5; Miller, *Mystery of Courage*, especially 1–12 and 66–76.

⁷⁶ John Ramsland, *Venturing into No Man’s Land: The Charmed Life of Joseph Maxwell VC World War I Hero* (Melbourne: Brolga Publishing, 2012), 113.

⁷⁷ Ramsland, *Venturing into No Man’s Land*, 150.

⁷⁸ Blanch and Pegram, *For Valour*, 294.

battles of the war, received the DCM for his accurate fire in destabilising four German machine gun posts.⁷⁹ The VC followed in September 1918. In the span of a single day's fighting, Buckley was credited with neutralising six machine gun posts and a field gun, and with leading the capture of several dozen German soldiers.⁸⁰ Both Maxwell and Buckley's heroic efforts can be interpreted as a means to assert or re-establish their own masculine identities.

A similar desire to prove one's worth influenced a number of Aboriginal servicemen. As racist and exclusionary policies were deeply engrained in (white) Australian society, there were considerable barriers to Indigenous service within the AIF. Amendments to the Defence Act in 1909 and 1910 restricted military service to those 'substantially of European origin or descent'.⁸¹ Indigenous men who attempted to enlist following the outbreak of war were accordingly rejected because of their race. Not until 1917 was the policy relaxed to accept those with at least one parent of European descent.⁸² Precise numbers are unknown but recent research indicates that more than one thousand Indigenous Australians served in the First World War, two-thirds of whom had managed to obscure or disclaim their Indigeneity in order to enlist prior to 1917.⁸³ On the war fronts, Aboriginal servicemen often found a greater level of tolerance and comradeship than they did in Australia.⁸⁴ Indeed, as one (white) soldier remarked of an Aboriginal comrade killed on the Western Front: 'although he was black, he was a White man, and a dinkum Aussie'.⁸⁵ Acceptance, though, was not automatic. As Philippa Scarlett points out, 'respect had to be won and soldiering ability proved in a way not expected of non-Indigenous soldiers.'⁸⁶

Aboriginal men had to demonstrate their martial prowess and masculinity in order to gain acceptance by their white comrades. Their efforts were duly reflected by honours and awards. Lance Corporal Harry Thorpe, a Brabuwoolooong man, and Private William Rawlings, of the Gunditjmarra people, were awarded Military Medals for clearing German resistance from dugouts and pillboxes near Ypres, Belgium, and Morlancourt, France, in 1917 and 1918

⁷⁹ Recommendation for Corporal Gerald Sexton, 13 August 1918, AWM28, 1/240 PART 1.

⁸⁰ Recommendation for Sergeant Gerald Sexton, 23 September 1918, AWM28, 1/246.

⁸¹ Siobhan McDonnell and Mick Dodson, 'Race, Citizenship and Military Service,' in *Serving Our Country: Indigenous Australians, War, Defence and Citizenship*, ed. Joan Beaumont and Allison Cadzow (Sydney: NewSouth Publishing, 2018), 39.

⁸² Philippa Scarlett, 'Aboriginal Service in the First World War: Identity, Recognition and the Problem of Mateship,' *Aboriginal History* 39 (2015): 166.

⁸³ John Maynard, 'The First World War,' in Beaumont and Cadzow, *Serving Our Country*, 76.

⁸⁴ Peter Stanley, "'He Was Black, He Was a White Man, and a Dinkum Aussie': Race and Empire in Revisiting the Anzac Legend,' in *Race, Empire and First World War Writing*, ed. Santanu Das (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 220, 222.

⁸⁵ Quoted in Stanley, "'He Was Black",' 226.

⁸⁶ Scarlett, 'Aboriginal Service in the First World War,' 170.

respectively.⁸⁷ Similarly, Private William Allan Irwin, of the Gamilaraay people, was awarded the DCM for his 'irresistible dash' after he singlehandedly rushed three German machine gun posts at Road Wood in August 1918.⁸⁸ Irwin's actions had immediately followed those of Private George Cartwright. After two companies were held up by machine gun fire, had Cartwright advanced towards the lead German post. He shot three gunners, tossed in a bomb, and then charged the position to capture nine German soldiers. Cartwright received the VC.⁸⁹ The unequal recognition accorded these two cases is curious given their similarities. Whether the two actions were compared at the time is unclear, but the most credible explanation for the discrepancy in award is that, in occurring first, Cartwright's feat was credited with being an inspirational influence. Indeed, his recommendation noted that 'all strove to emulate his gallantry.'⁹⁰ Although Indigenous Australians have been well represented among other honours, the VC remains elusive. The most probable reason is that, proportionally, Aboriginal peoples have constituted a small minority of Australia's military forces and have thus been accorded fewer opportunities to demonstrate the high standard required for the award. Nevertheless, it is clear that, because of their race, Indigenous men often had to go to greater effort to prove their martial abilities to even have a chance of conforming to Anglo-Australian notions of masculinity.

What the above cases indicate is that martial manliness and masculine identity are complex and could manifest in myriad ways. Nevertheless, there is one commonality that threads through these constructions: the infantryman and machine gunner, as the principal combatants, epitomised ideas of wartime masculinity. These were the men who were foremost afforded the opportunity to test their mettle in combat and 'coolness' under fire. The latter, in particular, was seen as an important determinant for manliness, and one which became synonymous with battlefield heroism in both popular and military discourse.⁹¹ Non-combatant personnel and others who laboured behind the lines accordingly expressed feelings of guilt or inadequacy. This sense affected two of Alistair Thomson's interviewees: Bill Langham, as an artilleryman, thought his job less gruelling than that faced by the infantry, while Percy Bird noted feelings of inferiority and shame following his redeployment as a clerk.⁹² Even stretcher-bearers, who often laboured under fire, voiced doubts about the (masculine) legitimacy of their

⁸⁷ Recommendation for Lance Corporal Harry Thorpe, 13 October 1917, AWM28, 1/34 PART 1; Maynard, 'First World War,' *Serving Our Country*, 88–89.

⁸⁸ Recommendation for Private William Allan Irwin, 7 September 1918, AWM28, 1/171 PART 1.

⁸⁹ Recommendation for Private George Cartwright, 7 September 1918, AWM28, 1/171 PART 1.

⁹⁰ Recommendation for Cartwright.

⁹¹ Meyer, *Men of War*, 87–88.

⁹² Thomson, 'A Crisis of Masculinity?', 137, 139.

work. Writing in 1915, Private Octavius Jocelyn Carr of the 1st Australian Field Ambulance lamented: ‘Am almost wishing I was doing the real work of fighting as we seem to be the only hangers on to the army who do the real work.’⁹³ The harsher, machismo form of masculinity that manifested during the war saw non-combatant personnel feel less secure in their role and their sense of manliness, while stretcher-bearers—partly due to the initiatives of Haig and his headquarters—became inadvertently construed as passive, almost feminised, carers of the wounded.

That women were similarly being recognised for tending to men under fire further fuelled these perceptions. The women of the Australian Army Nursing Service (AANS) were, among other tasks, attached to casualty clearing stations and hospitals to nurse the sick and wounded.⁹⁴ Their work was inherently gendered as a service of compassion, tender care, and dutiful devotion: connotations that obscure the fact that these women also had to cope with the carnage of war and sometimes labour under shell fire and bombs. The difficulties associated with wartime nursing are highlighted by the seven AANS nurses who were among the 127 women to be awarded the Military Medal during the First World War.⁹⁵ The first four of the Australian awards arose from an incident in July 1917, when No. 2 Australian Casualty Clearing Station was bombed by enemy aircraft. Sister Alice Ross-King recorded that the bombing caused a ‘good deal of damage’, with four killed and fifteen wounded.⁹⁶ Ross-King, along with Sisters Dorothy Cawood and Clare Deacon and Staff Nurse Mary Derrer, were recognised for their ‘great coolness and devotion’ in safeguarding the wounded and evacuating patients from burning buildings.⁹⁷ The actions of all four correspond to the humanitarian ideal of heroism. That the nurses were rewarded with the Military Medal, however, is a matter of curiosity and one that further elucidates the gender divide imposed by the military establishment.

The nursing services occupied an often ill-defined and inconsistent role within the Commonwealth armies. Although the AANS was subject to the military authority of the Australian Army Medical Corps, it sat awkwardly within the army hierarchy. For example, the nurses were granted honorary ranks as officers without being accorded the same status,

⁹³ Jocelyn Carr, quoted in Johnston, *Stretcher-Bearers*, 8–9.

⁹⁴ For the various other roles adopted by AANS nurses, see Harris, *More than Bombs and Bandages*, 225–29.

⁹⁵ Harris, *More than Bombs and Bandages*, 120; Abbott and Tamplin, *British Gallantry Awards*, 227.

⁹⁶ Alice Ross-King, diary, 22 July 1917, PR02082, AWM; Lieutenant Colonel J. Ramsay Webb, report on the bombing, 25 July 1917, AWM4, 26/63/13.

⁹⁷ Jacqueline Abbott, ‘Cawood, Dorothy Gwendolen (1884–1962),’ *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, accessed 8 April 2018, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/cawood-dorothy-gwendolen-5537>; Jan Bassett, *Guns and Brooches: Australian Army Nursing from the Boer War to the Gulf War* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1992), 63.

privileges or authority as their male colleagues.⁹⁸ This included in matters of honours and awards. That nurses were eligible for the Military Medal and not the Military Cross may reflect, as Jan Bassett suggests, ‘their ambiguous position as honorary officers.’⁹⁹ As Charles Bean was similarly denied a Military Cross at Gallipoli because his captaincy was honorary, there may be some merit to this argument.¹⁰⁰ However, as Bassett also points out, nurses in the Canadian Army Medical Corps were accorded substantive military ranks yet were also precluded from officers’ decorations.¹⁰¹ The inconsistency in award practices sparked the ire of one correspondent to the London-based *British Australasian*, who declared:

Sex qualifications in the winning of such decorations are both illogical and unfair
... It seems absurd that in these days when women are going cheerfully into every
kind of danger, and doing, in some cases, deeds of real heroism, that they should
not be eligible even for the V.C. itself on occasion.¹⁰²

The only other martial awards to which women were eligible were the Royal Red Cross (RRC) and, from 1915, the more junior Associate of the Royal Red Cross (ARRC). Established by Queen Victoria in 1883, the RRC sought to recognise nursing personnel who demonstrated ‘special devotion and competency’.¹⁰³ This could include acts of bravery, though the decorations were most commonly bestowed for meritorious service—whether in war or peace—and rarely for heroism in conflict. Australian nurse Sister Fannie Eleanor Williams, for instance, was appointed ARRC in 1917 for her collaborative research into dysentery and the bacteriological problems that afflicted military personnel in Egypt and France.¹⁰⁴ Appointment to orders of chivalry provided another (albeit limited) avenue to bestow recognition, but when it came to the VC women were not strictly excluded from the award; they were instead interpreted as ineligible by omission due to the ever-problematic vagueness of the medal’s original warrant.

The problem was addressed to some extent after war’s end. In August 1918, King George V directed an inter-departmental committee under Sir Frederick Ponsonby, Keeper of the Privy Purse, to revise the VC’s warrant. Comprised of representatives from the War Office, Admiralty, Air Ministry, Home Office, Colonial Office, and India Office, the purpose of the

⁹⁸ Bassett, *Guns and Brooches*, 53–56.

⁹⁹ Bassett, *Guns and Brooches*, 64.

¹⁰⁰ Ken Inglis, ‘Bean, Charles Edwin (1879–1968),’ *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, accessed 8 April 2018, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/bean-charles-edwin-5166>.

¹⁰¹ Bassett, *Guns and Brooches*, 64.

¹⁰² Phylis, ‘Sex Distinction,’ *Daily Herald* (Adelaide), 3 January 1919.

¹⁰³ Marquess of Hartington, ‘War Office, April 27, 1883,’ *London Gazette*, 27 April 1883.

¹⁰⁴ Harris, *More than Bombs and Bandages*, 176–77.

committee was to consolidate the various pre-war amendments into the one warrant and consider revisions arising from the recent conflict, such as posthumous awards and the eligibility of women.¹⁰⁵ The representatives were generally of the same mind as Sir George Fiddes of the Colonial Office: 'It would look better and be more in accordance with public opinion to make women eligible ... provided always that the standard ... is not lowered.'¹⁰⁶ The sole dissenting voice came from the Admiralty. The Naval Secretary, Rear Admiral Allan Everett, expressed concern that sentimentalism would skew judgement and leave men 'soft-hearted towards the woman ... and give her the benefit of the loosest interpretation of a female act of valour'. To further emphasise his point, Everett concluded that:

... it would be a dangerous measure to include females into the V.C. area. There are enough bickerings in the masculine line as to whether this man or that should or should not have been awarded a V.C., but if the hysterical female world is to be allowed in, God help the poor devils who have to make decisions.¹⁰⁷

Everett's objection was overruled by the remainder of the committee, though King George was similarly reluctant to permit women within the remit of the VC. Royal assent only came after the King received assurances that publication of the new warrant would be delayed until after the peace negotiations had concluded so as to avoid retrospective claims.¹⁰⁸ Women thus became eligible for the VC from 1920, though they curiously continued to be excluded from other forms of medallic recognition. The First World War had set a precedent in which the acts of heroism performed by women were construed as distinct from that of the masculine combatant; a matter that was to resurface over the following decades. The proactive and aggressive infantryman remained the epitome of martial prowess to the military authorities—a status he too came to hold in the eyes of the general populace.

'A stimulating effect on the recruiting movement': The hero writ large

Propaganda was a significant aspect of the home experience for Australians during the First World War, largely because recruitment to the AIF was based on voluntary enlistment. As Australia was geographically remote from the main battlefields and disconnected to the threat of direct attack, persuasion provided the key means through which to achieve mass social

¹⁰⁵ Lieutenant General Sir Francis Davies, Military Secretary, to Sir George Fiddes, Permanent Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, 6 August 1918, CO 323/782, TNA.

¹⁰⁶ 'Opinions of the Representatives of the Various Government Departments of the Questions of Awarding the Victoria Cross to Women,' n.d., CO 323/782, TNA.

¹⁰⁷ Rear Admiral Allan Everett to Lieutenant General Sir Francis Davies, 7 August 1918, WO 32/3443, TNA.

¹⁰⁸ Lord Stamfordham, Private Secretary to the Sovereign, to Winston Churchill, Secretary of State for War, 7 March 1919, WO 32/3443, TNA.

mobilisation. The imagery of posters, text of pro-war articles in the press, and the cry of government slogans induced men to enlist and reassured the public that the war was righteous and in Australia's interest. Early recruitment propaganda thereby appealed to a masculine sense of duty, loyalty and service. Other posters used guilt and shame as a motivator.¹⁰⁹ Such tactics were most prominent in atrocity propaganda, which was used to highlight real or manufactured German atrocities against Belgian civilians and prisoners of war to demonise the Germans as an almost bestial and barbaric enemy.¹¹⁰ Atrocity propaganda generated what Heather Jones has labelled 'war culture' in Britain and the Dominions, which in turn fostered a hatred for the enemy.¹¹¹ This hatred would inspire a wave of anti-Germanism and make it easier for civic society to accept and revere violent and aggressive heroics by empire combatants.

So it was that, from early 1917, VC winners and 'heroic' figures became entangled in the politics of propaganda and recruitment in Australia. By this time the Australian government was under increasing pressure from the British War Cabinet to maintain the number of reinforcements available for active service. The AIF divisions on the Western Front were already understrength following the severe casualties of Fromelles, the Somme and later Passchendaele. But as war weariness began to set in at home enlistments also plummeted, which posed a problem for the political ambitions of Billy Hughes—the Australian prime minister from October 1915—who desired a greater say in regional, Dominion and empire affairs.¹¹² The situation prompted an attempt by Hughes' Cabinet to introduce conscription. The proposal was narrowly defeated in a plebiscite in October 1916. A second attempt was to be made fourteen months later, but in the meantime the Australian government had to turn to alternate means to stimulate recruitment and reinspire a sense of loyalty to the war effort.¹¹³

Propaganda and recruitment drives provided one solution. It was amid this sense of war weariness and discontent that the State Parliamentary Recruiting Committee of Victoria launched the Sportsmen's Thousand initiative in March 1917. The Sportsmen's Thousand was a targeted recruitment drive intended to mobilise one thousand young athletes and sportsmen in Victoria—a battalion's worth—by suggesting that talent on the sports field would translate to prowess on the field of battle. According to the Melbourne *Argus*, the drive would see

¹⁰⁹ Emily Robertson, 'Propaganda at Home (Australia),' in 1914-1918-online, International Encyclopaedia of the First World War, ed. Ute Daniel, Peter Gatrell, Oliver Janz, Heather Jones, Jennifer Keene, Alan Kramer, and Bill Nasson, issued by Freie Universität Berlin, Berlin, 17 February 2015. doi: 10.15463/ie1418.

¹¹⁰ Emily Robertson, 'Propaganda and "Manufactured Hatred": A Reappraisal of the Ethics of First World War British and Australian Propaganda,' *Public Relations Inquiry* 3, no. 2 (2014): 246.

¹¹¹ Heather Jones, *Violence Against Prisoners of War in the First World War: Britain, France and Germany, 1914-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 38-39, 62-67.

¹¹² Beaumont, *Broken Nation*, 446-50; Bou and Dennis, *Australian Imperial Force*, 72.

¹¹³ Beaumont, *Broken Nation*, 219-48.

sportsmen ‘join together, train together, go to the motherland together, and, if the exigencies of war permit, fight together’.¹¹⁴ The drive thereby invoked pre-war notions of masculinity to construe the sporting ground as a training field for civility, gentlemanly behaviour, and war. The most notable aspect of the drive, however, was that Albert Jacka and the VC were featured prominently on the posters.¹¹⁵ Jacka was an accomplished cyclist and amateur boxer prior to the war and, following the award of his VC, was a well-known figure in his home state of Victoria. The Sportsmen’s Thousand sought to exploit this local connection. Backed by the Sportsmen’s Recruiting Committee, the Victorian Cricket Association and the Director-General of Recruiting, the Sportsmen’s Thousand was launched at a rally in West Melbourne Stadium (now Festival Hall) on 16 March. Between boxing exhibitions, vaudeville and band music, the inaugural rally achieved the drive’s first twenty recruits.¹¹⁶ Over the following months, the chief organisers of the drive hosted numerous recruiting rallies across Melbourne and regional Victoria. By all accounts the rallies were well attended, well publicised events that attracted the attention of the public and the press.¹¹⁷

In method and organisation, the Sportsmen’s Thousand closely mirrored earlier government-sanctioned recruitment drives in Australia. Carmichael’s Thousand, instigated by and named for the senior New South Wales politician Ambrose Carmichael (who himself enlisted), had been raised in New South Wales through recruiting rallies in 1915. The Carmichael and Sportsmen initiatives also led to a Ryan’s Thousand, named for the Queensland premier, and a second Carmichael’s Thousand in 1918.¹¹⁸ Targeted recruitment drives that made use of local, notable personalities therefore had some precedent. But unlike the Carmichael and Ryan initiatives, Jacka was not a noted politician. By placing Jacka in the same league as socially prominent and influential peoples, the Sportsmen’s Thousand highlighted Jacka’s social currency as a recipient of the VC and cemented his status as a modern martial celebrity.

¹¹⁴ ‘Sportsmen’s Thousand,’ *Argus* (Melbourne), 8 March 1917.

¹¹⁵ See, for example, ‘Enlist in the Sportsmen’s Thousand,’ Sportsmen’s Recruiting Committee, 1917, ARTV00026, AWM; ‘Which? Man You Are Wanted!,’ Sportsmen’s Recruiting Committee, 1917, ARTV05005, AWM.

¹¹⁶ ‘Sportsmen’s Thousand’; ‘Need for Men,’ *Argus* (Melbourne), 17 March 1917.

¹¹⁷ See, for example, ‘Sportsmen’s Thousand,’ *Ballarat Star*, 1 June 1917; ‘Sportsmen’s Thousand Military Band,’ *Inglewood Advertiser*, 18 September 1917; ‘Sportsman’s Thousand,’ *Malvern Standard*, 1 December 1917.

¹¹⁸ Bede Nairn, ‘Carmichael, Ambrose Campbell (1866–1953),’ *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, accessed 8 April 2018, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/carmichael-ambrose-campbell-5506>; Beaumont, *Broken Nation*, 420–22.



Figure 4.2: Troedel & Cooper, ‘Enlist in the Sportsmen’s 1000,’ Sportsmen’s Recruiting Committee of Victoria, 1917, H2001.34/3a, State Library of Victoria, Melbourne.

This can be seen in the posters created for the drive. Jacka’s likeness is conspicuous in many of the artworks, and so too is the VC. In one poster (figure 4.2) an arrow points to the VC on Jacka’s chest, proclaiming it to be ‘The medal of all medals’. Evidently, it was a reward that all sporting men should desire and prize above any other. Indeed, there was an expectation that the Sportsmen would win a cache of medals on the battlefield. In December 1917, just one month after the first Sportsmen had embarked from Australia, the *Newcastle Morning Herald* reported: ‘It is anticipated by those who compose the Sportsmen’s Thousand that ... numerous military decorations, perhaps including a Victoria Cross or two, will be amongst their honours of war.’¹¹⁹ The confidence in these men was so great that Agar Wynne, a senior Victorian politician and an executive of the Sportsmen’s Recruiting Committee, pledged £500 (approximately \$48,041 in 2018) to the first man to win the VC.¹²⁰ No Sportsman would claim this prize, but again the experience mirrored that of Jacka and the £500 he claimed from John

¹¹⁹ ‘The Victoria Cross,’ *Newcastle Morning Herald*, 29 December 1917.

¹²⁰ ‘£500 for V.C. Winner,’ *Bendigo Independent*, 8 August 1917.

Wren as the first Australian VC of the war. Jacka's presence at the centre of the Sportsmen's Thousand lent a sense of legitimacy and inspiration to the drive, and saw it transcend social boundaries. Sporting connotations of the time were typically grounded in the middling classes, but the working-class Jacka ensured the campaign had a wider appeal and some measure of success. The campaign also used Jacka, a soldier who had killed and who had been wounded multiple times, as almost a brand ambassador to present a glorified and sanitised representation of war. In doing so the Sportsmen's Thousand established a precedent for the use of 'war heroes' for political purposes.

Almost simultaneous to the Sportsmen's drive was the pro-conscription activism of Arthur Blackburn, the Pozières VC. Illness forced Blackburn's return to Australia late in 1916, where he was discharged from the AIF in April. He was not idle for long. In May 1917 he was elected Vice-President of the Returned Soldiers' Association (forerunner of the Returned and Services League) in South Australia. By September he was state president and, in April 1918, he was elected to the South Australian parliament.¹²¹ From these platforms Blackburn became an advocate for the welfare of soldiers and, according to his biographer Andrew Faulkner, made use of 'his new celebrity to promote the war effort by speaking at recruiting rallies.'¹²² In a manner not too dissimilar to the Sportsmen's drive, Blackburn spent much of the remainder of the war touring Adelaide and regional South Australia to inspire recruitment and relay the merits of conscription. To the general populace, Blackburn's authority as a voice from the trenches was lent even further credence and held in greater esteem because he possessed the social currency of the VC.

The Australian government was evidently aware of the inspirational pull commanded by the medal and its recipients. In June 1918 the Department of Defence, with backing from its minister George Pearce and Prime Minister Hughes, raised a proposal to grant three months furlough to Australia to the AIF's VC recipients still on active duty abroad. The request was purely political, as it was intended that these men 'would give great fillip to recruiting'.¹²³ By this stage of the war, conscription had again been rejected, enlistments had further slumped, and several battalions on the Western Front were being forced to merge or disband due to lack of personnel.¹²⁴ The proposal garnered widespread support among the AIF's senior command,

¹²¹ Faulkner, *Arthur Blackburn*, 120–29, 139.

¹²² Faulkner, *Arthur Blackburn*, 123.

¹²³ Department of Defence to General Sir William Birdwood, cablegram, 26 June 1918, MP367/1, 556/33/51, NAA, Canberra.

¹²⁴ Bou and Dennis, *Australian Imperial Force*, 17.

with Major General John Gellibrand, GOC 3rd Division, venturing so far as to declare that the VC winners 'would have a stimulating effect on the recruiting movement.'¹²⁵

At the time of the request thirty-seven of the AIF's personnel had received the VC, of whom eighteen were still on active duty overseas.¹²⁶ Divisional commanders were instructed to consult with the VC recipients under their command with the strict stipulation that '[n]o officer or man is to be retained with his unit on the ground that he cannot be spared', and despatch to London for passage those willing to accept the offer.¹²⁷ Of the eighteen, four were indisposed and three—including Martin O'Meara and Albert Jacka—refused outright. Clifford Sadlier was already to be invalided home due to his wounds, though nine others were amenable to the request. Lieutenant William Ruthven was added to this group after the award of his VC was gazetted in July, while William Symons, the Gallipoli VC, was at his own request permitted to return via the United States.¹²⁸ These men embarked from London in August. A further six sailed for Australia over the following two months. As the men made the journey home, Secretary of the Department of Defence, Thomas Trumble, instructed the commandants of each of the state-based Military Districts to liaise with their State Recruiting Committee 'with a view to taking ... such advantage from [the VC's] stay ... as may be secured from a recruiting point of view.'¹²⁹ However, as the first group of men did not arrive home until October, they had but a limited effect on recruiting before the fighting came to an end on 11 November 1918. The intended recruiting drive, nevertheless, was not the final use of the VC for propaganda purposes in the present war, for Jacka was again to be featured on a poster: this time for peace bonds. The message was broadly similar to earlier initiatives, conveying that Jacka had given his all, 'kept his pledge', and now it was the public's turn.¹³⁰ These various schemes—the recruitment drives, pro-conscription activism and peace bonds—established a precedent for the similar use of 'heroic' men throughout later conflicts. In doing so, the initiatives created a legacy for the promotion of martial heroism and military celebrity that was perpetuated during the interwar period and beyond.

¹²⁵ Major General John Gellibrand to Headquarters Australian Corps, 11 July 1918, AWM26, 449/3.

¹²⁶ Of the remaining nineteen, eleven had been killed in action or died of wounds and eight had returned to Australia. Brigadier General Thomas Griffiths, Commandant AIF Headquarters London, to AIF Headquarters France, 28 June 1918, AWM26, 449/3.

¹²⁷ Brigadier General Thomas Dodds, Deputy Adjutant General AIF, to headquarters Australian divisions, 25 July 1918, AWM26, 449/3.

¹²⁸ Brigadier General Thomas Griffiths to the Department of Defence, cablegram, 2 September 1918, MP367/1, 556/33/51, NAA, Canberra.

¹²⁹ Memoranda by Thomas Trumble to the commandants of the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th Military Districts, 25 September 1918, MP367/1, 556/33/51, NAA, Canberra.

¹³⁰ 'He Kept His Pledge,' Commonwealth Government of Australia, c. 1918–19, ARTV00784, AWM.

Heroes return home

With the end of the war came the monumental task of demobilising the AIF. Over a period of twelve months, some 167,000 Australians were repatriated from Europe and the Middle East.¹³¹ The shipping delays were long enough for Australia's newest VC recipients to attend grand investiture ceremonies at Buckingham Palace, and to navigate their new-found celebrity. Percy Statton, who had received three cheers from his battalion and been carried aloft on the announcement of his VC, enjoyed leave in Paris, served as a guard of honour at Amiens Cathedral, and spent time in London where his portrait was to be painted.¹³² Such a calendar of events reflected the uniqueness of wartime heroism—in that such festivities were, intrinsically, a homage to effective killing—but also signified the high esteem with which recipients of the VC were held.

The wait for repatriation was, however, a trying time for others in the AIF, and long enough for some to either grow bored or find other opportunities. One came in April 1919 when the British government began recruiting volunteers for the North Russian Relief Force, Britain's primary contribution to the allied intervention in the Russian Civil War. Approximately 150 Australians awaiting repatriation enlisted in this force, of whom two—Corporal Arthur Sullivan and Sergeant Samuel Pearse—were awarded the VC.¹³³ Sullivan was recognised for pulling four men clear of a deep swamp while subject to machine gun fire.¹³⁴ Pearse, in an action reminiscent of the Western Front, singlehandedly cleared an enemy blockhouse; he fell to machine gun fire shortly thereafter.¹³⁵ Pearse had married six weeks prior to joining the Relief Force and his daughter, Victoria (named after her father's award), was born six months after his death. Speaking of her father's VC later in life, Victoria declared: 'I hated that medal. I had a medal instead of a father.'¹³⁶

From the initial period of repatriation and resettlement, it was clear that a significant and expectant social pressure was placed upon the decorated, 'heroic' figures of the AIF. Harry Murray, who finished the war as the most decorated man in the AIF, was repatriated in November 1919 on a ship that also carried Generals Birdwood and Monash. After a month the ship docked in Fremantle, Western Australia, where the trio were greeted by a sizeable crowd.

¹³¹ Scott, *Australia During the War*, 825.

¹³² War diary, 40th Battalion, 27 September 1918, AWM4, 23/57/30; Captain James Chisholm to headquarters 10th Brigade, memorandum, 31 October 1918, AWM26, 449/3.

¹³³ Michael Challenger, *Anzacs in Arkhangel: The Untold Story of Australia and the Invasion of Russia, 1918–19* (Melbourne: Hardie Grant Books, 2010), 70–80.

¹³⁴ 'War Office, 29th September, 1919,' *London Gazette*, 29 September 1919.

¹³⁵ 'War Office, 23rd October, 1919,' *London Gazette*, 23 October 1919.

¹³⁶ Victoria Christen (née Pearse), quoted in Challenger, *Anzacs in Arkhangel*, 205.

Perth's *Daily News*, in announcing the arrival of 'the Three Big Men of the AIF', declared that 'Murray typifies the hero stuff that was in the "Aussie" army'.¹³⁷ The *Daily News* was not alone in its excitement as, despite his protests, Murray was carried shoulder high from the dock by returned servicemen and, along with Birdwood and Monash, received an elaborate reception at Fremantle's city hall. A similar scene greeted the men in Melbourne.¹³⁸ Writer and retired army officer Gordon Maitland claims that Murray was expected to embark on a prominent public career, 'to become prime minister or governor-general' even.¹³⁹ Murray, however, was uncomfortable with hero worship and spurned a public career to return to sheep grazing.

Others were more willing to embrace public life. On the expiry of his parliamentary term in 1921, Arthur Blackburn resumed his legal career. He was appointed Adelaide city coroner in 1933, rose to brigadier in the Second World War (where he spent three years in Japanese captivity) and, afterwards, was a commissioner in the Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration and a member of various committees, boards and trusts.¹⁴⁰ John Dwyer, who on being asked in later life about his VC-winning exploits joked he 'was drunk at the time', spent three decades in the Tasmanian parliament and became his state's first deputy premier.¹⁴¹ Similarly, William Currey was elected to the New South Wales parliament and William Ruthven served as mayor of Collingwood and later in the Victorian Legislative Assembly.¹⁴² For Blackburn, Currey and Ruthven, public life afforded a platform from which to champion the cause of returned servicemen.

Whether recipients of the VC elected to enter public life or not, it would appear that the medal automatically thrust certain social expectations upon the men. For several years, for instance, Thomas (Bede) Kenny and George Howell—who won their VCs a month apart in 1917 for their devastating bombing work (although, according to one newspaper report, Howell claimed to have received his for 'helping King George to whitewash the fowlhouses in Buckingham Palace')—led the Anzac Day march in Sydney.¹⁴³ Recipients of the VC were often also afforded a place of honour during significant public events. In 1920, Blair Wark led a group of eleven VCs invited to meet the Prince of Wales during the latter's tour of Australia.¹⁴⁴ Similar consideration was given in 1927 for the tour of the Duke and Duchess of

¹³⁷ 'Westralia Welcomes Three Heroes,' *Daily News* (Perth), 19 December 1919.

¹³⁸ Franki and Slatyer, *Mad Harry*, 150–51.

¹³⁹ Gordon Maitland, quoted in Tony Stephens, 'Told at Last,' *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 April 2003.

¹⁴⁰ Staunton, *Victoria Cross*, 58.

¹⁴¹ Chris Batt, 'Dwyer, John James (Jack) (1890–1962),' Australian Dictionary of Biography, accessed 8 April 2018, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/dwyer-john-james-jack-10081>.

¹⁴² Staunton, *Victoria Cross*, 129, 173.

¹⁴³ 'For Valour: How Australian VCs Were Won,' *Arrow* (Sydney), 5 August 1932.

¹⁴⁴ Gerald Gliddon, *The Final Days, 1918*, VCs of the First World War (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2000), 61.

York. As the royal couple were to observe Anzac Day in Melbourne, Victoria's Commemoration Council arranged for as many of Australia's VCs as possible to take part in the ceremony. In the end, thirty recipients marched alongside some thirty thousand other returned servicepersons.¹⁴⁵ Seventeen of the men again gathered in 1941 for the official opening of the Australian War Memorial in Canberra, where the cost of travel and accommodation was covered by the federal government.¹⁴⁶ Such events, and the status accorded to VC winners, was part of a broader empire trend. One hundred VCs, for instance, formed the guard of honour during the internment of the Unknown Warrior at Westminster Abbey on 11 November 1920. Moreover, King George V and the Prince of Wales both hosted events in London for the medal's recipients in the decade following the war.¹⁴⁷

Public forms of commemoration and remembrance were also strong themes for many VCs in post-war life. William Joynt published three autobiographical works and, as a founding member of Legacy in Melbourne, was a leading figure in the campaign to establish the Shrine of Remembrance. The Shrine was a site of significance for several of the VCs: William Ruthven was a trustee; George Ingram a member of the permanent guard; and Walter Peeler, who claimed his 'wartime experiences are nothing to make a splash about', spent thirty years as its custodian, for which he was awarded the British Empire Medal.¹⁴⁸ In one of the more unique instances of commemoration, Leonard Keysor was persuaded to re-enact his bomb throwing exploits in 1927 for G.B. Samuelson's silent film *For Valour*.¹⁴⁹ Relatives of VC winners recognised posthumously, like many other bereaved families, also engaged in efforts to commemorate and remember. Captain Clarence Jeffries, posthumously awarded the VC at Passchendaele in 1917, was honoured by his family through the donation of a carved chair to the Abermain Holy Trinity Anglican Church and, on the death of his mother in 1964, his VC was bequeathed to the dean of Christ Church Cathedral in Newcastle. As a sign of gratitude Jeffries' father, the general manager of the Abermain colliery in New South Wales, also

¹⁴⁵ 'Royal Procession,' *Canberra Times*, 13 April 1927; 'Anzac Remembrance,' *Independent* (Deniliquin), 29 April 1927.

¹⁴⁶ 'Cost to War Memorial of Bringing V.C. Winners to Canberra for Official Opening Ceremony,' n.d., AWM93, 2/5/25/18.

¹⁴⁷ 'The V.C. Garden Party,' *Times* (London), 28 June 1920; 'Armistice Day, 1920,' *Times* (London), 12 November 1920; 'The Prince and the V.C.s,' *Times* (London), 11 November 1929.

¹⁴⁸ Staunton, *Victoria Cross*, 112, 155, 195; Matthew Higgins, 'Ruthven, William (1893–1970),' *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, accessed 8 April 2018, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/ruthven-william-8306>.

¹⁴⁹ 'Gallipoli Film,' *Cairns Post*, 22 November 1928.

employed as trainee mining surveyors the two eldest sons of the sergeant who had assisted Clarence at Passchendaele.¹⁵⁰

Despite their social prominence, however, returned heroes were equally vulnerable to the physical and psychological legacy of war. The Danish-born Jørgen Jensen, who won his VC at Noreuil in 1917, survived barely three years beyond the armistice. He returned to Adelaide and established his own business, but died of war-related injuries in 1922 at age thirty-one.¹⁵¹ Albert Jacka fared little better. He settled in the Melbourne suburb of St Kilda, formed an electrical goods import and export business with two other former officers and was elected to the local council, from which he championed the plight of returned servicemen and the homeless. The business faltered in the Great Depression and Jacka's health deteriorated. He died aged thirty-nine of chronic nephritis (inflammation of the kidneys), the legacy of a May 1918 gas attack.¹⁵² To cope with the human cost of the war, the Repatriation Department had been formed in 1917 with responsibility for the rehabilitation, healthcare and pensioning of veterans and their families.¹⁵³ Forty-seven of the AIF's VC recipients survived the war, of whom thirty-eight have case files that detail some level of contact with the Repatriation Department. The majority of the correspondence concerns healthcare and pensions, including applications by widows and dependants for financial assistance. Some men, such as Lawrence McCarthy, only applied for support in old age once life began to catch up with them.¹⁵⁴ Others, like William Symons, had a long history of correspondence with Repatriation officials. Symons had suffered head wounds, dysentery and enteritis at Gallipoli and was gassed at Messines. Complaints of recurrent headaches, deafness, respiratory issues and nervousness, along with difficulty in maintaining employment, saw Symons pensioned in the immediate post-war years and again just prior to his death in 1948 aged fifty-eight.¹⁵⁵

Returned servicemen with physical wounds could readily prove their disability was related to war service. But men suffering from chronic physical or psychological illnesses would often experience difficulty in proving the connection. For example, Edward (John) Ryan (who won the VC in a harrowing bombing attack near Bellicourt in 1918) applied to the Repatriation Department for assistance on at least three occasions in the 1920s and 1930s,

¹⁵⁰ Stephen Snelling, *Passchendaele 1917*, VCs of the First World War (Stroud: Wrens Park Publishing, 2000), 230.

¹⁵¹ 'A South Australian V.C. Is Back to Everyday Work,' *Sunday Times* (Sydney), 23 April 1922; 'Death of a Hero,' *Advertiser* (Adelaide), 1 June 1922.

¹⁵² Grant, *Jacka, VC*, 159–77.

¹⁵³ Larsson, *Shattered Anzacs*, 21.

¹⁵⁴ Repatriation case notes for Lawrence McCarthy, B73, M101248, NAA, Melbourne.

¹⁵⁵ Repatriation case notes for William Symons, B73, R40843, NAA, Melbourne.

complaining of chronic sickness, chest pain and ‘nerves’. Repatriation officials were willing to assist with the old gunshot wound to Ryan’s shoulder, but rejected any illness was attributable to war service.¹⁵⁶ Hugo Throssell, who publicly declared that the war had made him a socialist and pacifist, was similarly pensioned in the early post-war period for his physical disabilities.¹⁵⁷ His self-described problem with ‘nerves’, however, was tacked on to Repatriation medical reports as almost an afterthought.¹⁵⁸ Throssell struggled to work and maintain his farm in the 1920s, and verged on financial ruin as the Depression set in. In 1933, Throssell killed himself with his service revolver. In correspondence with the Repatriation Department Throssell’s wife, writer and political activist Katharine Susannah Prichard, declared that ‘my husband’s magnificent constitution was impaired as a result of war service.’¹⁵⁹ Repatriation officials evidentially agreed, as Throssell’s depression was attributed to meningitis contracted at Gallipoli and Katharine was granted a war widow’s pension.¹⁶⁰ These cases highlight that, despite these men being upheld as the epitome of martial masculinity, the VC did not make them immune to the physical and psychological legacies of war service, nor the stringencies of government bureaucracy. Efforts to curb government spending amid the Great Depression saw the Repatriation Department cut pensions and accept few new claims; war hero status did not necessarily translate to favourable treatment by Repatriation officials, or bureaucracy more broadly.¹⁶¹

Conclusion

The Western Front solidified the tactical and aggressive heroics that first arose at Gallipoli. The almost immovable trench warfare fought in France and Flanders stressed the power of the aggressive combatant—the infantryman and machine gunner—and the need for the inspirational and ‘war-winning’ actions of junior leaders. Any lingering notions of the romanticised Victorian paradigm had, by both the demands of the battlefield and the British High Command, given way to a heroic construct that extolled violence, aggression and tactical success. The Western Front thus instigated a significant shift within the heroic paradigm of the British Empire, one that was to have a long-lasting legacy through much of the twentieth

¹⁵⁶ Repatriation case notes for Edward Ryan, B73, H100676, NAA, Melbourne.

¹⁵⁷ See, for example, ‘Mr. Hugo Throssell, V.C., A Socialist,’ *Eastern Districts Chronicle* (York), 1 August 1919; ‘Hugo Throssell, V.C., Tells His Story,’ *Westralian Worker* (Perth), 4 February 1921.

¹⁵⁸ Repatriation case notes for Hugo Throssell, K60, C5273, NAA, Perth.

¹⁵⁹ Katharine Susannah Throssell to the Deputy Commissioner, Repatriation Commission, 28 January 1934, PP645/1, M5273, NAA, Perth.

¹⁶⁰ Repatriation case notes for Throssell.

¹⁶¹ Clem Lloyd and Jacqui Rees, *The Last Shilling: A History of Repatriation in Australia* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1994), 224–48.

century. The new form of heroism, however, had a broader legacy beyond the heat of battle: it also shaped how masculinity and martial achievement were seen in Australia and on the war fronts. The aggressive tactical heroism of the Western Front also demonstrated that martial heroics and the award of medals were most commonly dictated by the specific nature of warfare and needs of the military command. And yet the dominant heroic paradigm did not necessarily reflect what was socially or universally revered. Of perhaps greater significance, however, is that the First World War established a precedent for the use of recognised 'war heroes' for political and propaganda purposes within Australia. The practice cemented the status of these men as modern martial celebrities, but also inspired the similar use of VC recipients for propaganda purposes during the Second World War.

Chapter Five

Valour in the Desert: North Africa and the Middle East, 1939–42

Many brave acts were performed in that battle, but to give every man his reward would mean the whole of Don Co[mpan]y and B Co[mpan]y being decorated for not one man shirked the task.

– Private Norm Liddiard, Tobruk, 12 August 1941¹

... the total Awards for Syria – both Immediate and Periodical – will be 80. The quota for Immediate Awards is 50 of which 12 have already been approved.

It will be necessary, therefore, to reduce the [68] recommendations for Immediate Awards shown in para. 1 above to at least 38.

– Deputy Adjutant General, AIF Middle East, to Headquarters 7th Division, 23 September 1941²

For 241 days from April to November 1941 a garrison of Australian, British, Indian, and later Polish and Czech troops withstood a concentrated siege by German and Italian forces at the coastal town of Tobruk in Libya. British Commonwealth forces had captured Tobruk in January as part of the counteroffensive Operation Compass, the first major land operation in which Australians took part in the Second World War.³ Operation Compass all but destroyed the Italian Tenth Army in North Africa, but the arrival of the German Afrika Korps soon after altered the power dynamic in the theatre. The initial garrison of Australian infantry, British artillery and Indian cavalry was encircled during a German-led offensive that forced the retreat of almost all Commonwealth forces back to the Egyptian border. The garrison was ordered to hold Tobruk for two months. Despite the casualties, privations and lack of air support, the defenders held on for almost eight months and for their tenacity came to be known as the ‘Rats of Tobruk’. The nickname, at first used derisively by the German besiegers, was adopted by the Australians as a mark of honour.⁴

The Siege of Tobruk is notable for a number of reasons. The garrison’s defence was romanticised at the time and afterwards for being, as one Queensland newspaper described it,

¹ Private Norm Liddiard to his aunt, 12 August 1941, PR00548, AWM.

² Deputy Adjutant General, AIF Middle East, to Headquarters 7th Division, 23 September 1941, AWM63, 116/500/69.

³ Mark Johnston, *Anzacs in the Middle East: Australian Soldiers, Their Allies and the Local People in World War II* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 52, 62–66.

⁴ Joan Beaumont, ‘Australia’s War: Europe and the Middle East,’ in *Australia’s War, 1939–45*, ed. Joan Beaumont (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1996), 15; Johnston, *Anzacs in the Middle East*, 114–15; Karl James, “‘I Hope You Are Not Too Ashamed of Me’: Prisoners in the Siege of Tobruk, 1941,’ in Beaumont, Grant and Pegram, *Beyond Surrender*, 100.

‘an epic in military achievement’.⁵ The ‘rats’ were revered for what was seen as their heroic doggedness and soldierly prowess: newspapers were rife with poetry and literary tales valorising Tobruk and its defenders; noted filmmaker Charles Chauvel directed *The Rats of Tobruk* (1944); and novels and memoirs of the siege became bestsellers.⁶ The Siege of Tobruk and the naval efforts to relieve the garrison also helped define the forms of heroism that were recognised by the Australian forces in the Second World War. After two decades of relative peace, the process for recognising heroism was no longer a familiar one. Australian forces, like those of the British Empire more broadly, had to grapple with the mechanics of the recommendation process and determine an appropriate standard for heroism in light of what would become an increasingly mechanised war. This chapter focuses on the attempts to define and refine heroism during the campaigns in North Africa and the Middle East in the early years of the Second World War. In doing so, it argues that senior field commanders and the War Office tended to recognise tactical forms of heroism that had a tangible effect; the paradigm of heroism that, broadly speaking, had been solidified on the Western Front in the previous war. However, heroic recognition during this period was also increasingly subject to bureaucratic stringencies and restrictive quotas.

Outbreak of war

The Second World War erupted in September 1939 when, following years of mounting tensions in Europe and as a consequence of the German invasion of Poland, Britain and France declared war on Germany. In response Australia’s prime minister, Robert Menzies, announced via a national radio broadcast that it was his ‘melancholy duty’ to inform the nation that, as a result of Germany’s aggression and Britain’s declaration, ‘Australia is also at war.’⁷ Although the ensuing six-year conflict was to disrupt some of the imperial bonds, in 1939 Australia was firmly connected and committed to the British Empire. But as Menzies’ words suggest, Australia (and the empire) met the outbreak of this war with far greater reservation than it had the last. The reaction was clouded by a general sense of anxious uncertainty as memories of the First World War—and the sixty thousand Australian dead—remained strong among a

⁵ ‘Tobruk,’ *Longreach Leader*, 29 November 1941.

⁶ See, for example, H.E.H., ‘Tobruk,’ *Coffs Harbour Advocate*, 7 November 1941; Padre J.C. Salter, ‘Tobruk,’ *Mercury* (Hobart), 13 July 1942; Terry Hourigan, ‘Tobruk,’ *Braidwood Dispatch*, 20 April 1945; James, “‘I Hope You Are Not Too Ashamed of Me’,” 100.

⁷ ‘Australia at War,’ *Age* (Melbourne), 4 September 1939.

nation that was only just beginning to recover from the economic and social devastation of the Great Depression.⁸

Uncertainty similarly pervaded parliament. The declaration of war received (albeit reluctant) bipartisan support due to the threat fascist expansionism posed to the British Empire, but it was almost a fortnight before Menzies announced that a 'special force' of twenty thousand men—soon to be named the Second Australian Imperial Force (2nd AIF)—would be raised 'for service either at home or abroad'.⁹ The ambiguity as to where this force was to be committed was governed by Australia's strategic and security concerns. Australian politicians and strategists alike had expressed disquiet as to Japan's ambitions in the Pacific region since that nation's surprise victory over Russia in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–05—disquiet that grew during the 1930s with Japan's incursions into Chinese territory. Menzies' Cabinet and military officials were concerned that war with Japan may not long follow that with Germany.¹⁰

Over the ensuing weeks the Menzies government negotiated Australia's contribution to the war in Europe. Once again, and in accordance with interwar plans for imperial defence, the vessels of the RAN were placed under the strategic direction of the British Admiralty. Australian ships and naval personnel were subsequently despatched for service in the Atlantic and Mediterranean, and for escort duties in the Pacific and Indian Oceans.¹¹ It was while deployed in the North Atlantic in November 1939 that Commander Stanley Spurgeon, on exchange with the Royal Navy and in command of the destroyer HMS *Echo*, damaged and drove off the German submarine *U-49*. Spurgeon, awarded the DSO for this feat, was the first Australian to be decorated in the Second World War.¹² Meanwhile, Menzies' Cabinet also committed the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) to the Empire Air Training Scheme. The scheme would see aircrew from Australia, along with the other Dominions and colonies, trained in Australia, Canada, Southern Rhodesia and elsewhere for service with the Royal Air Force. By May 1942, the RAAF had expanded twenty-two-fold from its pre-war size to a complement of some 79,000 personnel, of whom forty percent were serving under the Empire

⁸ Kate Darian-Smith, *On the Home Front: Melbourne in Wartime, 1939–1945*, 2nd ed. (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2009), 1–2.

⁹ 'Australian Army,' *West Australian* (Perth), 16 September 1939.

¹⁰ David Horner, *Inside the War Cabinet: Directing Australia's War Effort, 1939–45* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1996), 8.

¹¹ Beaumont, 'Australia's War: Europe and the Middle East,' 4.

¹² Pfennigwerth, *Bravo Zulu*, 96.

Air Training Scheme in Europe, the Mediterranean, India and Burma.¹³ Enlistments in the RAAF and 2nd AIF, however, were but a slow trickle in the early months of the war.

The subdued reaction to war this time around was characterised by a conspicuous absence of the social militarism that had underpinned early enthusiasm for the First World War. Edwardian militarism had dissipated in the carnage of France and Flanders, to be replaced in Australia by a more sombre and occasionally macabre form of remembrance that coalesced around 'Anzac' and the Gallipoli campaign of 1915. In her study of First World War commemoration in Australia, historian Carolyn Holbrook observes that forms of remembrance in the interwar period shifted from imperialist in tone to adopt a more distinctly Australian character.¹⁴ A similar phenomenon has been found in war novels and boys' story papers, which became nationalist and 'indubitably Australian'.¹⁵ In many of these literary works, however, the battlefield fades into the background. The war may provide the setting, but the carnage of the front is often obscured by tales of espionage, adventure, romance, and more.¹⁶ Novels concerned with the battlefield or life in the trenches, such as Erich Maria Remarque's bestselling *All Quiet on the Western Front* (the English translation of which arrived in Australia in 1929) and Leonard Mann's classic *Flesh in Armour* (1932), drew censure from sections of society who held, as Holbrook puts it, 'a visceral and often-expressed desire to forget about the war and get on with daily life.'¹⁷ Such literary and commemorative representations underscore that, while the First World War had become a source of identity for Australians, the war had also made the nation acutely aware of the tragedy of armed conflict. This helps explain why during the austerity measures of the Depression years defence expenditure was able to be slashed with minimal public comment to the extent that, by 1939, the permanent force of the army had dwindled to just 3,572 personnel.¹⁸ The First World War lingered as a familiar cultural trope, even as much of broader society sought to move on.

Popular representations of the heroic figure proved an exception. As we saw in Chapter Four, the significance accorded to VC recipients in the interwar period would indicate that a strong respect and even reverence remained for war heroes. Indeed, invoking comparisons to

¹³ Beaumont, 'Australia's War: Europe and the Middle East,' 4–5; Douglas Gillison, *Royal Australian Air Force, 1939–1942*, vol. 1 of *Australia in the War of 1939–1945: Series 3 – Air* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1962), 485.

¹⁴ Holbrook, *Anzac*, 59–60.

¹⁵ Christina Spittel, 'Remembering the War: Australian Novelists in the Interwar Years,' *Australian Literary Studies* 23, no. 2 (2007): 126–28; Crotty, 'Frontier Fantasies,' 57.

¹⁶ Spittel, 'Remembering the War,' 124–28.

¹⁷ Christina Spittel, 'A Portable Monument? Leonard Mann's *Flesh in Armour* and Australia's Memory of the First World War,' *Book History* 14 (2011): 191–94; Holbrook, *Anzac*, 60.

¹⁸ Beaumont, 'Australia's War: Europe and the Middle East,' 5.

the fortitude and bravery of soldiers on the old battlefields were seen as a high form of praise. In one notable example, the mayor of the Sydney suburb of Marrickville, Milton Jarvie (a decorated officer of the first AIF), opined in 1927 that the bravery of local man Stanley Gibbs in attempting to rescue a teenager from a shark attack were ‘in keeping with any of the heroic deeds in the great war’.¹⁹ Cultural historian Robin Gerster notes that this trend of heroic veneration was reflected in popular Australian literature. Both works of fiction and history tended to romanticise the soldier, valorise their exploits, and emphasise tales of wartime daring.²⁰ Some of the best-selling books, such as Frank Dalby Davison’s novella *The Wells of Beersheba* (1933), drew inspiration from ancient Greek odysseys to produce a romanticised epic, but in doing so sanitised the violence or employed euphemism to obscure the confronting aspects of war.²¹ It would appear that, while war itself had become abhorrent to the Australian public, tales of war remained a topic of morbid fascination and a source of boastful pride regarding the performance of Australian men in the heat of battle. Nevertheless, the now too familiar sorrow and tragedy of armed conflict saw the outbreak of the Second World War met with a sense of caution.

Not until December 1939 did the 2nd AIF reach its initial goal of twenty thousand men.²² By this time, under mounting pressure from the British government and with New Zealand having agreed to commit an expeditionary force, Menzies’ Cabinet decided that the initial recruits would be organised into the 6th Division and sent overseas.²³ The division sailed for Palestine for further training in January 1940, with the intention that it would eventually join British forces fighting in France. France, however, fell to Germany in June, which sparked a wave of panic across the Britain Empire and spurred a flurry of activity to reinforce and expand the empire’s forces. The significance was also felt among the public: 102,000 enlisted in the Australian services between June and August 1940 alone.²⁴ To accommodate the influx of volunteers, the 7th, 8th and 9th Divisions were raised between February and September. The 8th Division was sent for garrison duties in Malaya, Rabaul, Timor and Ambon, but the 7th and 9th were dispatched to join the 6th Division in the Middle East.²⁵

¹⁹ ‘Heroic Youth,’ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 January 1927.

²⁰ Gerster, *Big-noting*, especially 1–20 and 62–114.

²¹ Frank Dalby Davison, *The Wells of Beersheba: A Light Horse Legend* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1933). See also, Gerster, *Big-noting*, 62–114; and Midford, ‘From Achilles to Anzac.’

²² Michael McKernan, *The Strength of a Nation: Six Years of Australians Fighting for the Nation and Defending the Homefront in WWII* (Crowns Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2006), 35.

²³ Horner, *Inside the War Cabinet*, 14.

²⁴ John Robertson, *Australia at War, 1939–1945* (Melbourne: William Heinemann, 1981), 19.

²⁵ Beaumont, ‘Australia’s War: Europe and the Middle East,’ 9.

Australia's first land engagements thus came in North Africa and the Middle East. Italy joined the war on the side of Germany in June 1940 and, from its colony in Libya, invaded Egypt in September. The British, supported by the 6th Australian Division, counterattacked in December and over the following two months pushed the Italians back eight hundred kilometres to the Libyan port of Benghazi.²⁶ It was during this offensive that the first gallantry awards were gained by men of the 2nd AIF. During the Battle of Bardia in January 1941, Sergeant William Morse of the 2/5th Battalion led a platoon against a series of Italian artillery positions. Working methodically and supported by Captain William Griffiths, Morse and his men forced the surrender of two batteries, several tank crews and stores staff, and the headquarters of an artillery group. In all, they captured over six hundred men.²⁷ Morse received the DCM for this feat, while one of his section commanders (Corporal Robert Shattock) was awarded the Military Medal and Griffiths the Military Cross.²⁸ Two weeks later, during the operations to capture the coastal town of Tobruk, Privates Oliver Neall and Leslie Passmore were involved in the 2/8th Battalion's attack on the strongpoint of Fort Pilastrino. Equipped with anti-tank rifles, Neall and Passmore were collectively credited with disabling at least five Italian tanks and thereby disrupting a counterattack. Both men received the DCM.²⁹ These early awards were almost reminiscent of the actions rewarded on the Western Front late in the previous war, when the final allied offensives induced mass movement on the frontline. The conditions during the British counteroffensive in Libya were roughly similar, yet the early acts of heroism were reflective of the nature of this war and the mechanised conflict it entailed.

Simultaneous to these actions on the land, the British and Dominion navies increased their presence in the Mediterranean. From early on, RAN vessels were tasked with undertaking anti-submarine sweeps along the Egyptian coast. During these operations the commanding officers of HMA Ships *Stuart* and *Voyager*, Captain Hector Waller and Commander James Morrow, were awarded DSOs in recognition of their skill and success against Italian submarines. Waller was also cited for locating and mapping mines laid off the coast of Alexandria.³⁰ However, success in naval operations was as much contingent on the professionalism and skill of the crew as it was the leadership of the ship's captain. As naval historian Ian Pfennigwerth explains, the fighting organisation of a British warship in the 1940s

²⁶ Beaumont, 'Australia's War: Europe and the Middle East,' 10.

²⁷ Craig Stockings, *Bardia: Myth, Reality and the Heirs of Anzac* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2009), 205–207.

²⁸ 'War Office, 9th May, 1941,' *London Gazette*, 9 May 1941.

²⁹ Gavin Long, *To Benghazi*, vol. 1 of *Australia in the War of 1939–1945: Series 1 – Army* (1952; repr., Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1961), 228.

³⁰ Pfennigwerth, *Bravo Zulu*, 104–05.

was designed so all crew were allocated an ‘action station’—the bridge and armament stations were manned, engineering spaces and engine rooms bolstered, damage control parties prepared, and the mess cleared to receive casualties.³¹ For instance, aboard HMAS *Parramatta* the medical crew were trained on the Vickers machine gun. The dual role was fortuitous during an action off Tobruk in June 1941, when *Parramatta* and HMS *Auckland* were attacked by over fifty enemy bombers. *Parramatta*’s Medical Officer, Surgeon Lieutenant Charles Harrington, led his gunners in action and, later, was tireless in his efforts to care for the wounded. He was recognised with the DSC.³²

As ground operations moved along the coast into Libya and back again, naval forces were instrumental in supporting the army. In particular, the navy was charged with ferrying supplies, executing coastal bombardments, evacuating or relocating troops, and engaging enemy vessels along the coast. It was during these and later operations in the Mediterranean that junior and non-armament personnel demonstrated their valuable contributions in action. Able Seaman Henry Warr, for example, was awarded the DSM as a sonar operator on HMAS *Stuart* for his persistence in tracking movement during *Stuart*’s attacks on an enemy submarine.³³ Similarly, Chief Stoker William Earl of HMAS *Parramatta* received the DSM for his efficient management of the boiler room and for maintaining morale under aerial attack, while Chief Petty Officer John McLean as coxswain of HMAS *Nizam* was recognised with the DSM for his skill in steering the ship during several days of air attacks.³⁴ These awards recognised the nature of war at sea. Unlike operations on land, there were few opportunities for naval personnel to perform individual feats of heroism. Operational success at sea was instead predicated on the ship’s company as a whole and the skill of the armament and technical departments. Advancements in the conduct of warfare and the use of technology were to shape the forms of heroism—on land, at sea and in the air—that manifested during the Second World War.

Greece, Crete and rewarding prisoner escape

With the Italian Tenth Army all but destroyed in Libya, the 6th Division was sent to reinforce Greece. The German invasion from 6 April was disastrous for the Allies: in three weeks, the Australians—alongside the 2nd New Zealand Division and a British armoured brigade—were

³¹ Pfennigwerth, *Bravo Zulu*, 106–07.

³² Tom Frame, ‘Harrington, Charles Frederick (1914–1941),’ Australian Dictionary of Biography, accessed 10 October 2018, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/harrington-charles-frederick-10706/text18495>.

³³ Pfennigwerth, *Bravo Zulu*, 104–05.

³⁴ Pfennigwerth, *Bravo Zulu*, 129, 138.

pushed southward and forced to evacuate the Greek mainland. The 6th Division withdrew to Egypt and Crete, minus 2,065 men who had been taken prisoners of war. A further 3,109 Australians were captured during the ill-fated Battle of Crete in May.³⁵ Until the fall of Singapore nine months later (in which fifteen thousand Australians surrendered to the Japanese), the scale of surrender and captivity was unprecedented for the Australians. More than thirty thousand Australian servicemen (and some women) endured captivity during the Second World War, a significant increase on the four thousand who had fallen into enemy hands during the previous conflict. Some 8,184 were taken prisoner by German and Italian forces, while 22,376 became prisoners of the Japanese.³⁶ The stigma of surrender and its associations with shame and failure often saw the act attributed to incompetence or deficient courage. As Sergeant Charles Granquist, captured in Greece, explained, being taken prisoner meant ‘that I had failed as a soldier, failed my mates and failed myself.’³⁷ Surrender on such mass scales, however, can be attributed to failures at the political, strategic and command levels. Accordingly, questions were raised within the War Office, Admiralty, and even the Australian government as to whether acts of bravery or meritorious conduct performed prior to—or even during—confinement should be recognised and rewarded.

The drastic upsurge in the number taken prisoner of war, however, did not at first alter cultural and military attitudes towards capture. In October 1942 the British Army’s Military Secretary cited Army Order 193 of 1919 as the principal instrument guiding the War Office’s approach to matters of honours and awards concerning prisoners.³⁸ As discussed in Chapter Two, the stance of the War Office had gradually shifted during the previous war. Early on, prisoners were disqualified from even being considered for award unless the recommendation was tendered by a Court of Enquiry investigating the circumstances of capture. By late 1918, however, prisoners could be recommended for award provided their imprisonment had come through no fault of their own or the recommendation was unconnected with their capture. Army Order 193, issued in the immediate aftermath of the war, provided for the recognition of

³⁵ A.E. Field, ‘Prisoners of the Germans and Italians,’ in *Tobruk and El Alamein*, by Barton Maughan, vol. 3 of *Australia in the War of 1939–1945: Series 1 – Army* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1966), 755–56.

³⁶ Gavin Long, *The Final Campaigns*, vol. 7 of *Australia in the War of 1939–1945: Series 1 – Army* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1963), 633–34.

³⁷ Charles Granquist, quoted in Peter Monteath, *P.O.W.: Australian Prisoners of War in Hitler’s Reich* (Sydney: Pan Macmillan, 2011), 73.

³⁸ Lieutenant General Sir Colville Wemyss, Military Secretary, to Admiral Sir Hugh Binney, 1 October 1942, ADM 1/15700, TNA.

meritorious conduct in prison camps, but it was most commonly invoked to reward escape and escape attempts which had until then been determined ad hoc and on an inconsistent basis.³⁹

The emphasis accorded to escape is demonstrated by an honours list published in January 1920. It was intended to be one of the last lists for the First World War and the final concerning prisoners under Army Order 193. Of the forty-two Australians on the list, thirty-three were lauded ‘in recognition of gallant conduct and determination in escaping, or attempting to escape, from captivity’.⁴⁰ The willingness of the British High Command to award escape may have been in recognition, or reflection, of the fact that planning and effecting a break from a prison camp was a proactive course of action that demonstrated the very opposite of passivity and powerlessness; connotations typically associated with the prisoner of war experience. There is, nonetheless, a certain irony in the privileging of escape. Like others in the empire, the AIF received limited training regarding captivity. Servicemen were instructed as to what they could and should reveal if taken by the enemy, but there was no clear direction about duty to attempt escape.⁴¹ It is unsurprising then that the men who did successfully escape constitute a small minority—about two percent of the Australians captured in the First World War. Only two Australians escaped from Turkey, both in the very late stages of the war and both by feigning illness, while just forty-three absconded from German captivity.⁴²

Escape had, nevertheless, become a key element of capture and captivity that was deemed worthy of award; a practice that was perpetuated during the Second World War. There was less ambiguity about a prisoner’s duty to attempt escape in this war. As Karl James notes, the obligation to escape was adopted as a formal policy in Britain from late 1939 with the establishment of the British Military Intelligence section MI9, ‘one of whose aims was to develop “escape-mindedness” in the military’.⁴³ The War Office thereafter actively encouraged escape, to the extent that the army had lectures delivered to combatant troops claiming a determination to escape was essential to morale.⁴⁴ Similar initiatives were adopted by the 2nd AIF. In April 1941, for instance, the garrison at Tobruk was directed that if any man were taken prisoner it was ‘their duty to try and escape’. The policy was formalised in the 2nd AIF from October with the publication of the pamphlet *Instruction and Guide to All Officers and Men of*

³⁹ Patrick Regan, ‘Neglected Australians: Prisoners of War from the Western Front, 1916 to 1918’ (MA thesis, University of New South Wales, 2005), 130.

⁴⁰ *Commonwealth of Australia Gazette*, no. 38, 29 April 1920, 623–24.

⁴¹ Historian S. P. MacKenzie argues that lack of training with respect to conduct in captivity stemmed from a desire to make surrender seem a dishonourable—almost unthinkable—situation. See S.P. MacKenzie, ‘The Ethics of Escape: British Officer POWs in the First World War,’ *War in History* 15, no.1 (2008): 2–4.

⁴² Ariotti, *Captive Anzacs*, 59; Pegram, ‘Bold Bids for Freedom,’ 24.

⁴³ James, “‘I Hope You Are Not Too Ashamed of Me,’” 110.

⁴⁴ Monteath, *P.O.W.*, 345.

the Army Regarding the Duties of Perform and Precautions to be Taken by Prisoners of War, which specified that escape was the ‘most important duty’ of the prisoner.⁴⁵

Escape, however, remained a minority experience. Peter Monteath estimates that some 266 Australians (just three percent) successfully escaped from captivity in Europe.⁴⁶ The figure was even lower in the Pacific, where militant Japanese and Korean guards, as well as the isolation of many of the prison camps and the obvious ethnic difference of most of the captives, made the task almost impossible.⁴⁷ The difficulties inherent in escape is perhaps why it was such an attractive feat to reward. For example, Warrant Officer Class II Francis Barrett, a member of the 2/1st Battalion captured on Greece, had spent two and a half months in German captivity when, while being transported via train to Austria, he jumped into the brake van of a locomotive travelling in the opposite direction. Over the next two months, Barrett made his way from Serbia to Greece and then to neutral Turkey, where Barrett and fellow escapees he encountered along the way were taken in by the British consul. In recognition of his ‘extraordinarily fine performance’, Barrett was awarded the DCM.⁴⁸

The journey of fighter pilot Squadron Leader Andrew (Nicky) Barr proved more convoluted. Shot down and captured in North Africa in June 1942, Barr made multiple attempts to escape captivity in Italy. He was successful in August 1943, when he leapt from a train bound for Germany. Over seven months, Barr connected with local partisans and was twice recaptured and again escaped, before leading a group of Allied prisoners along an escape route through the Apennine Mountains in Italy. For these feats, Barr received the Military Cross.⁴⁹ Just as in the First World War, escape from captivity was seen as an active, aggressive action that rehabilitated the captive back within the rubric of military heroism. As Lieutenant General Sir Colville Wemyss, the Military Secretary from June 1942, opined: ‘Everything possible should be done ... to reward those officers and men who have the pluck and determination to escape so that they can get back to take a further part in the war.’⁵⁰

Tobruk, Syria–Lebanon, and the strictures of martial heroism

Almost simultaneous to the disasters in Greece and Crete, the British and Dominion forces suffered reversals in North Africa. The German Afrika Korps, sent to Libya in February 1941

⁴⁵ Quoted in James, “‘I Hope You Are Not Too Ashamed of Me”,’ 110.

⁴⁶ Monteath, *P.O.W.*, 347.

⁴⁷ Joan Beaumont, ‘Officers and Men: Rank and Survival on the Thai–Burma Railway,’ in Beaumont, Grant and Pegram, *Beyond Surrender*, 187.

⁴⁸ Recommendation for Warrant Officer Class II Francis Barrett, n.d., B883, NX18434, NAA, Canberra.

⁴⁹ Peter Dornan, *Nicky Barr: An Australian Air Ace* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2005), 153–239.

⁵⁰ Wemyss to Binney.

to prop up what remained of Italy's army, went on the offensive from late March. The decisive use of mechanised and armoured units saw most of the Commonwealth forces pushed back into Egypt.⁵¹ After a fighting withdrawal, the inexperienced 9th Australian Division took up a defensive position at Tobruk. The port had been converted into a veritable fortress under the Italians and its new garrison—which also included the 7th Division's 18th Brigade, as well as supporting British artillery, machine gun, and anti-tank units, and an Indian cavalry regiment—were ordered to hold Tobruk for at least two months. By 11 April, Axis forces had encircled the garrison; so began the siege that was to last 241 days.⁵²

On the night of 13/14 April, German infantry and tanks made a determined attack on Tobruk. The assault fell with particular ferocity on R33, a post under Lieutenant Frederick Mackell of the 2/17th Battalion, which was subjected to rifle, machine gun and mortar fire. Mackell, with Corporal John (Jack) Edmondson and five other men, counterattacked with fixed bayonets.⁵³ As the party rushed forward, Edmondson was shot in the stomach and neck but continued onward. According to Mackell, in 'spite of his wounds Edmondson was magnificent.'⁵⁴ In the melee that ensued, Edmondson killed at least two German soldiers. Mackell, meanwhile, was wrestling with one German when a second attacked him from behind. After Mackell shouted for help, Edmondson rushed over, bayoneted both Germans, and continued with the attack until he collapsed from his wounds. He died a few hours later, but the German assault had been repulsed.⁵⁵ Edmondson's actions were praised as 'outstanding for bravery, devotion and leadership', and he was posthumously awarded the VC.⁵⁶ He thus became the first Australian to receive the VC in the Second World War, though the award had been close run.

Edmondson's recommendation was supported at all levels up to theatre but came under scrutiny by the VC Committee in London. The committee had been reformed soon after the outbreak of war, this time consisting of the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, the Permanent Under-Secretary of State for War, and the Military Secretary.⁵⁷ In considering Edmondson's case the then Military Secretary, Lieutenant General Arthur Floyer-Acland, opined:

⁵¹ Beaumont, 'Australia's War: Europe and the Middle East,' 15.

⁵² Johnston, *Anzacs in the Middle East*, 114–15; James, "'I Hope You Are Not Too Ashamed of Me'," 98.

⁵³ Recommendation for Corporal John Edmondson, 7 May 1941, AWM54, 391/11/33; Barton Maughan, *Tobruk and El Alamein*, vol. 3 of *Australia in the War of 1939–1945: Series 1 – Army* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1966), 148.

⁵⁴ Frederick Mackell, quoted in Maughan, *Tobruk and El Alamein*, 148.

⁵⁵ Maughan, *Tobruk and El Alamein*, 149.

⁵⁶ Recommendation for Edmondson.

⁵⁷ Crook, *Evolution of the Victoria Cross*, 218.

In offering my opinion in connection with recommendations for the Victoria Cross I am guided to a great extent by the answer to the question whether the act of gallantry was of a spontaneous nature and of short duration or a long sustained effort of great courage and determination.⁵⁸

Floyer-Acland touched on a curious point: nowhere was it specified that the VC could only be awarded for sustained actions, or that spontaneous acts were disqualified. Yet only a month later he objected to the VC recommendation for Sergeant Nigel Leakey of the King's African Rifles on similar grounds. Leakey's act in leaping on top of an attacking Italian tank, wrenching open the turret and killing the crew, Floyer-Acland later opined, 'was not up to the standard required ... I regard his action as of the spontaneous nature, lacking the elements of long sustained courage and endurance, which tell of the highest form of self-sacrifice.'⁵⁹

Floyer-Acland's judgement held sway in the interim in Leakey's case, but for Edmondson he conceded that, although 'the act was evidently of the spontaneous character', given the grievous state of Edmondson's wounds his action had 'a definite element of very courageous self-sacrifice'.⁶⁰ Floyer-Acland also observed that since the outbreak of war six VCs have gone to soldiers, none of which 'have been to a member of the Australian Forces'.⁶¹ It would appear that, by Floyer-Acland's estimation, Edmondson's wounding and death as well as the potential significance the first award of the VC would have to morale in Australia was sufficient to justify its bestowal. He was right: Edmondson was accorded a three-page spread in the pictorial section of Sydney's *Sunday Telegraph*; the *Australian Women's Weekly* published an extended interview with his parents; a memorial fund was founded in his name; and Dame Mary Gilmore immortalised the corporal in a poem.⁶² But there is also perhaps an element of truth to Floyer-Acland's judgement on sustained actions. His reticence to reward spontaneous acts was not, as Michael Crook points out, 'made a general principle', but award recommendations were subject to increasingly intense scrutiny and rigid protocol.⁶³ General Headquarters Middle East Command—the theatre command under which the Australians fought in North Africa—issued a circular in September 1941 critical of the delay between the

⁵⁸ Lieutenant General Arthur Floyer-Acland, minute note, 16 June 1941, WO 32/9956, TNA.

⁵⁹ Lieutenant General Arthur Floyer-Acland, minute note, 10 July 1941 and 18 February 1942, WO 32/9955, TNA.

⁶⁰ Floyer-Acland, minute note, 16 June 1941. After further information was submitted in support of Leakey's recommendation, a posthumous VC was approved in November 1945.

⁶¹ Floyer-Acland, minute note, 16 June 1941.

⁶² 'Our First V.C.,' *Sunday Telegraph* (Sydney), 13 July 1941; Marjorie Beckingsale, 'Tobruk V.C.,' *Australian Women's Weekly* (Sydney), 19 July 1941; 'V.C. Winner,' *Goulburn Evening Post*, 2 September 1941; Dame Mary Gilmore, 'Edmondson, V.C.,' *Australian Women's Weekly* (Sydney), 19 July 1941.

⁶³ Crook, *Evolution of the Victoria Cross*, 264.

performance of acts of heroism and the submission of recommendations.⁶⁴ Headquarters AIF Middle East attributed the delay on their part to recommendation forms being ‘submitted with important details wrongly stated or omitted altogether.’ In more than one recent case, staff at higher command formations had had to investigate the circumstances of a recommendation and request forms be revised and resubmitted.⁶⁵

The problem was that the officers of the 2nd AIF were—like those of the empire more broadly—inexperienced in the mechanics of the recommendation process and attempting to grapple with the appropriate standard for heroism after two decades of peace. The VC recommendation for Lance Corporal Kitchener Anderson is an apt example. On 3 August 1941, the 2/28th Battalion was detailed with carrying out a night assault on two German-held posts at Tobruk, S6 and S7. Despite intense enemy fire, landmines and severe casualties, Lieutenant Harold Coppock’s 16 Platoon—of which Anderson was part—managed to take S7; with three others, Coppock killed or captured the German occupants.⁶⁶ Anderson, still outside the post and ‘cursing the enemy’ at this point, was described by Coppock as having ‘held off large numbers of [the] enemy with a Thompson’ submachine gun.⁶⁷ By the time Anderson was ordered into the post, he had been fatally wounded. He was subsequently recommended for the VC in recognition of his ‘great gallantry, coolness and devotion to duty’. The recommendation progressed to brigade, where someone pencilled in the margin: ‘Not considered sufficiently gallant for V.C.’ He was instead posthumously Mentioned in Despatches.⁶⁸

It would appear that Anderson’s action failed to conform to the high standard of heroism established on the Western Front and anticipated in this war. Indeed, compare this case to that of Private James Gordon of the 2/31st Battalion three weeks earlier. Gordon had, alongside the bulk of the 7th Division, been sent to Syria and Lebanon from June as a pre-emptive strike against Vichy French forces in the region.⁶⁹ Near Jezzine, Lebanon, on 10 July, Gordon’s company was held up by heavy machine gun fire and grenades during its assault to capture a feature known as ‘Greenhill’. After previous attempts to take the post had led to severe casualties, Gordon crept forward on his own initiative and, allegedly muttering ‘Blast this, here goes’, rushed the post; he killed the four occupants and captured the machine gun.

⁶⁴ Deputy Adjutant General, AIF Middle East, to Headquarters I Australian Corps and 6th, 7th and 8th Divisions, 23 September 1941, AWM63, 116/500/93.

⁶⁵ Deputy Adjutant General, AIF Middle East, to Headquarters I Australian Corps and 6th, 7th and 8th Divisions, 31 October 1941, AWM63, 116/500/93.

⁶⁶ Maughan, *Tobruk and El Alamein*, 319–21.

⁶⁷ Private James Curtis and Lieutenant Harold Coppock, witness statements, 14 August 1941, AWM54, 391/11/45.

⁶⁸ Recommendation for Lance Corporal Kitchener Anderson, n.d., AWM54, 391/11/45.

⁶⁹ Johnston, *Anzacs in the Middle East*, 141.

Gordon had made a clear, tangible contribution to the operation—as his platoon commander noted, Gordon’s spontaneous efforts ‘allowed the two platoons to continue’ and the company to secure its objective.⁷⁰ In contrast, the significance of Kitchener Anderson’s contribution to the attack on S7 was less clear.

Heroic acts that made a material and tactical contribution to battle were evidently favoured for recognition. The award to Lieutenant Arthur (Roden) Cutler, the sole Australian officer and artilleryman to receive the VC during the campaigns in North Africa and the Middle East, supports such a conclusion. At Merdjayoun, Lebanon on 19 June 1941, Cutler was among a small party that penetrated into Vichy-occupied territory to establish an artillery forward observation post. Under heavy fire throughout the day, Cutler mended a communications line and, later, was instrumental in repelling an attack by two tanks and French infantry. In the afternoon, he led a small patrol further into enemy territory. The party was cut off and later withdrew under the cover of darkness, but not before Cutler had acquired valuable intelligence on the state of enemy positions.⁷¹ He commanded an artillery team four days later that knocked out an Italian anti-tank post—helping to facilitate the capture of Merdjayoun—and, at Damour on 6 July, was again artillery observation officer with an advanced patrol. He captured eight men during the fighting, but was soon wounded in the leg and, stuck in an isolated position, it was twenty-six hours before he was extracted, and the leg amputated.⁷² More was expected of Cutler due to his status as an officer, but like Gordon he had made a significant contribution in the (successful) pursuit of operational objectives.

In contrast, Anderson’s recommendation was part of a series that were severely downgraded or summarily dismissed. The 2/28th Battalion, for instance, submitted three recommendations for the DCM between October and November 1942. One, recognising leadership during a fighting withdrawal, was reduced to the Military Medal.⁷³ The other two were tendered following a patrol that had gone awry—Private John Gullefer moved ahead of his comrades and ‘effectively silenced’ a German machine gun post, while Corporal Frederick Booth led his section with dash and, after receiving the order to withdraw, dressed his officer’s wounds and attempted to carry him out of action; the pair were surrounded and spent six days in German captivity. Neither man received an award. That Gullefer’s recommendation seems

⁷⁰ Lieutenant Leslie Hurrell, witness statement, 24 July 1941, AWM54, 391/11/45.

⁷¹ Recommendation for Lieutenant Arthur Cutler, 7 July 1941, WO 373/27/52, TNA; Gavin Long, *Greece, Crete and Syria*, vol. 2 of *Australia in the War of 1939–1945: Series I – Army* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1953), 444–45.

⁷² Recommendation for Cutler; Long, *Greece, Crete and Syria*, 487.

⁷³ Recommendation for Acting Sergeant George McIntyre Moore, n.d., AWM54, 391/11/45.

to imply a recklessness—‘he showed no regard for his own safety – only a determination to close with and destroy the enemy’—and Booth had relinquished his command to (unsuccessfully) aid his wounded officer, may have prejudiced the chances of award for both men.⁷⁴ But that no recognition was forthcoming at all is telling of the potential discrepancy between officers in frontline commands and those at senior formation level when it came to conceptions of heroism.

In an attempt to address some of the problems with recommendations, staff at General Headquarters Middle East Command had in September 1941 issued a circular detailing the forms of recognition open to army personnel.⁷⁵ Around the same time, Headquarters AIF Middle East forwarded to all units detailed instructions on the procedure to compile and submit recommendations for awards.⁷⁶ The process was further clarified from February 1943, with the adoption of a revised W.3121 form (see figure 5.2 on the following page) that included instructions for recommendations on the reverse.⁷⁷ These initiatives helped clarify the procedure for recommendations and the general eligibility of men for awards, but each was vague as to the type of actions that could or would be rewarded.

For unit commanders the awards process appeared to function through these early campaigns as one of trial and error, which was only exacerbated by bureaucratic stringencies. Following the successful prosecution of the Syria–Lebanon campaign in June–July 1941, Headquarters Middle East Command determined that the allocation of awards for the campaign was to be capped at eighty. As no more than fifty were to be ‘Immediate Awards’ (typically, those for heroism or distinguished leadership in action) and twelve had already been approved, the 7th Division was instructed to reduce its list of sixty-eight recommendations ‘to at least 38.’⁷⁸ The reimposition of a quota system was to see the awards for bravery and distinguished conduct in Syria almost halved. Curiously, a victim earlier on in the culling process was Staff Sergeant Walter Peeler who, as a lance corporal, had received the VC in 1917 for his devastating use of a Lewis machine gun in clearing German resistance during an assault near Broodseinde, Belgium. Peeler had reenlisted in 1940 and, as a company quartermaster in the 2/2nd Pioneer Battalion, was recommended for the Military Medal in Syria for his efforts to

⁷⁴ Recommendations for Corporal Frederick Booth and Private John Gullefer, n.d., AWM54, 391/11/45.

⁷⁵ Assistant Adjutant General, AIF (Middle East) Base Area, to AIF (Middle East) Reinforcement Depot, 30 September 1941, AWM54, 391/2/5.

⁷⁶ Brigadier in charge of Administration, AIF Middle East, ‘Recommendations for Honours and Awards: Instructions for Completion of Army Form W.3121. Particular to A.I.F. (M.E.),’ n.d., AWM315, 412/002/001.

⁷⁷ See, for example, recommendation for Lieutenant William Woodward, 18 July 1945, AWM119, 129.

⁷⁸ Deputy Adjutant General to Headquarters 7th Division, 23 September 1941.

Schedule No. (To be left blank)		Unit	Personal or Army No.	Rank and Name. (Christian names must be stated)	Action for which commended (Date and place of action must be stated)	Recommended by	Honour or Reward	(To be left blank)	
16 Aust Inf Brigade.		6 Aust Division.	1 Aust Corps.	Sgt DONNETT Allan Hugo	For most distinguished conduct and outstanding leadership in an attack on the enemy-held village of RINDOGIM New Guinea on 4 August 1945. D Coy of 2/2 Aust Inf Bn were ordered to capture RINDOGIM, a native village situated on a narrow ridge rising 500 feet above the surrounding country. The only approach to the village was via a native track which followed a steep narrow spur running from the gorge to the ridge above. The leading platoon had climbed about 100 feet when they came under heavy enemy machine gun and rifle fire from concealed dug in positions. Sgt DONNETT, as platoon serjeant, was at the rear of the platoon. Immediately the enemy opened fire, without awaiting his platoon commander's orders, he moved forward and repositioned the position. Noticing that his platoon commander and the leading section were unable to move without being fired on he moved the reserve section to a flank and directed their fire to neutralize the enemy. Then, single-handed he charged the enemy position throwing grenades into their fox-holes and firing burst after burst from his sub-machine gun. He killed four of the enemy and the remainder, numbering about twenty five, fled in panic. Calling on the platoon to follow him, he pursued them, shouting orders in complete disregard for the fact that he was disclosing his position and drawing enemy fire. He continued at the head of his platoon and organised its consolidation on a knoll which dominated the village of RINDOGIM.	Lt-Col (A. G. CAMERON) Comd 2/2 Aust Inf Bn 1 Aug 45	D. C. M. (M.M.)	RECOMMENDED FOR IMMEDIATE AWARD OF Lt-Col (P. A. GULLEN) Adm Comd 16 Aust Inf Bde 25 Aug 45 Brig Adm Comd 6 Aust Div 27 Aug 45 Lt-Gen GOC FIRST AUST ARMY 12 Sep 45.	General Commander AUSTRALIAN MILITARY FORCES 2 OCT 45

Figure 5.1: An example of the earlier format army W.3121 recommendation form. This version was used in both world wars and, after the introduction of the revised form in 1943, continued on an ad hoc basis until 1945. Source: AWM119, 143. Photograph by Bryce Abraham.

Army Number NX47054		Recommended by (Signature) Lt Col (J. WOODALL) Comd 4 Aust Fd Regt (Jungle Div) (AIF) 11 June 45	Honour or Award D.S.O. IMM.
Name David Frey SPARK		Rank Lt Col (J. WOODALL) Comd 4 Aust Fd Regt (Jungle Div) (AIF) 11 June 45	
Next of Kin Mr T P SPARK		Rank Lt Col (J. WOODALL) Comd 4 Aust Fd Regt (Jungle Div) (AIF) 11 June 45	
Relationship Father		Rank Lt Col (J. WOODALL) Comd 4 Aust Fd Regt (Jungle Div) (AIF) 11 June 45	
Home Address 57 Broughton Road ARTARMON, N.S.W.		Rank Lt Col (J. WOODALL) Comd 4 Aust Fd Regt (Jungle Div) (AIF) 11 June 45	
Date of Birth 20 Apr 16		Rank Lt Col (J. WOODALL) Comd 4 Aust Fd Regt (Jungle Div) (AIF) 11 June 45	
Date of Enlistment AIF 28 Jul 40		Rank Lt Col (J. WOODALL) Comd 4 Aust Fd Regt (Jungle Div) (AIF) 11 June 45	
PMF CME Mar 38		Rank Lt Col (J. WOODALL) Comd 4 Aust Fd Regt (Jungle Div) (AIF) 11 June 45	
CITATION (Date and place of action must be stated)		Rank Lt Col (J. WOODALL) Comd 4 Aust Fd Regt (Jungle Div) (AIF) 11 June 45	

On 9 Jun 45 during the evacuation by sea of a position in PORTON plantation BOUGAINVILLE in close contact with the enemy Lt SPARK was P.O.O. with the company involved. After arranging covering fire Lt SPARK adjusted and controlled it until his wireless communications failed. Under heavy fire he arranged alternate communication until that also failed. Refusing an opportunity to withdraw in a barge he swam to an LCA and again established communications. Due mainly to Lt SPARK's devotion to duty and disregard of personal safety the artillery was able to maintain accurate and sustained fire which assisted materially in the successful evacuation of the force in the face of constant enemy suicide attacks. During the period which covered some five hours Lt SPARK was struck repeatedly by fragments of bullets and spent splinter, nevertheless he remained at his post until nightfall when darkness rendered his further presence useless.

In addition Lt SPARK assisted wounded soldiers to reach safety. On at least one occasion he swam half a mile to do so, again under fire.

At the conclusion of his action, ammunition was almost exhausted and it

(over)

INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETION OF A.F. W.3121

1. A separate A.F. W.3121 completed in duplicate (where possible typed) is to be used for each recommendation.
2. Both the substantive and temporary or acting ranks will be shown.
3. By unit is meant a regiment and the corps to which it belongs, e.g., 5 Aust. Armcd. Regt., 1 Aust. Garr. Bn, 2/1 Aust. Inf. Bn, 10 Aust. Fd. Regt., 1 Aust. Ord. Stores Coy. (A.A.O.C.), 101 A.G.H. (A.A.M.C. (Med.)). If the individual is extra regimentally employed, this fact should also be stated, e.g., 1 Aust. Armcd. Div. Sigs. seconded as B.M. 1 Aust. Armcd. Bde.
4. Wherever possible the date of birth, the next of kin, the home address, and the date of enlistment will be shown in the spaces provided, in order that time will not be wasted in obtaining these particulars from the Records Offices.
5. The date the recommendation is received by each formation, and forwarded to the higher formation will be shown in the space provided.
6. The recommending officer will sign in the space provided, showing his name, rank and appointment, and leaving the next space for the use of the officer of the higher formation.
7. The honour or award recommended is shown in the space provided. Indicate whether it is "Immediate", "Periodical" or "Special" by showing "Imm.", "Per." or "Spec." under the award.
8. The citation should not normally be greater than can be contained in the space provided, but if it is longer, it may be continued on the back of this form. Do not use another form.
9. Recommendations for the V.C., G.C., and G.M. will be supported by signed statements of at least three witnesses of the act for which the award is recommended. Wherever possible these statements should be on oath.
10. G.O. A.519 of 1942 is to be read in conjunction with these instructions.

is due to Lt SPARK's sound judgement and exceptional technical ability throughout the whole action that the utmost value was obtained from that available and that fire was maintained throughout.

Lt SPARK's coolness and demeanour were outstanding and an inspiring example to all around him.

Figure 5.2: An example of the revised W.3121 recommendation form phased in for use by the army from February 1943. This version continued to be used until the 1970s. Note the instructions on the reverse (at right). Source: AWM119, 121. Photographs by Bryce Abraham.

supply the men with food and necessities under fire and for leading bearer parties to bring in the wounded.⁷⁹

As Peeler's case demonstrates, the operational quota was to both govern and limit award practices throughout the war. In April 1942, the British government advised the Prime Minister's Department in Australia that the scale of Immediate Awards for the army was six per month for 'every five thousand troops in an operational command.' Periodical Awards, used to recognise meritorious service or leadership over an extended period, were restricted to one per 250 troops every six months. Scales for the air force, meanwhile, were determined by operational flight time, with one award permissible for every three hundred flying hours.⁸⁰ The system for awards to the navy was more complex, but the quota was similar to that in the army: one per 250 men on operations.⁸¹ The scales were regarded 'as highly secret', though were congruent with those imposed in the Syria–Lebanon campaign and in North Africa.⁸² However, with the scales determined on operational lines and applicable to all forms of recognition, this quota system was far more pervasive, defined and restrictive than the version that had operated during the First World War, and contributed towards difficulties in securing recognition.

Morale, cowardice and sustained heroics: El Alamein

Physically exhausted after five months of unremitting operations, the 9th Australian Division was withdrawn from Tobruk over September and October 1941.⁸³ Following Japan's entry into the war in December, the 6th and 7th Divisions were sent home to confront the new enemy to Australia's north.⁸⁴ The 9th Division was retained in the Middle East but took no part in operations until July 1942, by which time morale among the empire's forces in North Africa had ebbed to a concerning level. The British Eighth Army had suffered heavy reverses over the last few months. Efforts to relieve Tobruk the previous November were a success, but the offensive stalled and the Eighth Army was again pushed back beyond the Egyptian border. The loss of Tobruk in June was a particularly severe blow to the Australians.⁸⁵ As the 9th Division moved to the front just forward of El Alamein (one hundred kilometres west of Alexandria),

⁷⁹ Recommendation for Staff Sergeant Walter Peeler, 1 August 1941, AWM54, 391/11/64.

⁸⁰ Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to Prime Minister's Department, cablegram, 24 April 1942, A816, 66/301/138, NAA, Canberra.

⁸¹ Pfennigwerth, *Bravo Zulu*, 71.

⁸² Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to Prime Minister's Department, 24 April 1942.

⁸³ Johnston, *Anzacs in the Middle East*, 138.

⁸⁴ Peter Stanley, "'The Part We Played in This Show': Australians and El Alamein," in *El Alamein and the Struggle for North Africa: International Perspectives from the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Jill Edwards (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2012), 60.

⁸⁵ Johnston, *Anzacs in the Middle East*, 162–64

the Australians were confronted by the sight of the tired, beaten-looking British troops they were to relieve.⁸⁶ According to contemporaneous intelligence summaries, defeatist talk was rife among the Eighth Army's men. As historian Peter Stanley reflects: 'Allied fortunes were in decline, and the Australians joined the desert army at its lowest point.'⁸⁷

The situation in North Africa had become such a concern that the British commander-in-chief, General Sir Claude Auchinleck, twice recommended that the War Office reinstate the death penalty for severe cases of desertion or cowardice.⁸⁸ The rate of desertion and surrender in the Eighth Army had been on the rise since February 1942, leaving Auchinleck and his staff concerned that a deficiency of courage and surfeit of cowardice existed within the Commonwealth forces in North Africa. Historians John Baynes and Jonathan Fennell have suggested that there is a distinct connection between morale and combat effectiveness—units experiencing low morale, such as the Eighth Army, were susceptible to 'cowardly' acts like desertion, while those with high morale and cohesion were more likely to foster courage and inspire acts of bravery.⁸⁹ That the Eighth Army was inadequately trained, fatigued, and demoralised, and that the men perceived themselves to be 'out-generaled' and poorly equipped, meant they were demotivated to act in accordance with British soldierly expectations.⁹⁰ Even in the well-rested 9th Division the rate of surrender (particularly by unwounded men) was above average during the fighting in July. The divisional commander, Lieutenant General Sir Leslie Morshead, appealed to a masculine sense of duty to advise his men that in future:

They must be a good staunch Australian and not emulate the Italians ... Nothing is ever hopeless so long as troops have stout hearts, and have weapons and ammunition. In this too is the test of real leadership and manhood.⁹¹

The leading problem was one of command. The Eighth Army halted the German advance in July and turned the tide in North Africa over October and November, during the First and Second Battles of El Alamein. In between, however, Auchinleck and the Eighth Army commander had been replaced and the army rebuilt to restore morale.

The battles of El Alamein were pivotal in the North African campaign and served to solidify the standard of heroism that the British military establishment sought to inculcate during the Second World War. On 16 July, during the operations to secure the ridges around

⁸⁶ Johnston, *Anzacs in the Middle East*, 166–67.

⁸⁷ Mark Johnston and Peter Stanley, *Alamein: The Australian Story* (South Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2002), 31; Stanley, "'The Part We Played in This Show'", 61.

⁸⁸ Fennell, 'Courage and Cowardice,' 100.

⁸⁹ Baynes, *Morale*, 7; Fennell, 'Courage and Cowardice,' 113, 122.

⁹⁰ Fennell, 'Courage and Cowardice,' 111–15.

⁹¹ Sir Leslie Morshead, quoted in Fennell, 'Courage and Cowardice,' 107.

Tel el Eisa at first El Alamein, two companies of the 2/23rd Battalion were tasked with a dawn attack on a ridge known as Point 24. This entailed B Company under Captain Keith Neuendorf, supported by a squadron of British tanks, penetrating 2,400 yards into enemy-occupied territory.⁹² Subject to a maelstrom of machine gun, mortar and artillery fire, Neuendorf was described as almost omnipresent throughout the attack. Although wounded early on (according to one account, his hand was ‘shot away’), he encouraged his men, aided in clearing a path through landmines for the tanks, and at one point dashed ‘through a belt of [gun]fire’ to give aid to a wounded man.⁹³ Neuendorf was killed by an artillery shell ‘just as success was in sight.’⁹⁴ The company sustained fifty percent casualties during the operation, but in little over an hour had seized Point 24 and captured over six hundred Italian and German prisoners.⁹⁵ Neuendorf’s leadership and example were credited with having ‘ensured the success of the operation’, and he was posthumously recommended for the VC.⁹⁶

Neuendorf’s recommendation passed through brigade but was bounced back on reaching division headquarters, where staff were dissatisfied with the quality of the written citation. After requesting further details from the battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel Bernard Evans, the recommendation was redrafted and Evans instructed to submit the new citation on W.3121 along with copies of the (also re-written) witness reports.⁹⁷ The revision process hints at the anxiety felt over the increasingly strenuous procedure for awards as, compared to previous wars, a major rewrite of a recommendation was relatively rare in the Australian experience. Nevertheless, Neuendorf’s recommendation was approved by Morshead and forwarded to General Sir Thomas Blamey, until recently GOC AIF Middle East but now back in Australia as Commander-in-Chief of the Australian Military Forces. The intermediate fate of the recommendation is unclear. However, it finally reached Blamey after being bundled with a list of periodic recommendations concerning distinguished services in the Pacific for the first quarter of 1945.⁹⁸ That Neuendorf’s recommendation appears to have been mislaid in the administrative rabbit warren may have prejudiced the chances of a posthumous VC, as he was instead belatedly Mentioned in Despatches in February 1946.⁹⁹

⁹² Johnston and Stanley, *Alamein*, 78–79.

⁹³ Johnston and Stanley, *Alamein*, 79; Recommendation for Captain Keith Neuendorf, n.d., AWM54, 391/11/37; Maughan, *Tobruk and El Alamein*, 570.

⁹⁴ Recommendation for Neuendorf.

⁹⁵ Johnston and Stanley, *Alamein*, 78–79; Maughan, *Tobruk and El Alamein*, 570.

⁹⁶ Recommendation for Neuendorf.

⁹⁷ AA&QMG, 9th Division, to 26th Brigade, 7 September 1942, AWM54, 391/11/37; Corporal J.R. Nugent and Private G.E. Crosher, witness statement, n.d., AWM54, 391/11/37.

⁹⁸ Recommendation for Captain Keith Neuendorf, n.d., AWM119, 117 PART 1.

⁹⁹ ‘Correction,’ *Commonwealth of Australia Gazette*, no. 85, 15 May 1947.

Three Australians were awarded the VC for the battles of El Alamein, each in recognition of devastating attacks at crucial moments. Six days after Neuendorf's death, the 26th Brigade was sent to recapture Point 24. Neuendorf's men had been forced to withdraw from the ridge after less than four hours of occupation, casting some doubt as to the cost of the captain's sacrifice.¹⁰⁰ After D Company, 2/48th Battalion, was pinned down by concentrated machine gun fire, Private Stanley Gurney successively rushed three enemy posts—he killed five men, captured one and, despite being knocked down by a grenade blast, persisted with his singlehanded assault until killed. Gurney's commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel Heathcote Hammer, reflected: 'The successful outcome of this operation was almost entirely due to GURNEY's heroism at the moment it was needed.'¹⁰¹ Hammer's words are a little hollow as the company was soon pinned down again and, lacking armoured support and with the unit almost wiped out, was forced to withdraw at dusk.¹⁰² However, Gurney had facilitated the battalion's immediate tactical success.

Similarly, on the night of 25/26 October during second El Alamein, the 2/48th Battalion was detailed with capturing the feature Trig 29. A Company, supported by artillery and armoured carriers, was consolidating the area to the west of the objective when it was held up by withering machine gun and mortar fire.¹⁰³ Private Percival Gratwick rushed the closest enemy post, killing a mortar crew and submachine gunner with grenades, before charging a second post with rifle and bayonet. As Gratwick 'was within striking distance of his objective', he was killed by machine gun fire. His actions, nonetheless, were credited with having 'changed a doubtful situation into a successful capture of his company's final objective.'¹⁰⁴ In the aftermath of the Trig 29 assault, Sergeant William Kibby—who two days earlier had been noticed for rushing enemy strongpoints—was praised for encouraging his platoon, maintaining morale, and repairing communications wire under fire while weathering repeated counterattacks. Four days later, while subject to murderous fire and with almost all in his company casualties, Kibby led his men with dash and charged an enemy post, throwing grenades. He, too, was killed '[j]ust as success appeared certain' and was acknowledged as having been 'entirely responsible for the successful capture of the company objective.'¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁰ Johnston and Stanley, *Alamein*, 79–80.

¹⁰¹ Recommendation for Private Stanley Gurney, 28 July 1942, AWM54, 391/11/66.

¹⁰² Johnston and Stanley, *Alamein*, 92–93.

¹⁰³ Johnston and Stanley, *Alamein*, 181–82.

¹⁰⁴ Recommendation for Private Percival Gratwick, n.d., WO 373/23/273, TNA.

¹⁰⁵ Recommendation for Sergeant William Kibby, n.d., WO 373/23/272, TNA.

There are certain similarities between Neuendorf and the El Alamein trio—all four were credited with inspiring others and perished on the cusp of success. Nevertheless, Gurney, Gratwick and Kibby each made a material, tactical contribution to battle. While there is little doubt of Neuendorf's distinguished leadership, his tangible contribution is less perceptible. Kibby, as a junior leader and the senior ranking of the three VCs, is the most comparable with Neuendorf. Yet Kibby's award recognised his actions over an eight-day period; even before Kibby's final battle, his company commander intended to recommend him for the DCM.¹⁰⁶ The implication here is that a significant emphasis was lent to tactical actions that delivered tangible results. But, perhaps more so, there appears to have been a greater expectation placed on officers and senior non-commissioned men, just as there had been in the First World War. Kibby, like Cutler in Lebanon, was commended for his tactical leadership and bravery over an extended period. Kibby's and Cutler's awards were also consistent with those to other empire combatants. New Zealand infantry officer Charles Upham, for instance, received the VC for similar feats of bravery and command over eight days on Crete, and a Bar to the award for an intense day of operations at first El Alamein, during which Upham was severely wounded and, among other feats, singlehandedly destroyed a tank and a troop truck full of German soldiers.¹⁰⁷

The standard for heroism had clearly been established in these pivotal battles, but there is a curiosity about the Australian VCs at El Alamein. The nine battalions in the 9th Division were variously engaged in both battles, and yet all three VCs went to just one unit: the 2/48th Battalion. The 2/48th was to gain a fourth VC during the fighting in New Guinea in 1943 and became Australia's most highly decorated battalion of the war.¹⁰⁸ However, given the strenuous review procedures and the relative scarcity of the VC in the Second World War—just seventeen were awarded to the 2nd AIF—such a high concentration in the one battalion raises questions. It is difficult to speculate how one unit was so successful in securing recognition for its men, though as one battalion history neatly put it the unit 'needs only to do a good job in action, possess medal-minded CO and company commanders—and an adjutant with journalistic ability and imagination.'¹⁰⁹ Administrative prowess and supportive officers were certainly influential factors, but the effect of leadership and training should not be overlooked. Lieutenant Colonel Heathcote Hammer, the 2/48th's commanding officer during the El

¹⁰⁶ Lieutenant Hugh Treloar to Lieutenant Colonel Heathcote Hammer, 28 November 1942, WO 373/23/272, TNA.

¹⁰⁷ 'War Office, 14th October, 1941,' *London Gazette*, 14 October 1941; Recommendation for Captain Charles Upham, 16 October 1942, WO 32/11644, TNA.

¹⁰⁸ John Glenn, *Tobruk to Tarakan: The Story of a Fighting Unit*, 70th Anniversary Alamein ed. (Adelaide: Paul Oaten, 2012), 273.

¹⁰⁹ A.J. Marshall, ed., *Nulli Secundus Log* (Sydney: 2/2nd Australian Infantry Battalion, 1946), 101.

Alamein battles, had a reputation as a stern disciplinarian who enforced a brutal training regime. For these reasons Hammer was not the most popular of commanding officers, but in stressing the need to ‘fight wisely’ he cultivated a high degree of efficiency, professionalism and morale that, in battle, saw his battalion fight with proficiency and determination.¹¹⁰ As one veteran recalled of Hammer: ‘as a battle commander he was really very good’.¹¹¹ The medallic success of the 2/48th Battalion indicates how the relationship between efficient training, professional leadership and the cohesion of a unit had a bearing on battle performance and thereby the occurrence and recognition of heroism.

Interpersonal relations could also influence the award (or non-award) of a decoration. As Frank Reiter, a thrice decorated veteran of the 2/7th Battalion, reflected some decades later: ‘some officers, if they didn’t like the bloke and the bloke earnt the medal they wouldn’t ... put a decoration in for him’.¹¹² Senior officers could agitate for recognition, as Bernard Evans appears to have (unsuccessfully) done for Neuendorf, but they could also act to quash recommendations. Similarly, it was not unheard of for some officers to instil a culture of minimalist recognition. For example, historian Mark Johnston notes that officers ‘in the 6th Division seem to have taken perverse satisfaction in being parsimonious about’ giving awards.¹¹³ Indeed, one of the division’s battalions, the 2/2nd, seems to have been duly proud and scornful that ‘its ribbon discipline is one of the most notable things about the unit’; the battalion ‘imposed its own standards’, which were ‘rigid to the degree of harshness.’¹¹⁴ The strictures of the honours system had already made it more difficult to secure recognition in the Second World War, which was only compounded by the subjective and increasingly political nature of martial heroism.

Conclusion

The campaigns in North Africa and the Middle East demonstrated a tendency to recognise tactical forms of heroism that had a tangible effect in battle—qualities that had first been seen on Gallipoli and later entrenched on the Western Front in the First World War. However, the reimposition of this heroic paradigm was not an organic process. After two decades of relative

¹¹⁰ Garth Pratten, *Australian Battalion Commanders in the Second World War* (Port Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 115–17, 122–24.

¹¹¹ Quoted in Pratten, *Australian Battalion Commanders*, 116.

¹¹² Frank Reiter, interview, *Australians at War Film Archive*, 20 August 2003, <http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/607-frank-reiter>.

¹¹³ Mark Johnston, *The Proud 6th: An Illustrated History of the 6th Australian Division, 1939–45* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 246.

¹¹⁴ Marshall, ed., *Nulli Secundus Log*, 101.

peace, Australian and empire forces had to once again grapple with the mechanics of award recommendations and determine what could and, indeed, would be rewarded. Contemporary heroism had to conform to an increasingly mechanised form of warfare, while institutionalised recognition became ever more political. Awards were subject to bureaucratic stringencies, restrictive quotas and unpredictable commanding officers, while the disasters in Greece and Crete highlighted that, once again and with the exception of escapees, prisoners of war occupied a liminal space that sat awkwardly against the proactive heroic construct. The war in the desert also again indicated that there was a greater expectation placed on officers and senior non-commissioned men to inspire and effect tactical success in battle. The desert campaigns, and the operations at Tobruk and El Alamein in particular, helped set the tone for Australian martial heroism in this war. However, as the war in Europe was to indicate, this was a pervasive and mechanised conflict that was to demand unconventional and strategic forms of heroism in equal measure.

Chapter Six

Strategic and Unconventional: Heroism in Europe, 1939–45

To earn the V.C. in the Army or the R.A.F. it would probably have been necessary for them to have deliberately risked death on several occasions or at any rate on more than one occasion, or for a lengthy period ...

– Sir Robert Knox, Secretary of the George Cross Committee, 19 May 1943¹

‘This is London Calling in the Pacific Service. “With the Australians in Britain”.’ So began the announcer from the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) introducing a program centred on Australian rear gunner Warrant Officer Norman Williams, who had recently been decorated for the third time for his daring deeds over the skies of Europe. The program aired on 23 November 1943, the same year that the flow of Australian aircrew to Europe under the Empire Air Training Scheme was at its height and the BBC began to air limited programs of Australian-specific content.² Williams, ‘too shy to come to the microphone himself’, was represented by ‘fellow Australian’ Henry James. Drawing upon a recent interview with Williams, James began by establishing the airman’s credentials: ‘he’s done fifty-one trips ... shot down four enemy fighters for certain, two probables and two others damaged ... [and] been twice wounded.’ Although clear to point out Williams’ modesty and that the record and medals clash with how Williams perceived his own success, James weaves a riveting tale of the airman’s most recent exploits: under attack from two German fighters and with his gun turret damaged and one wing on fire, a badly wounded Williams managed to shoot down both enemy aircraft.³

Williams was but one of the many Australian aircrew to be featured on the BBC radio program ‘With the Australians in Britain’ in 1943–44. The program was aired at a time when the BBC served as the voice of empire, to the extent that the then Australian Broadcasting Commission re-broadcast an average of eleven and a half hours of BBC content each week.⁴ By presenting thrilling accounts of daring and interviews with Australian aircrew, the BBC transported the geographically distant war in Europe to the homes of the Australian public. In

¹ Sir Robert Knox, ‘Selection Committee for the George Cross, the George Medal and the British Empire Medal,’ 19 May 1943, T 351/19, TNA.

² Robertson, *Australia at War*, 54; Asa Briggs, *The War of Words*, vol. 3 of *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom*, rev. ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 289n.

³ Henry James, ‘With the Australians in Britain: Air Gunners in Battle,’ British Broadcasting Corporation, radio broadcast, transcript, AWM65, 5396.

⁴ Thomas Hajkowski, ‘The BBC, the Empire, and the Second World War, 1939–1945,’ *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 22, no. 2 (2002): 136; Briggs, *War of Words*, 447.

doing so the BBC personalised the serving men at war, but also highlighted a growing narrative of heroism: that performed in the air. While few Australian soldiers were to see service in the European theatre in the Second World War, more than 27,000 Australian aircrew participated in the air war over Europe. The RAN also committed warships and personnel to serve in Britain and the Atlantic.⁵ This chapter considers Australian and empire operations in Europe to argue that conceptions of heroism realigned, and the honours system adjusted, to recognise the significance of aircraft to modern warfare. Recognition in Europe was to an extent political and strategic, as the systematic use of bomber aircraft came to see aircrew well represented among lists of honours and awards. A flow on effect of the bombing campaigns was the institution of the George Cross in 1940, an award to rank alongside the VC to recognise civilians and military personnel alike for heroism in the absence of a direct enemy presence. The George Cross, an attempt by the military (and civil) establishment to define and codify less conventional forms of heroism, both clarified and complicated the honours system.

Aircraft ascendancy

Aircrew were among the first Australians to see action in the Second World War. Some 450 Australians were serving with the Royal Air Force (RAF) in September 1939, at least four of whom were flying operations over France within days of war's outbreak.⁶ Since 1927, select graduates from the RAAF's Flying Training School at Point Cook, Victoria, had been sent to Britain and appointed to short service commissions of four to five years in the RAF. The purpose was to accumulate a reserve of pilots able to reinforce the RAF in an emergency. The scheme saw 149 officers passed to the RAF before it was suspended in 1938 when the RAAF pursued a program of expansion.⁷ These men were supplemented by Australians who enlisted or were commissioned in the British services direct, or joined following the outbreak of war while in Britain for business, leisure or study.⁸ This was not a uniquely Australian phenomenon as Canadians, New Zealanders, South Africans and others from across the empire similarly had a presence in the British services. It does, nonetheless, emphasise the interconnectedness and interoperability of the empire's military forces, and explains (in part) why so many Australian aircrew came to serve in the European theatre during the Second World War.

⁵ Robertson, *Australia at War*, 54.

⁶ Dennis Newton, *A Few of 'The Few': Australians and the Battle of Britain* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1990), 5, 8.

⁷ Chris Coulthard-Clark, *The Third Brother: The Royal Australian Air Force 1921–39* (North Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1991), 87–89; Newton, *A Few of 'The Few'*, 5.

⁸ Newton, *A Few of 'The Few'*, 5.

Honour or Award	First World War	Second World War
Victoria Cross	628	182
Distinguished Service Order	10,732	5,444
Distinguished Conduct Medal	25,050	1,888
Conspicuous Gallantry Medal (Naval)	108	72
Conspicuous Gallantry Medal (Flying)	— ¹	109
Distinguished Service Cross	2,084	5,013
Distinguished Service Medal	5,588	7,116
Military Cross	40,154	10,892
Military Medal	121,237	15,391
Distinguished Flying Cross	1,110	21,946
Distinguished Flying Medal	104	6,698

¹ Instituted in November 1942 and thus not awarded during the First World War.

Table 6.1: The quantity of British honours and awards (including subsequent award Bars) distributed during the world wars for distinguished leadership and gallantry in action. Source: Wingate, in P.E. Abbott and J.M.A. Tamplin, *British Gallantry Awards*, 2nd ed. (London: Nimrod Rix & Co, 1981).

The Empire Air Training Scheme, as inaugurated in 1939, indicated the significance of aircraft to modern warfare. However, during the 1920s and early 1930s, aircraft and the study of airpower were in their relative infancy and, amid budgetary cuts and attempts to amalgamate the fledgling air forces with the army and naval services, the RAF and RAAF had struggled to survive.⁹ But by 1939 it was clear to most defence strategists that airpower was to make a significant contribution to grand strategy and the conduct of war. Indeed, award statistics from the Second World War reveal the importance of the air force to British Empire strategy. Despite the intensity of this conflict, for instance, awards of the VC fell by over three hundred percent in comparison to the First World War, from 628 between 1914–18 to 182 from 1939–45 (see table 6.1). Similarly, the number of DSOs halved and the DCM declined thirteenfold, while presentations of the Military Cross and Military Medal slumped by four and eight hundred percent, respectively.¹⁰ Awards to the naval services experienced an increase, with bestowals of the DSC more than doubling and the DSM rising by almost 130 percent.¹¹ But the most significant increases were recorded in decorations to aircrew. The Distinguished Flying Cross

⁹ Martin Francis, *The Flyer: British Culture and the Royal Air Force, 1939–1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 14; Coulthard-Clark, *Third Brother*, 72–78.

¹⁰ Abbott and Tamplin, *British Gallantry Awards*, 82–83, 126–28, 220–21, 226–28.

¹¹ Abbott and Tamplin, *British Gallantry Awards*, 109–10, 116.

(DFC) and Distinguished Flying Medal (DFM) had been instituted in June 1918 as third-tier gallantry awards for airmen officers and other ranks. Their late institution meant the awards had limited application in the First World War with only 1,110 and 104 awards (including subsequent award Bars), respectively. The rate of award skyrocketed during the Second World War—the DFC, with almost 22,000 bestowals, was the most awarded British decoration of the war, while the DFM was granted 6,698 times (including Bars).¹² Despite the general downturn in award numbers, aircrew also increased their representation among the recipients of the VC and DSO.¹³

The types and quantity of awards reveal a sharp decline in recognition to soldiers, a general increase for naval personnel, and the ascendancy of aircrew. Although award figures to the Australian forces differ slightly by source, the pattern of award is consistent (if a little more extreme in the fluctuation) with that of the broader empire.¹⁴ The variance between the two global conflicts is explainable, in part, by the stringent award quotas introduced by the service departments (see Chapter Five). Much else can be attributed to British strategy and the conduct of warfare in the Second World War. The trench warfare of attrition that characterised the empire experience two decades earlier had, for the most part, dissipated as politicians and strategists sought to avoid the mass slaughter of the past, while technology demanded innovation and facilitated greater movement on the front. The role of the navy had also shifted, as naval blockades had given way to offensive patrols and anti-submarine operations, while the air force had matured beyond its previous directive of support and reconnaissance.¹⁵

The greater role accorded to the air force saw a romanticism of aircrew and the war in the air, though the phenomenon was not unique to the 1940s. Aviators had been heavily romanticised during the First World War. Newspapers, politicians and the broader British public had conceived of and portrayed military aviators as fearless but gentlemanly warriors of the air. Fighter pilots, in particular, had been seen to epitomise this new form of combatant and were represented as ‘chivalric knights’ who engaged in courageous aerial duels.¹⁶ Such representations, however, clashed with how many of the aviators regarded themselves and their role. Edward (Mick) Mannock and James McCudden, both VC recipients and two of the

¹² Abbott and Tamplin, *British Gallantry Awards*, 95–96, 104.

¹³ Abbott and Tamplin, *British Gallantry Awards*, 128, 293.

¹⁴ See, for instance, Clive Johnson, *Australians Awarded: A Concise Guide to Military and Civilian Decorations, Medals and Other Awards to Australians from 1772 to 2013 with their Valuations*, 2nd ed. (Banksmedow: Renniks Publications, 2014), 86, 100–106, 130–32, 146–50.

¹⁵ Francis, *The Flyer*, 14.

¹⁶ Michael D. Collins, ‘A Fear of Flying: Diagnosing Traumatic Neurosis among British Aviators of the Great War,’ *First World War Studies* 6, no. 2 (2015): 193; Michael Paris, ‘The Rise of the Airmen: The Origins of Air Force Elitism, c. 1890–1918,’ *Journal of Contemporary History* 28, no. 1 (1993): 136–37.

empire's highest scoring aces—aviators credited with the destruction of five or more enemy aircraft in aerial combat—dismissed illusions to aerial warfare as glamorous or even fair.¹⁷ Indeed, as sociologist R.W. Connell points out, McCudden derided the public image of fighter pilots as hypermasculine 'knights' by likening such ideas to 'cavalry tactics in the air'.¹⁸ Nevertheless, romanticised notions governed how much of the public beheld fighter pilots during the First World War and its aftermath.

The adulation for airmen was perpetuated by interwar initiatives of the RAF (and RAAF) to inculcate in the general populace a sense of 'airmindedness'; a fascination with aircraft and the air as a new and exciting frontier.¹⁹ Air shows, for instance, were popular events organised as grand festivals of the air in the 1920s and 1930s. Fighter aircraft tended to be well represented at the shows, with few appearances of the bomber because fear of the aircraft and its destructive might was pervasive among the broader public.²⁰ Such enthusiasm for fighter pilots, however, did not immediately translate to the Second World War. Early on, the RAF faced public criticism and even disdain over misconceptions about its role in the Battle of France and the retreat from Dunkirk. Fighter Command, however, soon gained fame for defending the United Kingdom from the onslaught of German aircraft during the Battle of Britain between July and October 1940.²¹ Fighter pilots were once again glamorised for their 'chivalric' performances: aces such as John Dundas, the New Zealander Edgar (Cobber) Kain, and the Australian-born Paterson Hughes adorned the pages of newspapers; airmen were featured heavily in romance novels published in 1940–41; and the British government sanctioned (and even commissioned) films and documentaries about the war in the air.²² Whereas fighter pilots had been celebrated as pioneers of a new and romanticised form of warfare during the era of the First World War, their social gravitas was now connected to their efforts to protect Britain from German air raids.

Given the strategic significance of the bomber it seems ironic that fighter pilots gained the lion's share of the fame. However, with the British and empire armies fighting in distant

¹⁷ Collins, 'A Fear of Flying,' 193; R.W. Connell, *Masculinities* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1995), 213–14.

¹⁸ Connell, *Masculinities*, 214.

¹⁹ Brett Holman, 'The Militarisation of Aerial Theatre: Air Displays and Airmindedness in Britain and Australia between the World Wars,' *Contemporary British History*, published ahead of print, 25 September 2018, doi: 10.1080/13619462.2018.1519430.

²⁰ Brett Holman, 'The Shadow of the Airliner: Commercial Bombers and the Rhetorical Destruction of Britain, 1917–35,' *Twentieth Century British History* 24, no. 4 (2013): 497; Francis, *The Flyer*, 17.

²¹ Francis, *The Flyer*, 18–20.

²² 'He Shot Down Nazi Ace,' *Derby Evening Telegraph*, 26 April 1941; "'Cobber" Kain Killed,' *Evening Telegraph and Post* (Dundee), 10 June 1940; 'Fallen Officers,' *Times* (London), 17 September 1940; 'Sydney R.A.F. Pilot Killed in Action,' *Argus* (Melbourne), 18 September 1940; Francis, *The Flyer*, 21.

fields during the early years of the Second World War, bomber crew were soon accorded a similar respect to fighter pilots because they, as Martin Francis writes, ‘appeared to be the only fighting men regularly taking the war to the heart of the enemy’.²³ Famous raids, pilots and crewmen were thereafter lauded in the press and the public imagination. Operation Chastise, the ‘Dambusters’ raid on the Edersee, Möhne and Sorpe dams in Germany in May 1943, is one of the most notable examples. Of the 133 personnel to take part in the raid, fifty-three were killed, two became prisoners of war, and thirty-four were decorated (eight of whom were Australian).²⁴ Wing Commander Guy Gibson, who planned and led the raid, was awarded the VC, sent on a public relations tour to Canada and the United States, and afforded time to write *Enemy Coast Ahead* (1946), an autobiography of his experiences in Bomber Command.²⁵

The veneration of aircrew was almost an empire wide phenomenon. Aside from the re-broadcasting of the BBC’s ‘With the Australians in Britain’, the press in Australia carried regular reports about the achievements of Australian and empire airmen. The Directorate of Public Relations aided these efforts by issuing bulletins that drew attention to the notable achievements of Australian airmen in Europe. One released in December 1943 celebrated the award of the DSO to a noted air gunner, Pilot Officer Roberts Dunstan. Dunstan had been permitted to join the RAAF despite losing his left leg to a wound at Tobruk while serving with the 2nd AIF. He gained a degree of celebrity as the ‘one-legged air gunner’, which was only enhanced by the dedication and skill that saw him become one of the youngest and most junior Australian recipients of the DSO in the Second World War; his ‘courage and unique determination’ were, as the bulletin remarked, ‘an inspiration to all’.²⁶ In projecting such tales of valour and fortitude into the homes of the Australian public, the initiatives of the government, press and the BBC served to connect Australians to their countrymen fighting on behalf of the empire in Europe. Although the Australian contingent in Europe was a comparatively small one—27,000 airmen over five years—it was a significant contribution for the RAAF. From early 1942, RAAF personnel were increasingly committed to the war in the Pacific. Despite the shift in strategy and manpower, the European theatre still accounted for

²³ Francis, *The Flyer*, 20.

²⁴ Thirteen Australians took part in the raid, of whom three were awarded the DSO, two a Bar to the DFC, two a DFC, and one a DFM. Two others were killed, and one became a prisoner of war. Mark Connelly, *Reaching for the Stars: A New History of Bomber Command in World War II* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2001), 97; Hank Nelson, *Chased by the Sun: The Australians in Bomber Command in WWII* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2002), 153; ‘Air Ministry, 28th May, 1943,’ *London Gazette*, 28 May 1943.

²⁵ Bowyer, *For Valour*, 327; Guy Gibson, *Enemy Coast Ahead* (London: Michael Joseph Ltd, 1946).

²⁶ Directorate of Public Relations, ‘One-Legged Air Gunner Awarded D.S.O. for Gallantry in Action,’ 9 December 1943, A8681, 1943/3009, NAA, Canberra.

fifty-one percent of the fatalities and forty-six percent of the casualties sustained by the RAAF in the Second World War.²⁷

The bomber reigns supreme

On the outbreak of war, the RAF's combat operations were governed by three formational commands: Coastal Command, Fighter Command and Bomber Command. Coastal Command supported maritime operations by protecting Allied convoys and shipping and defending sea lanes. Fighter Command wrestled for control of the skies, supported ground operations and, notably, was charged with the aerial defence of Britain. Bomber Command, as the name suggests, was responsible for bomber operations. Strategic, or, 'morale bombing' had been championed by RAF chiefs and sympathetic defence officials since the interwar period. The doctrine, according to historian Phillip S. Meilinger, involved the concentrated use of bombers against military and industrial targets to cripple enemy production and civil morale.²⁸ Although the morality and even legality of Bomber Command's operations have been questioned in subsequent decades, a commitment to targeted strikes and morale bombing directed the role of the RAF in the Second World War. The austerity of the 1930s hampered early operations against Germany and its allies, but innovation and technological advancements—such as in airborne radar and aircraft—soon saw Bomber Command deploy bombers on a mass scale and with devastating effect.²⁹ The RAF, and Bomber Command in particular, emerged as a significant consideration in British grand strategy, just as the *Luftwaffe* did in Germany.

With the strategic emphasis on Bomber Command, it is perhaps unsurprising that bomber operations came to dominate the Air Ministry's conception of heroism. Early recognition went to aircrew who pressed attacks against, or took the fight directly to, the enemy. Such as Pilot Officer Donald Garland and Sergeant Thomas Gray, the pilot and navigator of the lead aircraft on a May 1940 raid that, in an effort to stem the German advance into Belgium, destroyed a vital bridge over the Albert Canal. Or Wing Commander Hughie Edwards, a Western Australian on a RAF short service commission, for his meticulous planning and leadership of a hazardous daylight raid on the German port of Bremen in July

²⁷ Nelson, *Chased by the Sun*, 44, 276; John Herington, *Air Power Over Europe, 1944–1945*, vol. 4 of *Australia in the War of 1939–1945: Series 3 – Air* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1963), 509.

²⁸ Phillip S. Meilinger, 'Trenchard and "Morale Bombing": The Evolution of Royal Air Force Doctrine Before World War II,' *Journal of Military History* 60, no. 2 (1996): 244.

²⁹ Meilinger, 'Trenchard and "Morale Bombing",' 245; Kenneth P. Werrell, 'The Strategic Bombing of Germany in World War II: Costs and Accomplishments,' *Journal of American History* 73, no. 3 (1986): 704.

1941.³⁰ Even among aircrew in Coastal Command, successful bomber attacks were favoured for recognition. Flying Officer Kenneth Campbell, for instance, received a posthumous VC for a torpedo attack that damaged the German battlecruiser *Gneisenau* in April 1941.³¹

These awards came during and in the immediate aftermath of the Blitz, when the pilots of Fighter Command were taking to the skies daily to confront the relentless raids of German bombers on Britain. The fighter pilots were fêted at the time (and since) as ‘The Few’ who saved Britain from defeat. And yet only one among their number was awarded the VC.³² Flight Lieutenant James Nicolson was the lead of three Hurricane fighters patrolling over Southampton in August 1940 when they were ambushed by German Messerschmitts. Nicolson’s companions were driven from the sky—one made to bail out and the other forced to land—as his own Hurricane was severely damaged. Although wounded in the eye and leg, and with his fuselage ablaze and burning his hands and face, Nicolson managed to shoot down one Messerschmitt before parachuting clear of his aircraft.³³ He was recommended for an immediate DFC, which was upgraded to the VC at group headquarters.³⁴ Historian Hugh Halliday suggests that the award was ‘motivated as much by political concerns’ as it was Nicolson’s bravery.³⁵ Indeed, Air Commodore Robert Oxland, in forwarding the recommendation to the RAF’s VC Committee (comprised of the Chief of the Air Staff, Air Member for Personnel, and Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Air), considered that Nicolson’s case was ‘less strong’ than that of Garland and Gray but the VC ‘might, perhaps, be approved’ as ‘no member of the Fighter Command has yet received this decoration.’³⁶ Nicolson was awarded Fighter Command’s only VC of the war.³⁷

Accomplished fighter pilots continued to be recognised and several ended the war highly decorated. But that the VC remained elusive is telling of the strategic shift to bombers and Bomber Command. The romanticism and novelty of aerial combat during the First World War had seen fighter pilots well recognised for their combat prowess: the empire’s top ten

³⁰ Recommendation for Flying Officer Donald Garland and Sergeant Thomas Gray, 22 May 1940, AIR 2/5686, TNA; Recommendation for Wing Commander Hughie Edwards, 8 July 1941, AIR 2/5686, TNA.

³¹ Bowyer, *For Valour*, 246–47.

³² Bowyer, *For Valour*, 227.

³³ Bowyer, *For Valour*, 228, 233.

³⁴ Recommendation for Flight Lieutenant James Nicolson, 26 October 1940, A395, RAF Museum, London.

³⁵ Hugh Halliday, ‘VC or Not VC? Bestowing a Battlefield Icon,’ *Canadian Military History* 5, no. 2 (1996): 80.

³⁶ Air Commodore Robert Oxland, Director of Personal Services, minute note, 6 November 1940, AIR 2/5686, TNA. For the composition of the RAF’s VC Committee, or those of the other services, see: Sir Robert Knox, ‘Selection Committee for the George Cross, the George Medal and the British Empire Medal,’ 27 May 1941, T 351/8, TNA.

³⁷ Bowyer, *For Valour*, 227.

scoring aces shared fifty decorations between them, including six VCs.³⁸ Strategically, though, the fighter had been accorded second billing to the bomber for much of the period since 1918. Few fighter pilots were therefore recommended for the VC in the Second World War, though Squadron Leader Robert (Bobby) Gibbes of the RAAF was rumoured to have been considered for the award in December 1942.³⁹ After leading a raid on an Italian airfield in Libya, Gibbes had landed in rocky terrain to rescue a downed pilot in an action reminiscent of Frank McNamara's feat twenty-five years earlier (see Chapter Three).⁴⁰ Gibbes' recommendation does not appear to have reached the RAF's VC Committee, though a similar nomination for a Lieutenant R.H. Kershaw of the South African Air Force had been received by the Air Ministry in March 1941.⁴¹ In scrutinising the recommendation Air Marshal Philip Babington, the Air Member for Personnel, conceded that while the 'saving of a brother officer under fire ... was in the true V.C. tradition' and such acts had been rewarded early in the last war, the 'standard for gallantry has, however, risen considerably since'.⁴² Kershaw was instead awarded the DSO, as was Gibbes.⁴³

The Air Ministry did, nevertheless, make attempts to broaden the scope of recognition. On at least two occasions, representatives of the Air Board (the RAF's governing body) wrote to operational commands inviting further submissions for the VC.⁴⁴ The second instance was instigated by an internal note penned in September 1942 by Sir Archibald Sinclair, the Secretary of State for Air. Sinclair observed what he thought a 'remarkable' fact: '25 V.C.s have been awarded to the Army and only 9 to the Royal Air Force in the present war.' It is to be remembered, he continued, that acts 'of most conspicuous bravery or self-sacrifice ... further operations by maintaining high morale'.⁴⁵ At the suggestion of the Under-Secretary of State for Air, Sir Hugh Seely, operational commands were asked to recommend men 'for sustained gallantry over a period', for which 'some outstanding act ... can serve as a climax'.⁴⁶

³⁸ Figure does not include Mentions in Despatches or awards from foreign powers. Christopher Shores, Norman Franks, and Russell Guest, *Above the Trenches: A Complete Record of the Fighter Aces and Units of the British Empire Air Forces, 1915–1920* (London: Grub Street, 1996), 59, 62–63, 68, 76, 114–15, 240–41, 249, 255, 268, 271.

³⁹ 'Wg Cdr Bobby Gibbes,' *Telegraph* (London), 25 April 2007.

⁴⁰ 'Wg Cdr Bobby Gibbes.'

⁴¹ Headquarters RAF Middle East to Air Ministry, telegram, 17 March 1941, AIR 2/5686, TNA.

⁴² Air Marshal Philip Babington, minute note, 19 March 1941, AIR 2/5686, TNA.

⁴³ Babington, minute note, 19 March 1941; 'Air Ministry, 15th January, 1943,' *London Gazette*, 15 January 1943.

⁴⁴ Oxland, minute note, 6 November 1940; R.C. Richards to Air Marshal Sir Arthur Harris, Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief Bomber Command, 31 October 1942, AIR 2/4890, TNA.

⁴⁵ Sir Archibald Sinclair, minute note, 25 September 1942, AIR 2/4890, TNA.

⁴⁶ Sir Hugh Seely, minute note, 25 October 1942, AIR 2/4890, TNA; Richards to Harris, 31 October 1942.

Guy Gibson was the first to be acknowledged under this rule: the VC was as much for his courage and skill over 170 sorties and four operational tours as it was for the Dambusters raid.⁴⁷

Previous and subsequent recommendations for sustained acts, however, failed to garner sufficient support. The VC Committee variously took exception to the ‘sustained’ element, the worthiness of the ‘climax’, or argued that the individual had already been sufficiently decorated.⁴⁸ The posthumous recommendation for Flight Lieutenant William Newton, though, met a more receptive response. Newton, an RAAF light bomber pilot, flew fifty-two sorties against Japanese targets in New Guinea between May 1942 and March 1943. According to his commanding officer, Newton’s experience, skill and precision saw him ‘[c]onstantly allotted’ difficult targets ‘in heavily defended areas’.⁴⁹ His operational tour culminated with two strikes on Salamaua on 16 and 18 March 1943. Subjected to murderous anti-aircraft fire on both raids, Newton pressed his attacks at low level to achieve devastating hits on the targets. He managed to pilot his crippled aircraft back on the first raid, where it was found to have suffered direct hits from four anti-aircraft shells and to be riddled with ninety-eight bullet holes.⁵⁰ On the second operation, however, the plane erupted in flames from ground fire and he was forced to make a water landing. Newton’s fate was unknown at the time of the recommendation, but it was assumed that he had been killed in the crash.⁵¹ Newton and his navigator had, in fact, made it ashore but were soon captured and made prisoners of war. Both men were executed following an intense interrogation; Newton’s beheading by samurai sword was later the subject of a war crimes investigation.⁵²

Although the air war and the role of the air force in the Pacific differed from that in Europe, the ready support for Newton’s recommendation highlights that the Air Ministry’s bomber-centric idea of heroism had an influence on the other theatres of war. Indeed, Squadron Leader Owen Price, the only other RAAF aviator known to have been recommended for the VC in the Pacific, was forwarded for an act not dissimilar to Kenneth Campbell’s attack on the battlecruiser *Gneisenau*. Alongside two other Bristol Beaufort torpedo bombers, Price executed a dangerous and difficult raid on what his citation described as ‘a very formidable force’ of Japanese warships and merchant vessels in Simpson Harbour, Rabaul, on the night of

⁴⁷ ‘Air Ministry, 28th May, 1943

⁴⁸ See, for example, Sir Hugh Seely, minute note, 5 July 1943, AIR 2/4890, TNA; Air Vice Marshal Douglas Harries, Director-General of Personal Service, minute note, 5 December 1944, AIR 2/5867, TNA.

⁴⁹ Recommendation for Flight Lieutenant William Newton, 10 July 1943, AIR 2/5010, TNA.

⁵⁰ Recommendation for Newton; Mark Weate, *Bill Newton V.C.: The Short Life of a RAAF Hero* (Loftus: Australian Military History Publications, 1999), 61.

⁵¹ Recommendation for Newton.

⁵² Weate, *Bill Newton V.C.*, 65–68. See also: Correspondence Regarding the Execution of William Newton, AWM54, 81/4/185.

8/9 November 1943.⁵³ Piloting the second aircraft, Price and his crew faced an alert and concentrated anti-aircraft barrage that Air Commodore Joseph Hewitt, watching from an observation aircraft, thought 'so thick that it conveyed to me the impression of the whole harbour being covered with red hot ashes.'⁵⁴ Price's immediate fate was unclear, but officers in the observation aircraft were confident that Price's torpedo had struck and damaged a Japanese merchant vessel. The Beaufort was then thought to have been shot down; Price and his crew were declared missing presumed killed.⁵⁵

Price was recommended for the VC by his squadron's commanding officer, which was endorsed at the wing level and by Hewitt at group headquarters.⁵⁶ Meanwhile, the pilot of the third aircraft was submitted for an immediate DFC and, separately, the lead aviator for a periodic Mention in Despatches. The discrepancy in recognition provoked the RAAF's Air Member for Personnel to investigate the precise role of the three Beauforts in the operation. He determined that the part of 'all three aircraft was virtually indistinguishable', and the actions of the pilots 'equally gallant and meritorious' and worthy of the DFC.⁵⁷ The lead and third aviators duly received the medal, but an award for Price was withheld pending clarification as to his fate. The situation remained static for over a year before enquiries were made on behalf of Price's father who, despite the strict confidentiality in which award recommendations were meant to be held, was aware of his son's VC recommendation.⁵⁸ By now Price had officially been declared dead, effectively barring an award of the DFC. For unknown reasons, it was not until November 1946 that the RAAF's Air Board approved a posthumous Mention in Despatches.⁵⁹ Despite the non-award of the VC in this case, Price's recommendation (like Newton's award) conformed to the standard set in Europe from the early months of the war to emphasise the strategic significance of bomber operations and the centrality of targeted strikes to RAF and RAAF conceptions of heroism.

⁵³ Wing Commander Blake Pelly, recommendation for Squadron Leader Owen Price, 17 November 1943, A705, 55/1/529, NAA, Canberra.

⁵⁴ Air Commodore Joseph Hewitt, witness statement, 17 November 1943, A705, 55/1/529, NAA, Canberra.

⁵⁵ Hewitt, witness statement.

⁵⁶ Wing Commander Geoffrey Nicoll, recommendation for Squadron Leader Owen Price, 11 November 1943, A705, 55/1/529, NAA, Canberra; Pelly, recommendation for Price.

⁵⁷ Group Captain Henry Winneke, Director of Personal Services, to Melville Langslow, Secretary of the Department of Air, 5 May 1945, A705, 55/1/797, NAA, Canberra.

⁵⁸ R. Harrison to Senator James Fraser, 6 April 1945, A705, 55/1/797, NAA, Canberra.

⁵⁹ Arthur Drakeford, Minister for Air, to John Dedman, Minister for Defence, 4 November 1946, A705, 55/1/797, NAA, Canberra.

Getting out of a ‘desperate situation’

The cases hitherto examined demonstrate that, like the War Office and Admiralty, the Air Ministry was inclined to recognise tactical heroics that took the war directly to the enemy. However, it is important to note that such recommendations were not the only cases the Air Ministry received. For aircrew who survived the initial flight and raid over enemy territory, the return journey could be equally as difficult or dangerous. As early as 1940 the Air Ministry was in receipt of recommendations that involved, as officials later termed it, getting out of a ‘desperate situation’.⁶⁰ RAF wireless operator/air gunner Sergeant John Hannah, for example, was nominated for the VC following a raid over Antwerp, Belgium, in September 1940. Anti-aircraft fire sparked an inferno in the bomb compartment and Hannah fought to contain the flames as rounds of ammunition exploded around him. The rear gunner and navigator were forced to bail out, but Hannah succeeded in containing the blaze despite suffering burns to his face and eyes.⁶¹

The VC was duly approved in recognition of Hannah having saved his pilot and the aircraft. However, the case led senior officers to debate the absence of an award between the VC and DFM for ranking airmen.⁶² The matter was pushed aside but raised again nine months later with the VC recommendation for Sergeant James Ward of the Royal New Zealand Air Force. Ward was co-pilot of a Vickers Wellington bomber that, following a raid on Münster, had its fuel tank perforated and starboard engine set alight by a German fighter. Tethered to a rope, Ward climbed out on to the wing and smothered the flames. The VC Committee judged Ward to be ‘a border line case’. Air Marshal Babington was inclined to award the DFM, again citing the absence of a middling decoration.⁶³ He was overruled by the other committee members, but the lacuna in the honours system was eventually filled following the institution of the Conspicuous Gallantry Medal (Flying) in November 1942. The new award was granted just 109 times during the war but served to raise the standard for recognition to ranking airmen.⁶⁴ Among the recipients was the Australian rear gunner Norman Williams for the feat highlighted in the BBC program above. Williams’ turret was so badly damaged in the action that he had to be cut from the aircraft, and his wounds kept him in hospital for two months.⁶⁵

⁶⁰ Portal, minute note, 26 July 1941.

⁶¹ Recommendation for Sergeant John Hannah, 16 September 1940, AIR 2/5686, TNA.

⁶² Air Marshal Leslie Gossage, Air Member for Personnel, minute note, 21 September 1940, AIR 2/5686, TNA.

⁶³ Air Marshal Philip Babington, minute note, 24 July 1941, AIR 2/5686, TNA.

⁶⁴ Air Chief Marshal Sir Charles Portal, Chief of the Air Staff, minute note, 26 July 1941, AIR 2/5686, TNA; Alan W. Cooper, *Bravery Awards for Aerial Combat: Stories Behind the Award of the CGM (Flying)* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Aviation, 2007), 20–21.

⁶⁵ Cooper, *Bravery Awards for Aerial Combat*, 49.

A secondary legacy of the Ward case was greater scrutiny of recommendations for escaping so-called ‘desperate’ situations. In reviewing Ward’s recommendation Air Chief Marshal Sir Charles Portal, the Chief of the Air Staff, made clear his thoughts on martial heroism:

I must say that I think the V.C. should more often be given to a man who displays exceptional valour in getting himself into great danger, than to one who shows equal bravery in getting out of the kind of desperate situation which is latent in all air operations.

The first type knowingly raises the odds against himself in the pursuit of his duty, whereas in the latter type of case the motive of self-preservation may sometimes dominate his actions.⁶⁶

Portal’s views were adopted as a general rule—as Bomber Command was later informed, the emphasis should be on ‘the furtherance of operations’; exceptions would only be made ‘when there is clear evidence of actions of the highest gallantry.’⁶⁷ Portal’s ‘ruling’ was challenged with the VC recommendation of Pilot Officer Thomas Howes of the RAAF. In July 1942, Howes was navigator of a Vickers Wellington bomber tasked with a machine gun attack on German vehicles in the Ras El-Kanayis area of Egypt. During the raid the Wellington was fired upon by enemy aircraft. The second pilot, wireless operator, and rear gunner were wounded, and the fuselage and rear turret set alight. In spite of limited visibility and smoke in the air, Howes extinguished both fires and attended to the wounded men.⁶⁸ The Air Ministry thought the DFC more appropriate in Howes’ case and suggested as much to Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Tedder, the Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief RAF Middle East.⁶⁹ Tedder, ‘puzzled as well as gravely disappointed by this decision’, cited the value the award would have on morale in his command and drew comparisons to John Hannah’s VC.⁷⁰ In response, Air Marshal Babington alerted Tedder to the change in policy and dismissed Howe’s actions as ‘less valorous than that of Sergeant Hannah’.⁷¹

Howes’ recommendation was one among a series denied the VC under Portal’s criterion. Indeed, the combination of Portal’s ruling and the Conspicuous Gallantry Medal

⁶⁶ Portal, minute note, 26 July 1941.

⁶⁷ Richards to Harris, 31 October 1942.

⁶⁸ Recommendation for Pilot Officer Thomas Howes, n.d., AIR 2/5686, TNA.

⁶⁹ Air Marshal Philip Babington, minute note, 22 July 1942, AIR 2/5686, TNA.

⁷⁰ Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Tedder to Air Marshal Philip Babington, telegram, 31 July 1942, AIR 2/5686, TNA.

⁷¹ Air Marshal Philip Babington to Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Tedder, telegram, 3 August 1942, AIR 2/5686, TNA.

(Flying) provided the rationale in some instances for the Air Ministry to impose an almost impossibly high standard on heroism. The Vice-Chief of the Air Staff, for instance, objected to one VC recommendation because the incident ‘did not call for that element of deliberate self-sacrifice’.⁷² The sergeant pilot in this case had managed to bring his bomber and crew back to base despite his left foot being practically severed by anti-aircraft fire.⁷³ In a similar incident, the Under-Secretary of State for Air challenged the recommendation of a grievously wounded flight sergeant because ‘[b]y helping to bring the aircraft back he, in fact, increased his own chances of survival.’⁷⁴ Given the objections in these cases it is curious that a comparable recommendation for Flight Sergeant Rawdon (Ron) Middleton, a RAAF bomber pilot, found support.

Middleton was captain of a Short Stirling heavy bomber tasked with a low-level attack on the Fiat works in Turin, Italy, on 28/29 November 1942. Difficulty in climbing over the Alps led to an excessive consumption of fuel, meaning it unlikely the Stirling would make it back to base. Still, Middleton and his crew were determined to reach their target. As Middleton flew in low towards the Fiat works, his aircraft was riddled with ‘the most intense and accurate’ flak.⁷⁵ Both pilots and the wireless operator were wounded when a shell shattered the windscreen and exploded in the cockpit; shrapnel tore into Middleton’s face, destroying his right eye and exposing bone. He lost consciousness and the Stirling fell into a dive.⁷⁶ The second pilot, Flight Sergeant Leslie Hyder, regained control and released the bombs before Middleton came to and resumed command. In intense pain and with the aircraft damaged, Middleton was resolute about making the English coast. He remained at the controls for over four hours and, in spite of further anti-aircraft fire on the return journey, made the coast near Kent. Middleton kept the Stirling steady and ordered the crew to bail out. The flight engineer and front gunner remained to assist their captain, only bailing out at the last minute. The pair drowned, and Middleton was killed when the Stirling crashed into the English Channel.⁷⁷

Middleton was posthumously commissioned as a pilot officer and recommended for a VC, which found ready support in the Air Ministry.⁷⁸ Given the similarities between his case and those earlier rejected, it is not entirely clear why Middleton went unchallenged. But it may

⁷² Air Marshal Sir Douglas Evill, Vice-Chief of the Air Staff, minute note, 15 May 1943, AIR 2/4890, TNA.

⁷³ Cooper, *Bravery Awards for Aerial Combat*, 113–14.

⁷⁴ Sir Hugh Seely, Under-Secretary of State for Air, minute note, 1 April 1943, AIR 2/4890, TNA.

⁷⁵ Recommendation for Flight Sergeant Rawdon Middleton, 11 December 1942, AIR 2/4890, TNA.

⁷⁶ Stuart Bill, *Middleton VC: The Life of Pilot Officer Rawdon Hume Middleton, VC of the Royal Australian Air Force as Remembered by His Friends and Colleagues* (East Bentleigh: S. & L. Bill, 1991), 135.

⁷⁷ Recommendation for Middleton; Sergeant H.W. Gough, witness statement, n.d., X002-5599, RAF Museum, London.

⁷⁸ Air Chief Marshal Sir Charles Portal, minute note, 2 January 1943, AIR 2/4890, TNA.

be assumed that the sacrificial element to Middleton's actions, the difficulties experienced in the initial flight, and the fact that Middleton's Stirling was the only aircraft of that type to make it to Turin were sufficient to distinguish his claim. In a subsequent and eerily similar recommendation for Flight Sergeant Arthur Aaron, however, the Under-Secretary of State for Air hinted at the possible political and morale factors behind Middleton's award. The Under-Secretary thought Aaron's 'a doubtful case' and intimated that the VC Committee had 'had similar doubts' about Middleton. But because the latter's award 'was acclaimed by the public and the service generally', he was inclined to see Aaron awarded the VC also.⁷⁹ There is truth to the Under-Secretary's claims. After Middleton's body washed ashore at Dover in January 1944, he was accorded a military funeral attended by senior representatives from the RAAF and Bomber, Coastal and Fighter Commands.⁸⁰ Accounts of the funeral and Middleton's wartime service appeared in newspapers across Britain and Australia, while his final flight was immortalised in BBC programs in 1943 and 1958.⁸¹

Middleton's final flight epitomised the Air Ministry's vision of heroism during the Second World War. Although the case fell into the 'desperate situation' category, the actions of Middleton and his crew reflected a dogged determination to prosecute the war, the skill, professionalism and team dynamic endemic to successful bomber operations, and self-sacrifice; virtues the Air Ministry was eager to recognise and publicise. Accordingly, in addition to Middleton's VC, the Stirling's navigator and wireless operator were awarded DFCs, while Hyder, the mid-upper gunner, and the rear gunner each received the DFM.⁸² The bomber emerged in Europe as a fundamental weapon in grand strategy, and thereafter came to dominate the narrative of heroism amid the war in the air. But the legacy of the bomber grew beyond feats of aerial daring—the bomber similarly shaped the narrative and recognition surrounding less conventional acts of martial heroism.

Codifying less conventional heroism

The Blitz on London from September 1940 to May 1941 drew attention to the myriad acts of heroism performed by civilians, the emergency services, and military personnel alike. Existing

⁷⁹ Sir Hugh Seely, minute note, 29 September 1943, AIR 2/5010, TNA.

⁸⁰ Bill, *Middleton VC*, 148–57.

⁸¹ See, for example, 'Middleton, V.C., "Most Gallant" of the Few,' *Evening Standard* (London), 15 January 1943; 'Air V.C.'s Burial,' *Eastern Daily Express* (Norwich), 6 February 1943; 'Middleton, VC,' *Newcastle Sun*, 19 March 1943; Pilot Officer Norman Skinner, 'Bravery During a Raid on Turin,' transcript of interview, *BBC*, 14 January 1943, X002-5599, RAF Museum, London; *With Courage*, no. 2, 'Flight Back,' written and produced by Alan Burgess, aired 12 October 1958, *BBC*, X002-5599, RAF Museum, London.

⁸² Bill, *Middleton VC*, 147.

honours and awards for military heroism and non-warlike bravery—such as the Albert Medal and Empire Gallantry Medal—were insufficient to meet the demands of what was an unprecedented situation. Accordingly, in a public broadcast on 23 September 1940, King George VI announced the institution of two new honours: the George Cross (GC) and George Medal (GM). The awards were primarily created to recognise acts of heroism performed by civilians, with the GC to rank alongside the VC and ‘in front of ... all British Orders of Chivalry’, although military personnel were also eligible for ‘actions for which purely military Honours are not normally granted.’⁸³ This vague caveat has been refined over time but was generally taken to mean acts of heroism performed in hazardous circumstances remote from a battlefield and in the absence of a direct enemy presence. The emphasis on civilians in the award statutes, though, was a meaningful development. As historian Geoffrey Best suggests, it signified that ‘[c]ivilian behaviour under bombardment, then, constituted a case demanding equality of esteem with military behaviour in battle.’⁸⁴

To administer the new honours and ensure suitable standards of award to the military services, an interdepartmental GC Committee was formed in October 1940 with Sir Horace Wilson, Permanent Secretary to the Treasury, as its chair. The committee included representatives from the Admiralty, War Office, and Air Ministry, as well as the Private Secretaries to the Sovereign and Prime Minister.⁸⁵ The committee was thus more diverse, robust and capable of enforcing a universal standard than the VC Committees convened by the service departments. The GC Committee tabled its inaugural meeting for 28 November, by which time the Air Ministry had submitted five recommendations for the GC, the Admiralty eight, and the War Office ten. Wilson made clear twenty-three recommendations at this stage was excessive. He argued that the grant of the GC on such a scale,

would make the awards far less valuable than [*sic*] had been the intention. In fact, a succession of lists on the scale proposed would soon make it quite ridiculous to say that the new Decoration should be regarded as the equivalent of the V.C.⁸⁶

He thus persuaded the Air Ministry to downgrade four of its recommendations and the War Office to reduce its number by seven. Although Sir Archibald Carter, Permanent Secretary to the Admiralty, was sympathetic to Wilson’s entreaties, he was certain the First Sea Lord (the

⁸³ Winston Churchill, ‘The George Cross,’ *London Gazette*, 31 January 1941.

⁸⁴ Geoffrey Best, *Honour among Men and Nations: Transformations of an Idea* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), 75.

⁸⁵ ‘Selection Committee for the George Cross, the George Medal and the Medal of the Order of the British Empire. Conclusions of a Meeting of the Committee Held on Thursday, 28th November, 1940, at the Treasury,’ 28 November 1940, T 351/8, TNA.

⁸⁶ ‘Selection Committee for the George Cross,’ 28 November 1940.

professional head of the Royal Navy) would insist on the Admiralty recommendations being approved.⁸⁷ This was to be a recurrent theme, with the navy fiercely defensive of recommendations it submitted to the committee despite lingering questions over suitable standards.

By May 1941 thirty-seven awards of the GC had been made: six to the air force; nine to civilians; ten to the army; and twelve to naval personnel. The rate of award was far in excess of the VC at that stage of the war, yet a further seven recommendations for the GC and one for a Bar to the award were under consideration by the GC Committee.⁸⁸ Between the approved and pending recommendations, a clear pattern had emerged in the medal's award. Twenty-seven of the GCs—almost three-quarters—were in recognition of rendering safe unexploded ordnance, namely German mines and bombs dropped during the Blitz. The remaining ten recognised the saving of life from crashed aircraft or from burning buildings in the aftermath of an air raid.⁸⁹ The high rate of award, and the recommendation of a Bar in particular, led the GC Committee to revisit the appropriate standard for recognition. The committee sought advice from Admiral of the Fleet Lord Chatfield, the Chairman of the Civil Defence Honours Committee responsible for awards to civilians. Chatfield expressed concern over the high number of military awards, since the GC was chiefly instituted 'as the greatest Civilian Order obtainable'. He also lamented 'the large number ... given for bomb disposal', which 'is now inevitably leading to the G.C. getting into a different category to the V.C.' It was Chatfield's understanding that the VC was awarded for 'a spontaneous act of great courage', yet he considered bomb disposal work prolonged, repetitive, incurring few casualties and, therefore, 'not acts for which the G.C. and V.C. were created'.⁹⁰

Chatfield's criticism on the grounds of prolonged duration is odd, as the personnel involved in bomb and mine disposal were repeatedly and for long periods exposed to ordnance that could explode with one false move. Disposal work had assumed a greater significance from May 1940, when the fall of France made the threat of German attack on the British Isles a near certainty. The British Army's Royal Engineers were handed responsibility for the disposal of bombs and anti-aircraft shells shortly after the outbreak of war. The training and techniques were at first rudimentary, and few personnel—just one hundred other ranks—were

⁸⁷ 'Selection Committee for the George Cross,' 28 November 1940.

⁸⁸ Sir Robert Knox, 'Selection Committee for the George Cross, the George Medal and the British Empire Medal,' 16 May 1941, T 351/8, TNA.

⁸⁹ Knox, 'Selection Committee,' 16 May 1941.

⁹⁰ Admiral of the Fleet Lord Chatfield to Sir Robert Knox, 25 May 1941, T 351/8, TNA.

dedicated to the task.⁹¹ The bomb disposal section rapidly expanded as the threat intensified, so that an average of almost eight thousand sappers were employed during the Blitz to dispose of over nineteen thousand bombs and six thousand shells.⁹²

The Royal Engineers were complemented by mine disposal personnel from HMS *Vernon*, a shore establishment home to the Royal Navy's torpedo, mine and anti-submarine warfare branch. The work at *Vernon*, too, had been accorded greater importance from the outbreak of war, as advancements in the design of German mines meant the ordnance could be dropped from the air and remain dormant until sound, pressure, magnetic influence or tampering caused detonation.⁹³ *Vernon* employed a small, specialist team able to be deployed to any part of the United Kingdom: by May 1941, the section was staffed by fifty-six officers and ratings, and had rendered safe some seven hundred mines.⁹⁴ The mine disposal team included Australians on loan to the Royal Navy under the Dominion Yachtsmen Scheme. The Admiralty had sent a request to the Australian government in May 1940 for gentlemen yachtsmen to serve with the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve. With the Royal Navy under strain, the Admiralty was eager to secure the services of educated 'gentlemen' who, ideally, had experience in sailing or seamanship.⁹⁵ Recruitment began in June. Successful candidates aged thirty to forty were commissioned directly into the Royal Australian Naval Volunteer Reserve (RANVR), while men in their twenties were appointed seamen. The five hundred Yachtsmen volunteers experienced diverse wartime careers, but for at least eight it was spent with HMS *Vernon* rendering mines safe.⁹⁶

Bomb and mine disposal was dangerous, nerve-racking and arduous work, but imperative to save lives and infrastructure. Proportionally, the Royal Engineers suffered one man killed for every 133 bombs and shells disposed during the Blitz. *Vernon* lost a sailor for every eighty-eight mines during the same period and, according to a March 1942 report, the men engaged in mine disposal were almost twice as likely to be killed than those serving in

⁹¹ Ian Bisset, *The George Cross* (London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1961), 50; Major General G.B.O. Taylor, Inspector of Fortifications and Director of Bomb Disposal, extract from report to the War Office, 27 May 1941, T 351/8, TNA.

⁹² Taylor, extract from report.

⁹³ Bisset, *George Cross*, 143–44; Pfennigwerth, *Bravo Zulu*, 91–92.

⁹⁴ Sir Robert Knox, 'Selection Committee for the George Cross, the George Medal and the British Empire Medal,' 27 May 1941, T 351/8, TNA.

⁹⁵ Janet Roberts Billet, 'The Yachtsmen Scheme 1940–42,' *Oral History Association of Australia Journal*, no. 26 (2004): 71; Janet Roberts Billet, 'Australians in the Dominion Yachtsmen Scheme 1940–45,' *Journal of Australian Naval History* 7, no. 1 (2010): 35–36.

⁹⁶ Roberts Billet, 'Yachtsmen Scheme,' 72; Roberts Billet, 'Australians in the Dominion Yachtsmen Scheme,' 37–42.

army operational commands.⁹⁷ Given the hazards and importance of the work, it is understandable why bomb and mine disposal dominated awards of the GC and GM. The use of the awards to recognise such work also addressed historical inconsistencies in rewarding less conventional acts of heroism. Between 1858 and 1881 eligibility for the VC had been modified to include heroism ‘under circumstances of extreme danger’ but in the absence of a recognised enemy presence. Only six awards were made under the amendment, the first of which went to Private Timothy O’Hea of the Rifle Brigade who, in 1866, fought a fire that had broken out on a railway car loaded with two thousand pounds of ammunition and gunpowder.⁹⁸ The amendment was contentious and was rescinded in 1881, but thereafter left a gap in the honours system.

During the First World War at least three men in the AIF were recommended for the VC for acts of heroism analogous to O’Hea’s. At Lone Pine in August 1915, after a Howitzer shell had landed on the 2nd Battalion’s headquarters killing two men and wounding Corporal John McElroy and others, McElroy ‘at great personal risk’ smothered the flames on a sack filled with one hundred bombs.⁹⁹ Twelve months later, at Pozzières, Private Harold Riddell discovered a mortar bomb with a running fuse among a cache of 380 explosives. He threw the bomb over the parapet and shouted for the men nearby to take cover. The bomb exploded without incident.¹⁰⁰ The third recommendation was a posthumous one in favour of Sergeant David Coyne. In May 1918, while occupying a support trench in northern France, Coyne was testing some Mills bombs he suspected to be of doubtful quality when one rebounded off the parapet. He ordered the men out of the trench but, with time running short, he leapt on the bomb to smother the blast in what was described as an ‘example of cold blooded bravery’. Coyne died from his injuries but prevented any further casualties.¹⁰¹ In each of these incidents, bravery had been performed without the presence or—in the latter two cases—interference of the enemy. As the VC’s warrant did not strictly cover such acts, there was considerable confusion as to the awards appropriate. McElroy was ultimately awarded a Military Medal, Riddell a DCM, and Coyne an Albert Medal in Gold. The institution of the GC and GM therefore brought clarity and some consistency to the recognition of less conventional acts of heroism.

⁹⁷ Taylor, extract from report; Knox, ‘Selection Committee,’ 27 May 1941; Sir Robert Knox, ‘Selection Committee for the George Cross, the George Medal and the British Empire Medal,’ 9 March 1942, T 351/10, TNA.

⁹⁸ Crook, *Evolution of the Victoria Cross*, 144–46.

⁹⁹ Recommendation for Corporal John McElroy, n.d., AWM28, 2/293.

¹⁰⁰ Recommendation for Private Harold Riddell, 11 August 1916, AWM28, 1/69.

¹⁰¹ Recommendation for Sergeant David Coyne, 22 July 1918, AWM28, 1/298.

Lord Chatfield's advice regarding awards for disposal work was, nevertheless, considered in a meeting of the GC Committee in May 1941. The Admiralty defended its recommendations by arguing that, aside from the inherent danger, mine disposal was pragmatic work and valuable in a tactical sense as it enabled the Admiralty 'to obtain information to enable us successfully to carry on the war at sea.'¹⁰² The War Office was similarly defensive about awards for bomb disposal. Sir Horace Wilson was, however, clear to caution that it would be a 'mistaken policy' for the service departments to continue to press for GC awards at the current standard, noting that, in comparison, VCs are made with an eye to 'maintaining the element of rarity'.¹⁰³ The committee generally concurred and considered it premature to approve the award of a Bar to the GC. The Bar was recommended for Lieutenant John Miller in recognition of rendering safe, near London Bridge Station, a precarious mine threatening the viaduct and signals connecting three underground rail lines.¹⁰⁴ His GC had been approved only four months earlier, in reward for rendering safe ten difficult mines in 1940.¹⁰⁵ Four of the six pending Admiralty recommendations were also downgraded, one for Sub-Lieutenant Howard Reid RANVR among them. Reid had dealt with six mines over December and January, including two after the fuse had started to run and one that had lodged into the pavement, severing a water main and power cables.¹⁰⁶ He instead received the GM. Ten months later a GC recommendation in favour of Lieutenant Keith Upton RANVR for similar circumstances met the same fate.¹⁰⁷ As recommendations for disposal work continued to trickle in, the GC Committee revised the requirements to ensure a superior standard of award.

The subsequent GC recommendations for Lieutenants John Mould and Hugh Syme, both of the RANVR, met a more receptive response. Both men had already been twice decorated: Mould with a GM and King's Commendation for Brave Conduct (the non-warlike equivalent of a Mention in Despatches) for dealing with a new and particularly deadly type of mine and rendering safe six others; and Syme a GM and Bar for disposing of ten mines and for his innovative methods in dismantling a difficult and perilous mine buried in the clay at Primrose Hill in London.¹⁰⁸ Mould's GC recommendation, however, recognised his disposal

¹⁰² Knox, 'Selection Committee,' 27 May 1941.

¹⁰³ Knox, 'Selection Committee,' 27 May 1941.

¹⁰⁴ Recommendation for Lieutenant John Miller, n.d., T 351/8, TNA.

¹⁰⁵ Bisset, *George Cross*, 151.

¹⁰⁶ Recommendation for Sub-Lieutenant Howard Reid, n.d., T 351/8, TNA.

¹⁰⁷ Sir Robert Knox, 'Selection Committee for the George Cross, the George Medal and the British Empire Medal,' 9 March 1942, T 351/10, TNA.

¹⁰⁸ Recommendation for Sub-Lieutenant John Mould, n.d., T 351/8, TNA; Pfennigwerth, *Bravo Zulu*, 92; Recommendation for Sub-Lieutenant Hugh Syme, n.d., T 351/8, TNA; Recommendation for Lieutenant Hugh Syme, n.d., T 351/10, TNA.

work from November 1941 to June 1942, during which he worked to overcome new types of mines and anti-tampering devices, often in water or under ‘filthy, exacting and arduous conditions’.¹⁰⁹ The GC was approved and gazetted in November 1942. Syme’s followed nine months later, the award granted in recognition of his rendering safe an additional nineteen mines between May 1941 and December 1942. In one instance, Syme had endured several painful electrical shocks while dismantling a mine partially submerged in bitterly cold water.¹¹⁰

Clearly the standards for the GC had continued to climb. Rendering safe ten mines (or fewer) had secured the award earlier in the war, but by 1942 the GC Committee increasingly emphasised the difficulty, hazards and significance of the work involved. This was certainly the case for Lieutenants Leon Goldsworthy and George Gosse, the final RANVR officers to be awarded the GC. Goldsworthy’s recommendation, made in recognition of rendering safe two ground mines underwater, reached the GC Committee in July 1944.¹¹¹ He had earlier received the GM under similar circumstances, defusing two submerged mines using an innovative diving suit he helped to design.¹¹² The committee was inclined to award a Bar to Goldsworthy’s GM, but as the recommendation was lacking in detail the committee requested (and shortly after received) further information from the Admiralty.¹¹³ On the first occasion, Goldsworthy had made three dives and spent eighty minutes underwater in poor weather conditions to defuse a corroded mine from which he had no escape if anything went wrong. The second mine took a single dive of twenty-eight minutes, throughout which the mine was ‘in a highly dangerous state’ and he again had no means of escape.¹¹⁴ The GC was duly approved and promulgated in September 1944.

Gosse’s recommendation appeared before the GC Committee in February 1946. The previous May, just days after the war in Europe had come to an end, Gosse had been in command of a party of divers undertaking clearance work in Germany’s Bremen harbour. His divers discovered an unusual device in the water, and Gosse confirmed it was a modified pressure mine. He rendered safe three such mines over the following ten days, despite limited visibility, shipping nearby, and corpses obstructing the waterways. According to Gosse’s

¹⁰⁹ Recommendation for Lieutenant John Mould, n.d., T 351/15, TNA; Bisset, *George Cross*, 154.

¹¹⁰ Recommendation for Lieutenant Hugh Syme, n.d., T 351/19, TNA.

¹¹¹ Recommendation for Lieutenant Leon Goldsworthy, n.d., T 351/24, TNA.

¹¹² Pfennigwerth, *Bravo Zulu*, 94.

¹¹³ Sir Robert Knox, ‘Selection Committee for the George Cross, the George Medal and the British Empire Medal,’ 22 July 1944, T 351/24, TNA.

¹¹⁴ J.P. Droop, Administrative Assistant Admiralty Secretariat and Head of the Honours and Awards Branch, to Sir Robert Knox, 15 August 1944, T 351/25, TNA.

recommendation, this ‘most difficult and important operation’ called for an ‘exceptionally high standard of personal courage and also a high degree of skill.’¹¹⁵

In recognising instances of wartime bravery remote from the battlefield, the GC and GM addressed inconsistencies in the British honours system and established a distinct legacy for the reward of less conventional acts of heroism. Ordnance disposal technicians and clearance divers, for instance, were similarly recognised for outstanding performances during the Troubles in Northern Ireland and in the wars in Vietnam, Afghanistan and Iraq.¹¹⁶ The GC and GM also carried implications for those subject to enemy attack. Sister Ellen Savage, for example, received the GM for her devotion to the wounded after the hospital ship *Centaur* was sunk by a Japanese torpedo while en route to New Guinea in May 1943. Savage was the only one of twelve nurses onboard to survive the sinking and, despite sustaining serious injuries, she tended to the wounded and maintained morale until rescued some thirty-four hours later.¹¹⁷ In cases such as this there existed a fine, at times artificial, line between acts that received operational gallantry awards and those rewarded with their non-warlike counterparts. Indeed, comparable acts by nursing sisters during the First World War had earned the Military Medal (see Chapter Four). After 1940, male military personnel were similarly rewarded with non-warlike decorations for acts of heroism during air raids and in the aftermath of naval attacks.¹¹⁸ But the GC and GM, being among the few honours to which women were eligible, perpetuated the gender divide in the honours system. This distinction is most patently clear among the recognised personnel of the Special Operations Executive (SOE), a clandestine British organisation formed in 1940 to encourage resistance movements in occupied Europe.

At its height the SOE employed some five thousand field agents from a variety of backgrounds—including émigrés and foreign exiles—among whom were a number of women. Their work differed by region and female agents were often accorded less hazardous tasks, such as couriering messages and liaison work.¹¹⁹ Some agents such as Violette Szabo, Pearl Witherington, and the Australian Nancy Wake did, however, assume an active and often dangerous role in operations. Szabo, for instance, was subject to interrogation and torture by

¹¹⁵ Recommendation for Lieutenant George Gosse, n.d., T 351/32, TNA.

¹¹⁶ See, for example: ‘Army Department,’ *London Gazette*, 11 January 1972; Pfennigwerth, *Bravo Zulu*, 527–36; ‘Honours and Awards,’ *London Gazette*, 23 March 2006; ‘Honours and Awards,’ *London Gazette*, 18 March 2010.

¹¹⁷ Recommendation for Sister Ellen Savage, 29 April 1944, AWM88, O/A 16 AMF.

¹¹⁸ See, for example: Award of the George Medal to Private James Calder, 25 October 1945, AWM54, 391/11/15.

¹¹⁹ M.R.D. Foot, *SOE: An Outline History of the Special Operations Executive, 1940–46* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1985), 61–62. For an insight into the varied role and functions of SOE agents, see Peter Monteath, ‘SOE in Crete: An Alternative Model of “Special Operations”?,’ *Intelligence and National Security* 33, no. 6 (2018): 839–53.

the Gestapo and later executed following her capture in 1944. Szabo received a posthumous GC in recognition of her ‘magnificent example of courage and steadfastness’, while Wake was awarded a GM, and Witherington appointed a Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE); all civil or non-warlike decorations.¹²⁰ Curiously, male SOE agents were similarly denied the VC, with Wing Commander Forest Yeo-Thomas and Lieutenant Commander Patrick O’Leary (the wartime alias of Belgian-born Albert-Marie Guérisse) likewise awarded the GC. However, at the lesser level male agents were rewarded with operational gallantry awards: Yeo-Thomas also received a Military Cross and Bar, and O’Leary a DSO.¹²¹ The discrepancy in award types reflected the status of SOE agents in the British forces. Male agents, if not already in the services, were commissioned as officers while their female counterparts were appointed to the women’s auxiliary services or the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry.¹²² Lacking substantive military appointments, female personnel were once again denied equality in recognition, which served to reinforce the perception of the military establishment that the wartime heroism of women was separate to that of the masculine combatant.

Conclusion

The air war over Europe demonstrated the significance of aircraft to modern warfare. The operations flown by aircrew were dangerous, volatile, and—according to British defence strategists at the time—vital to the prosecution of the war, which was duly reflected in the flow of honours and awards. Indeed, the conflation of aircraft, a desire to avoid attrition tactics in land operations, and stringent award quotas saw a dramatic drop in the recognition of ground forces and a substantial rise in that accorded to aircrew. The strategic emphasis on bomber operations, furthermore, demonstrated the increasingly political and strategic application of the honours system. To secure the VC, feats of aerial heroism had to conform to specific, often restrictive and at times contradictory ideals harboured by the Air Ministry. For the most part this paradigm was dominated by bomber crew who pressed attacks against or took the war directly to the enemy. Heroics performed in escaping a ‘desperate situation’ could earn high recognition but hinged on the element of self-sacrifice involved and whether the deed would boost morale. Australian and empire air operations in Europe therefore saw conceptions of

¹²⁰ ‘Central Chancery of the Orders of Knighthood,’ *London Gazette*, 17 July 1945; ‘Central Chancery of the Orders of Knighthood,’ *London Gazette*, 17 December 1946; Marcus Binney, *The Women Who Lived for Danger: The Women Agents of SOE in the Second World War* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2002), especially 186–200.

¹²¹ Kevin Brazier, *The Complete George Cross: A Full Chronological Record of All George Cross Holders* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Military, 2012), 157–59. See also: Recommendation for Lieutenant Commander Patrick O’Leary, n.d., T 351/35, TNA.

¹²² Foot, *SOE*, 60–61.

heroism realigned, and the honours system adjusted, to recognise the ascendancy of the air force. A subsidiary legacy of the air war was the GC and GM, awards instituted as a direct result of the bombing campaigns to recognise civilian and less conventional acts of martial heroism. The cool courage of bomb and mine disposal specialists came to dominate both awards, and in doing so clarified historical inconsistencies in award practices. But the GC and GM were also used to perpetuate a gendered divide in the honours system, which was to similarly have implications for prisoners of war in the Pacific theatre.

Chapter Seven

Valour in the Pacific: Heroism in the War Against Japan, 1941–45

The army opens up the issue of awards/decorations at the conclusion of a successful operation. Anything that is looked upon as just continuing warfare, and not very successfully, they don't talk about.

– Lieutenant Colonel Geoffrey Cooper, reflecting on the New Guinea campaign in 1996¹

Just inland from the coast on New Guinea's Huon Peninsula sits Sattelberg, a village that straddles a peak and rises some nine hundred metres above sea level to dominate the local region. Sattelberg was home to a Christian mission prior to the Pacific War, but alongside much of New Guinea was occupied by Imperial Japanese forces from early 1942. The 2nd AIF sought to recapture Sattelberg in late 1943 as part of the Huon Peninsula campaign. The operation was hard fought as the entrenched Japanese offered fierce resistance over precipitous terrain, but by 24 November the 2/48th Battalion was within striking distance of the peak. After multiple attempts by B Company to take the higher ground failed, Sergeant Thomas (Diver) Derrick received permission to make one final assault.² Derrick led one section of his platoon to the left flank and, moving forward of his men, destroyed a Japanese machine gun post with grenades. A second section, ordered to the right flank, was held up by machine gun fire and grenades from a further six weapon pits. Working ahead of his men, Derrick clambered up the steep cliff face and, gripping on with one hand, lobbed grenade after grenade at the Japanese positions while his men provided covering fire. His accurate throwing from an exposed position—and method of following up with precise rifle fire—was described as 'so completely demoralising [to] the enemy that they fled'.³ Derrick's company commander later wrote that he 'was amazed' Derrick had managed such a feat 'at the top of such precipitous slopes.'⁴ With seven posts now silenced, B Company at last gained a foothold. Leading two sections in a final attack, Derrick and his men captured the three remaining Japanese posts in the area; by the following morning, the 2/48th Battalion had recaptured Sattelberg.⁵

¹ Geoffrey Cooper, quoted in Bill Edgar, *Warrior of Kokoda: A Biography of Brigadier Arnold Potts* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1999), 185.

² Garth Pratten, 'Applying the Principles of War: Securing the Huon Peninsula,' in *Australia 1943: The Liberation of New Guinea*, ed. Peter J. Dean (Port Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 274.

³ Recommendation for Sergeant Thomas Derrick, 2 January 1944, AWM54, 391/11/66.

⁴ Captain Deane Hill, witness statement, 17 December 1943, AWM54, 391/11/66.

⁵ Recommendation for Derrick.

Derrick, who had already earned distinction while fighting in North Africa, received only the second VC awarded to the 2nd AIF for the operations in 1943. He was lavished with celebrity; profiled in major newspapers and magazines and hosted to dinner by the Premier of South Australia, Derrick became a household name and was described by war correspondent Allan Dawes as ‘the Albert Jacka of this war’.⁶ Derrick’s reputation was such that, when he was killed on Borneo in May 1945, the Japanese erroneously taunted Allied forces ‘over the death of Lieutenant General Terick CinC of Allied Force in Tarakan’.⁷ Actions such as Derrick’s feat of tactical leadership and offensive heroics at Sattelberg characterised the heroism recognised in Australia’s Pacific War of 1941–45.

Australians fought in the South West Pacific under a United States-led Allied command structure with next to no involvement from Britain or the other Dominions. For the first time, Australians were almost entirely responsible for the administration of Imperial honours and awards in a theatre of operations. This chapter analyses the experiences of the Australian forces (and Federal government) in attempting to recognise heroism and administer the Imperial system of honours during the military and naval war against Japan. It argues that a sense of anxious cautiousness characterised the approach of Australian officers to recommendations for awards, such that the process for recognition in the South West Pacific was lengthened and the standards for award heightened. By late 1942 it was clear that only the most outstanding, and well supported, instances of tactical and offensive heroism—actions like Derrick’s at Sattelberg—would be considered for the VC or other high award.

Politics, policies and prisoners: the Japanese thrust

Australia entered the Pacific War in December 1941 after Japan simultaneously invaded the British colonies of Hong Kong and Malaya and bombed the United States Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. The attacks, stemming from a diplomatic impasse over Japan’s military aggression in China, drew the United States into the Second World War and spurred a flurry of activity among political leaders and military commanders.⁸ Australians panicked as the continent was sparsely defended. Only the 8th Division remained in the Pacific, with two brigades stationed in Singapore and a third split between the islands of Ambon, Timor and New

⁶ ‘Surprised it Was V.C. Says Winner,’ *News* (Adelaide), 23 March 1944; ‘Sergeant T.C. Derrick, V.C., D.C.M.,’ *Age* (Melbourne), 24 March 1944; Freda Young, ‘Derrick V.C. Could Have Stayed Safely at Home,’ *Australian Women’s Weekly* (Sydney), 16 June 1945; Murray Farquhar, *Derrick V.C.* (Adelaide: Rigby, 1982), 158; Allan Dawes, ‘“Diver” Derrick, V.C. Led a Charmed Life,’ *Herald* (Melbourne), 4 June 1945.

⁷ Peter Stanley, *Tarakan: An Australian Tragedy* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1997), 147.

⁸ Joan Beaumont, ‘Australia’s War: Asia and the Pacific,’ in Beaumont, *Australia’s War, 1939–45*, 26.

Britain. Continental defence rested with the part-time Citizens Military Force, a cache of mostly obsolete or trainer aircraft, and just five cruisers and destroyers.⁹ John Curtin, Australia's prime minister since October 1941, resisted British advances to send the 6th and 7th Divisions to Burma, but both formations returned from the Middle East for service in the Pacific.¹⁰ Meanwhile, the United States committed forces to the region, but to Australia's dismay adopted with Britain a policy of 'Beat Hitler First'; Japan was a secondary consideration and the war against Germany was accorded top priority.¹¹

The speed and ingenuity with which Japanese forces advanced southward through the Asia-Pacific caught Allied commanders by surprise. In Malaya, British and Indian troops in the north were overwhelmed in December 1941.¹² The Australians, stationed in Johore towards the southern end of the peninsula, made contact the next month. On 18 January, Lieutenant Colonel Charles Anderson's 2/19th Battalion was ordered to Bakri to reinforce the 2/29th Battalion and aid the 45th Indian Brigade, which was under strain from the veteran Japanese Imperial Guards Division. The men attempted to regain ground and weathered incessant attacks from land and air for two days in an effort to hold back the Japanese. By 20 January, with the 45th Brigade's commander killed and the casualties mounting, Anderson assumed command of the remaining force and embarked on a fighting withdrawal towards Parit Sulong some twenty-five kilometres away.¹³ Anderson's men fought to break through Japanese roadblocks on their forward route, all the while fending off attacks from the rear. With one roadblock offering fierce resistance, Anderson led his lead company to rout the Japanese and shatter the blockade; Anderson himself destroyed two machine gun posts with grenades.¹⁴ The remnants of Anderson's column halted just outside of Parit Sulong. Attempts were made to break through the Japanese cordon there until 22 January when, with the column cut off and under attack from tanks, artillery and aircraft, Anderson ordered the destruction of heavy equipment and instructed those able to escape eastward in small parties. The Indian brigade was just about

⁹ Beaumont, 'Australia's War: Asia and the Pacific,' 27.

¹⁰ David Horner, 'Australia in 1942: A Pivotal Year,' in *Australia 1942: In the Shadow of War*, ed. Peter J. Dean (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 18.

¹¹ Horner, 'Australia in 1942,' 16.

¹² Christopher Bayly and Tim Harper, *Forgotten Armies: The Fall of British Asia, 1941–1945* (London: Allen Lane, 2004), 113–25.

¹³ Chris Coulthard-Clark, *Where Australians Fought: The Encyclopaedia of Australia's Battles* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1998), 198–99; David Horner, *The Gunners: A History of Australian Artillery* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1995), 294–97.

¹⁴ Lionel Wigmore, *The Japanese Thrust*, vol. 4 of *Australia in the War of 1939–1945: Series 1 – Army* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1957), 236–37.

annihilated with barely four hundred survivors, while only 503 of the Australians made it back to friendly lines.¹⁵

Although Anderson's column ultimately crumbled, the men had for more than four days held up and inflicted heavy casualties on an experienced Japanese division. Lieutenant General Arthur Percival, the British commander-in-chief, later described the column's efforts as one of 'dogged resistance' and 'one of the epics of the Malayan campaign'.¹⁶ For his part, Anderson became on 13 February 1942 the first of eleven Australian soldiers to receive the VC in the Pacific.¹⁷ The award is, however, a little odd as the official citation is riddled with errors. For instance, it credits Anderson's men with having 'destroyed ten enemy tanks.'¹⁸ This occurred on 18 January when two anti-tank gunners, Lance Sergeant Clarence Thornton and Sergeant Charles Parsons, knocked out nine Japanese light tanks. Yet neither man was under Anderson's command at the time.¹⁹ The citation also muddles the timeline of events—such as when the equipment was destroyed—and acknowledges that 'Anderson, throughout all this fighting, protected his wounded and refused to leave them.'²⁰ This was true up to 22 January, until the decision was made to escape in small groups. Some 150 wounded Australian and Indian troops were unable to be moved and had to be left behind. They were massacred almost to a man by Japanese soldiers.²¹

Anderson's VC recognised the efforts and tribulations of the column, as well as his personal influence in motivating those under his command.²² In a sense, the award fell within the tradition of fighting withdrawals of the nineteenth century and, perhaps, some of those of the First World War. But given the oddities throughout his citation, it is conceivable that the impetus for the award was in fact to boost morale in a flailing defensive campaign. Indeed, as Anthony Staunton points out, the twenty-two days between Anderson's actions and the gazettal of his award is the record shortest interval for an Australian VC.²³ Anderson was also one of only a few to be recognised at the time. Sergeants Thornton and Parsons had to wait until 1946 to be awarded a Mention in Despatches and DCM, respectively, for their tank-busting efforts.²⁴

¹⁵ Wigmore, *Japanese Thrust*, 249; Horner, *Gunners*, 298.

¹⁶ A.E. Percival, *The War in Malaya* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1949), 233.

¹⁷ Blanch and Pegram, *For Valour*, 480.

¹⁸ 'War Office, 13th February, 1942,' *London Gazette*, 13 February 1942.

¹⁹ Horner, *Gunners*, 295–96; DCM citation for Sergeant Charles Parsons, B883, VX38874, NAA, Canberra.

²⁰ 'War Office, 13th February, 1942.'

²¹ Coulthard-Clark, *Where Australians Fought*, 199; Wigmore, *Japanese Thrust*, 246–48.

²² Pratten, *Australian Battalion Commanders*, 156–57.

²³ Anthony Staunton, 'Blaming Buckingham Palace: The 13 Month Delay in the Award of the Wheatley Victoria Cross,' *Sabretache* 38, no. 3 (1997): 16.

²⁴ 'War Office, 1st August, 1946,' *London Gazette*, 1 August 1946; 'War Office, 10th January, 1946,' *London Gazette*, 10 January 1946.

This was due to the fall of Singapore on 15 February, when the eighty thousand-strong British Commonwealth garrison capitulated to the Japanese and became prisoners of war; Anderson, Thornton, Parsons, and some fifteen thousand other Australians among them.²⁵ The Japanese continued to dominate in early 1942; within a matter of weeks, the Dutch East Indies (modern-day Indonesia) was occupied, New Guinea invaded, and a further seven thousand Australians made prisoner.²⁶

The delay in recognising these men was in accordance with policy adopted by the Australian government from British practices. The War Office and Air Ministry made a point of putting aside recommendations for personnel missing or taken prisoner until further clarification had been obtained regarding their fate. The Admiralty was less discriminating in its practices, but all three service departments withheld specific recommendations until further evidence could be gathered from liberated prisoners.²⁷ The Australian government informally maintained similar practices until the policy was formalised in May 1944 on the advice of Australia's governor-general, Lord Gowrie. The Australian and British governments thereafter agreed to defer all awards to personnel missing or prisoner in the Pacific for 'risk of reprisals on our men by the Japanese.'²⁸ The government's decision, however, was not universally appreciated. Sydney Smith wrote to Prime Minister Curtin in April 1944 on behalf of the Australian Prisoners of War Relatives' Association. Formed in 1942 with Smith as honorary secretary, the association was a support network for families and a lobby group for the welfare of captives. Reflecting broader public sentiment over perceived government inaction, Smith urged Curtin to investigate 'outstanding feats of bravery' performed by Australians prior to capture, 'with a view to their receiving commensurate decorations'.²⁹ Smith's letter was acknowledged in May, but with no response forthcoming he followed up in October and again in December.³⁰ After nine months of waiting, a detailed reply was furnished in January 1945. The response reiterated government policy on retaining recommendations for prisoners and assured Smith that the awards 'will be dealt with at the appropriate time.'³¹

²⁵ Coulthard-Clark, *Where Australians Fought*, 203–04.

²⁶ Beaumont, 'Australia's War: Asia and the Pacific,' 30.

²⁷ High Commissioner's Office, London, to Captain Leighton Bracegirdle, Military and Official Secretary to the Governor-General, cablegram, 20 March 1944, A11191, 18 SPECIAL, NAA, Canberra.

²⁸ Frederick Shedden, Secretary of the Department of Defence, to John Curtin, 17 March 1945, A816, 66/301/104, NAA, Canberra.

²⁹ Sydney Smith to John Curtin, 3 April 1944, A989, 1944/925/1/130, NAA, Canberra.

³⁰ Sydney Smith to John Curtin, 3 October 1944, A816, 66/301/104, NAA, Canberra; Sydney Smith to Frank Forde, Acting Prime Minister, 7 December 1944, A816, 66/301/104, NAA, Canberra.

³¹ Frank Strahan, Secretary of the Prime Minister's Department, to Sydney Smith, 2 January 1945, A816, 66/301/104, NAA, Canberra.

The point was relatively moot, however, given that few individuals were forwarded for recognition prior to the fall of Singapore. Lieutenant General Arthur Percival had approved twelve awards to Australians prior to the capitulation and was able to send the War Office an additional fourteen recommendations from a prison camp in May 1942. For the majority—a further 121—operational awards had to wait until prison camps were liberated from September 1945.³² Indeed, by May 1944 Army Headquarters in Melbourne had just twenty pending recommendations on file, and the War Office an additional thirteen, for Australians presumed to be prisoners of war in either Europe or the Pacific.³³ Australia's Defence Committee, comprised of the three service chiefs and the Secretary of the Department of Defence, were also sceptical about the reprisal argument.³⁴ William Newton, the RAAF bomber pilot (see Chapter Six), was the only Australian decorated in the Pacific known at the time to have been mistreated by the Japanese. His VC, however, had been announced following his death, though the Department of Air did concede that the publicity afforded Newton's actions beforehand 'possibly stimulated the Japanese in the atrocity'.³⁵

The problem was the fundamental absence of any information concerning prisoners of the Japanese. Not being a signatory to the 1929 Geneva Convention governing the treatment of prisoners of war, Japan was under no obligation to share particulars on captured personnel. As historian Michael McKernan writes, with the fall of territories to Japanese occupation in early 1942 'suddenly the news shut down ... There was silence now where for the past months there had been busy reporting and glowing, optimistic expectations of hard fighting and victory.'³⁶ Not until prison camps began to be liberated was the extent, and toll, of the privations of Japanese captivity revealed. More than eight thousand Australians (a third of those captured) had died from malnourishment, sickness, disease, exhaustion, or ill treatment.³⁷ Although the experience of captivity differed by camp and location, the conditions in which many of the prisoners were held meant that several of those who survived did so due to the efforts of fellow prisoners who worked to provide aid and assistance, such as by procuring

³² 'Parliamentary Question – Mr J. Francis – 7th March 1947,' 27 March 1947, A663, O148/2/435, NAA, Canberra.

³³ Captain Leighton Bracegirdle to High Commissioner's Office, London, cablegram, 21 February 1944, A11191, 18 SPECIAL, NAA, Canberra.

³⁴ Douglas Menzies, 'Minute by Defence Committee at Meeting Held on Friday, 2nd March, 1945,' A816, 66/301/104, NAA, Canberra.

³⁵ A.J. Wilson, Acting Secretary of the Department of Defence, to Frank Strahan, memorandum, 18 September 1944, A816, 66/301/104, NAA, Canberra.

³⁶ Michael McKernan, *This War Never Ends: The Pain of Separation and Return* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2001), 6.

³⁷ Joan Beaumont, *Australian Defence: Sources and Statistics*, vol. 6 of *The Australian Centenary History of Defence* (South Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2001), 345.

additional food, offering medical care, defying or challenging guards, or maintaining morale. Testimony collected during the recovery and repatriation process highlighted instances of heroism and valuable services performed prior to and during captivity. Some of this information was used to supplement or compile award recommendations for the engagements fought in 1941–42.³⁸ But the question then became whether, and by what means, heroism in captivity should also be recognised.

Army Order 193 of 1919 provided for the recognition of conduct in prison camps. The British authorities had begun to reward personnel recently liberated in Europe, and the Australian government was eager to recognise the services of its own personnel in the Pacific. This was partly because the prisoners of the Japanese were a significant political issue in Australia. The sheer number captured, coupled with the lack of information regarding their fate, had from 1942 seen the Australian government frequently questioned (and even accused of inaction) by elements of the public and the Federal Opposition over efforts to liberate those in captivity.³⁹ By facilitating a swift repatriation of former prisoners in the Pacific and ensuring some of the men and women were recognised for their conduct, the Australian government attempted to pacify a critical public. Indeed, treatment of the ex-prisoners was such a sensitive issue that, from mid-1946, the government used the press to keep the public updated on the number and progress of award recommendations.⁴⁰

By May 1946, the Prime Minister's Department was in receipt of 284 recommendations for ex-prisoners of war in the Pacific, of which eighty were for decorations and 204 for Mentions in Despatches.⁴¹ Among those recommended were Lieutenants Jessie Blanch and Vivian Bullwinkel, nurses with the AANS submitted for the ARRC in respect to their 'selfless devotion' and 'magnificent example' in voluntarily nursing the sick while interned on Sumatra.⁴² For his 'fortitude and courage', Flight Lieutenant Jack Macalister was also nominated for an MBE—following an unsuccessful attempt to 'capture' a Japanese plane,

³⁸ Frank Forde, Minister for the Army, to Prime Minister Ben Chifley, 22 October 1945, AWM119, 123.

³⁹ Bryce Abraham, 'Bringing Them All Back Home: Prisoner of War Contact, Recovery and Reception Units, 1944–45' (summer scholarship paper, Australian War Memorial, 2015), 30–31.

⁴⁰ 'Malayan Decorations on the Way,' *Herald* (Melbourne), 23 May 1946; 'Speed-Up of Malaya Awards Wanted,' *Sun* (Sydney), 24 February 1947; 'Awards Sought for Ex-POW's,' *Argus* (Melbourne), 28 February 1947.

⁴¹ Two of the decorations and six Mentions were for RAAF personnel; the remainder were army. 'Awards to Ex Prisoners of War: Parliamentary Question by Mr Davidson,' draft response, February 1947, A663, O148/2/433, NAA, Canberra.

⁴² Recommendations for Lieutenants Jessie Blanch and Vivian Bullwinkel, 13 March 1946, A816, 66/301/211, NAA, Canberra.

Macalister was tortured and for nine months kept in solitary confinement but ‘maintained his spirit’ and emboldened others.⁴³ These awards were duly approved in 1947.⁴⁴

Announcements of the awards were distributed in the Australian press, but the government still faced criticism for the delay, allegations of parsimony for the number awarded, and even disappointment in the types of honours granted. Brigadier Arthur Blackburn—the Pozières VC, captured on Java in March 1942—was vocal over what he considered ‘the apparent lack of recognition by the Government’ of Lieutenant Colonel Edward (Weary) Dunlop.⁴⁵ The Australian Prisoners of War Relatives’ Association had petitioned the government as early as November 1945 to urge that ‘nothing less than a Knighthood would be a fitting reward’ for Dunlop and fellow medical officer, Lieutenant Colonel Albert Coates. The association wrote of the two men:

According to the unanimous testimony of ex-prisoners of war in Thailand and elsewhere, the above two medical officers not only performed miracles of surgery which resulted in the saving of many valuable Australian lives, but were quite prepared to take, and did take, severe punishment for standing up for the rights of their men in the prison camps.⁴⁶

However, both officers were too junior in rank to ordinarily be considered for a knighthood in recognition of military services.⁴⁷ Besides, the governing Australian Labor Party had, since the 1920s, maintained a policy of not recommending citizens for Imperial knighthoods.⁴⁸ Coates was appointed an Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) and Dunlop, already made an OBE for his command of a field hospital on Java prior to the surrender, was Mentioned in Despatches.⁴⁹ These were, like those to Blanch, Bullwinkel and Macalister, awards for meritorious service that (with the exception of Dunlop’s Mention) were non-specific to wartime and failed to adequately consider the nuances of the services rendered by those in enemy hands.

More curious was the approach to overt acts of heroism in captivity. Captain Lionel Matthews, for instance, was recommended for a posthumous GC in 1947. Held at Sandakan in North Borneo, Matthews had established an elaborate intelligence network and made contacts

⁴³ Recommendation for Flight Lieutenant Jack Macalister, 25 August 1945, A816, 66/301/211, NAA, Canberra.

⁴⁴ ‘Government House, Canberra, 6th March, 1947,’ *Commonwealth of Australia Gazette*, 6 March 1947.

⁴⁵ Arthur Blackburn, quoted in ‘VC Hits at Award to POW Doctor,’ *Herald* (Melbourne), 13 March 1947.

⁴⁶ E.V. Britnell, Secretary of the Australian Prisoners of War Relatives’ Association, to Prime Minister Ben Chifley, 9 November 1945, AWM119, 123.

⁴⁷ Assistant Adjutant General, AIF Middle East, to units under command, 30 September 1941, AWM54, 391/2/5.

⁴⁸ Fox, “‘A Pernicious System of Class and Privilege’,” 213.

⁴⁹ Index award card for Lieutenant Colonel Albert Coates, n.d., AWM192, 312; Index award cards for Lieutenant Colonel Ernest Edward Dunlop, n.d., AWM192, 311.

with local peoples in order to smuggle crucial supplies into the camp. He also organised escape parties, made contact with resistance forces in the Philippines, and planned an uprising against the Japanese in Sandakan. However, his activities were discovered in July 1943 and he was arrested by the Japanese military police. Matthews was tortured, kept in solitary confinement for eight months and, after refusing to divulge any information, was executed by firing squad in March 1944.⁵⁰ As one fellow prisoner later remarked, Matthews had ‘displayed the greatest gallantry in circumstances of the gravest danger ... in a sincere endeavour to bring help and succour to the 3000 prisoners of war in this area’.⁵¹

The GC was approved in November 1947, though the decision to grant this specific award is significant. The GC was instituted as the premier award for civilian or non-warlike heroism, as recognition for acts performed remote from a battlefield and not in the presence of the enemy. Yet the enemy, in the form of Japanese and Korean camp guards, was present the entire time Matthews directed his underground network and his death had come as a direct result of the Japanese. The GC Committee had already approved four posthumous awards to British and Indian officers for comparable heroics on Hong Kong, so the British authorities had determined and established a precedent for such cases.⁵² It is, nevertheless, peculiar that prisoner escapes, which inherently involved evading the enemy, were rewarded with military decorations, while heroic efforts in prison camps received their non-warlike counterparts. Clearly, courageous work as a captive was deemed separate and distinct from the heroism displayed on the battlefield, or in attempts to get back to it.

A cautious approach: policies and practices in Southwest Pacific Area

In the aftermath of the fall of Singapore, the rapid Japanese advance, loss of so many men, and lack of information provoked political and social crises within Australia. On the outbreak of war, the colourful (and now topical) perceived virtues of the Anzac legend—those of resourcefulness, courage, natural soldierly abilities, and martial prowess—saw a version of martial manhood asserted as the hegemonic form of masculinity in Australia.⁵³ There were thus certain expectations and assumptions thrust upon this new generation of Australian servicemen as the ‘sons’ or ‘heirs’ of Anzac. The crushing defeats in Malaya and Singapore, occurring only a few months after the disasters in Greece and Crete, shattered these expectations and, as

⁵⁰ Recommendation for Captain Lionel Matthews, n.d., T 351/44, TNA.

⁵¹ Sergeant Alan Weston, witness statement, 29 January 1947, B883, VX24597, NAA, Canberra.

⁵² ‘Selection Committee for the George Cross, the George Medal and the British Empire Medal,’ 15 September 1947, T 351/44, TNA.

⁵³ Twomey, ‘Emancipation or Emasculation?’, 299.

historian Christina Twomey remarks, ‘cast a shadow over the 2nd AIF’s fighting prowess’.⁵⁴ The shock of defeat was equalled only by disbelief that it had come at the hands of an Asiatic enemy long thought of as racially inferior.

Australian attitudes towards Asia at the time were shaped by colonialism as, prior to the Pacific War, European powers occupied almost all of Southeast Asia. To many Australians Asian peoples represented a subordinate ‘other’; one both romanticised by nineteenth century perceptions of the ‘Orient’ and distrusted amid recurrent anxieties over Australia’s defence and geographical isolation from the empire.⁵⁵ Japan, specifically, had been a chief source of concern as it emerged as a burgeoning military power early in the twentieth century. These anxieties over national security, and the inherent belief in the ‘superiority’ of white Britishness, shaped the way the Japanese were portrayed in political cartoons and early wartime propaganda. For instance, while Nazi German soldiers were represented as hypermasculine and aggressive, the Japanese were depicted as feeble, diminutive and even simian; more of a nuisance than a legitimate wartime enemy.⁵⁶ Successive defeats at the hands of the Japanese therefore challenged Australians’ self-assurance in their ‘whiteness’ and, as Agnieszka Sobocinska argues, the imprisonment of so many Australian (and empire) combatants by a racial ‘other’ stood as an inversion of the supposedly ‘natural’ colonial order.⁵⁷

With the fall of Singapore, the idea that Australia would soon be invaded fostered a sense of powerlessness that eroded the masculine confidence that had flourished only months earlier. Thereafter, the Australian government urgently sought to cultivate widespread social support for, and participation in, the war effort.⁵⁸ Restrictions on Indigenous military service, for instance, were relaxed and specialised units of mostly Indigenous men from the Northern Territory and Torres Strait Islands were raised to defend northern Australia and its approaches.⁵⁹ Representations of the Japanese also shifted. Depictions in cartoons and

⁵⁴ Hank Nelson, ‘Measuring the Railway: From Individual Lives to National History,’ in *The Burma–Thailand Railway: Memory and History*, ed. Gavan McCormack and Hank Nelson (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1993), 13; Twomey, ‘Emancipation or Emasculation?’, 299.

⁵⁵ Sobocinska, ‘“The Language of Scars”’, 58.2.

⁵⁶ Twomey, ‘Emancipation or Emasculation?’, 299; Christina Twomey, ‘Australian Nurse POWs: Gender, War and Captivity,’ *Australian Historical Studies* 36, no. 124 (2004): 255–56; Judy Mackinolty, ‘Wake Up Australia! Australia’s Home Front Propaganda During the Second World War,’ *Journal of the Australian War Memorial*, no. 1 (1982): 19; Lachlan Grant, *Australian Soldiers in Asia-Pacific in World War II* (Sydney: NewSouth Publishing, 2014), 148–59.

⁵⁷ Sobocinska, ‘“The Language of Scars”’, 58.5–58.8.

⁵⁸ Michael McKernan, *Australians at Home: World War II* (Scoresby: Five Mile Press, 2014), 147; Peter Stanley, ‘Threat Made Manifest,’ *Griffith Review*, no. 9 (2005): 19; Mackinolty, ‘Wake Up Australia!’, 22.

⁵⁹ Noah Riseman, ‘Defending Whose Country? Yolngu and the Northern Territory Special Reconnaissance Unit in the Second World War,’ *Limina* 13 (2007): 80–81; Noah Riseman, *In Defence of Country: Life Stories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Servicemen & Women* (Canberra: ANU Press, 2016), 3–4.

propaganda remained grounded in racist tropes, but Japanese soldiers went from appearing feeble to almost bestial and monstrous.⁶⁰ As art and cultural historians Melissa Miles and Robin Gerster contend, the press came to describe the jungle warfare in the Pacific ‘as a kind of hunt’, which saw the conflict against Japan descend into ‘a remorseless war fought with a racially charged viciousness.’⁶¹ The aggressiveness and call to the offensive as implied by these initiatives influenced how heroism was represented and rewarded by the Australian authorities in the Pacific.

By April 1942, the war against Japan manifested as a geographically vast and complicated front. To cope with the scale of operations the governments of Britain and the United States agreed to split the theatre: the western portion, incorporating the Indian Ocean and mainland Southeast Asia, fell to British command, while the United States gained responsibility for the broader Pacific Ocean. The United States’ zone was further divided into the Pacific Ocean Areas, accountable for most of the Pacific Ocean and its islands, and Southwest Pacific Area (SWPA), which encompassed Australia, Borneo, the Dutch East Indies (excluding Sumatra), Papua and New Guinea, and the Philippines.⁶² General Sir Thomas Blamey, recently returned from the Middle East and now Commander-in-Chief Australian Military Forces, was appointed commander Allied Land Forces with responsibility for all Australian, American, Dutch and associated ground forces in the SWPA. In this post Blamey was subordinate to General Douglas MacArthur, an American officer appointed Supreme Commander SWPA. In a rare occurrence up to this point, the Australians in SWPA were fighting in a theatre and under a command structure with almost no involvement from Britain or the other Dominions. This had significant ramifications for honours and awards. In previous campaigns Australians were, at most, accountable for honours up to the level of corps before recommendations were passed to British hands. In SWPA, Australians were entirely responsible for the process.

This arrangement for honours and awards was not an organic development. Amid the loss of Singapore and the institution of the above command arrangements, the Australian government was initially unsure of how the process for honours would operate, if at all. Accordingly, Lord Gowrie wrote to Curtin in February 1942 suggesting that the approval of King George VI be sought to enable personnel ‘operating in a theatre of war under

⁶⁰ See, for example, ‘Bushido,’ *Argus* (Melbourne), 12 March 1942.

⁶¹ Melissa Miles and Robin Gerster, *Pacific Exposures: Photography and the Australia–Japan Relationship* (Canberra: ANU Press, 2018), 81.

⁶² Peter J. Dean, *MacArthur’s Coalition: US and Australian Operations in the Southwest Pacific Area, 1942–1945* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2018), 42–43.

Commonwealth control' to be eligible for operational awards, and that the governor-general be delegated the authority to confer them.⁶³ Why Lord Gowrie suggested he, and not a senior military figure such as Blamey, be delegated such authority was due to the constitutional position of his role, since the governor-general is vested with the 'command in chief of the naval and military forces of the Commonwealth'.⁶⁴ Following conferral with representatives from the three services, the request was sent four weeks later and approved by the King in April.⁶⁵ Akin to commanders-in-chief in other theatres, the governor-general was delegated authority to award Mentions in Despatches, confer immediate operational awards (subject to final approval by the King), and recommend direct to the Crown periodical operational awards and recommendations for the VC and GC. This authority was, however, confined solely to army and RAAF personnel.⁶⁶

The government had sought similar delegate powers over the RAN but was met with resistance from the Australian Commonwealth Naval Board (ACNB) —the governing body of the RAN—and the British authorities. Both argued that, unlike the army and air force, the delegation of authority to approve naval awards was unprecedented and, as 'very great value is attached to uniformity of standard in awards', such a proposal 'would tend to jeopardise that standard.'⁶⁷ The argument appears ill-considered and contradictory given the practice adopted by the other two services, and was to remain a minor source of contention for the Australian government.⁶⁸ Nevertheless, despite further (half-hearted) attempts at change, this process for naval recommendations remained through the Pacific War and into the conflicts in Malaya and Korea that followed.⁶⁹

The procedure for awards in the army and RAAF was also unique. Lord Gowrie had proposed that recommendations be sent direct from the services to his office.⁷⁰ Curtin's Cabinet thought this inappropriate and instead requested that they be forwarded via the relevant

⁶³ Frederick Shedden to Frank Strahan, memorandum, 13 March 1942, A816, 66/301/138, NAA, Canberra.

⁶⁴ Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act, 1900, 63 & 64 Vict., c. 2.

⁶⁵ Shedden to Strahan, memorandum, 13 March 1942; Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to Prime Minister's Department, cablegram, 24 April 1942, A816, 66/301/138, NAA, Canberra.

⁶⁶ Dominion Affairs to Prime Minister's Department, 24 April 1942.

⁶⁷ Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to Prime Minister's Department, cablegram, 21 May 1942, A816, 66/301/138, NAA, Canberra.

⁶⁸ Attorney-General H.V. Evatt labelled the process for naval recommendations as 'undesirable' and 'quite inappropriate'. H.V. Evatt to John Curtin, 8 December 1942, A816, 66/301/9, NAA, Canberra.

⁶⁹ See, for example: Thomas Hawkins, Secretary of the Department of the Navy, to Allen Brown, Secretary of the Prime Minister's Department, 7 December 1951, A816, 66/301/386, NAA, Canberra; Prime Minister's Department to the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, savingram, 5 January 1956, AWM269, B/12/6/2.

⁷⁰ Lord Gowrie to John Curtin, 5 May 1942, A816, 66/301/9, NAA, Canberra.

government minister.⁷¹ Award recommendations in the army were required, therefore, to be processed along the command chain as normal, be subject to scrutiny from Blamey, and then sent to Frank Forde, the Minister for the Army. From Forde's office recommendations were forwarded to Curtin (as both prime minister and Minister for Defence) before arriving on the governor-general's desk.⁷² The system in the RAAF was similar, except recommendations remained the responsibility of the Air Member for Personnel. After progressing through operational commands (squadron, to wing, then group or operational headquarters), RAAF recommendations in the Pacific were sent to the Air Member for Personnel for deliberation then, if approved, via the Minister for Air, Arthur Drakeford, to Curtin and then the governor-general.⁷³ The extent of the political involvement in the army and RAAF's processes for awards was highly unusual. However, there is little evidence to suggest unjust interference by any of the ministers.

Indeed, there was a sense of cautiousness in the way Australians approached military honours and awards in the Pacific. The rate at which VC recommendations were processed in SWPA, for instance, was much slower than had been the case in the First World War or in North Africa in 1940–42.⁷⁴ The average time between the actions and gazettal of VCs to the AIF had been sixty-nine days. The wait crept out to seventy-nine days during the North African campaign and slumped to 128 for the awards to James Gordon and Roden Cutler in Syria–Lebanon, a campaign in which Australians were the primary contributors and largely in command. Despite the outlier in Charles Anderson's award, the average wait for Australian VCs in the Pacific was 138 days; twice as long as had been the case in the First World War and, on average, almost two months longer than the VCs in North Africa.⁷⁵

The Australian authorities were at fault for the delay, which would indicate either an overworked system or a thoroughness inspired by caution.⁷⁶ In light of subsequent recommendations, the latter seems the most likely. Captain Charles Bicks, for example, was unsuccessfully recommended for the VC in recognition of his command of B Company, 61st Battalion during the Battle of Milne Bay. In August 1942, the Japanese made a seaborne assault on Milne Bay, the eastern most point on Papua. Bicks' men were the first to encounter the

⁷¹ John Curtin, draft response to Lord Gowrie, n.d., A816, 66/301/9, NAA, Canberra.

⁷² Douglas Menzies, 'Immediate and Periodical Operational Awards of Honours,' 14 September 1942, A816, 66/301/139, NAA, Canberra.

⁷³ Menzies, 'Immediate and Periodical Operational Awards.'

⁷⁴ Staunton, 'Blaming Buckingham Palace,' 16.

⁷⁵ Statistics compiled from the latest date for which each of the recipients were commended and the date the awards were officially announced in either the *London Gazette* or *Commonwealth of Australia Gazette* (whichever was sooner).

⁷⁶ Staunton, 'Blaming Buckingham Palace,' 16.

invasion force.⁷⁷ Despite his company being outnumbered, Bicks was commended for his ‘ruthlessness & determination’ in leading attacks, undertaking reconnaissance, reorganising his men, and coordinating skirmishes over two days before being forced to withdraw. Even then, Bicks was active in the defence and counter-offensive that followed, to the extent that his commanding officer claimed that for ‘sustained effort his actions are unsurpassable in the Annals of British History.’⁷⁸

An addendum to Bicks’ recommendation, however, noted that it ‘is supported by only two statements by officers’ as the five others with Bicks were either killed or evacuated wounded.⁷⁹ This was a strange admission, as nowhere was it stipulated that witnesses need be commissioned or of equal or superior rank to the nominee. In wars past, two eyewitness statements (regardless of rank) had been sufficient for army recommendations for the VC. But with the revised 1920 Royal Warrant demanding ‘conclusive proof’ of VC-worthy heroics, there was an increasing push for officers to more thoroughly vet recommendations and furnish three or more supporting eyewitness statements.⁸⁰ That Bicks was also an officer in the Citizens Military Force (‘the Militia’) was unlikely to have helped his chances. Officers of the 2nd AIF were responsible for scrutinising recommendations that reached the higher formational level, but an intense and at times toxic rivalry existed between the part-time and part-conscript Militia and the 2nd AIF since the latter was accorded priority for resources and its men were all volunteers.⁸¹ Bicks’ recommendation was downgraded to the DSO.⁸²

A similar fate met Corporal Mervyn Hall in 1943. On 27 December, during an assault by the 2/16th Battalion on the southern end of Shaggy Ridge in New Guinea, Hall rushed forward under grenade and machine gun fire to silence a Japanese pillbox holding up the advance. Although wounded, he then pursued an attack on a second emplacement ‘with undiminishing dash’.⁸³ The prospect of a VC was vetoed by senior commanders due to there being ‘only two witnesses’ and a feeling by some ‘that his action does not quite measure up to the VC.’⁸⁴ Hall received the DCM.⁸⁵ The objection to higher reward in these cases appears, at

⁷⁷ Phillip Bradley, ‘The Battle of Milne Bay,’ in *Kokoda: Beyond the Legend*, ed. Karl James (Port Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 156.

⁷⁸ Recommendation for Captain Charles Bicks, 11 September 1942, AWM54, 391/11/57.

⁷⁹ Recommendation for Bicks.

⁸⁰ Smith, *Awarded for Valour*, 174; Crook, *Evolution of the Victoria Cross*, 222.

⁸¹ Mark Johnston, *The Australian Army in World War II* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2007), 5–6.

⁸² Recommendation for Bicks.

⁸³ Recommendation for Corporal Mervyn Hall, 5 January 1944, AWM54, 391/11/31.

⁸⁴ Lieutenant General Sir Leslie Morshead, GOC New Guinea Force, to General Sir Thomas Blamey, 17 February 1944, 3DRL/6643, file 2/137, AWM.

⁸⁵ ‘Australian Military Forces,’ *Commonwealth of Australia Gazette*, 13 April 1944.

least in part, to be based on technical grounds, as senior commanders were judicious to ensure that recommendations complied with rigid procedural requirements.

There were similarly curious incidents along the Kokoda Trail in 1942. The Japanese South Seas Detachment had landed at Buna and Gona in northern Papua in July and embarked on an overland campaign to capture Port Moresby.⁸⁶ At Isurava in late August, the 39th and 2/14th Battalions attempted to halt the Japanese advance. The fighting was fierce and, after two days, the Japanese broke through the Australian lines.⁸⁷ Private Bruce Kingsbury's platoon in the 2/14th had been almost wiped out, but he volunteered to join another in a counterattack. Firing his Bren light machine gun from the hip, Kingsbury 'clear[ed] a path through the enemy', broke the Japanese assault and, in doing so, saved his battalion's headquarters just as it was about to be overrun. Kingsbury was then killed by a sniper.⁸⁸ Later that afternoon a wounded Corporal Charles McCallum, also of the 2/14th, volunteered to cover the withdrawal of his platoon in the face of overwhelming opposition. Armed with a Bren and a Thompson submachine gun, McCallum withstood repeated attacks and only retired once his platoon was clear. According to his subsequent award citation, the Japanese came so close that one soldier managed to tear off McCallum's utility pouches. The aggressive feat enabled the platoon to withdraw without incident. For his part, McCallum inflicted some forty casualties on the Japanese and was credited with having 'killed at least 25'.⁸⁹

Both men were recommended for the VC. Robert Thompson, the platoon sergeant during Kingsbury's final action, recorded that a few days after he submitted the recommendation for Kingsbury it was returned with the request:

'Would I please write it up a bit more with a bit more action and such,' so I did.

And I think it might have come back to me again for a bit more, so this time I really wrote it up ... they wanted this to be a real reward...⁹⁰

The revision process is reminiscent of Keith Neuendorf's ill-fated recommendation from El Alamein, and again hints at an anxiousness to both ensure and conform to the high standard

⁸⁶ Karl James, 'On Australia's Doorstep: Kokoda and Milne Bay,' in Dean, *Australia 1942*, 205.

⁸⁷ James, 'On Australia's Doorstep,' 206.

⁸⁸ Recommendation for Private Bruce Kingsbury, 3 October 1942, AWM119, 8.

⁸⁹ Recommendation for Corporal Charles McCallum, 3 October 1942, AWM119, 8.

⁹⁰ Robert Thompson, interview, *Australians at War Film Archive*, 5 March 2004, <http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/1594-robert-thompson>.

demanding for the VC.⁹¹ The award was duly gazetted in February 1943.⁹² McCallum's case proved more convoluted. As Thompson remarked, 'Charlie McCarthy [*sic*], who really did something, probably far more deserving but they were only going to award one VC, so Bruce got it.'⁹³ It is difficult to verify Thompson's claim that the senior command was merely willing to award the one VC, as it was around this same time that the 2/48th Battalion received three VCs for the battles of El Alamein and McCallum's recommendation suffered from administrative misfortune. McCallum was killed on 8 September and his recommendation was among a number of battalion papers destroyed during a subsequent engagement with the Japanese. Reconstruction of the recommendation proved difficult, as two key witnesses (a sergeant and corporal) went missing in action and only three officers had seen the original form.⁹⁴ The reconstructed version was forwarded onward in October, with three privates providing witness statements. On reaching Blamey, 'Victoria Cross' was struck out and 'DCM' penned in its place.⁹⁵

Whether administrative misfortune, the action itself, or a reluctance to over award the VC swayed Blamey's decision is unclear. However, there may have been some acknowledgement of the latter given that, a day after McCallum's feat, Private George Maidment (born Alexander Thornton) was cited for a brazen grenade attack under similar circumstances as his section withdrew. The recommendation was also reduced to a DCM by Blamey.⁹⁶ The archive is silent on the reasoning for Blamey's decision, but the most probable explanation is a reticence to over issue the VC. Furthermore, given the similarities between McCallum and Maidment's actions and the reverses suffered in New Guinea to that time, it would appear that the Australian command harboured a conscious preference to recognise and promote offensive heroics over valiant fighting withdrawals as the pinnacle of frontline heroism. As Lieutenant Colonel Geoffrey Cooper, commanding officer of the 2/27th Battalion at Kokoda, remarked in later life: 'Any sort of half success or failure is never commended.' In this the legacy of Haig's 1916 directive on the VC can be detected. Actions that were, as Cooper continued, 'looked upon as just continuing warfare ... they [the military command] don't talk

⁹¹ The VC recommendation for Corporal Reginald Rattey, in recognition of his singlehandedly neutralising three Japanese bunkers and a heavy machine gun on Bougainville in 1945, was similarly revised to strengthen the case. Karl James, *The Hard Slog: Australians in the Bougainville Campaign, 1944–45* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 187, 212.

⁹² 'War Office, 9th February, 1943,' *London Gazette*, 9 February 1943.

⁹³ Thompson, interview.

⁹⁴ Major Hugh Challen, Adminstrating Command 2/14th Battalion, 'Recommendation for Award – VC,' 30 September 1942, AWM119, 8.

⁹⁵ Recommendation for McCallum.

⁹⁶ Recommendation for Private George Maidment, 3 October 1942, AWM119, 8.

about.⁹⁷ Instead, a candidate for high reward needed to make a material and tactical contribution to battle. Only five days after Maidment's feat Corporal John French, similarly armed with grenades and a Thompson submachine gun, silenced three Japanese machine gun posts during an advance by the 2/9th Battalion at Milne Bay. French was killed after clearing the third post but was credited with being 'greatly instrumental' in reigniting the battalion's attack. He received a posthumous VC.⁹⁸

Like Kingsbury, French's offensive heroics and death undoubtedly helped clinch the award. The correlation with death is a notable point, as across all Australian services and theatres of the Second World War posthumous recommendations for the VC were almost thirty percent more likely to be awarded than those for personnel who survived their ordeal. The unequal recognition accorded to Corporal John Mackey and Lance Corporal Arthur Riedy for their efforts on Tarakan Island, Borneo, is a notable example. In May 1945, Mackay was in charge of his platoon's lead section during the assault by the 2/3rd Pioneer Battalion on a well defended feature known as 'Helen'. When the section came under heavy fire from three gun pits, Mackey and Riedy charged across almost sheer ground. They silenced one heavy and one light machine gun and killed seven Japanese soldiers before Mackey was killed. Riedy recovered Mackey's body and continued to engage the final gun post, until he was wounded in the thigh and evacuated.⁹⁹ Mackey was credited with facilitating the consolidation of his company's objectives and was awarded a posthumous VC. Riedy, who was praised for having saved his platoon's position, survived the incident and received a DCM.¹⁰⁰

Proportionately, posthumous cases were more common in the Second World War. Less than twenty-one percent of the AIF's VCs had been posthumous (thirteen of sixty-three), yet over half of the Australian personnel who received the award during the Second World War (ten of nineteen) died as a result of their actions. Even the success rate for posthumous recommendations was almost ten percent higher in 1939–45. This was not a uniquely Australian experience. As Melvin Smith demonstrates, the 'cost of courage' was much higher in the Second World War. Of the 182 VCs awarded during the conflict, eighty-six (forty-seven percent) were posthumous.¹⁰¹ Smith attributes the spike in the lethality rate to the revised Royal Warrant of 1920 that clarified the status of posthumous awards of the VC—thus 'leaving

⁹⁷ Geoffrey Cooper, quoted in Edgar, *Warrior of Kokoda*, 185.

⁹⁸ Recommendation for Corporal John French, 11 September 1942, AWM54, 391/11/24.

⁹⁹ Recommendations for Corporal John Mackey and Lance Corporal Arthur Riedy, 8 June 1945, AWM54, 391/11/68; Long, *Final Campaigns*, 432.

¹⁰⁰ Recommendations for Mackey and Riedy.

¹⁰¹ Smith, *Awarded for Valour*, 187.

recommending officers free to recognize the sacrifice of their men’—and the tightening of regulations, which meant ‘fewer borderline incidents got recommended.’¹⁰² Given some of the odd objections offered by the Air Ministry (see Chapter Six) and the obviously heightened interpretation of standards in SWPA, Smith certainly has a point. For an Australian to secure recognition in SWPA they had to satisfy rigid technical requirements and perform an outstanding feat of heroism or distinguished leadership.

In comparison, recognition within and from the American forces tended to be more forthcoming. As Blamey observed in December 1942, American practices in SWPA were ‘of a much more personal nature’ and, unrestrained by numerical quotas, awards were approved directly by MacArthur.¹⁰³ When it came to reciprocal awards, though, the Australian government approached the issue with characteristic caution. Policies adopted from January 1943 restricted the quantity of foreign awards that would be accepted each quarter, dictated that the intended recipient could not have been recognised with an Imperial award (or vice versa) for the same actions, and prohibited posthumous bestowals.¹⁰⁴ The ban on posthumous recognition was bent on a couple of occasions, but it was under this criterion that representations from the Dutch government to award the late Captain Hector Waller of the RAN a Knight of the Military Order of William were declined.¹⁰⁵ Likewise, a DSO recommendation for Group Captain William Garing in recognition of his ‘untiring efforts and tactical skill’ in directing RAAF operations over New Guinea was rejected in 1943 because he had already received the American equivalent, the Distinguished Service Cross.¹⁰⁶ The Australian government and military command were clearly careful to manage the policies and practices for recognition in SWPA, even if it clashed with their coalition partners.

Despite the cautious approach to foreign honours, distinct patterns of recognition emerged in SWPA. Instances of distinguished leadership and command, hot-blooded assaults on enemy positions, and valuable contributions to the strategic or tactical landscape were favoured for award. Heroism of a less direct tactical or offensive kind, however, remained underappreciated. The VC recommendation for Staff Sergeant Stanley Miller, for example, was less than enthusiastically supported by senior commanders. A company quartermaster in the 2/1st Battalion, Miller four times ventured out under heavy rifle and machine gun fire to

¹⁰² Smith, *Awarded for Valour*, 187–88.

¹⁰³ General Sir Thomas Blamey to John Curtin, 7 December 1942, A816, 66/301/138, NAA, Canberra.

¹⁰⁴ Douglas Menzies, ‘Defence Committee Agenda – Foreign Honours: Rules for Acceptance,’ 1 January 1943, A816, 66/301/138, NAA, Canberra.

¹⁰⁵ Lewis, *Honour Denied*, 268–69.

¹⁰⁶ Recommendation for Group Captain William Garing, n.d., A705, 55/1/469, NAA, Canberra.

assist or rescue wounded men at Soputa in November 1942. His recommendation was altered to the Military Medal by Major General George Vasey (who had a tendency for ruthlessness with recommendations) and approved as a DCM by Blamey.¹⁰⁷ The same fate met similar recommendations for Lance Corporal Owen O'Connor and Captain Raymond Allsopp. On Bougainville Island in May 1945, after his patrol leader and another man were wounded, O'Connor went to their aid under a hail of gunfire, assumed command of the remaining men, and covered the subsequent withdrawal. Six weeks later, Allsopp—a medical officer with the 2/5th Cavalry (Commando) Squadron—tended to at least three men while under intense machine gun fire at Balikpapan, Borneo, until he was mortally wounded. Lacking a tactical or offensive element, O'Connor's and Allsopp's VC recommendations were reduced to a DCM and a posthumous Mention in Despatches, respectively.¹⁰⁸

The above represent clear cases of bravery, professionalism and leadership. The VC, however, remained elusive in SWPA for all but the most distinguished (and well supported) instances of tactical heroism. Irish-born Private Richard Kelliher, for instance, received the VC for what one witness described as 'an act of extreme bravery'.¹⁰⁹ In September 1943, Kelliher was among the lead platoon in B Company, 2/25th Battalion, when it was held up by a concealed machine gun nest on the Markham Valley Road. An attempt to take the post resulted in the death of five Australians and the wounding of two others, one of whom was stuck in an exposed position. Remarking 'I'd better go and bring him in', Kelliher dashed forward to hurl two grenades at the Japanese post.¹¹⁰ He was chased off with return fire but, collecting a Bren light machine gun, again charged at the post. Firing from the hip, he killed the occupants. Only then did he crawl out to rescue the wounded corporal, despite facing fire from a second Japanese position. Kelliher was credited with saving the corporal's life and with having reinvigorated the company's attack. According to his subsequent recommendation, Kelliher's efforts 'electrified everyone who saw it'.¹¹¹

Kelliher's feat is particularly remarkable because, only six months earlier, he had been court-martialled for cowardice. During an engagement near Ilimo, forward of Kokoda, Kelliher was accused of having retreated to company headquarters without permission. He was charged

¹⁰⁷ Recommendation for Staff Sergeant Stanley Miller, n.d., AWM54, 391/11/18.

¹⁰⁸ Recommendation for Lance Corporal Owen O'Connor, 22 June 1945, AWM54, 391/11/35; Long, *Final Campaigns*, 187; Karl James, *Double Diamonds: Australian Commandos in the Pacific War, 1941–45* (Sydney: NewSouth Publishing, 2016), 208.

¹⁰⁹ Private James Cameron, witness statement, n.d., AWM88, O/A 12 AMF.

¹¹⁰ Cameron, witness statement; Peter J. Dean, 'From the Air, Sea and Land: The Capture of Lae,' in Dean, *Australia 1943*, 226.

¹¹¹ Recommendation for Private Richard Kelliher, 16 September 1943, AWM88, O/A 12 AMF.

and convicted of ‘misbehaving before the enemy in such a manner as to show cowardice’ and sentenced to detention for one year.¹¹² The conviction was, however, quashed by the Judge Advocate General on the grounds that there was ‘no evidence upon which the Court, if properly directed, could have found the accused guilty of the charge’. The Judge Advocate General argued that, while Kelliher had moved about during the firefight, the incident occurred in a small wooded area in which there was little possibility of him having ‘run away’. Indeed, he ‘was always within speaking distance’ of his platoon.¹¹³ Kelliher, adamant that he was innocent, vowed he would prove himself—his clear display of tactical, offensive heroism found ready support among senior officers. Kelliher’s feat and award were well covered in the Australian press. Speaking to one correspondent in December 1943, he declared ‘I’m an Irishman, and no Irishman has ever been a coward.’¹¹⁴

Courage and controversies in the war at sea

Recognition to the officers and ratings of the RAN maintained the standard established in the Mediterranean, but the procedure for naval recommendations had its own idiosyncrasies in the Pacific. In February 1942, with the war now in local waters, the RAN (like the army and RAAF) became responsible for its own award recommendations in the Pacific. Accordingly, the ACNB decreed that recommendations were to be processed through the command chain as normal, for deliberation by the Admiralty Honours and Awards Committee in London.¹¹⁵ This procedure was in accordance with pre-existing British and Commonwealth practices. Where the RAN differed was through the order that ‘the nature of the award is not to be suggested’; an award, if any, would be solely determined by the Admiralty on the merits of the case (or, at least, the quality of the written citation).¹¹⁶ As naval researcher John Bradford argues, the Admiralty Honours and Awards Committee ‘remained the final arbiter’ in determining awards for empire naval personnel. But the Royal Navy was at least empowered to specify whether their recommendations were for either decorations or Mentions in Despatches.¹¹⁷ The Australian authorities effectively relinquished this power, which led to a number of unusual and controversial decisions.

¹¹² Charge sheet for Private Richard Kelliher, 26 March 1943, A471, 37944, NAA, Canberra.

¹¹³ John Bowie Wilson, minute note, 27 May 1943, A471, 37944, NAA, Canberra.

¹¹⁴ Richard Kelliher, quoted in Geoff Hawksley, ‘Kelliher V.C. Tells’ *Truth* (Brisbane), 2 January 1944.

¹¹⁵ Commonwealth Naval Order 43, 17 February 1942, A816, 66/301/9, NAA, Canberra.

¹¹⁶ Commonwealth Naval Order 43.

¹¹⁷ John Bradford, ‘Odd Man Out? The Awards Process for RAN Gallantry in World War II,’ *Journal of Australian Naval History* 2, no. 2 (2005): 21.

The case of Ordinary Seaman Edward (Teddy) Sheean is one of the most prominent examples. Sheean's ship, the corvette HMAS *Armidale*, was attacked by nine Japanese bombers, three fighters and a floatplane on 1 December 1942 while en route to resupply Allied forces on Timor.¹¹⁸ The order came to abandon ship after *Armidale* was struck by two torpedoes and listed sharply to port. Sheean, a gun loader, was twice wounded by aircraft fire but strapped himself into the aft Oerlikon 20 mm anti-aircraft gun. As the Japanese strafed men in the water, Sheean was credited with shooting down one bomber, damaging two further aircraft, and with holding the remaining planes at bay.¹¹⁹ According to one shipmate, Sheean died 'still firing as he disappeared beneath the waves.'¹²⁰ He was among one hundred of the 149 aboard *Armidale* to perish. Naval officer and historian James Goldrick describes Sheean's actions as 'perhaps the most conspicuous of a number in this period'.¹²¹ Indeed, in his report on *Armidale*'s final action, Lieutenant Commander David Richards singled out Sheean for praise.¹²²

On the basis of Richards' testimony, the Admiralty granted Sheean a posthumous Mention in Despatches. The decision is curious, since Sheean's actions had direct parallels with two other naval men given higher awards. Leading Seaman Jack Mantle, a Royal Navy gunner aboard HMS *Foylebank*, was posthumously awarded the VC for steadfastly manning the starboard 2-pounder pom-pom during an air raid on Portland Harbour in 1940. Like Sheean, he had remained at the gun in spite of fatal wounds.¹²³ Ordinary Seaman Ian Rhodes, a RANVR sailor attached to HMS *Kashmir* in 1941, manned the starboard Oerlikon gun after his ship began to sink while south of Crete following an attack by a German Stuka dive bomber. Rhodes shot down the Stuka as it returned to strafe the man abandoning ship; he was recognised with a Conspicuous Gallantry Medal, the only one awarded to a member of the RAN.¹²⁴ The similarities end with their respective actions, as there appears to be no suggestion at the time that Sheean receive a higher award. His death prevented recognition of the type accorded to Rhodes, and the account of Sheean's actions sent to the Admiralty was brief, nondescript and

¹¹⁸ James Goldrick, '1941–1945: World War II: The War Against Japan,' in *The Royal Australian Navy*, ed. David Stevens, vol. 3 of *The Australian Centenary History of Defence* (South Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2001), 130–31.

¹¹⁹ G. Hermon Gill, *Royal Australian Navy, 1942–1945*, vol. 2 of *Australia in the War of 1939–1945: Series 2 – Navy* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1968), 218; Goldrick, '1941–1945', 131.

¹²⁰ Gill, *Royal Australian Navy, 1942–1945*, 218n.

¹²¹ Goldrick, '1941–1945', 131.

¹²² Lieutenant Commander David Richards, 'Report of Proceedings of H.M.A.S. "Armidale" – 29/11/42 to 1/12/42', 11 December 1942, A5954, 518/18, NAA, Canberra.

¹²³ 'Admiralty, Whitehall, 3rd September, 1940,' *London Gazette*, 3 September 1940.

¹²⁴ Pfennigwerth, *Bravo Zulu*, 140.

unlikely to inspire the award of a VC.¹²⁵ Further, as John Bradford points out, Sheean had no senior uniformed authority to advocate on his behalf to perhaps sway the Admiralty's decision.¹²⁶ Jack Mantle had; his recommendation received enthusiastic support from the Commander-in-Chief, Portsmouth.¹²⁷ Sheean's case has received considerable attention in subsequent decades and remains controversial, though debates over recognition during Australia's naval operations in the Pacific have not been confined to that one incident.

Like the battle for Malaya, the early war at sea in the Pacific was calamitous for the Australians. With the United States Pacific Fleet temporarily weakened after Pearl Harbor and the warships of Australia, Britain and the Netherlands chiefly committed to other parts of the globe, the Imperial Japanese Navy gained superiority at sea.¹²⁸ The RAN lost nine vessels sunk or destroyed by the Japanese in 1942, the light cruiser HMAS *Perth* and the sloop HMAS *Yarra* among them. The cases of *Perth* and *Yarra* are particularly notable for the efforts then and since to secure recognition for their respective captains and crew. On the night of 28 February/1 March, USS *Houston* and HMAS *Perth*—commanded by Captain Hector Waller—encountered a Japanese invasion force consisting of a minelayer, two aircraft carriers, six cruisers, twelve destroyers, and some fifty troopships while making passage through the Sunda Strait between Java and Sumatra.¹²⁹ *Houston* and *Perth* were engaged by the destroyers. The Japanese lost the minelayer and four troopships in the engagement and suffered damage to several vessels. James Goldrick suggests the action was 'one of the few substantial blows achieved by surface forces against the Japanese offensive.'¹³⁰ The action had, however, come at a price: *Perth* and *Houston* were also sunk. Of the 680 crew aboard *Perth*, 352 (including Waller) were killed and a further 320 became prisoners of war.¹³¹

HMAS *Yarra* sank three days after *Perth*. Under Lieutenant Commander Robert Rankin, *Yarra* was sole escort to two merchant ships and a minesweeper when, southeast of Christmas Island, the small convoy sighted three Japanese heavy cruisers and two destroyers.¹³²

¹²⁵ Lieutenant Commander David Richards, 'Report of Proceedings of H.M.A.S. "Armidale" – 29/11/42 to 1/12/42', 11 December 1942, ADM 1/14364, TNA.

¹²⁶ Bradford, 'Odd Man Out?', 32.

¹²⁷ Admiral Sir William James, Commander-in-Chief Portsmouth, to Admiralty, 30 July 1940, ADM 1/10492, TNA.

¹²⁸ Goldrick, '1941–1945', 127–28; Tom Frame, *No Pleasure Cruise: The Story of the Royal Australian Navy* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2004), 173–76.

¹²⁹ Frame, *No Pleasure Cruise*, 176; Tom Lewis, 'The Navy's Finest Fighting Leader: Captain "Hec" Waller, DSO and Bar, RAN,' *Journal of Australian Naval History* 1, no. 1 (2004): 20.

¹³⁰ Goldrick, '1941–1945', 129; Lewis, 'Navy's Finest Fighting Leader,' 20.

¹³¹ Lewis, 'Navy's Finest Fighting Leader,' 20; G. Hermon Gill, *Royal Australian Navy, 1939–1942*, vol. 1 of *Australia in the War of 1939–1945: Series 2 – Navy* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1957), 622.

¹³² Tom Lewis, 'No VC for Rankin?,' *Sabretache* 43, no. 2 (2002): 4–5.

Yarra was overwhelmingly outgunned but Rankin, ordering his convoy to scatter and hoping to buy them time, turned to engage the warships.¹³³ G. Hermon Gill, official historian for Australia's naval operations in the war, wrote that the Japanese 'advantages in range, speed, and overwhelming superiority in fire power, resolved the encounter into a mere matter of target practice'.¹³⁴ *Yarra* held out for ninety minutes before Rankin, with his vessel on fire and the remainder of the convoy sunk, ordered his crew to abandon ship. He was killed shortly after when the bridge suffered a direct hit. Thirteen crew were rescued by a Dutch submarine on 9 March; the remaining 138 perished either in the action or its aftermath.¹³⁵

Controversy surrounds the recognition accorded to Waller and Rankin, partly because of the higher awards bestowed on others under similar circumstances. The posthumous Mention in Despatches awarded to Waller, for instance, clashed with the recognition granted to Albert Rooks, the captain of *Houston*. Rooks, who also perished when his ship sank, was awarded the Medal of Honor, the United States' highest military decoration and equivalent to the VC. The award recognised Rooks' 'extraordinary heroism, outstanding courage, gallantry in action and distinguished service' during successive engagements from 4 to 27 February 1942, but oddly made little mention of his death and none of *Houston*'s sinking.¹³⁶ Waller and *Perth* were also involved in a number of these operations and, although *Houston* was the larger and more powerful ship, Waller was senior of the two captains.¹³⁷ The reason for the discrepancy in reward is not entirely clear, though the case does illuminate the differences in national approaches and processes for recognition.

Rooks' Medal of Honor was announced in June 1942. Waller and his crew had to wait four years for their due. Less than a third of *Perth*'s crew survived the war, but once the men were liberated from prison camps the ACNB used the survivors' testimony to compile a list of twenty-two recommendations for surviving members of the crew.¹³⁸ The list was sent to the Admiralty in November 1945.¹³⁹ Curiously, Waller and anyone else who had perished during the sinking of *Perth* or its aftermath were omitted. The Admiralty was clearly puzzled by this, as a cable was sent to the ACNB soon after enquiring if Waller, at least, 'should be considered

¹³³ Frame, *No Pleasure Cruise*, 176; Goldrick, '1941–1945', 130; Lewis, 'No VC for Rankin?', 5.

¹³⁴ Gill, *Royal Australian Navy*, 630.

¹³⁵ Gill, *Royal Australian Navy, 1939–1942*, 630–32; Goldrick, '1941–1945', 130.

¹³⁶ 'Albert Harold Rooks – Medal of Honor citation,' Hall of Valor Project, Military Times, accessed 6 February 2019, <https://valor.militarytimes.com/hero/70>.

¹³⁷ Gill, *Royal Australian Navy, 1939–1942*, 619; Goldrick, '1941–1945', 129.

¹³⁸ Vice Admiral Sir Geoffrey Arbuthnot, Chairman of the Admiralty Honours and Awards Committee, minute note, 1 February 1946, ADM 1/30687, TNA.

¹³⁹ Navy Office, Melbourne, to Secretary of the Admiralty, 9 November 1945, ADM 1/30687, TNA.

for Posthumous Mention'.¹⁴⁰ The reply came in the affirmative.¹⁴¹ The seeming reticence at first to reward Waller is bizarre given the praise heaped on the captain and his crew in the House of Representatives the previous March. Norman Makin, the Minister for the Navy, described the 'distinguished career' and 'heroic service' of *Perth* and, referring to the Java Sea and Sunda Strait engagements, argued that Waller and his crew 'left their mark on the enemy and their ship went down fighting against overwhelming odds.'¹⁴² Whether this was simple political hyperbole, or the ACNB found reason to be reluctant to recognise Waller, is unclear.

Rankin, meanwhile, went unrewarded despite comparisons between his actions and those of Captain Edward Fegen of the Royal Navy.¹⁴³ Fegen's armed merchant cruiser HMS *Jervis Bay* had, in November 1940, been escort to thirty-eight merchant vessels in the North Atlantic when the convoy came under attack from the German heavy cruiser, *Admiral Scheer*. Fegen manoeuvred to engage *Admiral Scheer* and block its path; *Jervis Bay* and five merchant ships fell to the superior German vessel, but thirty-three sailed clear because of Fegen and his crew. Fegen was posthumously awarded the VC.¹⁴⁴ Yet the similar deeds of Rankin and *Yarra* sixteen months later (albeit on a much smaller scale) were overlooked. This, too, is curious as a press release from Prime Minister Curtin on *Yarra*'s final action noted that the ship occupies 'a place in naval history alongside ... *Jervis Bay* and others who have written epic stories'.¹⁴⁵ According to John Bradford, the ACNB discussed the possibility of recognising Rankin in November 1945. However, the recently appointed Chief of Naval Staff, Vice Admiral Sir Louis Hamilton of the Royal Navy, assumed that his predecessor had 'examined this question fully' and the proposal was quashed.¹⁴⁶

Waller and Rankin received minimal to no recognition due to what appears to be, as naval officer and historian Tom Lewis argues, 'cumbersome administrative procedures' and inertia.¹⁴⁷ The death of both officers, the relatively few survivors from either *Perth* or *Yarra*, and the number made prisoner from the former undoubtedly hindered what efforts may have been made to recognise the men or other members of the ships' companies. Timing, and the inexperience of the RAN in fielding award recommendations, should also be considered. Amid the chaos and confusion of successive defeats and withdrawals in early 1942, the ACNB was

¹⁴⁰ Admiralty to Commonwealth Naval Board, cable, 23 January 1946, ADM 1/30687, TNA.

¹⁴¹ Commonwealth Naval Board to Admiralty, cable, 29 January 1946, ADM 1/30687, TNA.

¹⁴² Norman Makin, adjournment, CPD, House of Representatives, 2 March 1945, 307.

¹⁴³ See, for example: Tom Lewis, *Honour Denied: Teddy Sheean a Tasmanian Hero and Other Brave Warriors of the Royal Australian Navy* (Kent Town: Avonmore Books, 2016), 215.

¹⁴⁴ 'Admiralty, Whitehall, 22nd November, 1940,' *London Gazette*, 22 November 1940.

¹⁴⁵ John Curtin, quoted in 'Epic Fight by Yarra,' *Daily News* (Perth), 24 March 1942.

¹⁴⁶ Bradford, 'Odd Man Out?,' 29.

¹⁴⁷ Lewis, 'No VC for Rankin?,' 5.

likely preoccupied and unable to adequately consider making recommendations for awards. The optimal time to initiate or process recommendations had also long passed by the time *Perth*'s surviving crew was liberated in 1945.

Recognition to members of the RAN has remained controversial. Proportionally, the RAN received the greatest recognition per capita of the three Australian services during the Second World War. But because no member of the RAN has ever been awarded the VC, complaints of neglect abound. Accordingly, former sailors, family members and commentators have campaigned over the decades to see retrospective VCs awarded to Waller, Rankin, Sheean and others.¹⁴⁸ Renewed efforts early in the twenty-first century led Australia's Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade to deliberate over the issue of historical recognition during Senate estimates hearings in 2010. From these inquiries, the Department of Defence confirmed that it had no record of any RAN officer or rating having been considered for the VC.¹⁴⁹ The Parliamentary Secretary for Defence, Senator David Feeney, therefore directed the Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal to establish the Inquiry into Unresolved Recognition for Past Acts of Naval and Military Gallantry and Valour (known as the 'Valour Inquiry') in February 2011. The purpose of the inquiry was to investigate past instances of 'unresolved recognition' and determine whether recommendations for 'appropriate recognition' should now be made.¹⁵⁰ The terms of reference concerned thirteen cases spanning from the First World War to Vietnam, eleven of whom were naval personnel; Waller, Rankin, Sheean, and Stoker of the submarine *AE2* among them.¹⁵¹ The inquiry ran for almost two years, during which the tribunal received 166 written submissions relating to the thirteen subjects of the inquiry, and a further 174 submissions concerning 140 other individuals and groups.¹⁵² In handing down its findings in January 2013, the tribunal remained firm to the original mandate of thirteen and was determined that, in assessing each case, 'it should apply the rules as they were at the time.'¹⁵³ The inquiry was principally concerned with due process and rectifying instances of maladministration, if applicable, rather than applying contemporary ideas of martial heroism to perceived historical injustices.

¹⁴⁸ See, for example: Lewis, *Honour Denied*, especially 169–72, 215–74; Bradford, 'Odd Man Out?'; Tim Morgan, 'Battle for Recognition of Teddy Sheean Continues 75 Years After HMAS Armidale Went Down,' ABC News, 2 December 2017, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-12-01/hmas-armidale-memorials-renew-calls-for-teddy-sheean-vc/9218688>.

¹⁴⁹ Lewis, *Honour Denied*, 171–72.

¹⁵⁰ *The Report of the Inquiry into Unresolved Recognition for Past Acts of Naval and Military Gallantry and Valour* (Canberra: Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal, 2013), ix–x, 1.

¹⁵¹ *Report of the Inquiry*, ix.

¹⁵² *Report of the Inquiry*, 1, 342.

¹⁵³ *Report of the Inquiry*, 6.

The tribunal found insufficient grounds to recommend any of the thirteen be retrospectively awarded the VC or an alternate decoration. The committee members dismissed claims of British bias towards RAN personnel and, in response to submissions that drew comparison to similar acts accorded higher recognition, noted that ‘no two cases are the same, and that commanders and committees which recommend honours do so solely on the merits of the individual case.’¹⁵⁴ The Royal Navy’s Second Sea Lord had expressed a similar sentiment in 1940.¹⁵⁵ Yet, despite the committee’s claim, this was something that had long been practised by the Admiralty, Air Ministry, War Office, and within the Australian services. As to specific cases, the tribunal argued that correct procedure had been followed to recognise Stoker and Sheean.¹⁵⁶ Maladministration and ‘significant failures in the process’ were, however, attributed to the ACNB in its inability to appropriately recognise Waller and Rankin, though the tribunal remained of the opinion that neither attained the standard required for the VC.¹⁵⁷ The recommendations of the Valour Inquiry were met with a mixed reception. Disappointment emanated from those in the public who felt the inquiry had failed to address past injustices, while others praised the tribunal for maintaining the integrity of the Australian Honours System.¹⁵⁸ Waller, Rankin and Sheean have, nevertheless, been recognised in alternate ways—all three are namesakes to *Collins* class submarines. The Valour Inquiry recommended that all three names ‘be perpetuated in the RAN after the present named ships be decommissioned.’¹⁵⁹ Contentious as these cases are, the recognition (or lack thereof) accorded to these individuals was a product of the time and circumstances and, as the processes for the army elucidate, were not the only instances in the Pacific where a misapplication of procedures led to a lesser honour than may have been warranted.

Conclusion

The Allied command structure instituted in the Pacific in the wake of the reverses and defeats suffered in early 1942 saw Australians fighting in a theatre with almost no involvement from the British. For the first time, Australian commanders were responsible for administering the process for Imperial honours and awards in a theatre of war—at least, as far as the Australian

¹⁵⁴ *Report of the Inquiry*, 4.

¹⁵⁵ Admiral Sir Charles Little, minute note, 15 November 1940, ADM 1/10496, TNA.

¹⁵⁶ *Report of the Inquiry*, 7.

¹⁵⁷ *Report of the Inquiry*, 8.

¹⁵⁸ See, for example: ‘Gallipoli Hero Simpson Won’t Receive VC,’ ABC News, 1 March 2013, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-03-01/gallipoli-hero-simpson-won27t-receive-vc/4548272>; Gill Vowles, ‘I Will Not Ever Give Up,’ *Mercury* (Hobart), 5 April 2015.

¹⁵⁹ *Report of the Inquiry*, 10.

army and RAAF were concerned. The RAN conformed to pre-existing procedures for empire naval recommendations. Yet the inexperience of senior naval officers, and the reticence of the ACNB to actively recommend or pursue recognition for its members, may well have contributed to an alienation of RAN personnel from the higher echelons of award. Japan's early successes also saw the Australian government and propagandists demonise the Japanese and fuel an aggressiveness among Australian combatants in the Pacific; an aggressiveness which came to underpin how heroism was interpreted (and recognised) in SWPA. Just like on the Western Front a generation before, aggressive tactical heroism was favoured for award. But the cautiousness with which honours were approached by the Australian command saw an inevitable increase in standards. Instances of distinguished command, aggressive bravery, and constructive contributions to the strategic or tactical landscape were all rewarded in SWPA. By late 1942, however, it was clear that only the most outstanding and well supported cases of heroism would be considered for the VC. The Pacific War thereby cemented a heightened standard for offensive tactical heroism and an adherence to the rigid technical requirements for award recommendations. These procedural conditions and the interpretation of heroic standards were to influence early processes for recognition during the engagements of Australia's Cold War.

Chapter Eight

Policies, Politics and Patrols: The Korean War and the Move Towards Professionalised Heroism, 1946–53

A guide to the standard required [for the VC] may be taken as a 90 per cent possibility of being killed in performing the deed.

– War Office, *Pamphlet on Military Honours and Awards* (1953)¹

During the operations on 4–5 October 1951 to secure Hills 355 and 317, part of the Battle of Maryang San during the Korean War, Major Jack Gerke was singled out for having displayed ‘qualities of courage, leadership and ability to an outstanding degree.’² A seasoned officer with combat experience in the Second World War, Gerke had returned to action in Korea and been appointed to a company command.³ During the fighting on 4 October, Gerke and his men were ordered to aid the 1st Battalion, King’s Own Scottish Borderers by capturing the eastern ridges towards Hill 355 before tackling the summit itself. Encountering strong resistance, Gerke was described as having ‘led his men with great skill and courage’ as the company worked methodically over some three hours of heavy fighting to secure its objectives.⁴ Robert O’Neill, the official historian of Australia in the Korean War, writes that it ‘was a moment of triumph for Gerke to stand on the crest of that great, round hill which dominated the battlefield’.⁵ The following afternoon, Gerke’s company was again committed from reserve to neutralise the final defences towards, and capture the summit of, the tactically more difficult Hill 317. According to his commanding officer, this Gerke and his company did with ‘remarkable skill and drive’.⁶

Gerke’s distinguished performance at Maryang San was rewarded with the DSO. His award typified the pattern of recognition during Australia’s Korean War, which increasingly came to emphasise exemplary leadership and command under difficult tactical conditions. Even among the ordinary ranks and non-commissioned men, efficient leadership assumed a

¹ War Office, *Pamphlet on Military Honours and Awards* (1953; repr., Melbourne: Base Printing Company, 1958), 12.

² Recommendation for Major Jack Gerke, 21 October 1951, AWM119, 330.

³ Dayton McCarthy, *The Battle of Maryang San: 1951*, Australian Army Campaign Series (Newport: Big Sky Publishing, 2018), 80.

⁴ Recommendation for Gerke.

⁵ Robert O’Neill, *Combat Operations*, vol. 2 of *Australia in the Korean War 1950–53* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1985), 187.

⁶ Recommendation for Gerke.

greater prominence. The increased emphasis on leadership stemmed from reforms instigated by the Australian government and senior service officers in the wake of the Second World War to professionalise the nation's armed services. This chapter considers Australian operations in the Korean War to argue that, as the Australian Army implemented these reforms, so too did official conceptions of heroism become progressively more professionalised. While aggressive leadership and hot-blooded bravery were still deemed worthy of recognition, senior officers and field commanders came to place ever more value in effective training, the use of combined arms and, more importantly, decisive tactical and inspirational leadership. Senior officers and the service departments proved relatively attune to this shift and the significance of recognition to morale, but were hampered by government bureaucracy. Inexperience and inertia at the political and diplomatic levels restricted the quantity of awards available early on in the conflict—thereby inflating the standards for reward—and caused extensive delays in recognition. These issues provoked criticism from the Australian public and proved deleterious to morale on the fighting front.

A professional army

With the end of the Pacific War came the monumental task of scaling back the nation's military forces and demobilising more than half a million Australians still in uniform. This process was completed in 1947.⁷ In the meantime, the Australian government committed a brigade to the occupation forces in Japan, and devoted significant attention to the post-war organisation, composition and capability of Australia's defence, particularly the army. Prior to the Second World War, Australia's peacetime army had been chiefly a part-time militia. As David Chinn remarks, the full-time professional component had been 'merely the permanent cadre for the larger citizen army'; one which was entirely reliant on civilian volunteers in times of war.⁸ Post-war, however, army leaders pressed the need to create and maintain a permanent, professional force. The proposal received bipartisan support as political leaders recognised the need for a standing army to meet Australia's present and future defence capabilities. The Australian Regular Army was raised in 1947, and the part-time Citizens Military Force was re-established the following year.⁹

⁷ The gradual process of demobilisation itself had started in 1943. Grey, *Military History of Australia*, 197–98.

⁸ David Chinn, 'Raising a Regular Infantry Force: Morotai, 1945–46,' in *Duty First: A History of the Royal Australian Regiment*, ed. David Horner and Jean Bou, 2nd ed. (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2008), 1.

⁹ Jeffrey Grey, *The Australian Army*, vol. 1 of *The Australian Centenary History of Defence* (South Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2001), 166–70; Wayne Klintworth, 'Formation of the Royal Australian Regiment: Australia and Japan, 1948–50,' in Horner and Bou, *Duty First*, 42–43.

The brigade stationed in Japan provided the core of the new standing army. Its three battalions were reorganised along regimental lines similar to the British Army, and in 1948 were redesignated as the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Battalions of the Australian Regiment (which, with Royal assent, became the Royal Australian Regiment in 1949).¹⁰ The battalions—and the army more broadly—suffered from a shortage of manpower in the late 1940s, which contributed to the decision by Robert Menzies' government (elected in 1949) to implement a national service scheme from 1951. The government also attempted to recruit experienced former British Army officers and non-commissioned men, re-raised the women's services that had been established during and disbanded following the Second World War, and opened a second officer training school.¹¹ These initiatives, among others, were intended to professionalise the modern Australian Army. A Post-War Army Planning Committee, convened back in 1944 and headed by Major General George Vasey, had stressed the importance of a professional army and an educated Staff Corps of officers. Although Vasey's recommendation that officer cadets receive a more rigorous academic education to the level of a university degree went unheeded for two decades, it indicated that serious thought was accorded to the establishment of a permanent army and the capacity to produce well trained, capable, professional soldiers.¹² These developments are notable because they instigated the gradual progression towards the contemporary Australian Army. The reforms also shaped the way Australian soldiers performed in battle and, consequently, affected what the military command recognised as valuable and heroic in wartime.

The initiatives to professionalise Australia's military had a curious side effect: a gradual, somewhat reluctant, acceptance of Indigenous service. The army had largely reinstated its policies of exclusion after the Second World War and restricted Indigenous service in the nation's armed forces, but gradual reforms from the early 1950s saw Indigenous service become increasingly possible.¹³ The shift in policies enabled Indigenous men and women to continue the tradition to defend their customary lands into the period of Australia's Cold War and, in doing so, be recognised for their valuable conduct and wartime heroism. Corporal Charlie Mene and Sergeant Cecil Anderson, for instance, were decorated for their conduct in the Korean War and Malayan Emergency, respectively. Both veterans of the Second World War, Mene and Anderson had re-enlisted for service in Korea. Mene, a Torres Strait Islander,

¹⁰ Klintworth, 'Formation of the Royal Australian Regiment,' 43–44.

¹¹ Grey, *Australian Army*, 180–89.

¹² David Horner, *General Vasey's War* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1992), 314.

¹³ Riseman, *In Defence of Country*, 5.

was awarded the Military Medal for his courage and leadership on two patrols in 1952.¹⁴ Anderson was killed during a subsequent deployment to Malaya in 1956, but was posthumously Mentioned in Despatches in recognition of his leadership and devotion.¹⁵ Although Indigenous personnel were to remain very much in the minority, their increased representation in the military from the 1950s generally accorded Aboriginal Australians greater prospects of acceptance, advancement and recognition within the armed forces.

The Korean commitment and the policies and politics of recognition

The Korean War provided a testing ground for Australia's new army. The Korean peninsula, annexed by Japan in 1910, found nominal liberation in the aftermath of the Pacific War. With Allied powers in disagreement over Korea's future, however, the peninsula was split along the 38th parallel into Soviet (north) and United States (south) zones of occupation. Historian Allan Millett argues that leaders of the now two Koreas harboured 'competing views of a modern, authentic Korean nation' and grappled with the 'divided liberationist politics' that at the time plagued a number of previously colonised or occupied states in Asia and Europe.¹⁶ The nascent United Nations attempted to mediate a settlement as both states engaged in violent cross-border incursions but the situation deteriorated and, on 25 June 1950, the (North) Korean People's Army crossed the 38th parallel and invaded South Korea. Within two days, the United Nations called upon member states to aid South Korea and 'restore international peace and security to the area'.¹⁷ The United States committed air, naval and, eventually, land forces and pressured the British Commonwealth to do the same. Britain agreed to provide naval support, and the Australian government grudgingly followed suit with HMA Ships *Shoalhaven* and *Bataan*. As South Korea's resistance crumbled, however, pressure mounted for Britain and the Commonwealth to commit air and, later, ground combat forces. Mindful of the budding Australian–American relationship and their mutual interests in the Asia-Pacific, the Menzies

¹⁴ Maurie Pears, *Battlefield Korea: The Korean Battle Honours of the Royal Australian Regiment, 1950–1953* (Loftus: Australian Military History Publications, 2007), 96; Noah Riseman and Richard Trembath, *Defending Country: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Military Service Since 1945* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2016), 22.

¹⁵ Riseman and Trembath, *Defending Country*, 25; Recommendation for Sergeant Cecil Anderson, n.d., A462, 829/28 PART 3, NAA, Canberra.

¹⁶ Allan R. Millett, *The War for Korea, 1950–1951: They Came from the North* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2010), 10–11.

¹⁷ Quoted in Jeffrey Grey, *The Commonwealth Armies and the Korean War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), 20–23.

government deployed No. 77 (Fighter) Squadron on 30 June. A ground contribution, initially consisting of the 3rd Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (3RAR), followed on 26 July.¹⁸

Australia's commitment to Korea remained relatively modest. The Australian forces had been scaled down since 1945, and the Menzies government's strategic focus was on the Middle East. There was also a public and political reticence to engage in large-scale conflict so soon after the Second World War.¹⁹ Nevertheless, Australia's contribution included two destroyers or frigates on rotation (with the occasional commitment of an aircraft carrier), while No. 77 Squadron was supplemented by transportation and maintenance units, and 3RAR was joined by a second battalion from April 1952.²⁰ With such a disparate commitment, the units were subsumed by Commonwealth and international commands under the United Nations to maximise effectiveness. Australian war vessels were incorporated into integrated Commonwealth and United States naval task forces, as No. 77 Squadron—under the administrative command of No. 91 Wing based in Japan—was operationally responsible to the United States 5th Air Force.²¹ 3RAR, meanwhile, was posted to the 27th British Commonwealth Brigade, which was replaced by the 28th Commonwealth Brigade under the 1st Commonwealth Division in 1951. These formations likewise fell under the operational command of the American-led United Nations effort, but were subject to the administrative authority of the Commander-in-Chief British Commonwealth Forces Korea (CinC BCFK), a post based in Japan and held by a succession of Australian Army officers beginning with Lieutenant General Sir Horace Robertson.²²

No. 77 Squadron, commanded by seasoned pilot Wing Commander Louis (Lou) Spence, was the first non-American unit under the United Nations to see combat. The squadron deployed from Japan where, like HMAS *Shoalhaven* and 3RAR, it was part of the occupation forces the Australian government had planned to withdraw.²³ The squadron flew its first operations over Korea on 2 July. RAAF historian Alan Stephens writes that the squadron's war 'started relatively quietly' but within a few weeks was committed to escort, close-support,

¹⁸ Robert O'Neill, *Strategy and Diplomacy*, vol. 1 of *Australia in the Korean War 1950–53* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1981), 45–76; Gavan McCormack, *Cold War Hot War: An Australian Perspective on the Korean War* (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1983), 100.

¹⁹ Grey, *Commonwealth Armies*, 31–32; O'Neill, *Strategy and Diplomacy*, 35–36.

²⁰ O'Neill, *Combat Operations*, 706; Steve Eather, *Odd Jobs: RAAF Operations in Japan, the Berlin Airlift, Korea, Malaya and Malta, 1946–1960* (Point Cook: Royal Australian Air Force Museum, 1996), 82.

²¹ O'Neill, *Combat Operations*, 419–21; Eather, *Odd Jobs*, 82.

²² Until July 1952, the CinC BCFK held additional responsibility as CinC of the British Commonwealth Occupation Force in Japan. O'Neill, *Combat Operations*, 166, 238.

²³ Grey, *Commonwealth Armies*, 55; O'Neill, *Strategy and Diplomacy*, 35–37.

ground attack, and reconnaissance missions.²⁴ The strategic use of aircraft in support of ground operations was significant from the early stages of the conflict, as the (North) Korean People's Army commanded superiority on land.²⁵ By the end of September, No. 77 Squadron's pilots had flown 1,674 sorties totalling 4,298 operational hours.²⁶ In recognition of these achievements Spence was awarded the American Legion of Merit in the grade of Officer (roughly congruent to an OBE) and, alongside a number of his pilots, received the Air Medal for meritorious achievement on missions.²⁷ The impromptu award of these foreign decorations caused complications for the Australian and British governments, which were considerably more sluggish in recognising the heroism and achievements of their personnel.

By early October the Minister for Air, Thomas White, was in receipt of the first batch of RAAF award recommendations for Korea.²⁸ Among them was a DSO for Spence, tendered in recognition of his 'outstanding fearless leadership' in commanding the squadron and for having led its pilots in action 'on many more occasions than would normally be required of him'.²⁹ At this stage neither the Australian government nor the British authorities had determined the policies or processes for operational awards in Korea. The Australian Defence Committee had resolved in September that representations should be made to the British government in order to determine an appropriate scale for awards to the Australian forces.³⁰ The Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations cabled the Australian government in early October with the assurance that the question of awards was currently under consideration. He made clear, however, that the British government was eager to abstain from, or at least heavily restrict, the acceptance of foreign awards.³¹ By now the RAAF and RAN components had been operating in Korea and its waters for three months, 3RAR had not long arrived, and British Army units had seen heavy action around Pusan and Seongju. Imperial awards may not have been readily forthcoming, but American ones were—often without deference to the British or Commonwealth authorities. Aside from the decorations to No. 77 Squadron, the United States

²⁴ Alan Stephens, *Going Solo: The Royal Australian Air Force, 1946–1971* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1995), 224–27.

²⁵ O'Neill, *Combat Operations*, 293.

²⁶ Department of External Affairs to the Australian High Commissioner's Office, London, cablegram, 8 January 1952, A816, 66/301/386, NAA, Canberra.

²⁷ Philip McBride to Robert Menzies, 29 November 1950, A705, 55/1/2203 PART 1, NAA, Canberra.

²⁸ Thomas White to Robert Menzies, 13 October 1950, A705, 55/1/2203 PART 1, NAA, Canberra.

²⁹ Recommendation for Wing Commander Louis Spence, 4 September 1950, A705, 55/1/2203 PART 1, NAA, Canberra.

³⁰ Donald Clues, 'Minute by Defence Committee at Meeting Held on Thursday, 21st September 1950,' 21 September 1950, A2031, 170/1950, NAA, Canberra.

³¹ Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations to the Department of External Affairs, cablegram, 3 October 1950, A816, 66/301/406, NAA, Canberra.

Far East Command had summarily approved an award of the Silver Star (roughly on par with the Military Cross) to 3RAR's commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel Charles Green, on 1 November for his performance during the Battle of Yongju only ten days earlier.³²

As the question of Imperial awards was debated, the RAAF recommendations had been forwarded by No. 91 Wing, via General Robertson and the Air Board, to White. The RAAF and BCFK were working on the assumption that the awards process would function similar to what had been the case in SWPA during the Second World War.³³ White, a former RAAF officer who had won the DFC in the First World War, sent the recommendations with his approval to Menzies on 13 October. In doing so he stressed the importance of prompt action since it was 'in the interests of the morale of the Squadron'.³⁴ Yet it was over a month before White received a response from the recently appointed Minister for Defence, Philip McBride, to whom Menzies had referred the recommendations.³⁵ By now King George VI had approved award scales for Korea, with effect from 9 July—a date that marked the first British casualties, but a full week after No. 77 Squadron's first operational sorties.³⁶ The army was permitted to recommend one decoration per every 250 personnel on operations in a six-month period, with Mentions in Despatches available on a scale of one per 150 personnel. Aircrew were afforded one decoration for every three hundred operational hours flown, while Mentions were determined at a rate of up to five for every three decorations. Since Korea was predominantly a land war, the Australian government was advised that scales would not be necessary for naval personnel. Instead, awards to the RAN would be determined ad hoc by the British CinC Far East Fleet.³⁷ As for the procedure, the RAAF assumption had been correct: recommendations for army and RAAF personnel were to flow through the BCFK command apparatus to the offices of the Adjutant-General or Air Member for Personnel in Australia, and then on to the appropriate minister.³⁸

As the initial batch of RAAF recommendations both fell within the permissible scale and complied with the process, White again pushed for prompt approval of the awards in a communication to McBride in November 1950. White was clearly attuned to the symbolic influence of awards, since he argued that further delay would have an 'adverse effect upon

³² Index award card for Lieutenant Colonel Charles Green, n.d., AWM192, 308.

³³ White to Menzies, 13 October 1950.

³⁴ White to Menzies, 13 October 1950.

³⁵ Philip McBride to Thomas White, 15 November 1950, A705, 55/1/2203 PART 1, NAA, Canberra.

³⁶ Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations to Department of External Affairs, cablegram, 28 October 1950, A705, 55/1/2203 PART 1, NAA, Canberra.

³⁷ Secretary of State to External Affairs, 28 October 1950.

³⁸ Military Secretary to the Secretary of the Department of the Army, 21 June 1951, AWM119, 321.

morale'.³⁹ To White's dismay, the awards were not approved until April 1951.⁴⁰ The delay stemmed, at least in part, from concerns over duplicate recognition with the American awards, as well as Spence's death on 9 September 1950. White argued that the recommendations submitted in favour of Spence and three other officers awarded American decorations were unique and distinguished enough to avoid duplication, even if there were some overlap.⁴¹ Besides, he wrote, the men 'would prize their own infinitely more than any foreign decoration.'⁴² Spence's recommendation was further complicated by timing. The original recommendation submitted by No. 91 Wing, dated 4 September 1950, had been for a Bar to the DFC Spence received for ground attack missions in North Africa in 1942.⁴³ Robertson had considered Spence's efforts sufficiently distinguished to warrant higher recognition, and ordered the recommendation be revised and submitted for the DSO. The amended version was received only days after Spence was posted as missing presumed killed.⁴⁴ A loophole existed for posthumous awards provided the recommendation was initiated prior to the person's death, so White advocated for approval of the DSO to Spence.⁴⁵ Menzies and McBride deferred to the British authorities on the case, suggesting that if an award of the DSO was not possible then the original recommendation be approved instead.⁴⁶ A Bar to Spence's DFC was duly promulgated.⁴⁷

The broader services and public were not privy to these internal considerations, but their grievances and disappointment over honours were aired by the press. Writing for Brisbane's *Sunday Mail* in February 1951, war correspondent J.D. Mulcahy noted that, after eight months of operations, Australian personnel felt they were being 'left out in the cold' since the government was yet to announce a single decoration. 'This could mean', Mulcahy continued, 'that field commanders have not recommended awards (which seems hardly likely), or that Australia has lagged behind other countries.'⁴⁸ Indeed, the sense of neglect was exacerbated by the speed with which the United States recognised both their own and

³⁹ Thomas White to Philip McBride, 20 November 1950, A705, 55/1/2203 PART 1, NAA, Canberra.

⁴⁰ Secretary of the Prime Minister's Department to Secretary of the Department of Defence, teleprinter message, 11 April 1951, A705, 55/1/2203 PART 1, NAA, Canberra.

⁴¹ White to McBride, 20 November 1950.

⁴² Thomas White to Melville Langslow, Secretary of the Department of Air, 15 November 1950, A705, 55/1/2203 PART 1, NAA, Canberra.

⁴³ White to McBride, 20 November 1950; P.J. Scully, 'Spence, Louis Thomas (1917–1950),' Australian Dictionary of Biography, accessed 18 March 2019, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/spence-louis-thomas-11741>.

⁴⁴ White to McBride, 20 November 1950.

⁴⁵ White to McBride, 20 November 1950.

⁴⁶ McBride to Menzies, 29 November 1950.

⁴⁷ 'Government House, Canberra,' *London Gazette*, 17 April 1951.

⁴⁸ J.D. Mulcahy, 'Why No Gongs for Our Korea Boys?,' *Sunday Mail* (Brisbane), 25 February 1951.

Commonwealth personnel, and by the award of a handful of decorations to British combatants—a posthumous VC to Major Kenneth Muir of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders among them. Muir had led a stoic counter-attack under trying conditions and fierce opposition at Hill 282, near Seongju, in September 1950. His VC was announced little more than three months later, while the Australian recommendations languished in the Prime Minister's Department.⁴⁹

By March 1951 the Victorian branch of the Returned Sailors' Soldiers' and Airmen's Imperial League (RSSAILA; predecessor to the Returned and Services League) was making enquiries as to why Australian personnel had seemingly been overlooked. At the same time, Melbourne's *Herald* fuelled rumours by suggesting that several Australians had been 'recommended ... for outstanding acts of heroism,' but according to 'reports' the awards 'are held up in London'.⁵⁰ The recommendations had reached the United Kingdom by this point, but it would be unfair to blame the British authorities for the delay. The internal discussions concerning Spence and duplicate awards had largely taken place in November. Yet, for reasons unclear, the recommendations had not been sent to the governor-general for approval and onward processing until February.⁵¹

Following further unfavourable reports in the press, the Menzies government was forced to admit that several award recommendations were awaiting final approval by the King. In carrying this announcement, Rockhampton's *Morning Bulletin* highlighted the efforts of war correspondents to bring attention to the 'numerous cases of individual bravery ... comparable with the leadership and courage for which high Empire awards were made in World War 2.'⁵² The situation manifested almost like the Crimean War a century before: a sense by the public and press that the average soldier, sailor and now airman were being denied their due recognition. The embarrassment this caused the services and Australian government led Robertson to request delegate powers (akin to the governor-general in the Pacific War) to approve Immediate operational awards; an authority he had already received for British Army personnel.⁵³ The delegate powers were duly approved, and were announced in the press to mitigate further unflattering accounts.⁵⁴ Robertson's authority was, however, rather limited, as

⁴⁹ 'The War Office, 5th January, 1951,' *London Gazette*, 5 January 1951.

⁵⁰ 'No Korea Awards: RSL Asks Why,' *Herald* (Melbourne), 15 March 1951.

⁵¹ William McKell, Governor-General of Australia, to Robert Menzies, 9 April 1951, A462, 829/29 PART 1, NAA, Canberra.

⁵² 'Empire Awards,' *Morning Bulletin* (Rockhampton), 30 March 1951.

⁵³ Lieutenant General Sir Horace Robertson to Josiah Francis, Minister for the Army, 28 February 1951, AWM119, 307.

⁵⁴ Adrian Ball, 'Korea Awards General's Job,' *Sunday Mail* (Brisbane), 18 March 1951; 'System of Awards in Korea,' *Sunday Herald* (Sydney), 24 June 1951.

he was only empowered to approve approximately half of the awards on the operational scale as Immediate. The remainder had to be submitted (and approved) through the standard channels.⁵⁵

The first awards to 3RAR were promulgated in April 1951, appearing alongside the initial batch of RAAF decorations.⁵⁶ Captain Archer Denness and Lieutenant David Mannett received Military Crosses and Private Charlie McMurray a Military Medal for their respective leadership and courage during engagements in October 1950. These awards, as well as those to Spence and the RAAF contingent, were widely publicised in the Australian press.⁵⁷ Major and regional newspapers alike continued to announce and print details on awards throughout the conflict. But recognition more broadly remained a contentious topic. The quota system for awards was subject to a flurry of unfavourable reports following 3RAR's prominent role in the Battle of Maryang San in October 1951. A correspondent for Sydney's *Sun*, for example, was unimpressed that a British battalion seemed to receive six times the number of awards accorded to 3RAR for the operation, arguing that an 'anomaly of the "quota" system for decorations is denying recognition to young Australians.'⁵⁸ Indeed, following the announcement of the British awards, one soldier from 3RAR was said to have remarked: 'That's not a list; it's a nominal roll.'⁵⁹ War correspondent Charles Madden wrote in May 1952 that the men of 3RAR resented the present system for determining awards, while a number of newspapers accused the government of 'rationing' recognition.⁶⁰ A spokesperson for the RSSAILA even demanded a public explanation from Australian Army headquarters, suggesting that: 'If somebody is blocking the way to Australian officers and men obtaining true recognition ... that somebody should be sent home.'⁶¹ The Minister for the Army, Josiah Francis, denied the reports of rationing and recalcitrant officers, but it was clear that the public and men of the services were unimpressed with the present allocation of awards.⁶² But neither were the senior officers responsible for the process.

⁵⁵ Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations to Department of External Affairs, cablegram, 24 February 1951, AWM119, 307; Military Secretary to the Secretary of the Department of the Army, 21 June 1951.

⁵⁶ 'The War Office, 17th April, 1951,' *London Gazette*, 17 April 1951.

⁵⁷ See, for example: 'Bravery Awards,' *Daily Telegraph* (Sydney), 11 April 1951; 'British Decorations for Australians in Korea,' *West Australian* (Perth), 11 April 1951.

⁵⁸ 'Diggers "Missing Out" on Battle Awards,' *Sun* (Sydney), 17 March 1952.

⁵⁹ Quoted in Charles Madden, 'Korea Diggers Don't Like "Quota" System of Awards,' *Sun* (Sydney), 28 May 1952.

⁶⁰ Madden, 'Korea Diggers Don't Like "Quota" System.'

⁶¹ N.D. Wilson, quoted in 'Blocking of Army Awards,' *Age* (Melbourne), 18 March 1952.

⁶² 'Awards in Korea "Not Rationed",' *Sun* (Sydney), 28 April 1952.

As early as May 1951 Robertson had raised the inadequacy of the award scale allotted to the Australian Army component in Korea. This came following the hard-fought Battle of Kapyong, an engagement with which 3RAR was heavily involved in April. Robertson remarked that the battalion 'is suffering greatly by comparison with UK Troops in number of awards granted'.⁶³ 3RAR maintained a complement of just over one thousand personnel which, under the award scales, entitled the battalion to a maximum of four decorations and seven Mentions in Despatches in a six-month period. British units were subject to the same scales but, in addition to combatant units, the United Kingdom provided an estimated three to four thousand personnel in support and staff positions.⁶⁴ These personnel helped bolster the British allocation of awards, to the extent that Robertson surmised that British battalions 'receive at least double' the awards of 3RAR; a claim substantiated by the initial honours granted for subsequent engagements in 1951.⁶⁵

To address the discrepancy, Robertson suggested that 3RAR be authorised to submit additional recommendations as special cases (a practice also common among British units) and that the Australians stationed in Japan be included to inflate the operational quota.⁶⁶ The latter was quickly dismissed, but the proposal of a special provision found support in the Department of the Army; 3RAR was allowed to submit three additional award recommendations to cover Kapyong.⁶⁷ In the meantime, the government began negotiations with the British service departments with an eye to securing a more favourable award scale. The discussions proved tedious and protracted, which is why the Australian government faced criticism through 1952. The proposal of a one in two hundred scale was rejected as inadequate in December 1951, but by the following March the newly crowned Queen Elizabeth II had approved a scale of one decoration per one hundred in the infantry and one in two hundred for other arms.⁶⁸ The prospect of additional decorations was welcomed, but the Department of the Army protested that the scales still disproportionately favoured British units.⁶⁹ Five months passed before a compromise was approved in August 1952. The revised scale provided one decoration per

⁶³ Lieutenant General Sir Horace Robertson to Department of Defence, cipher signal, 31 May 1951, A816, 66/301/386, NAA, Canberra.

⁶⁴ Department of External Affairs to Australian High Commissioner's Office, London, cablegram, 24 April 1952, AWM119, 380.

⁶⁵ Robertson to Department of Defence; External Affairs to High Commissioner's Office.

⁶⁶ Robertson to Department of Defence.

⁶⁷ Frank Sinclair, Secretary of the Department of the Army, to Sir Frederick Shedden, 25 June and 18 December 1951, A816, 66/301/386, NAA, Canberra.

⁶⁸ Sinclair to Shedden, 18 December 1951; Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations to the Prime Minister's Department, cablegram, 7 March 1952, AWM119, 380.

⁶⁹ External Affairs to High Commissioner's Office.

seventy-five in the infantry, but only in instances where the national contribution included less than two hundred personnel in support positions. Otherwise, the extant scales would apply. The one in seventy-five scale was also made retrospective to cover ten hangover recommendations from 1951, which the new CinC BCFK, Lieutenant General William Bridgeford, felt 'should not go unrewarded'.⁷⁰

The debates over recognition and award scales are significant because of their context. They arose at a time the Australian Army (and naval and air forces more broadly) was seeking to professionalise its fighting arms and move away from a wartime reliance on civilian volunteers. How the government and military command responded to situational circumstances, handled criticism from both outside and within, and stimulated morale were therefore important questions. A professional military requires expert management and an efficient system for recognition. In Korea, this was clearly a work in progress. The services and their civil departments were attuned to issues of morale, relatively efficient at fielding award recommendations, and aware of operational conditions and capabilities. For instance, after No. 77 Squadron replaced its P-51 Mustangs with the much faster Gloster Meteor jet in mid-1951, the Department of Air successfully petitioned for an adjustment to the RAAF's award scale to one decoration for every two hundred flying hours to meet the squadron's new operational capabilities.⁷¹ This is not to say that the services or departments were mistake free. Indeed, No. 91 Wing faced censure from the Air Member for Personnel in November 1952 for having recommended a meritorious Mention in Despatches for an engineering officer recently subject to a scathing performance report.⁷² However, it is evident that the officers and public servants responsible at least attempted to create a clear and consistent process for awards. The principal shortcomings of the honours process were instead at the political and diplomatic levels, where inertia, inexperience and a cautiousness caused lengthy delays to recognition and provoked resentment among frontline personnel.

Aggressive leadership and distinguished command: Kapyong and Maryang San

With the award scales in flux and so few decorations available in the early stages of the Korean War, field commanders had to adopt a cautious and considered approach to recommendations.

⁷⁰ Philip McBride to Robert Menzies, 28 August 1952, AWM119, 380; External Affairs to High Commissioner's Office.

⁷¹ Department of External Affairs to the Australian High Commissioner's Office, London, cablegram, 8 January 1952, A816, 66/301/386, NAA, Canberra.

⁷² Air Vice Marshal Francis Bladin to Group Captain Dixie Chapman, Officer Commanding No. 91 Wing, 27 November 1952, A705, 55/1/2497, NAA, Canberra.

Actions that demonstrated professional soldierly characteristics, bravery, and superior leadership were the standouts for recognition. Corporal Leonard Opie, a veteran of the Pacific War, won 3RAR's first DCM for facilitating the capture of Hill 614 to the northeast of Chipyeong-ni in February 1951. After two previous attempts to take the hill had failed, the task fell to Opie's platoon. Supported by mortar fire and airstrikes, Opie led the platoon's lead section to subdue three entrenched enemy positions and thereby secure a foothold on the ridge. As the section continued to advance, Opie made effective use of captured grenades and, alongside his men, neutralised a machine gun post and an additional weapons pit. Through his command, 'initiative and great courage', Opie was credited with having enabled the consolidation of Hill 614 and thus with reigniting the brigade's advance.⁷³

Throughout the debates on award scales, the Australian government had been constantly reminded 'that recommendations will not be put forward unless they fulfil the required standard in every way.'⁷⁴ The irony in this instruction is that the restrictive scales almost saw Opie overlooked. Opie's recommendation found resounding support among senior commanders but was not forwarded onwards until October 1951 after the award scales had been relaxed.⁷⁵ Australian officers had to be discriminating over how to expend the few allocated awards, meaning a heightened standard of heroism and leadership was most commonly needed to secure recognition—particularly among the ordinary ranks and non-commissioned men. This was patently clear at Kapyong and Maryang San; the two most significant battles of Australia's Korean War.

By April 1951, 3RAR and the 2nd Battalion, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry occupied defensive positions overlooking the Kapyong Valley. An offensive by United Nations forces in October 1950 had pushed the (North) Korean People's Army back beyond the 38th parallel. China saw the advance as a threat to its interests and intervened in support of North Korea. The Chinese-led offensive that followed prompted a series of fighting withdrawals and pressed the United Nations forces below the North Korean border. The Australian and Canadian battalions were thus positioned at Kapyong to fend off a thrust towards Seoul, the South Korean capital.⁷⁶ The attack duly came from the Chinese 118th Division on 23–25 April. Supported by New Zealand artillery and fifteen American tanks, A

⁷³ Recommendation for Corporal Leonard Opie, 7 October 1951, AWM119, 338; O'Neill, *Combat Operations*, 118–19.

⁷⁴ Sir William McKell to Robert Menzies, 11 January 1952, A462, 829/29 PART 1, NAA, Canberra. See also Secretary of State to External Affairs, 28 October 1950.

⁷⁵ Recommendation for Opie.

⁷⁶ Bob Breen, *The Battalion of Kapyong: 3rd Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment, Korea 23–24 April 1951* (Georges Heights: Headquarters Training Command, 1992), 8–22; O'Neill, *Combat Operations*, 132.

and B Companies of 3RAR weathered the brunt of the assault on the first night. At one point, a machine gun outpost held by four men under Lance Corporal Ray Parry was attacked by an estimated fifty Chinese. According to a subsequent report, through ‘brilliant use of firepower under [Parry’s] command and inspiring leadership, the attack was smashed’. By their aggressive precision, Parry and his men repelled three further assaults over twenty minutes to maintain a vital hold on B Company’s perimeter.⁷⁷

3RAR’s position remained precarious by morning. Its four rifle companies were cut off, and the battalion was subject to further onslaughts throughout the day.⁷⁸ D Company’s forward element, 12 Platoon, came under fierce and consistent attacks from 07:00. Robert O’Neill writes that the platoon’s left forward section under Corporal William Rowlinson ‘fought particularly hard.’⁷⁹ For over six hours, Rowlinson rallied his men to inflict heavy casualties on the Chinese and repulse concentrated assaults. Rowlinson and six of the section sustained wounds during the day. The men were evacuated and replaced by soldiers from nearby sections, but Rowlinson refused to go and, according to the battalion’s officers, displayed ‘outstanding courage’ and ‘leadership of a very high order’.⁸⁰ Private Ronald Smith similarly declined at first to leave and was conspicuous throughout the morning until the seriousness of his wound forced his evacuation. Smith had, nevertheless, served as ‘an inspiration to ... the hard pressed section.’⁸¹ Rowlinson, Smith and the section were credited with maintaining the company’s position and ensuring the security of the battalion.⁸²

3RAR was ordered to make a fighting withdrawal from the afternoon of 24 April. Thereafter, the Chinese attack fell hard on the Canadians until the United Nations’ position at Kapyong was reinforced. For some forty-eight hours, the two battalions and supporting arms had withstood and exacted heavy losses on the Chinese division.⁸³ 3RAR’s commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel Ian (Bruce) Ferguson, received significant praise from American and British commanders alike, and was awarded the DSO. The decoration was approved just one week after the battle, with the ribbon presented to Ferguson during a ceremony presided over by Robertson at brigade headquarters on 1 May.⁸⁴ The swift turnaround for Ferguson’s

⁷⁷ Recommendation for Corporal Ray Parry, May 1951, AWM119, 315.

⁷⁸ O’Neill, *Combat Operations*, 148.

⁷⁹ O’Neill, *Combat Operations*, 152.

⁸⁰ Recommendation for Corporal William Rowlinson, n.d., A462, 829/28 PART 1, NAA, Canberra.

⁸¹ Military Medal citation for Private R.F.A. Smith, in James J. Atkinson, *The Kapyong Battalion: Medal Roll of Third Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment, Battle of Kapyong, 23–24 April, 1951* (Ryde: New South Wales Military Historical Society, 1977), 57.

⁸² O’Neill, *Combat Operations*, 152.

⁸³ Grey, *Commonwealth Armies*, 82.

⁸⁴ O’Neill, *Combat Operations*, 158–59.

DSO was symbolic. The award provided almost immediate recognition to 3RAR and a quick boost to morale as further honours endured the lengthy recommendation process. A Military Medal to Smith was promulgated in August.⁸⁵ Rowlinson and Parry, among the additional ‘Special Case[s]’, received a DCM and Military Medal, respectively, in January 1952.⁸⁶ Noted Gunditjmara man, Captain Reginald Saunders, was also considered for recognition in respect to his command of C Company. Saunders declined any recommendation, remarking: ‘There were twenty-five other blokes in that particular battle with me and they didn’t get any recognition so why should I?’⁸⁷

Bravery, aggressive precision, and sustained leadership had secured recognition at Kapyong. The actions of Parry, Rowlinson, Smith and others were, in many respects, traditional expressions of recognised heroism in defensive operations, comparable even with some of the awards granted for Lone Pine during the First World War. Where the men at Kapyong differed was in technology and training. Clever tactical leadership and the efficient use of combined arms had assumed a greater significance by the 1950s. This was because the Australians in Korea benefited from technological advancements in weaponry and had been subject to more comprehensive training than many of their forebears in earlier wars. Efficient training and professionalism now provided an effective supplement to the hot-blooded heroics of the past. Aggressive heroics and prompt offensive action still had a place, but leadership and professionalism were increasingly recognised and rewarded as the *beau idéal* during the hot engagements of Australia’s Cold War.

Expressions of both hot-blooded and professional heroism were present at Maryang San. The Chinese offensive stalled in May 1951 and, by July, the war had descended into a stalemate along a front just north of the 38th parallel.⁸⁸ A limited offensive, codenamed Operation Commando, was approved by the United Nations Command for October. The operation was intended to push a section of the frontline approximately ten kilometres northward, and necessitated the capture of a series of ridges—most prominently the Hills 355 (Kowang San) and 317 (Maryang San)—near the Imjin River by the 28th Commonwealth Brigade.⁸⁹ The ridges around Kowang San were seized on 4 October, with Hill 355 carried by C Company, 3RAR under the expert guidance of Major Jack Gerke. Late in the action, when

⁸⁵ ‘The War Office, 17th August, 1951,’ *London Gazette*, 17 August 1951.

⁸⁶ Josiah Francis to Philip McBride, 29 November 1951, AWM119, 315; ‘The War Office, 25th January, 1952,’ *London Gazette*, 25 January 1952.

⁸⁷ Chris Saunders, ‘Reg Saunders (1920–1991),’ in *Forgotten Heroes: Aborigines at War from the Somme to Vietnam*, ed. Alick Jackomos and Derek Fowell (Melbourne: Victoria Press, 1993), 20.

⁸⁸ Grey, *Commonwealth Armies*, 142; McCarthy, *Battle of Maryang San*, 41.

⁸⁹ O’Neill, *Combat Operations*, 181–83.

C Company encountered strong resistance from well-fortified positions, Lance Corporal James Burnett had dashed forward under mortar, grenade and rifle fire to engage the Chinese. He lobbed grenades into their trenches and, armed with a Bren light machine gun, fired from the hip to break the resistance and enable his section to advance. Burnett's aggressive feat of arms was rewarded with the DCM.⁹⁰

The focus turned to Maryang-San the following day, where instances of leadership and professionalism came to the fore. Supported by Centurion tanks and an anti-tank platoon, the plan designed by Lieutenant Colonel Francis Hassett (in command of 3RAR since July) called for A Company to make a diversionary attack from the south-east, while B and D Companies assaulted the steep eastern ridge; B Company taking the lower ground and D moving through to the heights.⁹¹ A dense fog made the advance on the eastern ridge difficult. The limited visibility left D Company exposed to the well positioned Chinese defenders in a knoll above and, unable to receive artillery support, the Australians soon came under machine gun, rifle and grenade fire.⁹² Nevertheless, Lieutenant Geoffrey Leary's 10 Platoon advanced to capture this first knoll. Leary was soon wounded in the thigh but continued to direct his men until evacuated. Lance Corporal Vincent Brown then assumed charge. He led the platoon in the brutal close-quarters fighting that followed, despite sustaining a wound when his Owen gun was shot from his hand. Brown collected a replacement Owen gun from the rear and, after the knoll was captured, continued to lead the platoon until the end of the battle and the consolidation that followed. Meanwhile, the company commander, Major Jack Hardiman, was evacuated with a bullet wound to the thigh. Lieutenant James Young then assumed command, while control of his own 12 Platoon fell to the now-Sergeant William Rowlinson.⁹³

With tank and artillery support, Young led the company to capture three further knolls that afternoon amid hard fighting. Corporal John Black, commanding the lead section in 11 Platoon, was described as 'exemplary' in the attack on the second knoll. After his section had captured the first line of trenches, Black was badly wounded in the arm by a grenade blast and unable to use a firearm. Still, he remained directing his men and provided an inspirational influence until the knoll was cleared and the platoon reorganised.⁹⁴ Rowlinson was likewise conspicuous in the command of 12 Platoon. He was wounded in the leg during the assault on

⁹⁰ Recommendation for Lance Corporal James Burnett, 31 October 1951, AWM119, 338; O'Neill, *Combat Operations*, 187.

⁹¹ O'Neill, *Combat Operations*, 188; McCarthy, *Battle of Maryang San*, 87.

⁹² O'Neill, *Combat Operations*, 189–90; McCarthy, *Battle of Maryang San*, 91.

⁹³ O'Neill, *Combat Operations*, 190–91; McCarthy, *Battle of Maryang San*, 91.

⁹⁴ O'Neill, *Combat Operations*, 191–92.

the second knoll but continued to press the platoon's attack in spite of heavy rifle, machine gun and rocket fire. Rowlinson's platoon was instrumental in the consolidation of the second and third knolls, and in facilitating the capture of the fourth by 11 Platoon. A subsequent report, which credited 12 Platoon with having killed thirty-two and captured fourteen Chinese soldiers, noted that Rowlinson 'again has proved himself an outstanding, brave and intelligent soldier.'⁹⁵ With the four knolls in D Company's hands, Gerke's C Company was committed from reserve to capture a fifth knoll and seize the summit.⁹⁶

In the aftermath of Maryang San, Hassett's distinguished planning and leadership was rewarded with the DSO. Further honours gradually followed: Young received a Military Cross, Brown and Black were awarded Military Medals, and Rowlinson gained a Bar to his DCM—one of only two awarded in Korea, and the first to an Australian since 1918.⁹⁷ Each of these awards recognised professional leadership and command under fire, often above that demanded by their position and rank. Indeed, historian Dayton McCarthy has remarked that: 'Hassett was impressed with the effort and the fact that subordinates had taken over when superiors had become casualties.'⁹⁸ Here we again see a significant emphasis on leadership and efficient, professional conduct under demanding tactical circumstances.

While the significance of professionalism was growing in the Australian Army, it is equally noticeable in the awards to the RAAF and RAN, where it had a longer history. The more technical aspects of war in the air and at sea lent themselves to recognisable professional conduct. This is why a number of pilots and navigators were rewarded for sustained contributions during the Second World War, while the skill of helmsmen and engineering crew on warships often found high regard on operations (see Chapter Five). Certainly, as Ian Pfennigwerth argues, 'engineering and coxswain duties ... are everyday events during peacetime: in war they are not.' Under fire, Pfennigwerth asserts, 'the command team requires leadership of the highest order and enthusiasm is necessary to inspire the crew and to bring out their best.'⁹⁹ These traditions were upheld in Korea. Chief Petty Officer William Roe, for instance, was awarded the DSM for his calm efficiency under fire as coxswain in HMAS *Bataan*, while Petty Officer William Jones was Mentioned in Despatches for his outstanding performance as signaller aboard HMAS *Condamine*.¹⁰⁰ Among those in command, Captain

⁹⁵ Recommendation for Sergeant William Rowlinson, 21 October 1951, AWM119, 315.

⁹⁶ O'Neill, *Combat Operations*, 193–94.

⁹⁷ McCarthy, *Battle of Maryang San*, 149; Abbott and Tamplin, *British Gallantry Awards*, 84.

⁹⁸ McCarthy, *Battle of Maryang San*, 93.

⁹⁹ Pfennigwerth, *Bravo Zulu*, 484.

¹⁰⁰ Pfennigwerth, *Bravo Zulu*, 486, 502.

Otto Becher received the first of only two DSOs awarded to the RAN in Korea in recognition of his ‘high example’ of leadership of HMAS *Warramunga*. The recommending admiral wrote that, during thirteen months of escort, patrol and shore bombardment duties, Becher was at ‘the forefront of the Commanding Officers both in his skilful and determined handling of H.M.A.S. WARRAMUNGA and in his personal drive and dash.’¹⁰¹ As for the professionalism of aircrew, Pilot Officer Kenneth Murray completed two operational tours and was awarded the DFM (as a sergeant) and later a DFC for his skill, ‘tactical expediency’ and aggressive leadership while flying a United Nations record of 333 sorties.¹⁰² Likewise, Wing Commander John Hubble, who led No. 77 Squadron in 1953, was recognised with the DSO for his skill over 115 sorties and for having introduced his pilots to and ‘pioneered the tactics’ of night armed reconnaissance missions.¹⁰³ Leadership and operational expediency were integral to each of these awards.

Judging success in trench raids, patrols and captivity

After the limited offensives in late 1951, the land war turned static. The United Nations Command sought no further significant offensives for the remainder of the war as it was considered that the cost of victory would prove unpalatable for most contributing nations. Instead, the quiet was punctured by regular trench raids, patrols, airstrikes and naval bombardments as the United Nations forces sought to maintain pressure amid armistice negotiations.¹⁰⁴ The awards granted for patrols and raids therefore offer an interesting insight into how both success and bravery were judged in this static phase of the war. The DSO to Major Adrian Mann is a notable example. In December 1952, Mann’s B Company of the 1st Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (1RAR) was tasked with a deep raid behind Chinese lines to capture a prisoner for intelligence purposes.¹⁰⁵ The raid began with a long approach march of four hours across bitterly cold and icy terrain, but according to Mann the company ‘achieved complete surprise’.¹⁰⁶ With artillery support, B Company engaged in a bitter firefight

¹⁰¹ Commonwealth Relations Office to Australian Government, telegram, 26 July 1951, A2910, 427/5/44 PART 1, NAA Canberra. The second RAN DSO was awarded to Captain Galfrey Gatacre for his command of HMAS *Anzac* in 1952–53.

¹⁰² Recommendation for Pilot Officer Kenneth Murray, 10 March 1953, A462, 829/29 PART 2, NAA, Canberra.

¹⁰³ Recommendation for Wing Commander John Hubble, 6 July 1953, A462, 829/29 PART 2, NAA, Canberra.

¹⁰⁴ O’Neill, *Combat Operations*, 208–209.

¹⁰⁵ O’Neill, *Combat Operations*, 260–61.

¹⁰⁶ Recommendation for Major Adrian Mann, 19 December 1952, A816, 66/301/435; Gus Breen and Adrian Mann, ‘Operation Fauna – December 1952,’ in *Korea Remembered: The RAN, ARA and RAAF in the Korean War of 1950–1953*, ed. Maurie Pears and Fred Kirkland (Georges Heights: Doctrine Wing, Combined Arms Training and Development Centre, 2002), 119.

with a larger-than-expected force along a spur known as Fauna. Casualties began to mount, and Mann was twice blown from his feet by grenades, but still he pressed the attack and inflicted severe losses on the Chinese. Only when his men had cleared much of the position and came under increasing mortar and artillery fire from neighbouring units did Mann supervise a careful withdrawal.¹⁰⁷

The raid was only a partial success. The recommendation for Mann's DSO conveniently omitted that the company had failed to secure a prisoner—an objective one platoon commander regarded as 'an almost impossible mission'—but lavished praise for having satisfied the secondary task of inflicting casualties and disrupting defences at Fauna.¹⁰⁸ The battalion's commanding officer credited this success to Mann's thorough planning, careful preparation and determined leadership.¹⁰⁹ Mann and Jack Gerke were the only Australians at a sub-unit (or equivalent) level to receive the DSO in Korea. In both instances, the award had recognised exceptional professionalism in planning and command—in Mann's case, to the extent that his conduct was judged sufficiently distinguished to overlook that his company had failure to achieve its primary objective.

The raid was not an isolated incident. Lieutenant Francis Smith of 3RAR carried out a similar 'snatch' mission in the vicinity of Hill 355 on 24/25 January 1953. A five-man party led by Sergeant Edward Morrison entered the Chinese trenches while two groups of thirteen—one under Smith and the other with Corporal Francis MacKay—provided cover. Morrison was challenged by two sentries. He killed both but surprise was lost, and the men were subjected to concentrated rifle fire.¹¹⁰ Morrison's party withdrew and linked up with MacKay, just as Smith's men came under coordinated attack from a force estimated to be of company strength. Calling in artillery and mortar fire, Morrison led his now group of eighteen to ambush and kill an incoming party of twenty Chinese. Smith's party had by now been overrun, and the remaining Australians embarked eastward on a fighting withdrawal. As they did so, Morrison and MacKay encountered and killed a secondary element of six enemy in hand-to-hand fighting, while two platoon-sized groups of Chinese made flanking attacks. Morrison led men to drive off one party.¹¹¹ Private Lionel Terry charged into the second group of twenty, firing

¹⁰⁷ Recommendation for Mann; O'Neill, *Combat Operations*, 263–64.

¹⁰⁸ Recommendation for Mann; Breen and Mann, 'Operation Fauna,' 117

¹⁰⁹ Recommendation for Mann.

¹¹⁰ Jeffrey Grey, 'The Regiment's First War: Korea, 1950–56,' in Horner and Bou, *Duty First*, 76–77; O'Neill, *Combat Operations*, 258–59.

¹¹¹ Recommendation for Sergeant Edward Morrison, 1 February 1953, AWM119, 360; O'Neill, *Combat Operations*, 259–60.

his Owen gun and lobbing grenades. Terry was not seen again, but the Chinese attack was dispersed.¹¹² Thereafter, the remaining Australians withdrew to 3RAR's lines.

Of the thirty-one Australians to take part in the raid, thirteen (including Smith) were posted as missing while a further ten were wounded.¹¹³ Like Mann's raid on Fauna, the patrol had failed in its primary objective. As Robert O'Neill remarks, 'it had been an expensive and vain attempt to take a prisoner.'¹¹⁴ The patrol was, however, credited with having killed as many as eighty Chinese soldiers, and for this Morrison received a DCM, MacKay a Military Medal, and Smith and Terry were posthumously Mentioned in Despatches.¹¹⁵ These cases would indicate that, even if the chief objective of a raid or patrol was not achieved, significant stock was placed in aggressive leadership—particularly if heavy casualties were inflicted on the enemy.

One consequence of the regular raids and patrols was that Australian soldiers were also taken as prisoners. Twenty-nine Australians were listed as prisoners of war in Korea: six were RAAF pilots shot down over enemy territory; the remaining twenty-three were soldiers, of whom sixteen were captured in the static phase of the war.¹¹⁶ Captivity in Korea was very much a minority experience, but it is noteworthy because of the ways in which the Australian authorities viewed the prisoners' experiences and rewarded their resistance. Those taken prisoner in the early months of the war received poor and sometimes violent treatment from the North Koreans, but as the Chinese became chiefly responsible for captives from early 1951 the experience was typified by interrogation and indoctrination programs.¹¹⁷ Private Horace (Slim) Madden, captured at Kapyong in April 1951, refused to cooperate during interrogations and was beaten and subject to other maltreatment. He nevertheless remained 'cheerful and optimistic' and, according to Captain Anthony Farrar-Hockley of the British Army, Madden 'became a byeword [*sic*] amongst his fellow prisoners-of-war for resistance'.¹¹⁸ Despite meagre rations and his increasingly emaciated state, Madden also shared his food with the sick and wounded. He died of malnourishment in November 1951, but for his 'outstanding heroism'

¹¹² Recommendation for Private Lionel Terry, n.d., AWM119, 379.

¹¹³ Grey, 'The Regiment's First War,' 77; O'Neill, *Combat Operations*, 260.

¹¹⁴ O'Neill, *Combat Operations*, 260.

¹¹⁵ O'Neill, *Combat Operations*, 260.

¹¹⁶ Jeffrey Grey, 'Remembering Captivity in the Korean War,' in Beaumont, Grant and Pegram, *Beyond Surrender*, 245; 'List of Australian Prisoners of War, Korean War,' Australian War Memorial website, accessed 1 June 2019, <https://www.awm.gov.au/articles/encyclopedia/pow/korea/list>.

¹¹⁷ P.J. Greville, 'The Australian Prisoners of War,' in O'Neill, *Combat Operations*, 534; Grey, 'Remembering Captivity,' 240–41.

¹¹⁸ Captain Anthony Farrar-Hockley, witness statement, 27 August 1954, A463, 1956/1041, NAA, Canberra; Recommendation for Private Horace Madden, 21 March 1955, A463, 1956/1041, NAA, Canberra.

and 'inspiration' was awarded a posthumous GC.¹¹⁹ Madden's resistance was of a stoic and inspirational nature. In this sense he differed from the more proactive and subversive resistance of Lionel Matthews in Japanese hands.

Although it assumed different forms, resistance in captivity was clearly as valued in this war as it was in the last. Corporal Donald Buck and Privates Keith Gwyther, Thomas Hollis and Robert Parker, for instance, each made multiple attempts to escape. In one attempt, all four were involved in a breakout of twenty-four prisoners orchestrated by Buck in June 1952. The men escaped in small groups but were recaptured after four days and subject to violent interrogation and attempts at indoctrination.¹²⁰ The indoctrination (or 're-education') program involved relentless lectures, discussion and communist propaganda to incite disillusionment among the prisoners and encourage collaboration with their Chinese captors.¹²¹ The attempts were largely ineffective, but following their release from captivity in 1953, Buck, Gwyther, Hollis and Parker received praise from both Australian and British authorities for their respective resistance to, and the intelligence they were able to offer on, Chinese interrogation and indoctrination techniques. All four were Mentioned in Despatches.¹²² The experiences of these men elucidate the anxiousness British Commonwealth authorities felt about communism in the early period of the Cold War, and the significance accorded to a masculine stoicism in resisting communist indoctrination.

Risk, death and the VC

Despite the varied instances of recognised heroism, it is interesting to note that no Australian was recommended for the VC in the Korean War. In the aftermath of Smith's raid near Hill 355, Lieutenant Colonel Ronald Hughes and Brigadier Thomas Daly (in command of 3RAR and the 28th Commonwealth Brigade, respectively) considered recommending Lionel Terry for a posthumous VC, but concluded that there were insufficient witnesses for the case to go forward.¹²³ It is thus worth considering the conditions and criteria for the award during the period of the Korean conflict. In July 1953, the War Office published the twenty-six-page *Pamphlet on Military Honours and Awards*, a comprehensive guide to help officers determine and prepare award recommendations. Although it arrived too late for use in Korea, it is evident

¹¹⁹ Recommendation for Madden.

¹²⁰ Greville, 'Australian Prisoners of War,' 543–44.

¹²¹ Greville, 'Australian Prisoners of War,' 539–41.

¹²² Recommendations for Corporal Donald Buck and Privates Keith Gwyther, Thomas Hollis and Robert Parker, 30 July 1954, AWM119, 416.

¹²³ O'Neill, *Combat Operations*, 260; Peter Thompson and Robert Macklin, *Keep off the Skyline: The Story of Ron Cashman and the Diggers in Korea* (Milton: John Wiley & Sons, 2004), 154–55.

that the guide was compiled based on recent operational experience and expectations. Notably, the *Pamphlet* included a curious qualifier on the requirements for the VC: 'A guide as to the standard required may be taken as a 90 per cent possibility of being killed in performing the deed'.¹²⁴ It is unclear who added this guideline and why, particularly as it did not entirely reflect reality.

Those awarded the VC and other high-level decorations unquestionably faced dangerous and often deadly circumstances. However, despite the spike in lethality during the Second World War, the rate of posthumous bestowals of the VC has hovered at around fifty percent since 1940. Although certainly a high figure, it does not outright indicate near certainty of death. Yet the 1953 assessment of a ninety percent risk was often repeated over the following few decades as if a standard requirement.¹²⁵ This resulted in a cautious and considered approach to VC recommendations by the services, and raised perceptions of the standards required for the award and the esteem in which it is held. The expectation of high risk has also led commentators such as Gary Mead to remark that the VC has become synonymous with death.¹²⁶ That said, an observance of the ninety percent risk criterion is unlikely to have affected the Australians in Korea. The most probable explanation for the paucity of VC recommendations is instead the relatively modest Australian presence in the conflict. Nevertheless, the emphasis on risk and death was to be an important consideration for Australians and recommending officers in subsequent wars.

Conclusion

The Korean War demarcates an important evolution in both the understandings of, and efforts to recognise, Australian martial heroism. The war erupted amid the earliest initiatives to professionalise Australia's military services, which was reflected in the acts of heroism rewarded during the conflict. Recognised forms of heroism were still shaped by the conditions of the battlefield, just as in previous wars. But a greater emphasis on training and preparation saw increasing prominence afforded to the effective use of combined arms and, importantly, decisive tactical leadership. Recognition for leadership was not, of course, unique to this war. However, with the quantity of available awards restricted through the early stages of the conflict (and delays in recognition proving deleterious to morale), both field commanders and

¹²⁴ War Office, *Pamphlet on Military Honours*, 12.

¹²⁵ See, for example: Ministry of Defence, 'Examination of the Standards of Australian Citations for the Award of the Victoria Cross,' 1970, WO 98/10, TNA; Mead, *Victoria's Cross*, 15–16.

¹²⁶ Mead, *Victoria's Cross*, 217.

the service departments demonstrated a distinct willingness to reward expressions of exceptional, inspirational leadership under fire. This was particularly pertinent for ordinary and non-commissioned men, who often had to exhibit a command and proficiency beyond their rank. Such emphases on professionalism and leadership were to remain important considerations in recognising heroism during Australia's Vietnam War.

Chapter Nine

Valour in the Jungle: Standards, Quotas and Controversies in the Vietnam War, 1962–72

To initiate a recommendation for an Honour or Award is a most important act and warrants the personal consideration of a commander. If justice is to be done to the man you propose to recommend or support, the citation is the vital part of your recommendation and it must establish the man's right to be considered for an Honour or an Award.

– Colonel Donald Dunstan, 6 February 1968¹

The Battle of Long Tan, fought on 18 August 1966, is one of Australia's most well-known engagements of the Vietnam War. Under concentrated small arms, machine gun and mortar fire, D Company of the 6th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (6RAR) withstood the Viet Cong 275th Regiment for over three tense hours before a relief force arrived. In the aftermath of the battle, while the Australian authorities were contemplating recommendations for Imperial honours and awards, the South Vietnamese government organised an elaborate investiture ceremony to recognise twenty-two Australians with Vietnamese decorations for their distinguished conduct at Long Tan.² Imperial policy, however, had not moved on since the Second World War: foreign medals were generally not to be accepted.³ As one official within the Department of Defence later remarked: 'Our servicemen are wearing the Queen's uniform and it is her prerogative and not that of a foreign country to decorate them for gallantry or distinguished conduct in her service.'⁴ The Australian government received short notice of the investiture and, alarmed, communicated the Imperial policy to the South Vietnamese government. The ceremony was held as intended to save face but, in lieu of medals, the men were presented with cigarette cases, cigar boxes and dolls in Vietnamese national dress.⁵

¹ Colonel Donald Dunstan, Deputy Commander 1st Australian Task Force, to Commanding Officers and Officers Commanding Task Force subunits, 6 February 1968, AWM103, R445/2/4.

² Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal, *Smith and the Department of Defence Re: Kirby [2016] DHAAT 20*, 1 August 2016, https://defence-honours-tribunal.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/2016_DHAAT_20_Smith-Kirby-Decision-Report.pdf.

³ J.L. Thompson, 'Minute by Principal Administrative Officers' Committee (Personnel) – 16th March, 1967,' 17 March 1967, A1838, 696/8/6/6 PART 1, NAA, Canberra.

⁴ Department of External Affairs to Australian Embassy, Saigon, cablegram, 11 February 1967, A1838, 696/8/6/6 PART 1, NAA, Canberra.

⁵ Ekins, *Fighting to the Finish*, 812.

This embarrassing incident was characteristic of the limitations and inflexibility imposed by Imperial policies on honours and awards during the Vietnam War.⁶ Vietnam witnessed a gradual but sustained contribution from Australia. It was, in terms of strategy, operations and commitment, a convoluted war unlike past Australian engagements. The war, nevertheless, tended to solidify the characteristics of professional heroism first prioritised in Korea. Distinguished command, efficient leadership, precise fire control, and the effective use of combined and support arms were valued and recognised by the Australian command. Recognition more broadly, however, was a contentious issue. This chapter considers military heroism during Australia's decade-long commitment to the Vietnam War. It accords particular attention to award policies and operational scales to argue that, since Vietnam was fought without any involvement from the United Kingdom, the Australian service authorities were less judicious in seeking more favourable terms and flexibility for honours and awards as they had done in Korea. The result was a restrictive and inflexible operational award quota, which tended to see more complex expressions of heroism written up for award in an effort to secure recognition. Recommendations for the VC, for instance, were more elaborate and contained greater detail than ever before in an endeavour to appease both Australian and British authorities. For this reason, problems with the scales and policies for awards were recurrent throughout the war, drew rebuke from men in the combatant arms, and are one of the defining features of Australia's Vietnam War.

The initial commitment: leadership, heroism and the AATTV

The origins of the Vietnam War, like that in Korea, lay in colonialism and the Second World War. The French colony of Indochina (modern day Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam) was occupied by Japan from 1940, but with the end of the Pacific War a nationalist movement led by the Viet Minh and supported by the Indochina Communist Party declared the independence of Vietnam. France reasserted colonial governance in the south and engaged in a nine-year struggle for control of the region, finally withdrawing following the Geneva Conference of 1954. At this point Vietnam was split along the 17th parallel: the north was ceded to the Viet Minh and set up as a socialist state, while the south was established as a notionally democratic republic with backing from the United States. Over the ensuing years the political situation deteriorated into a violent power struggle. By 1961, a network of insurgents known as the Viet

⁶ Major General Douglas Vincent, Commander Australian Force Vietnam, to Lieutenant General Sir John Wilton, Chairman of the Chief of Staff Committee, 9 August 1967, A1838, 696/8/6/6 PART 2, NAA, Canberra.

Cong were engaged in a guerrilla war across South Vietnam. As the fighting intensified, the United States increased its military assistance to the South and pressured its allies to do the same. The Australian government agreed to a token commitment of thirty military advisors in 1962. The contribution was purely pragmatic as the Menzies government was both eager to maintain a close security relationship with the United States and fearful of the ‘domino theory’; the idea that, as historian Albert Palazzo writes, ‘all of South-East Asia would cascade into communism if South Vietnam gave way.’⁷

The initial group of advisors was formed as the Australian Army Training Team Vietnam (AATTV) and arrived in Saigon in August 1962. The AATTV’s personnel were carefully selected from capable commissioned and warrant officers; experienced professionals, often with previous operational service.⁸ The men were split into small groups and mostly spread across South Vietnam’s northern provinces where they were tasked—alongside the United States Military Assistance Advisory Group—with training soldiers from the Army of the Republic of (South) Vietnam (ARVN) in jungle warfare, village defence and counter-insurgency.⁹ The advisory role was expanded in 1964, when the Australian government consented to AATTV personnel serving with Vietnamese units in the field and acting as operational advisors.¹⁰

With Australian advisors now serving on operations, recommendations for honours and awards inevitably arose. Warrant Officer Class II (WO2) Kevin Conway has the unenviable distinction of being the first Australian killed in action in Vietnam, and the first to be considered for the VC. Conway was stationed at the Nam Dong Special Forces camp in Thua Thien Province when, in the early hours of 6 June 1964, it came under concentrated attack from a Viet Cong battalion. Conway and Master Sergeant Gabriel Alamo of the United States Army were roused from their sleep by enemy mortar fire. Grabbing their rifles, Conway and Alamo dashed outside to occupy a mortar pit on the perimeter. The volume of fire was fierce, and Conway was mortally wounded. Alamo was killed fending off an assault on the main gate; the camp commandant, Captain Roger Donlon, and his executive officer kept the mortar in action and maintained the perimeter until the attack dispersed some five hours later.¹¹

⁷ Albert Palazzo, *Australian Military Operations in Vietnam*, Australian Army Campaign Series (Canberra: Army History Unit, 2006), 13.

⁸ Ian McNeill, *The Team: Australian Army Advisors in Vietnam, 1962–1972* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1992), 9–11, 15.

⁹ McNeill, *Team*, 12; Palazzo, *Australian Military Operations*, 20.

¹⁰ McNeill, *To Long Tan*, 44–48.

¹¹ McNeill, *Team*, 80–82; Anne Blair, *Ted Serong: The Life of an Australia Counter-Insurgency Expert* (South Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2002), 102–03.

In the aftermath of the battle, the United States command recommended Donlon for the Medal of Honor, Alamo for the Distinguished Service Cross, and Conway for the Silver Star.¹² Colonel Francis (Ted) Serong, commanding officer of the AATTV, was impressed with the conduct of the defence and suggested that Conway receive a posthumous VC. Serong was under the impression that Conway had been vital to the defence and was killed late in the battle.¹³ Subsequent action reports were contradictory but tended to indicate that Conway was incapacitated by his wound as soon as he reached the mortar pit. In light of this, it was concluded that the ‘circumstances of Conway’s gallant death do not quite meet the extremely high standards set for [the] Victoria Cross.’¹⁴ Since the South Vietnamese had also summarily bestowed both their Knight of the National Order and the Cross of Gallantry on Conway during his burial ceremony, the Australian authorities declined to make any further recommendation for an Imperial award.¹⁵ The case highlights that, although the Australian command was willing to entertain award recommendations, Imperial policies clashed with those of international partners. The restriction on posthumous recognition and non-acceptance of foreign decorations were a curiosity of the Imperial system, which caused recurrent tensions and awkwardness throughout the conflict. High-ranking officers in Vietnam appealed for senior service authorities to petition the British government and alter the policies on posthumous and foreign awards, but the Australian authorities failed to adequately pursue the issue.¹⁶

Conway’s recommendation aside, WO2 Rayene (Ray) Simpson, a seasoned soldier with operational experience in the Pacific War, Korea and Malaya, was one of the first decorated in Vietnam. In 1964, while on his second tour with the AATTV, Simpson was posted to a special forces advisory group sent to establish a patrol base at Ta Ko, an isolated point in western Quang Nam Province near the Laotian border.¹⁷ On 16 September, he was accompanying a South Vietnamese patrol when the party was ambushed by a superior force of

¹² Bruce Davies and Gary McKay, *The Men Who Persevered: The AATTV—The Most Highly Decorated Australian Unit of the Viet Nam War* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2005), 52; ‘Gabriel Ralph Alamo – Distinguished Service Cross Citation,’ Hall of Valor Project, Military Times, accessed 20 May 2019, <https://valor.militarytimes.com/hero/5540>; AATTV to Army Headquarters, Canberra, telegram, August 1964, B2458, 13097, NAA, Canberra.

¹³ Ted Serong, ‘Australia in Vietnam,’ in *The Saving of South Vietnam*, Kenneth Grenville (Sydney: Alpha Books, 1972), 217; Blair, *Ted Serong*, 102–03.

¹⁴ AATTV to Army Headquarters.

¹⁵ AATTV to Army Headquarters.

¹⁶ Major General Douglas Vincent to Military Secretary, Army Headquarters, 17 May 1967, AWM103, R445/1/7/1; Colonel Edwin Griff, Chief of Staff Australian Force Vietnam, to Brigadier Stuart Graham, 30 July 1967, A1838, 696/8/6/6 PART 2, NAA, Canberra; Major General Douglas Vincent to Lieutenant General Sir John Wilton, 9 August 1967, A1838, 696/8/6/6 PART 2, NAA, Canberra.

¹⁷ Recommendation for WO2 Rayene Simpson, November 1964, A1946, 1969/1134 PART 1, NAA, Canberra; Davies and McKay, *Men Who Persevered*, 59.

Viet Cong.¹⁸ Simpson and the patrol leader were early casualties; a bullet shattered Simpson's right femur. Despite blood loss and intense pain Simpson radioed for assistance, rallied the patrol and organised the men into a defensive position, from which they were able to hold off repeated assaults. By the time a relief force arrived the patrol's ammunition was almost exhausted, and Simpson was weak from blood loss. He was evacuated soon after and spent seven months undergoing rehabilitation, but in recognition of his inspirational leadership Simpson was awarded the DCM.¹⁹

With such a modest and disparate commitment of personnel in this early period, the Australian government and service authorities considered it unnecessary to implement an operational scale for awards. Instead, recommendations were initiated as incidents arose and submitted via the Australian component commander in the (British) Far East Land Forces in Singapore to Army Headquarters in Canberra for the consideration of the Adjutant-General, the army's chief administrator.²⁰ Nevertheless, a distinct pattern is discernible among the early awards to the AATTV. Feats such as Simpson's were recognised for demonstrating superior leadership and stoicism under difficult operational conditions. These were, in essence, expressions of professionalism and soldierly discipline; characteristics that were expected from the AATTV. The advisors were drawn from some of the most experienced and capable men the Australian Army had to offer—consummate professionals who were proficient in the use of combined arms, possessed a sound grasp of tactics at the unit and sub-unit level, and were capable of motivating men. As the situation in South Vietnam continued to deteriorate, the Australian government committed an infantry battalion in 1965. Australia's contribution grew over time to include RAAF and RAN components, and the commitment swelled to 7,672 personnel in 1969.²¹ The AATTV also increased in size and scope but remained a modest component of the Australian contribution, peaking at 227 personnel in 1970.²² And yet the seasoned commissioned and warrant officers of the AATTV tended to dominate awards.

AATTV personnel accounted for twenty of the forty-two DCMs awarded to the Australian Army in Vietnam. The advisors were not quite so well represented among other honours—garnering close to twenty percent of the OBEs, MBEs and Military Medals awarded,

¹⁸ Recommendation for Simpson.

¹⁹ Michael J. Malone and Peter D. Lutley, *Simmo: A Biography of Ray Simpson, VC, DCM One of Australia's Greatest Soldiers* (Perth: Imprimatur Books, 2015), 123–24; 'Distinguished Conduct Medal,' *London Gazette*, 29 October 1965.

²⁰ G.W. Vance, 'Minute by Principal Administrative Officers' Committee (Personnel) – 23rd September 1965,' 23 September 1965, AWM278, 111.

²¹ Ekins, *Fighting to the Finish*, 835.

²² McNeill, *Team*, 504.

and a little more than ten percent of the Military Crosses and Mentions in Despatches—but their share was disproportionate to the size of the AATTV.²³ This reflected the significance of the advisors' contributions, the challenging conditions under which they operated, and the professionalism demanded of the men. Indeed, the *Pamphlet on Military Honours and Awards* (reprinted and redistributed on a number of occasions in the 1950s and 1960s) suggested that, aside from 'bravery of a high standard', 'a degree of leadership should also have been displayed' for the award of the DCM.²⁴ The men posted to the AATTV occupied prominent positions from which to demonstrate that standard.

Following the dispensation to serve on operations, a number of AATTV advisers were appointed to command roles in ARVN battalions and special forces units. WO2 William Rogers commanded a Vietnamese platoon during a search operation in Quang Ngai Province in February 1967. As two platoons moved to cordon a village, Rogers' men in support came under intense small arms fire. Leading his platoon against the enemy position, Rogers killed three Viet Cong soldiers and forced the remainder to withdraw. He then headed the search of the tunnels underneath the village, which led to the discovery and destruction of several hundred kilograms of rice and some ammunition. Rogers was commended for having 'broke[n] the resistance of the enemy' and for setting 'a strong and enduring example to the soldiers of his platoon.' He was awarded the DCM.²⁵ The precise form may have differed depending on operational conditions and objectives, but such expressions of leadership and professional soldierly abilities characterised the recognition of heroism within the AATTV.

The VC and the AATTV

The leadership roles held by AATTV advisors and the environment in which they operated also more readily lent themselves to the award of the VC. Indeed, the AATTV received all four VCs granted during the Vietnam War.²⁶ The first was won by WO2 Kevin Wheatley. As an advisor to the Tra Bong Special Forces Camp in Quang Ngai Province, Wheatley was detailed to take part in a company-sized search and destroy operation on 13 November 1965. He was joined by WO2 Ronald Swanton in the right flanking element, while the senior Australian advisor at Tra Bong, Captain Felix Fazekas, moved out with the company commander in the

²³ McNeill, *Team*, 507–09; McNeil, *To Long Tan*, 472.

²⁴ War Office, *Pamphlet on Military Honours*, 15.

²⁵ Malcolm Frazer, Minister for the Army, 'Australian Soldier Receives Gallantry Award,' press release, 13 September 1967, A1838, 696/8/6/6 PART 2, NAA, Canberra.

²⁶ Ekins, *Fighting to the Finish*, 180.

centre group.²⁷ In the early afternoon, the right element come under sporadic small arms fire while wading through a rice field. Wheatley provided covering fire and reorganised the platoon to confront the Viet Cong, but the fire intensified and most of the platoon broke for the jungle. Swanton—who had been assisting a wounded Vietnamese soldier—was then shot in the chest. Wheatley dragged Swanton towards the cover of the jungle where the platoon medical orderly, Private Dinh Do, dressed his wounds.²⁸ With the situation now in chaos, Wheatley's ammunition exhausted, air support some distance away, and Swanton's wounds fatal, Do urged Wheatley to flee with him and the remainder of the platoon. Wheatley refused to leave Swanton. According to Do, Wheatley:

pulled the safety pins from the two grenades he had. I started to run when the V[iet]C[ong] were about ten metres away. Then I heard two grenades explode and several bursts of fire.²⁹

A small relief force led by Fazekas managed to rout the Viet Cong, but Wheatley and Swanton were not located until the following morning. Both men had died from multiple gunshot wounds.³⁰

In the aftermath of the operation, Fazekas drafted a recommendation for Wheatley to be awarded the VC.³¹ The citation was redrafted and refined under Lieutenant Colonel Russell McNamara, commanding officer of the AATTV.³² McNamara had earlier initiated a recommendation for Wheatley to be Mentioned in Despatches in respect to an engagement the previous May, when he had rescued a three-year-old girl caught in the middle of a firefight.³³ Wheatley had again distinguished himself in August, leading a charge up a hill that routed some fifty Viet Cong. For this act, an American advisory detachment had urged the Australian authorities to recognise Wheatley.³⁴ Both incidents were later incorporated into the VC recommendation to portray a tale of sustained heroism and meritorious action under fire.³⁵

As two decades had passed since the last award of a VC to an Australian, officials in the Department of Defence were cautious to ensure Wheatley's recommendation complied with the exacting standards for award. They were also patently aware that this was the first

²⁷ McNeill, *Team*, 316; Recommendation for WO2 Kevin Wheatley, 15 November 1965, AWM119, 573.

²⁸ McNeill, *Team*, 317–22.

²⁹ Private Dinh Do, witness statement, 15 November 1965, AWM119, 573.

³⁰ McNeill, *Team*, 322–23.

³¹ Recommendation for Wheatley, 15 November 1965.

³² Recommendation for WO2 Kevin Wheatley, 31 December 1965, AWM119, 573.

³³ Recommendation for WO2 Kevin Wheatley, 13 September 1965, AWM119, 573.

³⁴ Lieutenant Colonel Clarence E. Bishop, Deputy Senior Advisor 1st Division Advisory Detachment, to Lieutenant Colonel Russell McNamara, 22 September 1965, AWM119, 573.

³⁵ 'Award of VC (Posthumous) to WO 2 K.A. Wheatley,' draft award citation, January 1966, AWM119, 573.

time the Australian government was recommending a VC for a war in which the United Kingdom had no involvement. In June 1966, the Department of Defence instructed Major General Francis Hassett, Head of the Australian Defence Staff in London, to make informal inquiries with British officials to ascertain whether there would be support for Wheatley's recommendation.³⁶ The department had made similar moves a decade earlier when contemplating the GC for Horace Madden; defence officials had pored over previous citations for the award and made almost anxious unofficial inquiries with the United Kingdom before processing the recommendation.³⁷ Both cases hint at the caution with which Australian officials approached high level awards for heroism. For Wheatley, Defence staff were concerned that the 1916 'ruling' on the VC—that it be awarded for acts 'materially conducive to the gaining of a victory'—would preclude the award.³⁸

Hassett consulted with officials in the Ministry of Defence, the VC and GC Association (a society of the medals' recipients formed in 1956), and General Sir Rodney Moore, the British Defence Services Secretary, who in turn made inquiries with the Military Secretary, Lieutenant General Sir Richard Goodwin. Ministry officials and representatives of the VC and GC Association dismissed the 'materially conducive' requirement, suggesting that it was never a prerequisite for the VC and must have been the directive of a local commander.³⁹ This was indeed true; the phrase was added by staff in the 2nd Australian Division on circulating notice of Haig's instruction on the VC in 1916. The implied emphasis on tactical aggression and victory was, as we have seen, a standard upheld over subsequent decades by both British and Australian forces, but it did not inherently preclude other types of heroic actions. In this instance, Goodwin's staff considered that Wheatley 'merits consideration'. Goodwin did suggest, however, that Wheatley's exploits in May and August

are irrelevant to his final deed ... and should be excluded. The V.C. may only be awarded for one act of bravery. If a 'build up' is necessary, and I do not think it is, it should be confined to two or three lines.⁴⁰

VCs for sustained heroism over several months were rare, but the British service departments had demonstrated a willingness to recognise multiple deeds over more than one day or

³⁶ Major General Francis Hassett to William Leng, Assistant Secretary of the Department of Defence, 3 August 1966, AWM119, 573.

³⁷ Philip McBride to Robert Menzies, 22 July 1955, A463, 1956/1041, NAA, Canberra; Robert Menzies to Sir Thomas White, Australian High Commissioner to the United Kingdom, 8 August 1955, A463, 1956/1041.

³⁸ Hassett to Leng; Allen Fairhall, Minister for Defence, to Prime Minister Harold Holt, 27 September 1966, A1945, 133/3/30, NAA, Canberra.

³⁹ Hassett to Leng.

⁴⁰ Lieutenant General Sir Richard Goodwin to General Sir Rodney Moore, 27 July 1966, WO 373/141/30, TNA.

engagement since the Crimean War. The claim that only a *single* act of valour be necessary for the VC was a common misinterpretation of the original Royal Warrant, which required some *signal* act of heroism. Nevertheless, Goodwin's staff were satisfied that, pending redrafts of the citation and witness statements to trim detail they considered 'irrelevant', Wheatley's recommendation should proceed.⁴¹

Hassett communicated this information to the Department of Defence at the beginning of August 1966.⁴² The suggestions were duly adopted but, for reasons unclear, Wheatley's revised recommendation was not forwarded to the governor-general's office until mid-October.⁴³ His official secretary, Murray Tyrrell, was flabbergasted at the delay. Tyrrell arranged for the immediate approval and dispatch of the recommendation to the United Kingdom. Only then did he send scathing letters to the Prime Minister's Department and Department of Defence remonstrating the latter, in particular, for allowing 'inexcusable delays such as has occurred in the case under notice.'⁴⁴ Wheatley's VC was approved by Queen Elizabeth II on 15 November and, following further amendments to the citation (partly to conceal that Wheatley had discarded his expended rifle), the award was announced one month later; thirteen months after Wheatley's death.⁴⁵ This was a record delay between the actions and award of a VC to an Australian, which Australian newspapers (once again) erroneously blamed on the British authorities.⁴⁶

Wheatley's VC found a receptive audience at home in Australia. The government was eager to make the most of his award; Wheatley's mother, widow and his four children were flown to Canberra to receive his VC. They were greeted at the airport by senior representatives from Army Headquarters and taken on a tour of the Australian War Memorial. There, Wheatley's 12-year-old son George was presented with a copy of Lionel Wigmore's *They Dared Mightily* (1963), a book on Australian recipients of the VC and GC. The day ended at Government House when the governor-general, Lord Casey, handed George his father's VC. Footage of the family's tour and the investiture was broadcast on Australian television, while

⁴¹ Goodwin to Moore.

⁴² Hassett to Leng.

⁴³ Murray Tyrrell to William Leng, 18 October 1966, A2880, 5/5/21, NAA, Canberra.

⁴⁴ Tyrrell to Leng; Murray Tyrrell to N.J. Flanagan, Director Establishments and Finance Branch, Prime Minister's Department, 19 October 1966, A2880, 5/5/21, NAA, Canberra.

⁴⁵ Sir Martin Charteris, Assistant Private Secretary to the Sovereign, to Murray Tyrrell, 15 November 1966, A2880, 5/5/21, NAA, Canberra; 'Thursday, 15th December 1966,' *London Gazette*, 15 December 1966.

⁴⁶ Staunton, 'Blaming Buckingham Palace,' 14; 'Awards for Bravery,' *Sydney Morning Herald*, 28 December 1966.

Wheatley's life and deeds were well represented in the press.⁴⁷ Aside from the heightened veneration of the VC, the reason Wheatley resonated with the public was because his final actions were depicted by the government and press as the ultimate expression of mateship and self-sacrificing devotion; attributes often appropriated as if quintessentially Australian.⁴⁸ In a convoluted war like Vietnam, where the conflict was ideologically-based and the enemy less readily identifiable, nationalistic invocations served to connect contemporary soldiers with previous wars that were better understood by the public and carried a stronger resonance. The practice also associated men like Wheatley with a sense of Australian nationalism and patriotism when the war in Vietnam still carried popular support.

The three VCs that followed evoked less nationalistic connotations, though like Wheatley they each curiously contained a humanitarian element. Major Peter Badcoe, a provincial operations advisor, had a reputation for fearlessness that at times bordered on reckless.⁴⁹ On 23 February 1967, while Badcoe was advising a regional force company in the Phu Thu District, an American officer was killed and a medical advisor wounded in close proximity to a Viet Cong machine gun post. Badcoe negotiated six hundred metres of ground swept by gunfire to tend to the medical advisor. He then led a force of platoon strength to capture the post; he personally killed the gunners and, afterwards, recovered the body of the American officer.⁵⁰ Twelve days later, in the Quang Dien District, Badcoe attached himself to a company reaction force headquarters during a counterattack. He led the company in an assault over open terrain and, according to his subsequent recommendation, by 'his personal courage and leadership' prevented the capture of the district headquarters and 'turned certain defeat into victory'.⁵¹ His final deed came on 7 April, in the Huong Tra District. Badcoe again joined a company reaction force, which was tasked with dislodging two Viet Cong units from a fortified position.⁵² The company was subjected to intense small arms and mortar fire during the advance and fell back to cover. Badcoe managed to rally the men and reignite the assault. He was killed by machine gun fire soon after as he made to throw grenades, but the Viet Cong position was captured a short while later with the aid of artillery. Badcoe's inspirational

⁴⁷ 'Wheatley Victoria Cross Presentation' (Canberra: Defence Public Relations, 1967), television news footage, DPR/TV/593, AWM; Gloria Newton, 'A Widow Is Proud,' *Australian Women's Weekly* (Sydney), 28 December 1966.

⁴⁸ See, for example: 'V.C. for Australian Who Died Defending Dying Mate,' *Australian News* (London), 15 December 1966; 'For Valour,' *Canberra Times*, 15 December 1966; 'Posthumous VC for NCO in Vietnam,' *Canberra Times*, 15 December 1966.

⁴⁹ Blanch and Pegram, *For Valour*, 438.

⁵⁰ McNeill, *Team*, 239–40.

⁵¹ Recommendation for Major Peter Badcoe, 17 June 1967, A2880, 5/5/33, NAA, Canberra.

⁵² McNeill, *Team*, 241.

leadership and decisive action were credited as the catalyst for success in each of these operations.⁵³

The final two VCs arose from incidents in May 1969. WO2 Ray Simpson, on his third tour with the AATTV, was posted to command the 232nd Mobile Strike Force Company during a search and clear operation in Kon Tum Province, near the border junction with Laos and Cambodia. The company was a special forces unit comprised of Montagnard peoples of Vietnam's Central Highlands. It and others in the Mobile Strike Force were beginning to show strain due to stretched resources and over-extended commitments that had left the men undertrained and advisors like Simpson frustrated.⁵⁴ On 6 May, while operating in rugged terrain, the lead platoon in Simpson's company was pinned down by enemy fire. Spurring his men on, Simpson ordered the remainder of the company forward and led an assault on the enemy position. Flanking fire fatally wounded one of the platoon commanders, WO2 Michael Gill, and the assault faltered. Simpson dashed across fire-swept ground to reach Gill and carry him to a position of safety; he returned and attempted to rally the company but, under concentrated fire, most of the Montagnards refused to move. Having failed to break into the enemy defences with grenades, Simpson was forced to order the company's withdrawal as dusk fell.⁵⁵

Simpson was scathing of the Montagnards' performance, labelling it 'a damned disgrace'.⁵⁶ Still, the company joined the battalion as it again attempted to clear the border region on 11 May. Once again, the lead company came under heavy fire; the battalion commander was killed, and the forward platoon commander wounded. Simpson gathered two of his platoons and led them to the site of contact, but several of the Montagnards fled under the withering fire. Almost alone, Simpson covered the evacuation of the casualties with grenades and accurate rifle fire until the last man had been extracted.⁵⁷ The Australian and American advisors praised Simpson's inspiring example. Staff Sergeant Peter Holmberg, of the United States Army Special Forces, wrote that Simpson alone 'kept the NVA [North Vietnamese Army] off of us. The extraction of the wounded could not have been made without the heroic actions of WO Simpson and his cool professionalism.'⁵⁸ Indeed, Simpson was

⁵³ 'Tuesday, 17th October 1967,' *London Gazette*, 17 October 1967.

⁵⁴ McNeill, *Team*, 345.

⁵⁵ Recommendation for WO2 Rayene Simpson, 26 May 1969, A1946, 1969/1134 PART 1, NAA, Canberra; McNeill, *Team*, 345–46.

⁵⁶ WO2 Ray Simpson, quoted in McNeill, *Team*, 346–47.

⁵⁷ Recommendation for Simpson, 26 May 1969; McNeill, *Team*, 348–49.

⁵⁸ Staff Sergeant Peter A. Holmberg, witness statement, 24 May 1969, AWM119, 609A.

singlehandedly credited with facilitating the withdrawal and preventing the battalion's position from being overrun.⁵⁹

A fortnight later, WO2 Keith Payne was in command of the 212th Company, 1st Mobile Strike Force Battalion on a similar search and clear operation in Kon Tum. Operating from an undefended ridge, the battalion was tasked with reconnoitring the infiltration routes from Laos to find and engage a North Vietnamese regiment thought to be in the area. The battalion began to clear the ridge on 24 May when the two forward companies (including Payne's on the left) came under a maelstrom of rocket, mortar and machine gun fire from three directions. As the Montagnard soldiers faltered, Payne dashed across the battlefield firing his Armalite rifle, lobbing grenades and attempting to bolster his men. Under increasing pressure, the battalion command was forced to withdraw. Several of the Montagnards followed in disorder and Payne, wounded in the hands, arms and hip by shrapnel, provided covering fire, reorganised the men, and withdrew into the valley below. There, he arranged the men into a defensive position.⁶⁰

As dusk set in, Payne ventured alone into the darkness to recover the missing. The search lasted three hours. Payne crawled up the ridge and among the North Vietnamese lines four times gathering wounded and displaced men. He recovered some forty soldiers and, leading them down into the valley, discovered that the defensive position had been abandoned. In spite of this setback, Payne led the men for several hours through dense jungle and enemy-dominated territory to the safety of the battalion's base. Battalion casualties had been high, but Payne's efforts had helped to alleviate the toll.⁶¹ One eyewitness, Sergeant Gerard Dellwo of the United States Army Special Forces, opined that Payne 'deserves the highest recognition for his courage, his concern for his fellow soldiers and his superior leadership which was demonstrated during this operation.'⁶² Payne received his VC from Queen Elizabeth II in April 1970, during a ceremony in Brisbane aboard the Royal Yacht *Britannia*.⁶³

A question of standards

The Vietnam cases mark both a continuance and a departure from the established standards for the VC. Leadership and professionalism, characteristics long valued and also increasingly prioritised by the Australian command, had been demonstrated by all four men. But so too had

⁵⁹ McNeill, *Team*, 348.

⁶⁰ Recommendation for WO2 Keith Payne, 31 May 1969, AWM119, 609A; McNeill, *Team*, 350–53.

⁶¹ Recommendation for Payne; McNeill, *Team*, 354–55.

⁶² Sergeant Gerard Dellwo, witness statement, 29 May 1969, AWM119, 609A.

⁶³ Nigel Cawthorne, *Heroes: The True Stories Behind Every VC Winner Since World War Two* (London: John Blake Publishing, 2007), 173.

feats of lifesaving; a form of heroism that had been relegated to second billing since the First World War, at least in the Australian experience. The feats of Badcoe and Simpson emphasised aggressive action and inspirational command, with the humanitarian element a distinct but secondary consideration. For Wheatley and Payne, the opposite had been true. Both demonstrated tactical leadership under some of the most trying of operational conditions, but their respective efforts to safeguard and protect the lives of other men was of greater significance in securing their awards. It is also noteworthy that three of the VCs were won in defeats or operational failures. Badcoe, who roused his men and spurred them on to tactical success, was alone consistent with the officers and senior non-commissioned men accorded high recognition for heroism during the world wars and Korea. Stoic defences, aggressive fighting withdrawals, and tactical feats during counter offensives had in the right circumstances been supported for reward in the past. Recognition had otherwise tended to be less forthcoming in instances of defeat or operational failure.

This divergence from previous standards explains why there had been some resistance to the awards of the VC in Vietnam. The Secretary of the Department of Defence, Sir Ted Hicks, was unconvinced about the recommendation to Wheatley, suggesting that the case ‘does reflect a lowering of the very high standards maintained by Australia for 50 years for this highest award.’ Hicks was concerned that lionising an ill-fated rescue attempt and not a feat of aggressive tactical heroism ‘departed from standards accepted since 1916’. However, with the unofficial enquiries indicating support for the recommendation in London and the Department of the Army satisfied that the case met the principles of the VC’s Royal Warrant (if not the conditions of the 1916 order), Hicks reluctantly supported the award.⁶⁴ Similar concerns were raised with Simpson’s recommendation three years later. An official within the Department of Defence considered that, although comparable in quality to Badcoe, Simpson failed to meet ‘the WW2 standards’ for the VC. Simpson’s two acts were, he continued, ‘of high DCM standard to my mind, but I cannot agree that two DCM rated acts in close succession equal one VC.’⁶⁵

These were curious objections. The willingness to combine deeds over multiple engagements to submit for a higher award was a well-established practice. One could also argue that there are parallels between Simpson’s actions and those of Roden Cutler and Bill Kibby in the Second World War. While Cutler and Kibby ultimately led their men to achieve

⁶⁴ Sir Ted Hicks to Allen Fairhall, Minister for Defence, 23 September 1966, A1945, 133/3/30, NAA, Canberra.

⁶⁵ Department of Defence minute note, 13 June 1966, A1946, 1969/1134 PART 1, NAA, Canberra.

the set tactical objectives—something Simpson’s company had failed to do—all three men had demonstrated aggressive leadership and perseverance and made pivotal contributions over multiple days of hard fighting. Moreover, while fighting withdrawals and failed offensive actions had tended to be overlooked or downgraded in the past—particularly during Australia’s Pacific War—the circumstances of Simpson’s actions warrant closer consideration. The Montagnards that Simpson led were not conventional soldiers: insufficiently trained and culturally diverse, they had not cultivated the professionalism and morale typically desired of units deployed into combat. The same was true of the company led by Payne. Whereas Cutler and Kibby were able to communicate with, command and inspire the men around them, this was not so readily an option for Simpson, Payne, or Wheatley for that matter.

Nevertheless, lingering questions over standards provoked an inquiry by the Ministry of Defence in London. Lieutenant General Sir Thomas Pearson, the newly appointed Military Secretary for the British Army, was concerned that Australian standards may have eroded and ordered his staff to review the awards of the VC in Vietnam.⁶⁶ The subsequent report was candid. The officer responsible scrutinised the citations of all four Vietnam awards and, for comparative purposes, reviewed the Australian VCs from the Second World War and a random selection of others from different time periods. The review concluded that although the awards to Badcoe, Simpson and Payne ‘are in keeping with the general standard of earlier VCs’, there were peculiar idiosyncrasies in Australian award recommendations. In particular, the citations opened with personal service summaries before delving into the purpose for the recommendation.⁶⁷ The reasoning behind this practice is unclear, but it had been adopted by the Australian Army in the 1950s and formalised by instructions circulated to units operating in Vietnam.⁶⁸ The inclusion of career histories was a deviation from British practice and, as the reviewing officer remarked, these ‘paragraphs of the citation have nothing to do with the award and are to English standard irrelevant.’ The recommendations also demonstrated a ‘theme of poor expressive capability’. The reviewing officer was scathing of the written citations, remarking that they were sparse on detail, full of clichés, and likely composed by officers ‘lacking the ability to arouse the reader’s mind’. Simpson’s award, for instance, represented a ‘good VC badly told.’ The report concluded that poor expression was the foremost ‘cause of comment on the standard of the current Australian awards.’⁶⁹

⁶⁶ ‘Examination of the Standards of Australian Citations for the Award of the Victoria Cross,’ circa 1970, WO 98/10, TNA.

⁶⁷ ‘Examination of the Standards of Australian Citations.’

⁶⁸ Recommendation for Madden; Dunstan to Task Force subunits.

⁶⁹ ‘Examination of the Standards of Australian Citations.’

Wheatley's VC came under greater scrutiny. On examining Wheatley's final moments, the reviewing officer wrote: 'It is questionable if this act is really to VC standard.' Quite a damning statement to begin with, but one given further credence by the fact that the overarching assessment of Wheatley's award has been redacted until 2045.⁷⁰ Whatever the content, it appears that the reviewing officer was sceptical that Wheatley's deeds had been sufficiently heroic or made a contribution significant enough to satisfy the rigorous standards demanded for the VC. Wheatley's case is arguably the weakest of the four. The original narrative of sustained heroism would have made for a stronger claim but, ironically, the detail on Wheatley's other actions had been stripped from the citation at the behest of the Military Secretary's office. The truncated recommendation had been supported by Pearson's predecessor. Yet Pearson's staff were still inclined to argue that 'Wheatley's award was not up to today's standard, and the incident is out-of-line with the standard of the last three awards.' The report suggested that Wheatley's VC may instead be seen as recognition of the AATTV's exacting efforts over its first nine months of active operations. A fair conclusion, but somewhat incongruous given another key point raised in the report: whether, given the excessive length of recent award recommendations, 'the VC is becoming more difficult to obtain.'⁷¹ The irony of pondering such a possibility while scrutinising awards already approved was apparently lost on the report's author. It was, however, a valid concern.

Keith Payne was only the fourth Australian and ninth person to receive the VC since the Second World War.⁷² Aside from four awards to the British Army in Korea and those to the AATTV, the only other VC was won by Lance Corporal Rambahadur Limbu, a Nepalese Gurkha, for his efforts to rescue two wounded men during an engagement with a numerically superior force of Indonesians on Borneo in 1965.⁷³ There is no definitive explanation as to why the award of the VC became so scarce. But the informal expectation of a ninety percent risk of death (see Chapter Eight), often repeated through revised copies of the *Pamphlet on Military Honours and Awards*, was undoubtedly an influential factor. The esteem in which the VC and its recipients were held had also continued to appreciate during the Cold War. As it did, so too did the expectation that men needed to perform the most astonishing and dangerous feats of heroism to secure the award. The cautious approach to recommendations, excessive length of citations, and the informal enquiries with the British authorities indicate that the Australians

⁷⁰ 'Examination of the Standards of Australian Citations.'

⁷¹ 'Examination of the Standards of Australian Citations.'

⁷² Cawthorne, *Heroes*, 5, 84, 104, 161.

⁷³ Cawthorne, *Heroes*, 90–93; 'Ministry of Defence,' *London Gazette*, 22 April 1966.

were not only anxious to comply with the standards required for the VC, but that they knew a recommendation was a gamble and far from a certainty for award. Cautiousness is perhaps why the success rate for Australian recommendations for the VC improved over the twentieth century: from forty-seven percent during the First World War, fifty-nine between 1939 and 1945, to eighty in Vietnam.⁷⁴

Expectations and standards aside, there are practical reasons why the VC became a rarity during the Cold War: military commitments occurred on a much smaller scale. The scope and size of the Australian commitment to Vietnam was far greater than it had been for either Korea, the Malayan Emergency or the Indonesia–Malaysia confrontation, but it still paled in comparison to the world wars. The same was true for Britain’s military operations in Asia and the Middle East. The military objectives and tactics employed also differed between the commitments. The world wars had inculcated an aggressive and offensive form of heroism, one that tended to most favour trench warfare and attrition tactics. This expression of heroism suited conditions in Korea, but less so in Vietnam where counter-insurgency, defence, and search and destroy operations assumed a greater importance. The asymmetric dimension to this form of warfare demanded a greater degree of leadership, professionalism and experience. These were attributes that the AATTV, as an irregular special forces unit, was well equipped to demonstrate, which is why its personnel tended to dominate awards.

The increased commitment and the strictures of recognition

In 1965, as the situation in South Vietnam continued to deteriorate, the United States committed ground troops to Vietnam. The commitment marked a significant shift in the war; the United States went from providing training and support to the ARVN to assuming direct control of strategy and operations.⁷⁵ The Australian government responded by deploying 1RAR.⁷⁶ Within twelve months the Australian contribution had swelled to the 1st Australian Task Force (1ATF), a brigade-sized formation raised to provide a degree of military independence from the United States and enable Australian units to employ their own tactics.⁷⁷ The army now had the numbers for an increased commitment since the Menzies government

⁷⁴ Statistics compiled from AWM28, AWM54, AIR 2 and AWM103 based on awards of the VC and known recommendations for the award.

⁷⁵ Palazzo, *Australian Military Operations in Vietnam*, 24.

⁷⁶ Peter Edwards, *Australia and the Vietnam War: The Essential History* (Sydney: NewSouth Publishing, 2014), 128

⁷⁷ Edwards, *Australia and the Vietnam War*, 128–29; Palazzo, *Australian Military Operations in Vietnam*, 38–39, 42.

had reintroduced selective national service in 1964.⁷⁸ 1ATF experienced a rather different war to the AATTV. The United States command assigned 1ATF to Phuoc Tuy, a coastal province and hotbed of Viet Cong activity. From its base at Nui Dat, the task force was primarily responsible for security and counter-insurgency operations in the province. The cornerstone of which was aggressive patrolling and the staging of ambushes; tactics intended to place constant pressure on the Viet Cong and facilitate the gathering of intelligence.⁷⁹ Infantry units in 1ATF spent approximately eighty percent of their time on patrols and active operations, and contacts with the enemy were common.⁸⁰

With the increased commitment to Vietnam the Australian services were eager to implement an appropriate operational scale to, as one committee put it, ‘control the allocation’ of honours and awards.⁸¹ The Chiefs of Staff Committee—comprised of the three service chiefs and a ranking Chairman (forerunner to the role of Chief of the Defence Force)—recommended a scale in September 1965 similar to that first used in the Korean War: up to one decoration per 250 personnel during a six-month period, with Mentions in Despatches allocated at a rate of one per 150 personnel. The scale was consistent with the general guide recommended in the *Pamphlet on Military Honours and Awards* and was intended to apply to all Australian naval and ground forces in Vietnam, including RAAF non-aircrew.⁸² The allocation to aircrew was more complex. The RAAF Transport Flight had been operating in Vietnam since April 1964, but plans were underway to deploy Iroquois helicopters on ground support operations; No. 9 Squadron arrived in Vietnam in June 1966. The scale for aircrew had to reflect the diversity of the RAAF’s operations. Accordingly, the Chiefs of Staff Committee suggested that the RAAF be permitted to recommend one decoration for every three hundred hours on fighter and ground attack operations; five hundred hours flying bombing missions; and one thousand hours

⁷⁸ National service was one of the most significant influences behind the anti-war protest movement that emerged from 1965, since a broad cross-section of Australians took umbrage to young men being compelled to fight—and die—in Vietnam. However, despite the vocal anti-war movement, Christina Twomey has argued that the majority of Australians were either indifferent towards or outright supported conscription. Sue Langford, ‘The National Service Scheme, 1964–72,’ in Peter Edwards, *A Nation at War: Australian Politics, Society and Diplomacy during the Vietnam War 1965–1975*, vol. 6 of *Official History of Australia's Involvement in Southeast Asian Conflicts 1948–1975* (North Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1997), 355–80; Ann Curthoys, ‘The Anti-War Movements,’ in *Vietnam: War, Myth and Memory*, ed. Jeffrey Grey and Jeff Doyle (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1992), 90–96; Christina Twomey, ‘The National Service Scheme: Citizenship and the Tradition of Compulsory Military Service in 1960s Australia,’ *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 58, no. 1 (2012): 67–81.

⁷⁹ McNeil, *To Long Tan*, 276–77; Bob Breen, ‘The Build-Up: Vietnam, 1965–67,’ in Horner and Bou, *Duty First*, 180.

⁸⁰ Ekins, *Fighting to the Finish*, 807.

⁸¹ G.W. Vance, ‘Minute by Principal Administrative Officers’ Committee (Personnel) – 23rd September 1965,’ 23 September 1965, AWM278, 111.

⁸² Commander Rothesay Swan, ‘Minute by the Chiefs of Staff Committee at Meeting Held on Wednesday 17th November 1965,’ 17 November 1965, AWM278, 111; War Office, *Pamphlet on Military Honours*, 4.

completed on transport and maritime reconnaissance. Mentions in Despatches were to be determined at a rate of five for every three decorations awarded.⁸³

The British Commonwealth Office demurred at the proposed quota for aircrew, erroneously arguing that an allocation based on flying hours ‘has not been practice in previous operations’.⁸⁴ The Department of Defence conceded that the quota would grant disproportionate recognition to aircrew so, as a compromise, agreed to apply ‘an arbitrary definition of operational flying’—only one-third of all flying hours were counted for the purposes of awards.⁸⁵ Minor adjustments to the scales were later made to incorporate New Zealand after the latter committed a second rifle company to serve with 1ATF from 1967, and to factor in helicopter and light aircraft operations (determined at a rate of one decoration per four hundred flying hours).⁸⁶ Otherwise, despite proposals from 1969 to implement a more generous allocation for ground forces, these award scales remained in effect throughout the Vietnam War.⁸⁷

Australian officers had to be mindful and discriminating in how they expended the allocated awards. Generosity at the beginning of a tour, for instance, could leave a shortfall towards the end, particularly if operations intensified. Inflexibility was thus the chief limitation of a system based on operational scales: in seeking to maintain a superior and consistent standard for award, the scales failed to consider shifts in operational tempo. Perhaps unsurprisingly, disquiet over award practices and the so-called ‘quota’ system was recurrent during the war and since. A common complaint was that the higher echelons tended to monopolise recognition and overlook the valuable contributions made by combatants.⁸⁸ The Battle of Long Tan is one of the most prominent examples of this tension.

The battle was fought on 18 August 1966 when D Company, 6RAR under Major Harry Smith encountered the 275th Regiment, a veteran Viet Cong unit reinforced by the D445 Battalion, while sweeping through the rubber plantation at Long Tan.⁸⁹ As monsoonal rain began to fall, Second Lieutenant Gordon Sharp’s 11 Platoon in the lead came under an inferno

⁸³ Swan, ‘Minute by the Chiefs of Staff Committee.’

⁸⁴ Herbert Bowden, Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, to Lord Casey, telegram, 28 February 1967, AWM278, 111.

⁸⁵ J.L. Thompson, ‘Minute by Principal Administrative Officers’ Committee (Personnel) – 17th May, 1967 and 6th July, 1967,’ 7 July 1967, AWM278, 111.

⁸⁶ Thompson, ‘Minute by Principal Administrative Officers’ Committee.’

⁸⁷ Ekins, *Fighting to the Finish*, 808.

⁸⁸ See, for example, I.L. Barnes, *Australian Gallant and Distinguished Service, Vietnam 1962–73: Being a Record of British and Foreign Decorations Awarded to Australian Servicemen* (Canberra: Military Historical Society of Australia, 1974), 4; Ekins, *Fighting to the Finish*, 808.

⁸⁹ Edwards, *Australia and the Vietnam War*, 150.

of small arms, machine gun and mortar fire from three directions, and was cut off. Smith called in artillery support from Nui Dat, but in little more than twenty minutes Sharp had been killed and a third of 11 Platoon was either dead or wounded.⁹⁰ Sergeant Robert Buick assumed control. Buick rallied his men, coordinated the defence and directed the artillery before communications were lost when his radio antenna was shot away.⁹¹ Smith requested air support and reinforcements, but with much of 1ATF committed elsewhere it was over two hours before A Company, 6RAR and a troop of armoured personnel carriers were able to reach D Company.⁹² In the meantime, Smith ordered Second Lieutenant Geoffrey Kendall and his 10 Platoon to attempt to extricate Buick and his men. Kendall's platoon engaged a force of more than thirty Viet Cong about to make a flanking attack on 11 Platoon but was itself soon subject to fierce fire and almost encircled.⁹³ Kendall also lost communications when a bullet shattered the platoon radio. Private William Akell from company headquarters negotiated three hundred metres of withering fire and killed two Viet Cong to run in a replacement.⁹⁴ Unable to advance, 10 Platoon fell back at Smith's instruction.⁹⁵

By now Buick had managed to repair his radio, but with the Viet Cong only fifty metres from his position the situation for 11 Platoon was desperate. Smith sent Second Lieutenant David Sabben and 12 Platoon to relieve the pressure. Sabben's men faced intense opposition but returned after an hour with what remained of 11 Platoon. Buick and his men had broken contact and made a run towards company headquarters once the situation turned critical; it was then that they encountered 12 Platoon.⁹⁶ Smith reorganised the defence of his depleted company as WO2 John (Jack) Kirby distributed a resupply of ammunition delivered via helicopter. Kirby had been conspicuous throughout the battle. Described by Smith as almost omnipresent among the company's lines, Kirby had raised morale, disseminated supplies, and organised care for the wounded. For now, though, he and the others fought to repulse waves of successive attacks. At one point, Kirby ventured out and silenced a Viet Cong heavy machine gun by killing its crew.⁹⁷

⁹⁰ Breen, 'The Build-Up,' 181; McNeil, *To Long Tan*, 313–18; Palazzo, *Australian Military Operations in Vietnam*, 63–64.

⁹¹ Recommendation for Sergeant Robert Buick, 28 August 1966, AWM103, R445/1/1/1 PART 2.

⁹² Breen, 'The Build-Up,' 182.

⁹³ McNeil, *To Long Tan*, 318–19; Recommendation for Second Lieutenant Geoffrey Kendall, 28 August 1966, AWM103, R445/1/1/1 PART 2.

⁹⁴ Recommendation for Private William Akell, 28 August 1966, AWM103, R445/1/1/1 PART 2.

⁹⁵ McNeil, *To Long Tan*, 319.

⁹⁶ McNeil, *To Long Tan*, 320, 325–26; Palazzo, *Australian Military Operations in Vietnam*, 64.

⁹⁷ Recommendation for WO2 John Kirby, 28 August 1966, AWM103, R445/1/1/1 PART 2; McNeil, *To Long Tan*, 328.

The relief force arrived soon after. Armoured personnel carriers transporting A Company had encountered the D445 Battalion on the way in and been subjected to small arms and machine gun fire. One carrier, commanded by Corporal John Carter, was targeted by a 57mm recoilless rifle. The first shot missed, and Carter engaged the two-man crew with his .50 calibre machine gun until it jammed. Carter then grabbed his driver's Owen gun, climbed onto the vehicle's roof, and killed the recoilless rifle crew and at least three more Viet Cong, all while exposed to heavy enemy fire.⁹⁸ The D445 Battalion dispersed soon after, as did the 275th Regiment shortly after the relief force arrived.⁹⁹ The Australians suffered eighteen killed and twenty-four wounded at Long Tan, but D Company had withstood an entire Viet Cong regiment for three tense hours.¹⁰⁰

Lieutenant Colonel Colin Townsend, the commanding officer of 6RAR, requested award recommendations within days of the battle. According to Harry Smith, he was given less than twenty-four hours' notice to compile recommendations for D Company, ostensibly because the Australian government was anxious to placate the public since eleven National Servicemen were among the dead.¹⁰¹ Smith conferred with his platoon commanders and Kirby, and submitted a list of sixteen names for awards.¹⁰² Townsend assessed the claims, drafted formal recommendations, and submitted Smith for the DSO.¹⁰³ Fifteen awards were subsequently promulgated for Long Tan. Eight went to D Company, including a Military Cross to Smith, a DCM to Kirby, a Military Medal to Buick, and Mentions in Despatches for Kendall, Sabben and Akell. Each of these awards recognised degrees of distinguished leadership, devotion and professionalism under fire; in essence, valued military qualities cultivated by effective training and morale. Carter also received the DCM for his initiative and determination, while the DSOs later bestowed on Townsend and Brigadier O.D. Jackson (1ATF's commander) acknowledged the battle.¹⁰⁴

Smith was disappointed with the list of honours. Half of his recommendations had not been approved, and the awards to Kendall and Sabben were apparently downgraded from the Military Cross.¹⁰⁵ Smith has since been censorious of his superiors, suggesting that Townsend

⁹⁸ Recommendation for Corporal John Carter, August 1966, AWM103, R445/1/1/1 PART 2; McNeil, *To Long Tan*, 335.

⁹⁹ Breen, 'The Build-Up,' 182; McNeil, *To Long Tan*, 335–36, 340.

¹⁰⁰ McNeil, *To Long Tan*, 351.

¹⁰¹ Harry Smith, quoted in Appeals Tribunal, *Smith and the Department of Defence*.

¹⁰² Smith, quoted in Appeals Tribunal, *Smith and the Department of Defence*.

¹⁰³ Recommendation for Major Harry Smith, 28 August 1966, AWM103, R445/1/1/1 PART 2.

¹⁰⁴ McNeil, *To Long Tan*, 373, 564; 'Army Department,' *London Gazette*, 10 January 1967; 'Army Department,' *London Gazette*, 1 August 1967.

¹⁰⁵ Harry Smith, *Long Tan: The Start of a Lifelong Battle* (Newport: Big Sky Publishing, 2016), 248.

and Jackson embellished their own role at Long Tan to secure awards for themselves at the expense of their men.¹⁰⁶ The DSO citations do overstate the involvement of both officers during the battle. However, it would have been highly unusual for either to have had a part in drafting their own recommendation. Indeed, Jackson's had been instigated at the request of Major General Kenneth Mackay, Commander Australian Force Vietnam, and reflected his earlier command of the AATTV and Australian Army Force Vietnam, as well as 1ATF.¹⁰⁷ That said, Jackson had compiled Townsend's recommendation in the aftermath of Long Tan.¹⁰⁸ The award was not immediately approved, but retained until Townsend's tour was near its end. The final citation reflected his year-long deployment with 6RAR, in which Long Tan was but one (albeit prominent) incident the DSO recognised.¹⁰⁹ The awards to Jackson and Townsend were also consistent with those granted to senior officers for command tours in Vietnam.¹¹⁰

Smith's accusations against his superiors appear chiefly to be predicated on the fact that the honours awarded to 6RAR were almost identical to those recommended by Townsend. The most significant change had been the decision by Mackay to downgrade the DSO recommended for Smith.¹¹¹ No reason was recorded, but the most probable explanation is Smith's comparatively junior position and that Townsend was also under consideration for the award. Of the thirty-seven DSOs awarded to Australians in Vietnam, only one went to an officer below the rank of lieutenant colonel (or equivalent): that to Major Patrick Beale of the AATTV, for his aggressive leadership and inspirational command of the 1st Battalion, 2nd Mobile Strike Force in Kon Tum Province in 1970.¹¹² The DSO tended to be the domain of officers at the level of unit or formation command in Vietnam; those responsible for battalions, task forces, flying squadrons, or guided missile destroyers. These officers were experienced professionals who were expected to grasp strategy, make calculated tactical decisions, and respond to crises with cool professionalism. Smith had, as Townsend wrote, demonstrated 'determination and outstanding leadership', but the pattern of award was not in his favour: all but one of the DSOs (Beale's) recognised distinguished command over several months of

¹⁰⁶ Smith, *Long Tan*, 242–48, 261–63; Bruce Atkinson, 'Battle of Long Tan: Commanding Officers Embellished Role to Receive Awards at Expense of Own Men, Retired Colonel Says,' ABC News, 18 August 2015, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-08-18/retired-colonel-harry-smith-pens-book-battle-of-long-tan/6701876>.

¹⁰⁷ 'Army Department,' 10 January 1967; Ross Eastgate, 'Long Tan Swipe Does Disservice,' *Townsville Bulletin*, 20 August 2015, <https://www.townsvillebulletin.com.au/news/opinion/long-tan-swipe-does-disservice/news-story/bd3fd03411623bc3835b6467aa8142f1>.

¹⁰⁸ Recommendation for Lieutenant Colonel Colin Townsend, August 1966, AWM103, R445/3/1/1.

¹⁰⁹ 'Army Department,' 1 August 1967.

¹¹⁰ Barnes, *Australian Gallant and Distinguished Service*, 51; Eastgate, 'Long Tan Swipe Does Disservice.'

¹¹¹ Ekins, *Fighting to the Finish*, 808.

¹¹² Barnes, *Australian Gallant and Distinguished Service*, 17, 51, 129; 'Awards for Seven Soldiers,' *Canberra Times*, 10 August 1970.

operations.¹¹³ Aside from Smith, though, the recommendations largely proceeded as Townsend intended—lacking half the names from D Company Smith had suggested. Smith has interpreted this decision as an act of neglect spurred by a sense of ambition or selfishness on Townsend's part. The more reasonable explanation is the restrictive quota system. At the time of Long Tan, 6RAR was only two months into a year-long tour in Vietnam. Townsend, Jackson and Mackay had to be cautious with their recommendations due to the limitations of the award scale and because they had no way of knowing the intensity of future operations.

Nevertheless, disappointment and disillusionment regarding award practices and the quota system persisted throughout the war. Lieutenant Colonel F. Peter Scott, who commanded 3RAR in Vietnam in 1971, later recorded the disenchantment he and his men felt after decorations to the battalion were announced in mid-1972. 'I was disappointed with the result', Scott wrote, 'as there were three downgraded and one deleted'. This was after the operational scale had already restricted the number of his men Scott wished to recommend.¹¹⁴ Smith and Scott were not alone in their disappointment; grievances regarding award practices lingered after the war. Following interviews with veterans of the Vietnam War, historical researcher Ian Barnes wrote in 1974 that 'many servicemen believe that some awards have been made rather freely' to men in command, staff and support positions.¹¹⁵ The general complaint was a common one during Australia's (and Britain's) engagements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: that recognition tended to unduly fall on men removed from battle, to the detriment of those under fire. The grievance does appear to have assumed a new intensity in Vietnam, since the men had a greater awareness of the quota system. As historian Ashley Ekins infers, perceptions and disparities did much to shape views on award practices. For example, a captain in charge of a base postal service was Mentioned in Despatches alongside the Long Tan awards. There is little doubt that the officer's performance was meritorious but, as Ekins writes, 'the timing was unfortunate' given the modest list of awards for Long Tan.¹¹⁶ Personnel in staff and support roles were well represented among awards of the OBE, MBE and Mentions in Despatches. The practice was consistent with previous wars given the importance of logistics, planning and support roles to the pursuance of operational objectives. But it was more noticeable in Vietnam and grievances arose when awards were approved for meritorious

¹¹³ Recommendation for Smith.

¹¹⁴ F. Peter Scott, *Command in Vietnam: Reflections of a Commanding Officer* (McCrae: Slouch Hat Publications, 2007), 134.

¹¹⁵ Barnes, *Australian Gallant and Distinguished Service*, 4.

¹¹⁶ Ekins, *Fighting to the Finish*, 808.

services while recommendations for leadership and heroism under fire were downgraded to meet the operational scale.¹¹⁷

A related complaint concerned the use and distribution of specific awards. According to Barnes, returned servicemen ‘from other wars who have won gallantry awards in combat resent the presentation of similar awards being granted for meritorious service as occurred with some DSOs and DFCs in Vietnam.’¹¹⁸ The accusation is misleading since the awards alluded to were not granted for meritorious service, but rather tours in command appointments. Awards to officers in wartime battalion and flying squadron commands have a long history, but the practice did become more pronounced in Korea and Vietnam. Almost every Australian officer who held a battalion or squadron command in either conflict received some form of recognition, often the DSO.¹¹⁹ The practice was less marked for ships’ captains since the RAN occupied a support role in both conflicts. Australian destroyers were also not committed to active operations in Vietnam until 1967 and only one DSO was awarded in the conflict to a naval officer: Captain Guy Griffiths for his ‘coolness under fire ... and excellent leadership’ while in command of HMAS *Hobart* in 1967.¹²⁰ Ships’ captains were, however, well represented among awards of the Order of the British Empire and Mentions in Despatches.¹²¹ There almost appears to have been an expectation that officers in wartime command appointments would perform competently and thus be worthy of a decoration. However, the awards were not automatic and, given the extensive training, professionalism and leadership required to attain a battalion, squadron or ship command by this point, as well as the stresses of leadership on operational deployment, the expectation is perhaps an understandable one. Awards for command tours also had a symbolic element in that they were as much an acknowledgement of the performance of the ship or unit as they were the professionalism and leadership of the officer concerned.

Perceptions, though, were an influential factor. It is understandable why men may have differentiated between awards, since individuals could be accorded the same recognition for different services. This was particularly noticeable among awards of the DFC in Vietnam. Flying Officer Michael Tardent and Wing Commander Colin Ackland received DFCs for their

¹¹⁷ Ekins, *Fighting to the Finish*, 808.

¹¹⁸ Barnes, *Australian Gallant and Distinguished Service*, 4.

¹¹⁹ O’Neill, *Combat Operations*, 684, 687–68, 691–98; Barnes, *Australian Gallant and Distinguished Service*, 50–51; Chris Coulthard-Clark, *The RAAF in Vietnam: Australian Air Involvement in the Vietnam War 1962–1975*, vol. 4 of *Official History of Australia's Involvement in Southeast Asian Conflicts 1948–1975* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1995), 342–43.

¹²⁰ Quoted in Pfennigwerth, *Bravo Zulu*, 510.

¹²¹ Barnes, *Australian Gallant and Distinguished Service*, 17, 21.

professional skill and leadership under fire: Tardent for providing fire support to ground forces and casualty evacuation helicopters during an engagement in August 1969; and Ackland, a senior Forward Air Controller, for his accurate direction of air strikes during a tense battle between ARVN and Viet Cong forces in August 1971.¹²² Other DFCs, such as those awarded to Squadron Leader Anthony Fookes and Wing Commander Francis Downing, recognised leadership in squadron commands.¹²³ If one is to give credence to the grievances noted by Barnes, the latter represented ‘meritorious service’ awards for administering command of a unit; services Barnes’ interviewees apparently saw as separate from the similar awards won for heroic action and leadership under fire. Such perceptions, however, seem to assume that squadron commanders were passive or remote administrators, yet they similarly flew on operations and were subjected to enemy fire. Downing, for instance, was forced to eject from his aircraft after it was struck by surface-to-air missiles while on a bombing mission in March 1971.¹²⁴

These awards instead represented sustained leadership in exacting operational conditions. Whether flying air support, ground attack or bombing missions, airmen—from junior aircrew to squadron command—operated under difficult and dangerous circumstances in Vietnam that required significant professionalism and skill. These were valued qualities, and ones that equally fell within the purview of operational awards. Certainly, a similar pattern of award, recognising instances of heroism, leadership and command, is discernible among the decorations accorded to the RAN Helicopter Flight Vietnam. The unit was formed in 1967 to serve alongside the United States Army on gunship, medical evacuation and transport duties.¹²⁵ As Jeffrey Grey notes, its airmen ‘saw the most intense combat of any RAN personnel in the war’ and, in recognition of their achievements, the flight’s aviators received over half of the decorations awarded to the RAN in Vietnam.¹²⁶

The pattern of recognition saw RAAF and RAN aviators receive a more favourable share of awards per capita than Australia’s ground forces in Vietnam. The anomaly has led Barnes to, rather unflatteringly, remark ‘that the RAAF appears the most valorous service in what was primarily a ground war.’¹²⁷ The implicit accusation of disproportionate (and perhaps

¹²² Coulthard-Clark, *RAAF in Vietnam*, 175, 280.

¹²³ Coulthard-Clark, *RAAF in Vietnam*, 112, 343.

¹²⁴ Coulthard-Clark, *RAAF in Vietnam*, 208–12.

¹²⁵ Jeffrey Grey, *Up Top: The Royal Australian Navy and Southeast Asian Conflicts 1955–1972*, vol. 7 of *Official History of Australia’s Involvement in Southeast Asian Conflicts 1948–1975* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1998), 236–37.

¹²⁶ Grey, *Up Top*, 279, 326–28.

¹²⁷ Barnes, *Australian Gallant and Distinguished Service*, 4–5.

undeserved) recognition is unfair, since it disregards the expertise and hazards inherent in air operations. Corporal John Coughlan, for example, a crewman on Iroquois helicopters, distinguished himself on two occasions while serving with No. 9 Squadron. In October 1967, while aboard an Iroquois sent to assist an American gunship crashed in Viet Cong territory, Coughlan volunteered to be winched down to search for survivors. Despite the ever-present threat of enemy attack, Coughlan and a lightly wounded American crew chief arranged for wounded airmen to be evacuated as ammunition exploded around the burning helicopter.¹²⁸ Coughlan later reflected: 'I did a lot of crawling that day. The rounds were flying all around us'.¹²⁹ Three months later, in January 1968, Coughlan was the winch operator on a night rescue mission. An American medical helicopter had crashed while evacuating casualties during a firefight. The battle still raged below as Coughlan leaned outside of his Iroquois, hovering at tree top level, to guide the pilot and manage the efficient evacuation of casualties. Coughlan was praised for his 'outstanding skill ... resolution and courage' on these two occasions and was awarded the Conspicuous Gallantry Medal (Flying).¹³⁰ He was the first person to receive the award since the Second World War, and the last before it was discontinued in 1993.¹³¹

Vietnam may have been predominantly a ground war, but the RAAF and RAN still made valuable contributions. The 'disproportionate' flow of awards instead highlights that aircrew received a more workable and receptive award scale while ground forces were handicapped by an inflexible allocation. Senior commanders had debated a more generous allotment for ground forces from 1969, but failed to reach an agreement and declined to petition the British authorities on the issue as they had during the Korean War.¹³² Over the decades since, disputes over honours and awards have become a defining feature of Australia's war in Vietnam. The restrictive award quota has been much disparaged by veterans, leading to calls for retrospective recognition.¹³³ In 1998, following significant social pressure, the Governor-General of Australia approved an 'end of war list' granting eighty-one new or upgraded awards for Vietnam—the majority to army personnel—under the new Australian Honours System on the advice of the government. The move was unprecedented but was intended to address perceived injustices caused by the operational scales.¹³⁴ The review has inspired further

¹²⁸ Recommendation for Corporal John Coughlan, 21 February 1968, A2880, 5/5/47, NAA, Canberra; Coulthard-Clark, *RAAF in Vietnam*, 156–57.

¹²⁹ John Coughlan, quoted in Coulthard-Clark, *RAAF in Vietnam*, 157.

¹³⁰ Recommendation for Coughlan; Coulthard-Clark, *RAAF in Vietnam*, 157.

¹³¹ Cooper, *Bravery Awards for Aerial Combat*, 188–89.

¹³² Ekins, *Fighting to the Finish*, 808.

¹³³ See, for example: Bob Buick, *All Guts and No Glory: The Story of a Long Tan Warrior* (St. Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 2000); Smith, *Long Tan*.

¹³⁴ Ekins, *Fighting to the Finish*, 814.

campaigns for retrospective recognition. Harry Smith, for instance, has repeatedly agitated for additional awards for Long Tan, including a VC to Jack Kirby.¹³⁵ The DCM received by Kirby at the time had been made on Smith's recommendation, which raises some interesting questions and reinforces the implied status and significance of the VC.

Conclusion

The Vietnam War raised a number of curiosities for Australians in terms of the system and mechanics for heroic recognition. Four Australian servicemen won the VC in Vietnam but, with three deviating from the established form of aggressive tactical heroism, the awards met some resistance at the bureaucratic level, while idiosyncrasies in the written citations provoked an unflattering review into Australian standards by the Ministry of Defence in London. The Vietnam War was unique among Australia's military commitments in that it lacked any involvement from the United Kingdom. For this reason, award recommendations became more elaborate and detailed to ensure success. The Australian command and defence officials also failed to address persistent problems with the restrictive and inflexible operational scale for awards. As a result, the standards for recognition—particularly among army personnel—tended to be inflated, and grievances over honours and awards continued beyond the war. These issues highlight that the Australian command and government bureaucracy had not adequately learned from previous mistakes in the Pacific War or Korea, where they likewise had greater autonomy over the system for heroic recognition. Nevertheless, reflecting the value placed in training and morale, the Vietnam War did cement the trend started in Korea to professionalise the characteristics of martial heroism. Instances of distinguished command, efficient leadership, precise fire control, and the effective use of combined and support arms were attributes most valued and recognised as heroic by the Australian command in Vietnam.

¹³⁵ Smith, *Long Tan*, 270–94.

Conclusion

Between the Boer War and Vietnam, ninety-one Australian military personnel were awarded the VC. These men were recognised for having demonstrated the pinnacle of martial heroism as it existed at that moment, whether that be by saving life under fire, rushing machine gun posts, leading destructive bombing raids, inspiring stoic defences, or for exuding extreme professionalism and leadership in some of the most trying of operational conditions. The award of a medal or decoration, however, was not an automatic outcome of the performance of an act of bravery. Indeed, an act had to be witnessed, nominated, and then navigate the rigours of the recommendation process, all while the concept of ‘heroism’ almost continuously evolved or was redefined during Australia’s military engagements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It was for these reasons that the Imperial honours system expanded to recognise various gradations of bravery and distinguished leadership in wartime, but also why at least eighty-nine other Australians were recommended for but denied the award of the VC.

Although heroic figures and tales of wartime daring are endemic to Australian war writing, how martial heroism was understood, recognised and revered during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has been neglected in Australian historiography. Australian society understands its martial history and heritage through the reverential lens of ‘Anzac’. Heroic figures therefore appear in popular literature to breathe life into a battle scene or in deference to the nation-building narrative of war. However, there is an inherent assumption, and acceptance, in these accounts that the individual simply was heroic. There is minimal awareness of, and engagement with the fact that heroism is an elusive and at times malleable social construct. Even studies on courage, a body of literature dedicated to understanding the nuances of operational performance and morale, have struggled to engage with physical manifestations of heroism in war. With some exceptions, military heroism and, by extension, martial culture and the systems and processes that govern the recognition of heroic acts, have been marginalised in Australian history. This thesis draws upon a rich range of sources—award recommendation files, official correspondence and government records, newspaper and press accounts, private letters, and service records—to fill this significant gap in the literature by providing a longitudinal analysis of the manifestations, recognition, and responses to Australian military heroism from the colonial engagements of the nineteenth century to the end of the Vietnam War.

By demonstrating that conceptions of heroism shifted in response to the demands of both operational circumstances and the military command, this thesis offers a fresh perspective on wartime heroics. The romanticised notions of heroism that flourished in the late nineteenth century—founded in Britain’s wars on the periphery and frontier regions of the empire and filtered into the Australian colonies through migration and the transference of British social norms and cultural ideals—dissipated amid the carnage of the First World War. The trench warfare and attrition tactics on Gallipoli and later the Western Front demanded innovation to break the stalemate. As one means to achieve this, the British High Command inculcated an aggressiveness among the empire’s combatants and reoriented the criteria for the VC. The heroic paradigm thereafter shifted to emphasise aggression, violence and tactical success. Not all combatant arms were able to conform to this new standard, but with the movement of field commanders the paradigm filtered into other theatres of war. Aggressive tactical heroics thereby became the benchmark under which Australian and empire forces understood and recognised wartime heroism.

The standard set on the Western Front was perpetuated during the Second World War, though analysis of this period reveals that bureaucracy, technology and strategy similarly influenced the manifestations and recognition of heroic acts. Institutionalised recognition became more political from the early years of the war, as awards were subject to bureaucratic stringencies, restrictive quotas and unpredictable commanding officers amid an increasingly mechanised form of warfare. Conceptions of heroism also realigned, and the honours system adjusted, to recognise the importance of aircraft and the strategic significance of bomber operations. A flow on effect of the bombing campaigns was the attempt to define and codify less conventional forms of heroism through the GC and GM. The cool courage of bomb and mine disposal specialists came to dominate both awards, but in doing so clarified historical inconsistencies in award practices and broadened the definition of what it means to be heroic in times of war. The more technical aspects of war in the air and at sea also lent themselves to recognisable professional conduct that stressed training, technical skills, and cohesion among the crew. Recognition to aircrew accordingly emphasised technical abilities and sustained performance, while at sea skills in engineering, navigation and steering were valued. However, unlike operations on land and (to a lesser extent) in the air, there were fewer opportunities for naval personnel to perform individual feats of heroism. Operational success at sea was instead predicated on the ship’s company as a whole and the skill of the armament and technical departments.

Beginning with the Pacific War, administration and constraint in award practices assumed a greater significance. The Australian authorities were accorded greater influence over the processes for Imperial recognition to their own forces during the war against Japan. The result was some administrative mishaps and unusual policy decisions, but it also led to a cautious approach to award recommendations, a strict adherence to the rigid technical requirements of the honours system, and a heightened standard for heroism. These procedural conditions and the corresponding inflation of heroic standards influenced the processes for recognition during Australia's Cold War. As the civilian soldier morphed into the contemporary regular during this period, 'heroism' also become increasingly professionalised. A series of reforms implemented by the Australian government from the late 1940s to modernise the nation's armed services saw a greater emphasis on effective training, leadership, and battle proficiency. More complex expressions of heroism were thereafter written up for award in Korea and Vietnam, to the extent that instances of distinguished command, efficient leadership, precise fire control, and the effective use of combined and support arms were favoured for reward by the Australian military command.

Recognition during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries thus hinged on the form of heroism foremost championed in that moment, but was also beholden to award scales (or 'quotas'), bureaucratic processes, and the arbitrary interpretations of senior officers and even public servants. For these reasons, the systems to recognise martial heroism have not gone without complaint or controversy. Recognition to members of the RAN, for instance, has attracted adverse comment and public allegations of neglect since no Australian sailor has been awarded the VC. Members of the RAN were proportionally well recognised for their efforts, but instances of maladministration and inconsistencies in award practices (particularly in the Second World War) have ignited campaigns for retrospective recognition in recent decades. The strictures of recognition in Vietnam likewise remain controversial. Indeed, while aircrew were beneficiaries of a more workable and receptive award scale in Vietnam, ground forces were handicapped by an inflexible allocation that the Australian authorities failed to adequately address. These problems highlight that the increased bureaucratisation and politicisation of the awards processes from the 1940s were not without flaws and, in Vietnam at least, the Australian command and government bureaucracy had not adequately learned from past mistakes in previous wars.

The significance of aggressive tactical heroics also meant prisoners of war and women were often alienated from conceptions of heroism. Since the performance and recognition of martial heroics came to rest on the principal combatants—the infantryman, machine gunner,

and even bomber and fighter pilots—wartime heroism during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was an inherently proactive, violent and masculine domain. Due to their race, Indigenous servicemen sat awkwardly against this construct and often had to go to greater effort to prove their martial abilities to even have a chance of conforming to Anglo-Australian notions of heroism and masculinity. Captivity proved a similar challenge. Capture or surrender could negatively affect a serviceman's chances of being recognised for heroic conduct and, although policies shifted during the world wars to become more sympathetic towards captives, it was really only escape from imprisonment that was seen to warrant the kind of martial recognition bestowed upon the 'heroic'. Courageous work as a captive was deemed separate and distinct from the proactive heroism displayed on the battlefield or in attempts to get back to it. For similar reasons, gender perceptions often led to disparity in rank, status and awards for women in the services. Nurses, for instance, often received civil, rather than military, decorations for their heroism or meritorious services in wartime. Such practices served to reinforce the perception of the military establishment that the wartime heroism of women was different from that of the masculine combatant.

In moving away from the battlefields and war fronts, this thesis also unpacks responses to and discourses about heroism and heroic figures that circulated in civil society. The patriotic militarism of the Victorian and Edwardian eras witnessed a reverence of soldier-heroes and an enthusiasm for martial culture. The outbreak of the First World War was thus met with excitement and an anticipation for the next generation of martial heroes. Enthusiasm waned as casualty lists and war weariness grew, but a celebration of decorated soldiers and the pervasive use of propaganda campaigns generated a 'war culture' that inspired a hatred for the enemy and made it easier for civic society to accept and revere violent and aggressive heroics by empire combatants. Military awards were also used strategically to boost public morale or sate popular concerns, while recognised 'war heroes' were employed for political and propaganda purposes. Beginning in the First World War, heroic figures were featured in recruitment drives, propaganda, and press reports as virtual ambassadors of the war effort. These initiatives established a precedent for the similar use of 'heroic' men throughout later conflicts and created a legacy for the promotion of martial heroism and military celebrity. This legacy endures today in the significance accorded to the VC and the status, social currency and reverence vested in the medal's recipients.

Analysing the constructions of Australian martial heroism from the colonial period to the end of the Vietnam War through the lens and contextual framework of the Imperial system of honours and awards has provided insights into the ways in which Australians considered

and sought to recognise heroic acts in wartime. But in this sense it can offer only a partial history of heroism within the former British Empire, and an incomplete insight into national approaches and processes for recognition. Extending the scope to include further international and inter-empire sources would shed further light on the understandings, recognition of, and responses to heroism across and between the Dominions. Widening the parameters to the contemporary Australian Honours System and its application in the engagements in East Timor, Afghanistan and Iraq would also explain the processes and paradigms of heroism in modern wars. With the boom in social and cultural histories of conflict and memory of war in recent decades, an examination into whether—or how—the rise in reverence of ‘Anzac’ and greater understanding of the traumatic effects of war have influenced popular memory of martial heroism would make a timely contribution.

The invocation of ‘hero’ is commonplace in contemporary Australian society. It assumed a greater intensity during the centenary of the First World War (2014–18), since glorified representations of the ‘Anzac hero’ were central to Australian commemoration. Yet any consideration of ‘heroism’ or what it meant to be ‘heroic’—a century ago or now—was notably absent. In tracing ideas of and responses to martial heroism from Australia’s colonial engagements to the end of the Vietnam War, this thesis provides the first comprehensive and critical analysis of military heroism in Australia. It situates the Australian experience within that of the former British Empire to illuminate consistency and variations in the historical understandings of and responses to wartime heroics and unpacks the systems and processes of national recognition. Such analysis offers a deeper, more rounded appreciation of the Australian military experience and the place of martial heroism in the national consciousness.

Appendix A

Members of the Australian Forces Officially Recommended or Considered for the Victoria Cross

The following records members of the Australian armed forces who, as supported by extant archival records, were either awarded, recommended or officially considered for the award of the Victoria Cross (VC). Accordingly, it does not include VC recipients born in Australia or living in the country on the outbreak of war, but who were decorated while serving with British or other Dominion forces. These include Mark Bell (Ashanti, 1874), James Rogers (South Africa, 1902), Issy Smith (Western Front, 1915), George Moor (Gallipoli, 1915), William (Wilbur) Dartnell (East Africa, 1915), Arthur Sullivan (Russia, 1919), Samuel Pearse (Russia, 1919), and Hughie Edwards (raid on Bremen, 1941). Nor do those individuals appear who are rumoured to have been recommended or considered for the VC, but whose claims have not been verified by extant primary records. The latter group includes Tom Morris (South Africa, 1899), Walter Kruger (South Africa, 1900), John Simpson (Gallipoli, 1915), the 2nd Battalion machine gun crew of John Pain, William Goudemey, James Montgomery and William Nichol at Lone Pine (1915), and Robert (Bobby) Gibbes (Libya, 1942). The list also omits the individuals retrospectively considered for recognition under the 2011–13 ‘Valour Inquiry’.

Due to the way recommendation and related files are archived, it is possible that other individuals have been officially considered for the VC. The following should thus not be taken as a conclusive list, but a comprehensive one in which the claim of every entry has been verified.

Legend

Symbol	Meaning
*	Indicates posthumous recommendation
**	Indicates British officer whose unit was integrated into an Australian formation
AFC	Australian Flying Corps
AM	Albert Medal
Bar	Denotes a second or subsequent award of a decoration
DFC	Distinguished Flying Cross
DCM	Distinguished Conduct Medal
DSO	Distinguished Service Order
MC	Military Cross
MiD	Mentioned in Despatches
MM	Military Medal
VC	Victoria Cross

Boer War

Name	Rank	Date(s)	Location/Battle	Award
1900				
Howse, Neville Reginald	Captain	24 July	Vredefort	VC
Bisdee, John Hutton	Trooper	1 September	Warmbad	VC
Wylly, Guy George Egerton	Lieutenant	1 September	Warmbad	VC
1901				
Bell, Frederick William	Lieutenant	16 May	Brakpan	VC
Sweeney, Edmund	Private	25 May	Bethal	DCM
Maygar, Leslie Cecil	Lieutenant	23 November	Geelhoutboom	VC

First World War

Gallipoli campaign

Name	Rank	Date(s)	Location/Battle	Award
1915				
Jacka, Albert	Lance Corporal	19 May	Courtney's Post	VC
Keysor, Leonard Maurice	Private	7–9 August	Lone Pine	VC
Besanko, Cyril Victor Moyle	Lance Corporal	7–9 August	Lone Pine	
Symons, William John	Lieutenant	9 August	Lone Pine	VC
Burton, Alexander Stewart*	Corporal	9 August	Lone Pine	VC
Dunstan, William	Corporal	9 August	Lone Pine	VC
Hamilton, John Patrick	Private	9 August	Lone Pine	VC
Shout, Alfred John*	Captain	9 August	Lone Pine	VC
Tubb, Frederick Harold	Lieutenant	9 August	Lone Pine	VC
McElroy, John Henry	Corporal	13 August	Lone Pine	MM
Throssell, Hugo Vivian Hope	Second Lieutenant	30 August	Hill 60	VC

Western Front

Name	Rank	Date(s)	Location/Battle	Award
1916				
Cox, William Edward*	Private	30/31 May	Cordonnerie	MiD
Jackson, John William Alexander	Private	25/26 June	Bois-Grenier	VC
Hutchinson, Arthur Justin Sandford*	Major	19/20 July	Fromelles	
Lees, John Stanley*	Lieutenant	19/20 July	Fromelles	MiD
Rowley, Thomas Charles	Private	19/20 July	Fromelles	DCM
Carpenter, Stanley Franzien	Corporal	22–25 July	Pozières	DCM
Blackburn, Arthur Seaforth	Second Lieutenant	23 July	Pozières	VC
Leak, John	Private	23 July	Pozières	VC
O'Connor, Roy Roderick	Private	23–25 July	Pozières	
Goodwin, Francis Willie	Regimental Sergeant Major	23–27 July	Pozières and Mouquet Farm	MC
Cooke, Thomas*	Private	24–25 July	Pozières	VC
Groves, John	Private	25 July	Pozières	
Tracey, Walter	Private	25 July	Pozières	DCM
Castleton, Claud Charles*	Sergeant	28/29 July	Pozières	VC
Riddell, Harold	Private	4 August	Pozières	DCM

Weston, Norman Douglas	Lance Corporal	5 August	Pozières	DCM
Molloy, Henry	Private	6 August	Pozières	DCM
O'Meara, Martin	Private	9–12 August	Pozières	VC
Goodwin, Francis Willie [second recommendation]	Second Lieutenant	18–19 August	Pozières	Bar to MC
Sullivan, Frederick	Private	22 August	Pozières	DCM
Weaver, Frederick Steene	Private	22 August	Pozières	DCM
1917				
Murray, Henry William	Captain	4/5 February	Stormy Trench	VC
Withers, Roy Barrett	Corporal	4/5 February	Stormy Trench	DCM
Boyle, Charles	Private	25 February	Le Barque	DCM
Allsopp, Eric Arthur	Lance Corporal	26/27 February	Malt Trench	MM
Nipperess, Edwin Henry	Corporal	26/27 February	Malt Trench	MM
Collins, Bernard	Private	20 March	Noreuil	DCM
Cherry, Percy Herbert*	Captain	26 March	Lagnicourt	VC
Jensen, Jørgen Christian	Private	2 April	Noreuil	VC
Newland, James Ernest	Captain	8 & 15 April	Boursies and Lagnicourt	VC
Whittle, John Woods	Sergeant	8 & 15 April	Boursies and Lagnicourt	VC
Kenny, Thomas James Bede	Private	9 April	Hermies	VC
Kirkpatrick, George*	Sergeant	15 April	Noreuil	MiD
Pope, Charles*	Lieutenant	15 April	Louverval	VC
Carson, Arthur Lawrence	Private	4 May	Bullecourt	DCM
Howell, George Julian	Corporal	6 May	Bullecourt	VC
MacNeill, Alexander	Lieutenant	6 May	Bullecourt	DSO
Moon, Rupert Theo Vance	Lieutenant	12 May	Bullecourt	VC
Morley, Frank	Second Lieutenant	15 May	Reincourt	MC
Grieve, Robert Cuthbert	Captain	7 June	Messines	VC
Bremner, Norman Frederick	Lieutenant	7–8 June	Messines	DSO
Carroll, John	Private	7–12 June	Messines	VC
Matt, Frank Oswald	Corporal	27/28 June	Sailly, France	
Birks, Frederick*	Second Lieutenant	20 September	Menin Road	VC
Errey, Leonard George Prentice	Lieutenant	20 September	Polygon Wood	DSO
Grinham, Melville Roy	Private	20 September	Polygon Wood	DCM
Johnston, William	Corporal	20 September	Menin Road	MM
Johnston, William Wallace Stewart	Major	20 September	Hooge	DSO
King, Patrick	Lance Corporal	20 September	Menin Road	DCM
Poole, Daniel	Sergeant	20 September	Menin Road	Bar to DCM
Ross, Charles Andrew	Private	20 September	Menin Road	DCM
Inwood, Reginald Roy	Private	20–21 September	Menin Road	VC
Dwyer, John James	Sergeant	26 September	Zonnebeke	VC
Hillier, Rubin James	Lance Corporal	26 September	Polygon Wood	DCM
Slater, Henry Ernest	Lieutenant	26 September	Polygon Wood	DSO
Bugden, Patrick Joseph*	Private	26–28 September	Polygon Wood	VC
Wilson, William Overend	Private	26–28 September	Polygon Wood	DCM

McGee, Lewis*	Sergeant	4 October	Broodseinde	VC
Peeler, Walter	Lance Corporal	4 October	Broodseinde	VC
Scales, Joseph Lindley	Lieutenant	9 October	Broodseinde	DSO
Jeffries, Clarence Smith*	Captain	12 October	Passchendaele	VC
McTye, Thomas Martin	Private	13 October	Zonnebeke	DCM
Barrett, Lindsay Ernest	Gunner	26 October	Ypres	DCM
1918				
McDougall, Stanley Robert	Sergeant	28 March	Dernancourt	VC
Boase, Leonard Charles	Lieutenant	4 April	Dernancourt	DSO
Bannister, William Joseph	Corporal	5 April	Dernancourt	DCM
Sayers, Douglas Alfred	Corporal	5 April	Vaire-sous-Corbie	DCM
Tregoweth, Frederick Joseph Arthur	Private	5 April	Albert	DCM
Muriel, Arthur John Chilvers	Lieutenant	5/6 April	Albert	MiD
Burdus, Stanley George	Lieutenant	7 April	Hangard	DSO
Storkey, Percy Valentine	Lieutenant	7 April	Hangard Wood	VC
Sadlier, Clifford William King	Lieutenant	24/25 April	Villers-Bretonneux	VC
Coyne, David Emmett*	Sergeant	15 May	Vaire-sous-Corbie	AM
Edgerton, Eric Henry Drummond	Lieutenant	19 May	Ville-sur-Ancre	DSO
Ruthven, William	Sergeant	19 May	Ville-sur-Ancre	VC
Cromie, George Lendrum	Lieutenant	10/11 June	Morlancourt	DSO
Widdy, Albert Marshall	Lieutenant	21 June	Villers-Bretonneux	MC
Lancaster, Victor Leslie	Lance Corporal	22/23 June	Morlancourt	DCM
Davey, Phillip	Corporal	28 June	Merris	VC
Thompson, Ivo Garfield*	Lieutenant	3/4 July	Ville-sur-Ancre	MiD
Axford, Thomas Leslie	Lance Corporal	4 July	Hamel	VC
Daziel, Henry	Driver	4 July	Hamel	VC
Brown, Walter Ernest	Corporal	6 July	Villers-Bretonneux	VC
Borella, Albert Chalmers	Lieutenant	17–18 July	Villers-Bretonneux	VC
Tunn, John Patrick	Second Lieutenant	19 July	Méteren	AM
Campbell, William	Sapper	8 August	Cerisy	DCM
Dean, Arthur Edwin	Sapper	8 August	Cerisy	DCM
Gaby, Alfred Edward	Lieutenant	8 August	Villers-Bretonneux	VC
Hunt, Ralph Alec	Lieutenant	8 August	Cerisy	DSO
Beatham, Robert Matthew*	Private	9 August	Amiens	VC
Davis, Clayton Edginton	Lieutenant	9 August	Vauvillers	DSO
Robertson, Gilbert Garvan	Private	9 August	Vauvillers	MM
Schumann, John David	Lance Corporal	9 August	Vauvillers	MM
Bloxsome, Norman Rupert	Lance Corporal	10 August	Lihons	DCM
Walker, John William	Private	11/12 August	Somme (near Proyart)	DCM
Statton, Percy Clyde	Sergeant	12 August	Somme (near Proyart)	VC
Joynt, William Donovan	Lieutenant	23 August	Herleville Wood	VC

Kelly, Harry	Sergeant	23 August	St Martin Woods	DCM
McAvoy, John	Lance Corporal	23 August	Herleville Wood	Bar to MM
McCarthy, Lawrence Dominic	Lieutenant	23 August	Madam Wood	VC
Gordon, Bernard Sidney	Lance Corporal	27 August	Fargny Wood	VC
Finlayson, William Randolph	Second Lieutenant	28 August	Mereaucourt Wood	MC
Cartwright, George	Private	31 August	Road Wood	VC
Crank, Ronald	Private	1 September	Péronne	DCM
Currey, William Matthew	Private	1 September	Péronne	VC
Lowerson, Albert David	Sergeant	1 September	Mont St Quentin	VC
MacTier, Robert*	Private	1 September	Mont St Quentin	VC
Towner, Edgar Thomas	Lieutenant	1 September	Mont St Quentin	VC
Buckley, Alexander Henry*	Corporal	1–2 September	Péronne	VC
Hall, Arthur Charles	Corporal	1–2 September	Péronne	VC
O'Connor, Alexander Ignatius	Sergeant	1–2 September	Péronne	DCM
Weathers, Lawrence Carthage	Corporal	2 September	Mont St Quentin	VC
Buckley, Maurice Vincent	Sergeant	18 September	Le Verguier	VC
Woods, James Park	Private	18 September	Le Verguier	VC
Wark, Blair Anderson	Major	29 September – 1 October	Bellicourt to Joncourt	VC
Ryan, Edward John Francis	Private	30 September	Bellicourt	VC
Maxwell, Joseph	Lieutenant	3 October	Beaurevoir Line	VC
Ingram, George Morby	Second Lieutenant	5 October	Montbrehain	VC

Sinai and Palestine campaign

Name	Rank	Date(s)	Location/Battle	Award
1917				
McNamara, Francis Hubert	Lieutenant (AFC)	20 March	Raid near Gaza	VC
Preston, Richard Martin Peter**	Major	1 September	Bir Saba	Bar to DSO
Fetherstonhaugh, Cuthbert Murchison	Major	31 October	Beersheba	DSO
Hyman, Eric Montague	Major	31 October	Beersheba	DSO
Lawson, James	Major	31 October	Beersheba	DSO
James, Albert Ernest	Sergeant	7 November	Tel el Khuweilfeh	DCM
Bowman, William Nesbit	Sergeant	12 November	Berkusie	DCM

Second World War

North Africa and the Middle East

Name	Rank	Date(s)	Location/Battle	Award
1941				
Edmondson, John Hurst*	Corporal	13/14 April	Tobruk	VC
Cutler, Arthur Roden	Lieutenant	19 June – 6 July	Merdjayoun	VC
Gordon, James Hannah	Private	10 July	Jezzine	VC

Anderson, Kitchener Crawford*	Lance Corporal	3 August	Tobruk	MiD
1942				
Howes, Thomas Edward White	Pilot Officer	25/26 June	Ras el-Kanayis	DFC
Neuendorf, Keith Otto*	Captain	16 July	El Alamein	MiD
Gurney, Arthur Stanley*	Private	22 July	El Alamein	VC
Kibby, William Henry*	Sergeant	23–31 October	El Alamein	VC
Gratwick, Percival Eric*	Private	25–26 October	El Alamein	VC

European theatre

Name	Rank	Date(s)	Location/Battle	Award
1942				
Middleton, Rawdon Hume*	Flight Sergeant	28/29 November	Raid on Turin	VC

Pacific theatre

Name	Rank	Date(s)	Location/Battle	Award
1942				
Anderson, Charles Groves Wright	Lieutenant Colonel	18–22 January	Muar	VC
Bicks, Charles Henry	Captain	26–29 August	Gama River	DSO
Kingsbury, Bruce Steel*	Private	29 August	Isurava	VC
McCallum, Charles Reginald	Corporal	29 August	Isurava	DCM
Maidment, George	Private	30 August	Abuari Ridge	DCM
French, John Alexander*	Corporal	4 September	Milne Bay	VC
Miller, Stanley George	Staff Sergeant	20 November	Soputa	DCM
1943				
Newton, William Ellis*	Flight Lieutenant	16–18 March	New Guinea	VC
Kelliher, Richard	Private	13 September	Lae	VC
Woods, William Arthur	Private	13 October	Kumawa	DCM
Price, Owen*	Squadron Leader	8/9 November	Rabaul	MiD
Derrick, Thomas Currie	Sergeant	24 November	Finschhafen	VC
Bonner, Ronald James	Sergeant	29 November	Wareo	MM
Hall, Mervyn	Corporal	27 December	Shaggy Ridge	DCM
1945				
Rathey, Reginald Roy	Corporal	22 March	Buin Road	VC
Chowne, Albert*	Lieutenant	25 March	Dagua	VC
Mackey, John Bernard*	Corporal	12 May	Tarakan	VC
O'Connor, Owen George John	Lance Corporal	13 May	Hongorai River	DCM
Kenna, Edward	Private	15 May	Wewak	VC
Walters, Richard Robert	Private	10 June	Labuan	DCM
Starceвич, Leslie Thomas	Private	28 June	Beaufort	VC
Allsopp, Raymond Jesse*	Captain	1 July	Balikpapan	MiD
Partridge, Frank John	Private	24 July	Ratsua	VC

Vietnam War

Name	Rank	Date(s)	Location/Battle	Award
1964				
Conway, Kevin George*	Warrant Officer Class II	6 July	Nam Dong District	
1965				
Wheatley, Kevin Arthur*	Warrant Officer Class II	13 November	Tra Bong Valley	VC
1967				
Badcoe, Peter John*	Major	23 February – 7 April	Phu Thu, Quang Dien and Huong Tra	VC
1969				
Simpson, Rayene Stewart	Warrant Officer Class II	6 & 11 May	Kon Tum Province	VC
Payne, Keith	Warrant Officer Class II	24 May	Kon Tum Province	VC

Appendix B

Members of the Australian Forces Officially Recommended or Considered for the George Cross

The following records those members of the Australian armed forces who, as verified by extant archival records, were either awarded, recommended or officially considered for the award of the George Cross (GC). Accordingly, it does not include civilians awarded or recommended for the GC, nor recipients of predecessor decorations such as the Albert Medal, Edward Medal or Empire Gallantry Medal that later exchanged their awards for the GC. Due to the way recommendation and related files are archived, it is possible that others have been officially considered for the GC. The following should thus not be taken as a conclusive list, but a comprehensive one in which all entries have been verified.

Legend

Symbol	Meaning
*	Indicates posthumous recommendation
CBC	King's Commendation for Brave Conduct
GC	George Cross
GM	George Medal
POW	Prisoner of war
RANVR	Royal Australian Naval Volunteer Reserve

Second World War

European theatre

Name	Rank	Date(s)	Location	Award
Reid, Howard Dudley	Sub-Lieutenant (RANVR)	December 1940 – January 1941	United Kingdom	GM
Upton, Keith Swan	Lieutenant (RANVR)	October 1941	United Kingdom	GM
Syme, Hugh Randall	Lieutenant (RANVR)	May 1941 – December 1942	United Kingdom	GC
Mould, John Stuart	Lieutenant (RANVR)	November 1941 – June 1942	United Kingdom	GC
Goldsworthy, Leon Verdi	Lieutenant (RANVR)	June 1943 – April 1944	United Kingdom	GC
Gosse, George	Lieutenant (RANVR)	8–19 May 1945	Bremen Harbour, Germany	GC

Pacific theatre

Name	Rank	Date(s)	Location	Award
Matthews, Lionel Colin*	Captain	August 1942 – March 1944	Sandakan, Borneo	GC

Hardy, Benjamin Gower*	Private	5 August 1944	Cowra, Australia (POW breakout)	GC
Jones, Ralph*	Private	5 August 1944	Cowra, Australia (POW breakout)	GC
Larsen, Conrad*	Leading Aircraftman	18 December 1944	RAAF Base Rathmines	CBC

Korean War

Name	Rank	Date(s)	Location	Award
Madden, Horace William*	Private	April – November 1951	POW camps in Suan, Kangdong and Pingchong-Ni	GC

Peacetime

Name	Rank	Date(s)	Location	Award
Rogers, Jonathan*	Chief Petty Officer	10 February 1964	Off the coast of New South Wales (<i>Melbourne– Voyager</i> collision)	GC

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Archival material

Australian War Memorial, Canberra

Official Records

- | | |
|--------|---|
| AWM4 | Australian Imperial Force Unit War Diaries, 1914–18 War |
| AWM25 | Written Records, 1914–18 War |
| AWM26 | Operations Files, 1914–18 War |
| AWM27 | Records Arranged According to AWM Library Subject Classification |
| AWM28 | Recommendation Files for Honours and Awards, AIF, 1914–18 War |
| AWM33 | New Guinea Campaign Records, 1914–18 War |
| AWM38 | Official History, 1914–18 War: Records of C E W Bean, Official Historian |
| AWM54 | Written Records, 1939–45 War |
| AWM63 | 2nd AIF Headquarters (Middle East), Registry Records |
| AWM65 | RAAF Biographical Files |
| AWM88 | Governor General's Office Honours and Awards Files |
| AWM93 | Australian War Memorial Registry Files – First Series |
| AWM103 | Headquarters 1st Australian Task Force (Nui Dat) Records |
| AWM119 | Office of Military Secretary, Army Honours and Awards Confidential Working Files |
| AWM192 | Governor General's Office, Index to Honours and Awards |
| AWM269 | The Official History of Australia's Involvement in Southeast Asian Conflicts 1948–1975 – Emergency and confrontation – Records of Peter Dennis and Jeffrey Grey |
| AWM278 | The Official History of Australia's Involvement in Southeast Asian Conflicts 1948–1975 – Up top – Records of Jeffrey Grey |
| AWM315 | Australian War Memorial Registry Files – Second Series |

Art

- | | |
|-----------|--|
| ARTV00026 | Enlist in the Sportsmen's Thousand |
| ARTV05005 | Which? Man You Are Wanted! In the Sportsmen's 1000 |

Australian Red Cross Society Records

1DRL/0428 Wounded and Missing Bureau Enquiry Files 1914–18 War

Film

DPR/TV/593 Wheatley Victoria Cross Presentation

Private Records

1DRL/0375 Inwood, Reginald Roy, VC (Corporal, b.1890 – d.1971)
2DRL/0793 Chauvel, Sir Henry George (Harry) (General, b.1865 – d.1945)
3DRL/6392 Blackburn, Arthur Seaforth, VC, CMG, CBE (Brigadier, b.1892 – d.1960)
3DRL/6643 Blamey, Sir Thomas GBE, KCB, CMG, DSO (Field Marshal, b.1884 – d.1951)
PR00535 Chauvel, Sir Henry George (Harry) (General, b.1865 – d.1945)
PR00548 Liddiard, James Norman (Private, b.1911 – d.1983)
PR02082 Ross-King, Alice, MM (Sister, b.1887 – d.1968)
PR04808 Tubb, Frederick Harold, VC (b.1881 – d.1917)

Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, King's College London

Private Records

GODLEY, Gen Sir Alexander John (1867–1957)
HAMILTON, Gen Sir Ian Standish Monteith (1853–1947)

National Archives of Australia, Canberra

Official records

A462 Prime Minister's Department Correspondence Files, Multiple Number Series, Fourth System
A463 Prime Minister's Department Correspondence files, Annual Single Number Series
A471 Courts-Martial Files, Single Number Series
A663 Department of Defence Correspondence Files, Multiple Number Series with 'O' Prefix
A705 Department of Air Correspondence Files, Multiple Number (Melbourne) Series (Primary Numbers 1-323)
A816 Department of Defence Correspondence Files, Multiple Number Series
A989 Department of External Affairs Correspondence Files, Multiple Number Series with Year Prefix

A1838	Department of External Affairs Correspondence Files, Multiple Number Series
A1945	Department of Defence Correspondence Files, Multiple Number Series
A1946	Department of Defence Correspondence Files, Annual Single Number Series
A2031	Defence Committee Minutes
A2880	Governor-General Correspondence Files, Multiple Number Series
A2910	Australian High Commission, London Correspondence Files, Multiple Number Series (Class 400)
A5954	The Shedden Collection
A8681	Public Relations Bulletins from the Department of Air, Directorate of Public Relations
A11191	Governor-General Correspondence Files, 'Special File' Series, Relating to Honours for Service in the Second World War
B883	Second Australian Imperial Force Personnel Dossiers, 1939–1947
B2458	Army Personnel Files, Multiple Number Series
MP367/1	Department of Defence General Correspondence Files

National Archives of Australia, Melbourne

Official Records

B3756	Department of Defence Correspondence Files, Annual Single Number Series
B73	Personal Case Files, World War I

National Archives of Australia, Perth

Official Records

K60	Personal Case Files, Single Number with 'M' and Other Letter Prefixes Series
PP645/1	Medical and Hospital Files of Veterans who Served with Australian Forces in 1914–1918 War and 1950–1956 Korean Malayan War in Numerical Order with 'M', 'H', 'MKM' and 'HKM' Prefixes

RAF Museum, London

Official Records

A395	Recommendation for Honours and Awards Form (Photocopy) for Award of DFC, Later Changed to VC, to Flt Lt James Brindley Nicholson (sic) (39329), 26 October 1940
------	---

Private Records

X002-5599 Papers Relating to Flt Sgt R.H. Middleton VC

State Library of New South Wales, Sydney

Private Records

MLMSS 15 Papers of Major General William Holmes and Colonel R. J. A. Travers, ca.
1900–1950, Mainly Relating to World War I and Anzac Memorial Appeal

State Library of Victoria, Melbourne

Art

H2001.34/3a Enlist in the Sportsmen's Thousand. Play Up and Play the Game.

The National Archives, Kew

Official Records

ADM 1 Admiralty, and Ministry of Defence, Navy Department: Correspondence and
Papers

AIR 2 Air Ministry and Ministry of Defence: Registered Files

CO 323 Colonies, General: Original Correspondence

T 351 Treasury: Ceremonial Branch: Civilian Gallantry Awards to Military Personnel
(GCM Series) Files

WO 6 War Department and Successors: Secretary of State for War and Secretary of
State for War and the Colonies, Out-letters

WO 32 War Office and Successors: Registered Files (General Series)

WO 98 War Office: Correspondence and Papers Concerning the Victoria Cross

WO 373 War Office and Ministry of Defence: Military Secretary's Department:
Recommendations for Honours and Awards for Gallant and Distinguished
Service (Army)

Newspapers and magazines

Adelaide Observer

Advertiser (Adelaide)

Age (Melbourne)

Argus (Melbourne)

Armidale Chronicle

Arrow (Sydney)
Australasian (Melbourne)
Australian (Sydney)
Australian News (London)
Australian Women's Weekly (Sydney)
Ballarat Star
Bathurst Daily Free Press and Mining Journal
Bendigo Independent
Berkshire Chronicle (Reading)
Braidwood Dispatch
Brisbane Courier
Cairns Post
Canberra Times
Coffs Harbour Advocate
Colonial Times (Hobart)
Commonwealth of Australia Gazette
Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers' Advocate (Parramatta)
Daily Herald (Adelaide)
Daily News (Perth)
Daily Telegraph (London)
Daily Telegraph (Sydney)
Derby Evening Telegraph
Dubbo Dispatch
Eastern Daily Express (Norwich)
Eastern Districts Chronicle (York)
Edinburgh Gazette
Evening News (Sydney)
Evening Standard (London)
Evening Telegraph and Post (Dundee)
Express and Telegraph (Adelaide)
Freeman's Journal (Sydney)
Geelong Advertiser
Goulburn Evening Post
Herald (Melbourne)

Hobart Town Gazette
Independent (Deniliquin)
Inglewood Advertiser
Korong Vale Lance
Kyneton Guardian
Launceston Courier
London Gazette
Longreach Leader
Malvern Standard
Maitland Mercury
Melbourne Punch
Mercury (Hobart)
Morning Bulletin (Rockhampton)
National Advocate (Bathurst)
Newcastle Morning Herald
Newcastle Sun
News (Adelaide)
Northern Star (Lismore)
Port Phillip Gazette
Portland Guardian
Queensland Times (Ipswich)
Register (Adelaide)
Reveille (Sydney)
Singleton Argus
Sunday Times (Sydney)
South Australian Advertiser (Adelaide)
South Australian Register (Adelaide)
Sport (Adelaide)
Sun (Sydney)
Sunday Herald (Sydney)
Sunday Mail (Brisbane)
Sunday Telegraph (Sydney)
Sunday Times (Sydney)
Sydney Gazette

Sydney Mail
Sydney Morning Herald
Tasmanian News (Hobart)
Telegraph (Brisbane)
Telegraph (London)
Times (London)
Toowoomba Chronicle
Truth (Brisbane)
Western Champion (Parkes)
West Australian (Perth)
Westralian Worker (Perth)
Worker (Wagga Wagga)
Yorkshire Telegraph and Star (Sheffield)

Published diaries and memoirs

Davison, Frank Dalby. *The Wells of Beersheba: A Light Horse Legend*. Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1933.

Gibson, Guy. *Enemy Coast Ahead*. London: Michael Joseph Ltd, 1946.

Halpern, Paul, ed. *The Keyes Papers: Selections from the Private and Official Correspondence of Admiral of the Fleet Baron Keyes of Zeebrugge*. Vol. 1. London: Navy Records Society, 1972.

Leichhardt, Ludwig. *Journal of an Overland Expedition in Australia, from Morton Bay to Port Essington, a Distance of Upwards of 3000 Miles, during the Years 1844–1845*. London: T. & W. Boone, 1847.

Martineau, John. *The Life of Henry Pelham, Fifth Duke of Newcastle, 1811–1864*. London: John Murray, 1908.

Monash, John. *The Australian Victories in France in 1918*. 1920. Reprint, Collingwood: Black Inc, 2015.

Percival, A.E. *The War in Malaya*. London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1949.

Reeves, L.C. *Australians in Action in New Guinea*. Sydney: Australasian News Company, 1915.

Scott, F. Peter. *Command in Vietnam: Reflections of a Commanding Officer*. McCrae: Slouch Hat Publications, 2007.

Government publications

Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act. 1900. 63 & 64 Vict.

Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, no. 9 (1945).

Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal. *Smith and the Department of Defence Re: Kirby [2016] DHAAT 20*. 1 August 2016, https://defence-honours-tribunal.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/2016_DHAAT_20_Smith-Kirby-Decision-Report.pdf.

Hansard Parliamentary Debates, 3d series (1830–91).

The Report of the Inquiry into Unresolved Recognition for Past Acts of Naval and Military Gallantry and Valour. Canberra: Defence Honours and Awards Tribunal, 2013.

Military Secretary's Branch. *Instructions Regarding Recommendations for Honours and Rewards*. France: Army Printing and Stationary Services, 1918.

New South Wales Parliamentary Debates, vol. 16 (1885).

War Office. *Pamphlet on Military Honours and Awards*. 1953. Reprint, Melbourne: Base Printing Company, 1958.

War Office. *Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire during the Great War, 1914–1920*. London: HM Stationary Office, 1922.

Interviews

Reiter, Frank. Interview. *Australians at War Film Archive*, 20 August 2003, <http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/607-frank-reiter>.

Thompson, Robert. Interview. *Australians at War Film Archive*, 5 March 2004, <http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/1594-robert-thompson>.

Other published material

Fitchett, W.T. *Deeds That Won the Empire: Historic Battle Scenes*. 3rd ed. London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1897.

Leask, G.A. *V.C. Heroes of the War*. London: George G. Harrap, 1916.

Moran, John Wilson, Baron. *The Anatomy of Courage*. London: Constable, 1945.

Robertson, J.M. *Essays Towards Peace*. London: Watts & Co., 1913.

Secondary Sources

Official histories

Bean, Charles. *The Australian Imperial Force in France during the Allied Offensive, 1918*. Vol. 6 of *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–1918*. Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1942.

Bean, Charles. *The Australian Imperial Force in France, 1916*. Vol. 3 of *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–1918*. 12th ed. Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1941.

Bean, Charles. *The Australian Imperial Force in France, 1917*. Vol. 4 of *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–1918*. 11th ed. Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1941.

Bean, Charles. *The Story of ANZAC from 4 May, 1915, to the Evacuation of the Gallipoli Peninsula*. Vol. 2 of *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–1918*. 11th ed. Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1941.

Butler, A.G. *Special Problems and Services*. Vol. 3 of *Official History of the Australian Army Medical Services, 1914–1918*. Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1943.

Butler, A.G. *The Western Front*. Vol. 2 of *Official History of the Australian Army Medical Services, 1914–1918*. Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1940.

Coulthard-Clark, Chris. *The RAAF in Vietnam: Australian Air Involvement in the Vietnam War 1962–1975*. Vol. 4 of *Official History of Australia's Involvement in Southeast Asian Conflicts 1948–1975*. St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1995.

Ekins, Ashley. *Fighting to the Finish: The Australian Army and the Vietnam War 1968–1975*. Vol. 9 of *Official History of Australia's Involvement in Southeast Asian Conflicts 1948–1975*. Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2012.

Gill, G. Hermon. *Royal Australian Navy, 1939–1942*. Vol. 1 of *Australia in the War of 1939–1945: Series 2 – Navy*. Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1957.

Gill, G. Hermon. *Royal Australian Navy, 1942–1945*. Vol. 2 of *Australia in the War of 1939–1945: Series 2 – Navy*. Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1968.

Gillison, Douglas. *Royal Australian Air Force, 1939–1942*. Vol. 1 of *Australia in the War of 1939–1945: Series 3 – Air*. Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1962.

- Grey, Jeffrey. *Up Top: The Royal Australian Navy and Southeast Asian Conflicts 1955–1972*. Vol. 7 of *Official History of Australia's Involvement in Southeast Asian Conflicts 1948–1975*. St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1998.
- Gullett, Henry. *The Australian Imperial Force in Sinai and Palestine, 1914–1918*. Vol. 7 of *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–1918*. 10th ed. Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1941.
- Herington, John. *Air Power Over Europe, 1944–1945*. Vol. 4 of *Australia in the War of 1939–1945: Series 3 – Air*. Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1963.
- Long, Gavin. *The Final Campaigns*. Vol. 7 of *Australia in the War of 1939–1945: Series 1 – Army*. Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1963.
- Long, Gavin. *Greece, Crete and Syria*. Vol. 2 of *Australia in the War of 1939–1945: Series 1 – Army*. Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1953.
- Long, Gavin. *To Benghazi*. Vol. 1 of *Australia in the War of 1939–1945: Series 1 – Army*. 1952. Reprint, Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1961.
- MacKenzie, S.S. *The Australians at Rabaul: The Capture and Administration of the German Possessions in the Southern Pacific*. Vol. 10 of *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–1918*. 10th ed. Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1941.
- Maughan, Barton. *Tobruk and El Alamein*. Vol. 3 of *Australia in the War of 1939–1945: Series 1 – Army*. Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1966.
- McNeil, Ian. *To Long Tan: The Australian Army and the Vietnam War, 1950–1966*. Vol. 2 of *The Official History of Australia's Involvement in Southeast Asian Conflicts 1948–1975*. St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1993.
- O'Neill, Robert. *Combat Operations*. Vol. 2 of *Australia in the Korean War 1950–53*. Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1985.
- O'Neill, Robert. *Strategy and Diplomacy*. Vol. 1 of *Australia in the Korean War 1950–53*. Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1981.
- Scott, Ernest. *Australia During the War*. Vol. 11 of *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–1918*. 7th ed. Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1941.
- Wigmore, Lionel. *The Japanese Thrust*, vol. 4 of *Australia in the War of 1939–1945: Series 1 – Army*. Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1957.

Unit histories

Glenn, John. *Tobruk to Tarakan: The Story of a Fighting Unit*. 70th Anniversary Alamein edition. Adelaide: Paul Oaten, 2012.

Marshall, A.J., ed. *Nulli Secundus Log*. Sydney: 2/2nd Australian Infantry Battalion, 1946.

Smith, Neil. *Men of Beersheba: A History of the 4th Light Horse Regiment, 1914–1919*. Melbourne: Mostly Unsung Military History Research and Publications, 1993.

Taylor, F.W., and T.A. Cusack. *Nulli Secundus: A History of the Second Battalion, A.I.F., 1914–1919*. 1942. Reprint, Swanbourne: John Burridge Military Antiques, 1992.

Books

Abbott, P.E. *Recipients of the Distinguished Conduct Medal, 1855–1909*. London: J.B. Hayward and Son, 1975.

Abbott, P.E., and J.M.A. Tamplin. *British Gallantry Awards*. 2nd ed. London: Nimrod Dix & Co, 1981.

Allison, Scott T., and George R. Goethals. *Heroes: What They Do and Why We Need Them*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Ariotti, Kate. *Captive Anzacs: Australian POWs of the Ottomans during the First World War*. Port Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2018.

Arthur, Max. *Symbol of Courage: The Men Behind the Medal*. London: Pan Books, 2005.

Atkinson, James. *The Kapyong Battalion: Medal Roll of Third Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment, Battle of Kapyong, 23–24 April, 1951*. Ryde: New South Wales Military Historical Society, 1977.

Austin, Ronald. *Australian and New Zealand Honours and Awards of the Boer War, 1899–1902*. McCrae: Slouch Hat Publications, 2010.

Barczewski, Stephanie. *Heroic Failure and the British*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016.

Barnes, I.L. *Australian Gallant and Distinguished Service, Vietnam 1962–73: Being a Record of British and Foreign Decorations Awarded to Australian Servicemen*. Canberra: Military Historical Society of Australia, 1974.

Barrett, John. *Falling In: Australians and 'Boy Conscription,' 1911–1915*. Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1979.

- Bassett, Jan. *Guns and Brooches: Australian Army Nursing from the Boer War to the Gulf War*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1992.
- Bayly, Christopher, and Tim Harper. *Forgotten Armies: The Fall of British Asia, 1941–1945*. London: Allen Lane, 2004.
- Baynes, John. *Morale: A Study of Men and Courage. The Second Scottish Rifles at the Battle of Neuve Chapelle, 1915*. London: Cassell, 1967.
- Beaumont, Joan. *Broken Nation: Australians in the Great War*. Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2013.
- Beaumont, Joan. *Australian Defence: Sources and Statistics*. Vol. 6 of *The Australian Centenary History of Defence*. South Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Best, Geoffrey. *Honour among Men and Nations: Transformations of an Idea*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982.
- Bill, Stuart. *Middleton VC: The Life of Pilot Officer Rawdon Hume Middleton, VC of the Royal Australian Air Force as Remembered by His Friends and Colleagues*. East Bentleigh: S. & L. Bill, 1991.
- Binney, Marcus. *The Women Who Lived for Danger: The Women Agents of SOE in the Second World War*. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2002.
- Bisset, Ian. *The George Cross*. London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1961.
- Blair, Anne. *Ted Serong: The Life of an Australia Counter-Insurgency Expert*. South Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Blanch, Craig, and Aaron Pegram. *For Valour: Australians Awarded the Victoria Cross*. Sydney: NewSouth Publishing, 2018.
- Bou, Jean. *Light Horse: A History of Australia's Mounted Arm*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Bou, Jean, and Peter Dennis. *The Australian Imperial Force*. Vol. 5 of *The Centenary History of Australia in the Great War*. South Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2016.
- Bowyer, Chaz. *For Valour: The Air VCs*. London: Grub Street, 1992.
- Brazier, Kevin. *The Complete George Cross: A Full Chronological Record of All George Cross Holders*. Barnsley: Pen & Sword Military, 2012.

- Brazier, Kevin. *The Complete Victoria Cross: A Full Chronological Record of all Holders of Britain's Highest Award for Gallantry*. South Yorkshire: Pen & Sword, 2010.
- Breen, Bob. *The Battalion of Kapyong: 3rd Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment, Korea 23–24 April 1951*. Georges Heights: Headquarters Training Command, 1992.
- Briggs, Asa. *The War of Words*. Vol. 3 of *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom*. Rev. ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.
- Brown, James. *Anzac's Long Shadow: The Cost of Our National Obsession*. Collingwood: Redback, 2014.
- Buick, Bob. *All Guts and No Glory: The Story of a Long Tan Warrior*. St. Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 2000.
- Cawthorne, Nigel. *Heroes: The True Stories Behind Every VC Winner Since World War Two*. London: John Blake Publishing, 2007.
- Challinger, Michael. *Anzacs in Arkhangel: The Untold Story of Australia and the Invasion of Russia, 1918–19*. Melbourne: Hardie Grant Books, 2010).
- Connell, R.W. *Masculinities*. St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1995.
- Connelly, Mark. *Reaching for the Stars: A New History of Bomber Command in World War II*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2001.
- Connor, John. *The Australian Frontier Wars, 1788–1838*. Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2002.
- Connor, John, Peter Stanley, and Peter Yule. *The War at Home*. Vol. 4 of *The Centenary History of Australia in the Great War*. South Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2015.
- Cooper, Alan W. *Bravery Awards for Aerial Combat: Stories Behind the Award of the CGM (Flying)*. Barnsley: Pen & Sword Aviation, 2007.
- Coulthard-Clark, Chris. *McNamara, VC: A Hero's Dilemma*. Fairbairn: Air Power Studies Centre, 1997.
- Coulthard-Clark, Chris. *The Third Brother: The Royal Australian Air Force 1921–39*. North Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1991.
- Coulthard-Clark, Chris. *Where Australians Fought: The Encyclopaedia of Australia's Battles*. St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1998.

- Creagh, O'Moore. *The Victoria Cross, 1856–1920*. Vol. 1 of *The V.C. and D.S.O. Book*. 1924. Reprint, Sussex: Naval and Military Press, 2001.
- Crook, Michael. *The Evolution of the Victoria Cross: A Study in Administrative History*. London: Midas Books, 1975.
- Crotty, Martin. *Making the Australian Male: Middle-Class Masculinity, 1870–1920*. Carlton South: Melbourne University Press, 2001.
- Daley, Paul. *Beersheba: A Journey through Australia's Forgotten War*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2009.
- Darian-Smith, Kate. *On the Home Front: Melbourne in Wartime, 1939–1945*. 2nd ed. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2009.
- David, Saul. *The Indian Mutiny: 1857*. London: Penguin, 2003.
- Davies, Bruce, and Gary McKay. *The Men Who Persevered: The AATTV—The Most Highly Decorated Australian Unit of the Viet Nam War*. Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2005.
- Davison, Graeme. *The Use and Abuse of Australian History*. St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 2000.
- Dawson, Graham. *Soldier Heroes: British Adventure, Empire and the Imagining of Masculinities*. London: Routledge, 1994.
- De la Billière, Peter. *Supreme Courage: Heroic Stories from 150 Years of the Victoria Cross*. London: Little Brown, 2004.
- Dean, Peter J. *MacArthur's Coalition: US and Australian Operations in the Southwest Pacific Area, 1942–1945*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2018.
- Dinter, Elmar. *Hero or Coward: Pressures Facing the Soldier in Battle*. London: Frank Cass, 1985.
- Dornan, Peter. *Nicky Barr: An Australian Air Ace*. Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2005.
- Duckers, Peter. *British Gallantry Awards 1855–2000*. Oxford: Shire Publications, 2013.
- Eather, Steve. *Odd Jobs: RAAF Operations in Japan, the Berlin Airlift, Korea, Malaya and Malta, 1946–1960*. Point Cook: Royal Australian Air Force Museum, 1996.

- Edgar, Bill. *Warrior of Kokoda: A Biography of Brigadier Arnold Potts*. St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1999.
- Edwards, Peter. *Australia and the Vietnam War: The Essential History*. Sydney: NewSouth Publishing, 2014.
- Farquhar, Murray. *Derrick V.C.* Adelaide: Rigby, 1982.
- Faulkner, Andrew. *Arthur Blackburn, VC: An Australian Hero, His Men, and Their Two World Wars*. Kent Town: Wakefield Press, 2008.
- Fennell, Jonathan. *Combat and Morale in the North African Campaign: The Eighth Army and the Path to El Alamein*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Figes, Orlando. *The Crimean War: A History*. New York: Metropolitan Books, 2010.
- Foot, M.R.D. *SOE: An Outline History of the Special Operations Executive, 1940–46*. London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1985.
- Frame, Tom. *No Pleasure Cruise: The Story of the Royal Australian Navy*. Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2004.
- Frame, T.R., and G.J. Swinden. *First In, Last Out: The Navy at Gallipoli*. Kenthurst: Kangaroo Press, 1990.
- Francis, Martin. *The Flyer: British Culture and the Royal Air Force, 1939–1945*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Franki, George, and Clyde Slatyer. *Mad Harry: Australia's Most Decorated Soldier*. Sydney: Kangaroo Press, 2003.
- Frayn Turner, John. *VCs of the Second World War*. South Yorkshire: Pen & Sword, 2004.
- Gerster, Robin. *Big-noting: The Heroic Theme in Australian War Writing*. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1987.
- Glanfield, John. *Bravest of the Brave: The Story of the Victoria Cross*. Stroud: The History Press, 2005.
- Gliddon, Gerald. *The Final Days, 1918. VCs of the First World War*. Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2000.
- Gliddon, Gerald. *The Sideshows. VCs of the First World War*. Gloucestershire: Sutton Publishing, 2005.

- Grant, Ian. *Jacka, VC: Australia's Finest Fighting Soldier*. South Melbourne: Macmillan, 1989.
- Grant, Lachlan. *Australian Soldiers in Asia-Pacific in World War II*. Sydney: NewSouth Publishing, 2014.
- Grey, Jeffrey. *The Australian Army*. Vol. 1 of *The Australian Centenary History of Defence*. South Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Grey, Jeffrey. *The Commonwealth Armies and the Korean War*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988.
- Grey, Jeffrey. *A Military History of Australia*. 3rd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.
- Grey, Jeffrey. *The War with the Ottoman Empire*. Vol. 2 of *The Centenary History of Australia in the Great War*. South Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2015.
- Halliday, Hugh. *Valour Reconsidered: Inquiries into the Victoria Cross and Other Awards for Extreme Bravery*. Toronto: Robin Brass Studio, 2006.
- Hancock, W.K. *Australia*. London: E. Benn, 1930.
- Harper, Glyn, and Colin Richardson. *In the Face of the Enemy: The Complete History of the Victoria Cross and New Zealand*. Auckland: HarperCollins, 2007.
- Harris, J.P. *Douglas Haig and the First World War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.
- Harris, Kirsty. *More than Bombs and Bandages: Australian Army Nurses at Work in World War I*. Newport: Big Sky Publishing, 2011.
- Hill, Alec. *Chauvel of the Light Horse: A Biography of General Sir Harry Chauvel, GCMG, KCB*. Loftus: Australian Military History Publications, 2008. First published 1978 by Melbourne University Press.
- Holbrook, Carolyn. *Anzac: The Unauthorised Biography*. Sydney: NewSouth, 2014.
- Horner, David. *General Vasey's War*. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1992.
- Horner, David. *The Gunners: A History of Australian Artillery*. St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1995.

- Horner, David. *Inside the War Cabinet: Directing Australia's War Effort, 1939–45*. St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1996.
- Inglis, Ken. *The Australian Colonists: An Exploration of Social History, 1788–1870*. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1974.
- Inglis, Ken. *The Rehearsal: Australians at War in the Sudan 1885*. Adelaide: Rigby, 1985.
- James, Karl. *Double Diamonds: Australian Commandos in the Pacific War, 1941–45*. Sydney: NewSouth Publishing, 2016.
- James, Karl. *The Hard Slog: Australians in the Bougainville Campaign, 1944–45*. Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2012.
- Jeffery, Keith. *1916: A Global History*. London: Bloomsbury, 2015.
- Johnson, Clive. *Australians Awarded: A Concise Guide to Military and Civilian Decorations, Medals and Other Awards to Australians from 1772 to 2013 with their Valuations*. 2nd ed. Banksmedow: Renniks Publications, 2014.
- Johnston, Mark. *Anzacs in the Middle East: Australian Soldiers, Their Allies and the Local People in World War II*. Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2013.
- Johnston, Mark. *The Australian Army in World War II*. Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2007.
- Johnston, Mark. *The Proud 6th: An Illustrated History of the 6th Australian Division, 1939–45*. Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2008.
- Johnston, Mark. *Stretcher-Bearers: Saving Australians from Gallipoli to Kokoda*. Port Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2015.
- Johnston, Mark, and Peter Stanley. *Alamein: The Australian Story*. South Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Jones, Heather. *Violence Against Prisoners of War in the First World War: Britain, France and Germany, 1914–1920*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.
- Keegan, John, and Richard Holmes. *Soldiers: A History of Men in Battle*. London: Guild Publishing, 1985.
- Kennedy, Paul. *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery*. London: Atlantic Highlands, 1986.
- Kuring, Ian. *Red Coats to Cams: A History of Australian Infantry, 1788 to 2001*. Loftus: Australian Military History Publications, 2004.

- Larsson, Marina. *Shattered Anzacs: Living with the Scars of War*. Sydney: UNSW Press, 2009.
- Lewis, Tom. *Honour Denied: Teddy Sheean a Tasmanian Hero and Other Brave Warriors of the Royal Australian Navy*. Kent Town: Avonmore Books, 2016.
- Lloyd, Clem, and Jacqui Rees. *The Last Shilling: A History of Repatriation in Australia*. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1994.
- Macklin, Robert. *Bravest: How Some of Australia's Greatest War Heroes Won Their Medals*. Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2008.
- Madden, Michael C. *The Victoria Cross: Australia Remembers*. Warriewood: Big Sky Publishing, 2018.
- Malone, Michael J., and Peter D. Lutley. *Simmo: A Biography of Ray Simpson, VC, DCM One of Australia's Greatest Soldiers*. Perth: Imprimatur Books, 2015.
- Mangan, J.A. *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School: The Emergence and Consolidation of an Educational Ideology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981.
- Marshall, S.L.A. *Men Against Fire: The Problem of Battle Command in Future War*. 1947. Reprint, Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1978.
- Masters, Chris. *No Front Line: Australia's Special Forces at War in Afghanistan*. Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2017.
- Masters, Chris. *Uncommon Soldier: Brave, Compassionate and Tough, the Making of Australia's Modern Diggers*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2012.
- McCarthy, Dayton. *The Battle of Maryang San: 1951*. Australian Army Campaign Series. Newport: Big Sky Publishing, 2018.
- McCormack, Gavan. *Cold War Hot War: An Australian Perspective on the Korean War*. Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1983.
- McKernan, Michael. *Australians at Home: World War I*. Scoresby: Five Mile Press, 2014.
- McKernan, Michael. *Australians at Home: World War II*. Scoresby: Five Mile Press, 2014.
- McKernan, Michael. *Gallipoli: A Short History*. Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2010.

- McKernan, Michael. *The Strength of a Nation: Six Years of Australians Fighting for the Nation and Defending the Homefront in WWII*. Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2006.
- McKernan, Michael. *This War Never Ends: The Pain of Separation and Return*. St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2001.
- McNeill, Ian. *The Team: Australian Army Advisors in Vietnam, 1962–1972*. St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1992.
- Mead, Gary. *Victoria's Cross: The Untold Story of Britain's Highest Award for Bravery*. London: Atlantic Books, 2015.
- Meyer, Jessica. *Men of War: Masculinity and the First World War in Britain*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.
- Miles, Melissa, and Robin Gerster. *Pacific Exposures: Photography and the Australia–Japan Relationship*. Canberra: ANU Press, 2018.
- Miller, William Ian. *The Mystery of Courage*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000.
- Millet, Allan R. *The War for Korea, 1950–1951: They Came from the North*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2010.
- Molkentin, Michael. *Australia and the War in the Air*. Vol. 1 of *The Centenary History of Australia in the Great War*. South Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2014.
- Molkentin, Michael. *Fire in the Sky: The Australian Flying Corps in the First World War*. Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2012.
- Monteath, Peter. *P.O.W.: Australian Prisoners of War in Hitler's Reich*. Sydney: Pan Macmillan, 2011.
- Myerly, Scott Hughes. *British Military Spectacle: From the Napoleonic Wars through the Crimea*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996.
- Nelson, Hank. *Chased by the Sun: The Australians in Bomber Command in WWII*. Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2002.
- Newton, Dennis. *A Few of 'The Few': Australians and the Battle of Britain*. Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1990.
- Oppenheimer, Melanie. *All Work. No Pay: Australian Volunteers in War*. Walcha: Ohio Productions, 2003.

- Palazzo, Albert. *Australian Military Operations in Vietnam*. Australian Army Campaign Series. Canberra: Army History Unit, 2006.
- Pears, Maurie. *Battlefield Korea: The Korean Battle Honours of the Royal Australian Regiment, 1950–1953*. Loftus: Australian Military History Publications, 2007.
- Peck, John. *War, the Army and Victorian Literature*. Houndmills: Macmillan, 1998.
- Pedersen, Peter. *The Anzacs: Gallipoli to the Western Front*. Camberwell: Penguin Books, 2010.
- Peel, Mark, and Christina Twomey. *A History of Australia*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.
- Perrett, Bryan. *For Valour: Victoria Cross and Medal of Honor Battles*. London: Cassell, 2003.
- Pfennigwerth, Ian. *Bravo Zulu: Honours and Awards to Australian Naval People*. Vol. 1. West Geelong: Echo Books, 2016.
- Pratten, Garth. *Australian Battalion Commanders in the Second World War*. Port Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- Price, John. *Everyday Heroism: Victorian Constructions of the Heroic Civilian*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015.
- Prior, Robin. *Gallipoli: The End of the Myth*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010.
- Ramsland, John. *Venturing into No Man's Land: The Charmed Life of Joseph Maxwell VC World War I Hero*. Melbourne: Brolga Publishing, 2012.
- Reynolds, Henry. *Unnecessary Wars*. Sydney: NewSouth, 2016.
- Rich, Norman. *Why the Crimean War? A Cautionary Tale*. Hanover: University Press of New England, 1985.
- Richardson, Matthew. *Deeds of Heroes: The Story of the Distinguished Conduct Medal, 1854–1993*. Barnsley: Pen and Sword Military, 2012.
- Riseman, Noah. *In Defence of Country: Life Stories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Servicemen & Women*. Canberra: ANU Press, 2016.
- Riseman, Noah, and Richard Trembath. *Defending Country: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Military Service Since 1945*. St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2016.

- Robertson, John. *Australia at War, 1939–1945*. Melbourne: William Heinemann, 1981.
- Robson, L.L. *The First A.I.F.: A Study of Its Recruitment, 1914–1918*. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1970.
- Roper, Michael. *The Secret Battle: Emotional Survival in the Great War*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009.
- Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. London: Penguin Classics, 2003.
- Scarlett, Philippa. *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Volunteers for the AIF: The Indigenous Response to World War One*. 3rd ed. Macquarie: ACT Indigenous Histories, 2015.
- Shores, Christopher, Norman Franks, and Russell Guest. *Above the Trenches: A Complete Record of the Fighter Aces and Units of the British Empire Air Forces, 1915–1920*. London: Grub Street, 1996.
- Smith, Harry. *Long Tan: The Start of a Lifelong Battle*. Newport: Big Sky Publishing, 2016.
- Smith, Melvin Charles. *Awarded for Valour: A History of the Victoria Cross and the Evolution of British Heroism*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.
- Snelling, Stephen. *Gallipoli. VCs of the First World War*. Trowbridge: Wrens Park Publishing, 1999.
- Snelling, Stephen. *Passchendaele 1917. VCs of the First World War*. Stroud: Wrens Park Publishing, 2000.
- Spencer, William. *Medals: The Researcher's Guide*. Kew: National Archives, 2008.
- Stanley, Peter. *Lost Boys of Anzac*. Sydney: NewSouth, 2014.
- Stanley, Peter. *Tarakan: An Australian Tragedy*. St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1997.
- Stanley, Peter. *The Remote Garrison: The British Army in Australia 1788–1870*. Kenthurst: Kangaroo Press, 1986.
- Staunton, Anthony. *Victoria Cross: Australia's Finest and the Battles They Fought*. Prahran: Hardie Grant, 2005.
- Stephens, Alan. *Going Solo: The Royal Australian Air Force, 1946–1971*. Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1995.

- Stevens, David. *In All Respects Ready: Australia's Navy in World War One*. South Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2014.
- Stevenson, Robert. *The War with Germany*. Vol. 3 of *Centenary History of Australia in the Great War*. South Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2015.
- Stockings, Craig. *Bardia: Myth, Reality and the Heirs of Anzac*. Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2009.
- Stockings, Craig. *The Torch and the Sword: A History of the Army Cadet Movement in Australia*. Sydney: UNSW Press, 2007.
- Strachan, Hew. *The First World War*. London: Simon & Schuster, 2014.
- Thompson, Peter, and Robert Macklin. *Keep off the Skyline: The Story of Ron Cashman and the Diggers in Korea*. Milton: John Wiley & Sons, 2004.
- Thomson, Alistair. *Anzac Memories: Living with the Legend*. New ed. Clayton: Monash University Publishing, 2013.
- Tosh, John. *Manliness and Masculinities in Nineteenth-Century Britain: Essays on Gender, Family and Empire*. Harlow: Pearson Education, 2005.
- Tyquin, Michael. *Neville Howse: Australia's First Victoria Cross Winner*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- Ulrichsen, Kristian Coates. *The First World War in the Middle East*. London: Hurst & Company, 2014.
- Urban, Mark. *Generals: Ten British Commanders Who Shaped the World*. London: Faber and Faber, 2005.
- Uys, Ian. *Victoria Crosses of the Anglo-Boer War*. Knysna: Fortress, 2000.
- Wallace, Robert. *The Australians at the Boer War*. Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1976.
- Ward, Russel. *The Australian Legend*. 2nd ed. Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1980.
- Wavell, Sir Archibald. *Allenby, a Study in Greatness: A Biography of Field Marshal Viscount Allenby of Megiddo and Felixstowe, G.C.B., G.C.M.G.* London: George G. Harrap, 1940.
- Weate, Mark. *Bill Newton V.C.: The Short Life of a RAAF Hero*. Loftus: Australian Military History Publications, 1999.

Wigmore, Lionel. *They Dared Mightily*. Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1963.

Wilcox, Craig. *Australia's Boer War: The War in South Africa, 1899–1902*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Wilcox, Craig. *For Hearths and Homes: Citizen Soldiering in Australia, 1854–1945*. St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1998.

Wilcox, Craig. *Red Coat Dreaming: How Colonial Australia Embraced the British Army*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

Winter, Jay. *Remembering War: The Great War between Memory and History in the Twentieth Century*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006.

Journal articles

Anderson, Olive. 'The Growth of Christian Militarism in Mid-Victorian Britain.' *English Historical Review* 86, no. 338 (1971): 46–72.

Austin, M. 'The Foundation of Australia's Army Reserves: 1788–1854 (Part 1).' *Defence Force Journal*, no. 33 (1982): 6–8.

Beaumont, Joan. 'Australian Citizenship and the Two World Wars.' *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 53, no. 2 (2007): 171–182.

Best, Brian. 'Charles Garforth: The Last Mounted Cavalry VC.' *Journal of the Victoria Cross Society*, no. 25 (2014): 7–9.

Biedermann, Narelle. 'Courage When it Really Counts: Observations from the Modern ADF.' *Australian Defence Force Journal* 172 (2007): 73–81.

Bosma, Ulbe. 'European Colonial Soldiers in the Nineteenth Century: Their Role in White Global Migration and Patterns of Colonial Settlement.' *Journal of Global History* 4, no. 2 (2009): 331–36.

Bradford, John. 'Odd Man Out? The Awards Process for RAN Gallantry in World War II.' *Journal of Australian Naval History* 2, no. 2 (2005): 17–47.

Clark, Rex. 'Medals, Decorations and Anomalies.' *British Army Review* 32 (1969): 47–51.

Collins, Michael D. 'A Fear of Flying: Diagnosing Traumatic Neurosis among British Aviators of the Great War.' *First World War Studies* 6, no. 2 (2015): 187–202.

- Crotty, Martin. 'Frontier Fantasies: Boys' Adventure Stories and the Construction of Masculinity in Australia, 1870–1920.' *Journal of Australian Colonial History* 3, no.1 (2001): 55–76.
- Crotty, Martin. 'The Making of the Man: Australian Public Schoolboy Sporting Violence, 1850–1914.' *International Journal of the History of Sport* 20, no. 3 (2003): 1–16.
- Denoon, Donald. 'Understanding Settler Societies.' *Historical Studies* 18 (1979): 511–27.
- Downey, Michael. 'Private Alexander Kruger – A Near V.C.' *Sabretache* 21, no. 4 (1980): 26–28.
- Fennell, Jonathan. 'Courage and Cowardice in the North African Campaign: The Eighth Army and Defeat in the Summer of 1942.' *War in History* 20, no. 1 (2013): 99–122.
- Fowler, T. Robert. 'Courage Under Fire: Defining and Understanding the Act.' *Canadian Army Journal* 13, no. 1 (2010): 37–49.
- Fox, Karen. "'A Pernicious System of Caste and Privilege': Egalitarianism and Official Honours in Australia, New Zealand and Canada.' *History Australia* 10, no. 2 (2013): 202–26.
- Fox, Karen, and Samuel Furphy. 'The Politics of National Recognition: Honouring Australians in a Post-Imperial World.' *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 63, no. 1 (2017): 93–111.
- Fox, Karen, and Katie Pickles. 'Success in Their Own Right: Dames on Top of the New Zealand Royal Honours System, 1917–2000.' *History Now* 11, no. 1 (2005): 24–30.
- Franco, Zeno E., Kathy Blau, and Philip G. Zimbardo. 'Heroism: A Conceptual Analysis and Differentiation Between Heroic Action and Altruism.' *Review of General Psychology* 15, no. 2 (2011): 99–113.
- Garton, Stephen. 'War and Masculinity in Twentieth Century Australia.' *Journal of Australian Studies* 22, no. 1 (1998): 86–95.
- Hajkowski, Thomas. 'The BBC, the Empire, and the Second World War, 1939–1945.' *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 22, no. 2 (2002): 135–55.
- Halliday, Hugh. 'VC or Not VC? Bestowing a Battlefield Icon.' *Canadian Military History* 5, no. 2 (1996): 77–87.
- Haskins, Victoria. 'The Girl Who Wanted to Go to War: Female Patriotism and Gender Construction in Australia's Great War.' *History Australia* 14, no. 2 (2017): 169–86.

- Hetherington, Les. 'Winning the Queen's Scarf.' *Wartime* no. 13 (2001): 48–51.
- Holman, Brett. 'The Militarisation of Aerial Theatre: Air Displays and Airmindedness in Britain and Australia between the World Wars.' *Contemporary British History*. Published ahead of print, 25 September 2018. doi: 10.1080/13619462.2018.1519430.
- Holman, Brett. 'The Shadow of the Airliner: Commercial Bombers and the Rhetorical Destruction of Britain, 1917–35.' *Twentieth Century British History* 24, no. 4 (2013): 495–517.
- Hunter, Kate. 'More than an Archive of War: Intimacy and Manliness in the Letters of a Great War Soldier to the Woman He Loved, 1915–1919.' *Gender & History* 25, no. 2 (2013): 339–54.
- Knudson, Jerry W. 'Late to the Feast: Newspapers as Historical Resources.' *Perspectives* 31, no. 7 (1993), <https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/october-1993/late-to-the-feast>.
- Lewis, Tom. 'The Navy's Finest Fighting Leader: Captain "Hec" Waller, DSO and Bar, RAN.' *Journal of Australian Naval History* 1, no. 1 (2004): 1–28.
- Lewis, Tom. 'No VC for Rankin?' *Sabretache* 43, no. 2 (2002): 3–6.
- Lyons, Martyn. 'French Soldiers and Their Correspondence: Towards a History of Writing Practices in the First World War.' *French History* 17, no. 1 (2003): 79–95.
- MacKenzie, S.P. 'The Ethics of Escape: British Officer POWs in the First World War.' *War in History* 15, no.1 (2008): 1–16.
- Mackinolty, Judy. 'Wake Up Australia! Australia's Home Front Propaganda During the Second World War.' *Journal of the Australian War Memorial*, no. 1 (1982): 18–23.
- Madigan, Edward. 'Courage and Cowardice in Wartime.' *War in History* 20, no. 1 (2013): 4–6.
- Madigan, Edward. "'Sticking to a Hateful Task": Resilience, Humour, and British Understandings of Combatant Courage, 1914–1918.' *War in History* 20, no. 1 (2013): 76–98.
- Markovits, Stefanie. 'Rushing into Print: "Participatory Journalism" during the Crimean War.' *Victorian Studies* 50, no. 4 (2008): 559–86.

- Meilinger, Phillip S. 'Trenchard and "Morale Bombing": The Evolution of Royal Air Force Doctrine Before World War II.' *Journal of Military History* 60, no. 2 (1996): 243–70.
- Midford, Sarah. 'Constructing the "Australian Iliad": Ancient Heroes and Anzac Diggers in the Dardanelles.' *Melbourne Historical Journal* 39 (2011): 59–79.
- Montague, R.E. 'The Royal Veterans in Australia.' *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society* 68, no. 3 (1982): 238–46.
- Monteath, Peter. 'SOE in Crete: An Alternative Model of "Special Operations"?' *Intelligence and National Security* 33, no. 6 (2018): 839–53.
- Murrie, Linzi. 'The Australian Legend: Writing Australian Masculinity/Writing "Australian" Masculine.' *Journal of Australian Studies* 22, no. 1 (1998): 68–77.
- Paris, Michael. 'The Rise of the Airmen: The Origins of Air Force Elitism, c. 1890–1918.' *Journal of Contemporary History* 28, no. 1 (1993): 123–41.
- Roberts Billet, Janet. 'Australians in the Dominion Yachtsmen Scheme 1940–45.' *Journal of Australian Naval History* 7, no. 1 (2010): 35–46.
- Roberts Billet, Janet. 'The Yachtsmen Scheme 1940–42.' *Oral History Association of Australia Journal*, no. 26 (2004): 71–73.
- Robertson, Emily. 'Propaganda and "Manufactured Hatred": A Reappraisal of the Ethics of First World War British and Australian Propaganda.' *Public Relations Inquiry* 3, no. 2 (2014): 245–66.
- Riseman, Noah. 'Defending Whose Country? Yolngu and the Northern Territory Special Reconnaissance Unit in the Second World War.' *Limina* 13 (2007): 80–91.
- Scarlett, Philippa. 'Aboriginal Service in the First World War: Identity, Recognition and the Problem of Mateship.' *Aboriginal History* 39 (2015): 163–81.
- Scates, Bruce. 'The Forgotten Sock Knitter: Voluntary Work, Emotional Labour, Bereavement and the Great War.' *Labour History*, no. 81 (2001): 29–51.
- Scates, Bruce. 'In Gallipoli's Shadow: Pilgrimage, Memory, Mourning and the Great War.' *Australian Historical Studies*, no. 119 (2002): 1–21.
- Sobocinska, Agnieszka. '"The Language of Scars": Australian Prisoners of War and the Colonial Order.' *History Australia* 7, no. 3 (2010): 58.1–58.19.

- Spittel, Christina. 'A Portable Monument? Leonard Mann's *Flesh in Armour* and Australia's Memory of the First World War.' *Book History* 14 (2011): 187–220.
- Spittel, Christina. 'Remembering the War: Australian Novelists in the Interwar Years.' *Australian Literary Studies* 23, no. 2 (2007): 121–39.
- Stanley, Peter. 'A Hundred in a Million.' *Griffith Review*, no. 48 (2015): 262–71.
- Stanley, Peter. 'Threat Made Manifest.' *Griffith Review*, no. 9 (2005): 11–24.
- Staunton, Anthony. 'The First Posthumous Victoria Crosses.' *Sabretache* 28 (1987): 3–9.
- Staunton, Anthony. 'Victoria Crosses of the Palestine Campaign.' *Sabretache* 49, no. 3 (2008): 7–14.
- Staunton, Anthony. 'Blaming Buckingham Palace: The 13 Month Delay in the Award of the Wheatley Victoria Cross.' *Sabretache* 38, no. 3 (1997): 14–20.
- Stockings, Craig. 'A Survey of Military, Educational and Community Expectations of the Cadet Movement in Australia, 1866–2006.' *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 52, no. 2 (2007): 236–50.
- Sweetman, John. "'Ad Hoc" Support Services during the Crimean War, 1854–6: Temporary, Ill-Planned and Largely Unsuccessful.' *Military Affairs* 52, no. 3 (1988): 135–40.
- Thomson, Alistair. 'Anzac Stories: Using Personal Testimony in War History.' *War & Society* 25, no. 2 (2006): 1–21.
- Thomson, Alistair. 'Memory as a Battlefield: Personal and Political Investments in the National Military Past.' *Oral History Review* 22, no. 2 (1995): 55–73.
- Twomey, Christina. 'Australian Nurse POWs: Gender, War and Captivity.' *Australian Historical Studies* 36, no. 124 (2004): 255–74.
- Twomey, Christina. 'Emancipation or Emasculation? Photographic Images, White Masculinity and Captivity by the Japanese in World War Two.' *Journal of Men's Studies* 15, no. 3 (2007): 295–310.
- Twomey, Christina. 'The National Service Scheme: Citizenship and the Tradition of Compulsory Military Service in 1960s Australia.' *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 58, no. 1 (2012): 67–81.
- Twomey, Christina. 'Trauma and the Reinvigoration of Anzac: An Argument.' *History Australia* 10, no. 3 (2013): 85–108.

Vonthoff, Tony. 'Military Heroism: An Australian Perspective.' *Australian Defence Force Journal* 169 (2005): 33–39.

Werrell, Kenneth P. 'The Strategic Bombing of Germany in World War II: Costs and Accomplishments.' *Journal of American History* 73, no. 3 (1986): 702–13.

Wright, Christine. 'Military Settlers: Men of the Royal Veteran Companies and Royal Staff Corps (1825).' *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society* 95, no. 2 (2009): 158–75.

Ziino, Bart. 'Eligible Men: Men, Families and Masculine Duty in Great War Australia.' *History Australia* 14, no. 2 (2017): 202–17.

Book chapters

Beaumont, Joan. 'Australia's War.' In *Australia's War, 1914–18*, edited by Joan Beaumont, 1–34. St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1995.

Beaumont, Joan. 'Australia's War: Asia and the Pacific.' In *Australia's War, 1939–45*, edited by Joan Beaumont, 26–53. St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1996.

Beaumont, Joan. 'Australia's War: Europe and the Middle East.' In *Australia's War, 1939–45*, edited by Joan Beaumont, 1–25. St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1996.

Beaumont, Joan. 'Officers and Men: Rank and Survival on the Thai–Burma Railway.' In *Beyond Surrender: Australian Prisoners of War in the Twentieth Century*, edited by Joan Beaumont, Lachlan Grant and Aaron Pegram, 174–95. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2015.

Berger, Stefan. 'Introduction: Towards a Global History of National Historiographies.' In *Writing the Nation: A Global Perspective*, edited by Stefan Berger, 1–29. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

Bou, Jean. 'Cavalry Combat: Mounted Warfare in Palestine.' In *The AIF In Battle: How the Australian Imperial Force Fought, 1914–1918*, edited by Jean Bou, 7–38. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2016.

Boyd, Kelly. 'Knowing Your Place: The Tensions of Manliness in Boys' Story Papers, 1918–39.' In *Manful Assertions: Masculinities in Britain Since 1800*, edited by Michael Roper and John Tosh, 145–67. London: Routledge, 1991.

Bradley, Phillip. 'The Battle of Milne Bay.' In *Kokoda: Beyond the Legend*, edited by Karl James, 150–63. Port Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2017.

- Breen, Bob. 'The Build-Up: Vietnam, 1965–67.' In *Duty First: A History of the Royal Australian Regiment*, edited by David Horner and Jean Bou, 170–95. 2nd ed. Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2008.
- Breen, Gus, and Adrian Mann. 'Operation Fauna – December 1952.' In *Korea Remembered: The RAN, ARA and RAAF in the Korean War of 1950–1953*, edited by Maurie Pears and Fred Kirkland, 115–22. Georges Heights: Doctrine Wing, Combined Arms Training and Development Centre, 2002.
- Broome, Richard. 'The Struggle for Australia: Aboriginal–European Warfare, 1770–1930.' In *Australia: Two Centuries of War and Peace*, edited by Michael McKernan and Margaret Browne, 92–120. Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1988.
- Campbell, Craig. 'Schooling in Australia.' In *Schooling in Oceania*, edited by Craig Campbell and Geoffrey Sherington, 9–77. Westport: Greenwood Press, 2007.
- Chinn, David. 'Raising a Regular Infantry Force: Morotai, 1945–46.' In *Duty First: A History of the Royal Australian Regiment*, edited by David Horner and Jean Bou, 1–18. 2nd ed. Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2008.
- Connor, John. 'The Capture of German New Guinea.' In *Before the Anzac Dawn: A Military History of Australia to 1915*, edited by Craig Stockings and John Connor, 283–303. Sydney: NewSouth, 2013.
- Coulthard-Clark, Chris. 'The Dispatch of the Contingent.' In *But Little Glory: The New South Wales Contingent to the Sudan, 1885*, edited by Peter Stanley, 19–30. Canberra: Military Historical Society of Australia, 1985.
- Curthoys, Ann. 'The Anti-War Movements.' In *Vietnam: War, Myth and Memory*, edited by Jeffrey Grey and Jeff Doyle, 81–107. St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1992.
- Darian-Smith, Kate. 'Images of Empire: Gender and Nationhood in Australia at the Time of Federation.' In *Britishness Abroad: Transnational Movements and Imperial Cultures*, edited by Kate Darian-Smith, Patricia Grimshaw and Stuart Macintyre, 153–68. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2007.
- Dean, Peter J. 'From the Air, Sea and Land: The Capture of Lae.' In *Australia 1943: The Liberation of New Guinea*, edited by Peter J. Dean, 210–32. Port Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2014.
- Downes, R.M. 'Part II – The Campaign in Sinai and Palestine.' In *Gallipoli, Palestine and New Guinea*. Vol. 1 of *Official History of the Australian Army Medical Services, 1914–1918*. 2nd ed. Melbourne: Australian War Memorial, 1938.

- Downey, Michael. 'The Medals of the Contingent.' In *But Little Glory: The New South Wales Contingent to the Sudan, 1885*, edited by Peter Stanley, 55–69. Canberra: Military Historical Society of Australia, 1985.
- Field, A.E. 'Prisoners of the Germans and Italians.' In *Tobruk and El Alamein*, by Barton Maughan, 755–822. Vol. 3 of *Australia in the War of 1939–1945: Series 1 – Army*. Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1966.
- Gammage, Bill. 'The Role of the Army in Shaping the Australian Nation to 1939.' In *Armies and Nation Building: Past Experiences – Future Prospects*, edited by David Horner, 15–22. Canberra: Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, 1995.
- Greville, P.J. 'The Australian Prisoners of War.' In *Combat Operations*, by Robert O'Neill, 533–69. Vol. 2 of *Australia in the Korean War 1950–53*. Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1985.
- Grey, Jeffrey. 'The Regiment's First War: Korea, 1950–56.' In *Duty First: A History of the Royal Australian Regiment*, edited by David Horner and Jean Bou, 57–80. 2nd ed. Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2008.
- Grey, Jeffrey. 'Remembering Captivity in the Korean War.' In *Beyond Surrender: Australian Prisoners of War in the Twentieth Century*, edited by Joan Beaumont, Lachlan Grant and Aaron Pegram, 239–53. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2015.
- Goldrick, James. '1941–1945: World War II: The War Against Japan.' In *The Royal Australian Navy*, edited by David Stevens, 127–53. Vol. 3 of *The Australian Centenary History of Defence*. South Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Holbrook, Carolyn. 'Nationalism and War Memory in Australia.' In *Australia and the Great War: Identity, Memory and Mythology*, edited by Michael J.K. Walsh and Andrekos Varnava, 218–39. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2016.
- Horne, John. 'Masculinity in Politics and War in the Age of Nation-States and World Wars, 1850–1950.' In *Masculinities in Politics and War: Gendering Modern History*, edited by Stefan Dudink, Karen Hagemann and John Tosh, 22–40. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004.
- Horner, David. 'Australia in 1942: A Pivotal Year.' In *Australia 1942: In the Shadow of War*, edited by Peter J. Dean, 11–29. Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2013.
- James, Karl. "'I Hope You Are Not Too Ashamed of Me": Prisoners in the Siege of Tobruk, 1941.' In *Beyond Surrender: Australian Prisoners of War in the Twentieth Century*, edited by Joan Beaumont, Lachlan Grant and Aaron Pegram, 96–115. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2015.

- James, Karl. 'On Australia's Doorstep: Kokoda and Milne Bay.' In *Australia 1942: In the Shadow of War*, edited by Peter J. Dean, 199–216. Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2013.
- Kilsby, Andrew. 'The Rifle Clubs.' In *Before the Anzac Dawn: A Military History of Australia to 1915*, edited by Craig Stockings and John Connor, 148–73. Sydney: NewSouth, 2013.
- Klintworth, Wayne. 'Formation of the Royal Australian Regiment: Australia and Japan, 1948–50.' In *Duty First: A History of the Royal Australian Regiment*, edited by David Horner and Jean Bou, 40–56. 2nd ed. Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2008.
- Langford, Sue. 'The National Service Scheme, 1964–72.' In Peter Edwards, *A Nation at War: Australian Politics, Society and Diplomacy during the Vietnam War 1965–1975*, 355–80. Vol. 6 of *Official History of Australia's Involvement in Southeast Asian Conflicts 1948–1975*. North Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1997.
- Maynard, John. 'The First World War.' In *Serving Our Country: Indigenous Australians, War, Defence and Citizenship*, edited by Joan Beaumont and Allison Cadzow, 74–93. Sydney: NewSouth, 2018.
- McDonnell, Siobhan, and Mick Dodson. 'Race, Citizenship and Military Service.' In *Serving Our Country: Indigenous Australians, War, Defence and Citizenship*, edited by Joan Beaumont and Allison Cadzow, 23–52. Sydney: NewSouth, 2018.
- McKenna, Mark. 'The History Anxiety.' In *The Commonwealth of Australia*. Vol. 2 of *The Cambridge History of Australia*, edited by Alison Bashford and Stuart Macintyre, 561–80. Port Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2013.
- Meyer, Jessica. "'Gladder to be Going Out Than Afraid': Shellshock and Heroic Masculinity in Britain, 1914–1919.' In *Uncovered Fields: Perspectives in First World War Studies*, edited by Jenny MacLeod and Pierre Purseigle, 195–210. Leiden: Brill, 2004.
- Nelson, Hank. 'Measuring the Railway: From Individual Lives to National History.' In *The Burma–Thailand Railway: Memory and History*, edited by Gavan McCormack and Hank Nelson, 10–26. St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1993.
- Oppenheimer, Melanie. 'Opportunities to Engage: The Red Cross and Australian Women's Global War Work.' In *Australians and the First World War: Local-Global Connections and Contexts*, edited by Kate Ariotti and James E. Bennett, 85–101. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.

- Pegram, Aaron. 'Bold Bids for Freedom: Escape and Australian Prisoners in Germany, 1916–18.' In *Beyond Surrender: Australian Prisoners of War in the Twentieth Century*, edited by Joan Beaumont, Lachlan Grant and Aaron Pegram, 18–39. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2015.
- Pegram, Aaron. "'Nightly Suicide Operations': Trench Raids and the Development of the AIF.' In *The AIF In Battle: How the Australian Imperial Force Fought, 1914–1918*, edited by Jean Bou, 190–216. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2016.
- Perry, Adele. 'Whose World Was British? Rethinking the "British World" from an Edge of Empire.' In *Britishness Abroad: Transnational Movements and Imperial Cultures*, edited by Kate Darian-Smith, Patricia Grimshaw and Stuart Macintyre, 133–52. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2007.
- Pratten, Garth. 'Applying the Principles of War: Securing the Huon Peninsula.' In *Australia 1943: The Liberation of New Guinea*, edited by Peter J. Dean, 255–84. Port Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2014.
- Saunders, Chris. 'Reg Saunders (1920–1991).' In *Forgotten Heroes: Aborigines at War from the Somme to Vietnam*, edited by Alick Jackomos and Derek Fowell, 20–22. Melbourne: Victoria Press, 1993.
- Serong, 'Australia in Vietnam.' In *The Saving of South Vietnam*, by Kenneth Grenville, 213–24. Sydney: Alpha Books, 1972.
- Stanley, Peter. 'Australian Heroes: Some Military Mates Are More Equal Than Others.' In *The Honest History Book*, edited by David Stephens and Alison Broinowski, 196–210. Sydney: NewSouth Publishing, 2017.
- Stanley, Peter. 'British Soldiers in Colonial Australia.' In *Before the Anzac Dawn: A Military History of Australia to 1915*, edited by Craig Stockings and John Connor, 39–61. Sydney: NewSouth, 2013.
- Stanley, Peter. "'He Was Black, He Was a White Man, and a Dinkum Aussie": Race and Empire in Revisiting the Anzac Legend.' In *Race, Empire and First World War Writing*, edited by Santanu Das, 213–30. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.
- Stanley, Peter. "'The Part We Played in This Show": Australians and El Alamein.' In *El Alamein and the Struggle for North Africa: International Perspectives from the Twenty-First Century*, edited by Jill Edwards, 55–71. Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2012.

Stevenson, Robert. 'The Battalion: The AIF Infantry Battalion and its Evolution.' In *The AIF In Battle: How the Australian Imperial Force Fought, 1914–1918*, edited by Jean Bou, 39–69. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2016.

Stockings, Craig. 'Australia's Boy Soldiers: The Army Cadet Movement.' In *Before the Anzac Dawn: A Military History of Australia to 1915*, edited by Craig Stockings and John Connor, 174–203. Sydney: NewSouth, 2013.

Thomson, Alistair. 'A Crisis of Masculinity? Australian Military Manhood in the Great War.' In *Gender and War: Australians at War in the Twentieth Century*, edited by Joy Damousi and Marilyn Lake, 133–47. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

Wallace, R.L. 'The Boer War, 1899–1902.' In *For Queen and Empire: A Boer War Chronicle*, edited by Ralph Sutton, 15–33. Ryde: New South Wales Military Historical Society, 1974.

Wilcox, Craig. 'Australians in the Wars in Sudan and South Africa.' In *Before the Anzac Dawn: A Military History of Australia to 1915*, edited by Craig Stockings and John Connor, 204–29. Sydney: NewSouth, 2013.

Wilcox, Craig. 'Edwardian Transformation.' In *Before the Anzac Dawn: A Military History of Australia to 1915*, edited by Craig Stockings and John Connor, 255–82. Sydney: NewSouth, 2013.

Unpublished theses and manuscripts

Abraham, Bryce. 'Bringing Them All Back Home: Prisoner of War Contact, Recovery and Reception Units, 1944–45.' Summer scholarship paper, Australian War Memorial, 2015.

Barrett Meyering, Isabelle. 'Victoria Crosses: The Vagaries of Valour.' Summer scholarship paper, Australian War Memorial, 2009.

D'Alton, Victoria. 'Behind the Valour: A Technical, Administrative and Bureaucratic Analysis of the Victoria Cross and the AIF on the Western Front, 1916–1918.' MA thesis, University of New South Wales, 2010.

Midford, Sarah. 'From Achilles to Anzac: Classical Receptions in the Australian Anzac Narrative.' PhD thesis, University of Melbourne, 2016.

Regan, Patrick. 'Neglected Australians: Prisoners of War from the Western Front, 1916 to 1918.' MA thesis, University of New South Wales, 2005.

Smith, Melvin Charles. "'Missis Victorier's Sons': A History of the Victoria Cross and the Evolution of the British Concept of Heroism.' PhD thesis, Auburn University, 2000.

Websites

Abbott, Jacqueline. 'Cawood, Dorothy Gwendolen (1884–1962).' Australian Dictionary of Biography. Accessed 8 April 2018, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/cawood-dorothy-gwendolen-5537>.

'About the National Australia Day Council.' National Australia Day Council LTD. Accessed 1 June 2019, <https://www.australiaday.org.au/nadc/about-the-nadc/>.

'Albert Harold Rooks – Medal of Honor citation.' Hall of Valor Project, Military Times. Accessed 6 February 2019, <https://valor.militarytimes.com/hero/70>.

Atkinson, Bruce. 'Battle of Long Tan: Commanding Officers Embellished Role to Receive Awards at Expense of Own Men, Retired Colonel Says.' ABC News, 18 August 2015, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-08-18/retired-colonel-harry-smith-pens-book-battle-of-long-tan/6701876>.

'Australian Legends: The Victoria Cross (2015).' Australia Post website. Accessed 1 June 2019, <https://auspost.com.au/content/corp/collectables/stamp-issues/australian-legends-the-victoria-cross/>.

Batt, Chris. 'Dwyer, John James (Jack) (1890–1962).' Australian Dictionary of Biography. Accessed 8 April 2018, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/dwyer-john-james-jack-10081>.

Beaumont, Joan. 'Australia.' In 1914-1918-online, International Encyclopaedia of the First World War, edited by Ute Daniel, Peter Gatrell, Oliver Janz, Heather Jones, Jennifer Keene, Alan Kramer, and Bill Nasson. Issued by Freie Universität Berlin, Berlin, 18 March 2015. doi: 10.15463/ie1418.10581.

Brown, Rachael. 'Fallen Diggers Honoured in Fromelles.' ABC News, 23 July 2012, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2012-07-21/fallen-diggers-honoured-in-fromelles/4145576>.

Eastgate, Ross. 'Long Tan Swipe Does Disservice.' *Townsville Bulletin*, 20 August 2015, <https://www.townsvillebulletin.com.au/news/opinion/long-tan-swipe-does-disservice/news-story/bd3fd03411623bc3835b6467aa8142f1>.

Edmonds, J.E. 'Murray, Sir Archibald James (1860–1945).' In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Edited by H.C.G. Matthew and Brian Harrison. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004. Accessed 12 December 2017, doi: 10.1093/ref:odnb/35155.

Frame, Tom. 'Harrington, Charles Frederick (1914–1941).' Australian Dictionary of Biography. Accessed 10 October 2018, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/harrington-charles-frederick-10706/text18495>.

'Gabriel Ralph Alamo – Distinguished Service Cross Citation.' Hall of Valor Project, Military Times. Accessed 20 May 2019, <https://valor.militarytimes.com/hero/5540>.

'Gallipoli Hero Simpson Won't Receive VC.' ABC News, 1 March 2013, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-03-01/gallipoli-hero-simpson-won27t-receive-vc/4548272>.

Higgins, Matthew. 'Ruthven, William (1893–1970).' Australian Dictionary of Biography. Accessed 8 April 2018, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/ruthven-william-8306>.

Inglis, Ken. 'Bean, Charles Edwin (1879–1968).' Australian Dictionary of Biography. Accessed 8 April 2018, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/bean-charles-edwin-5166>.

'List of Australian Prisoners of War, Korean War.' Australian War Memorial website. Accessed 1 June 2019, <https://www.awm.gov.au/articles/encyclopedia/pow/korea/list>.

McCarthy, Dudley. 'Keysor, Leonard Maurice (1885–1951).' Australian Dictionary of Biography. Accessed 4 October 2017, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/keysor-leonard-maurice-6946>.

Morgan, Tim. 'Battle for Recognition of Teddy Sheean Continues 75 Years After HMAS Armidale Went Down.' ABC News, 2 December 2017, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-12-01/hmas-armidale-memorials-renew-calls-for-teddy-sheean-vc/9218688>.

Nairn, Bede 'Carmichael, Ambrose Campbell (1866–1953).' Australian Dictionary of Biography. Accessed 8 April 2018, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/carmichael-ambrose-campbell-5506>.

Reserve Bank of Australia. 'Pre-Decimal Inflation Calculator.' Reserve Bank of Australia website. Accessed 1 June 2019, <https://www.rba.gov.au/calculator/annualPreDecimal.html>.

'Roberts-Smith the No 1 Ticket Holder at Freo.' *WAtoday*, 20 March 2012, <https://www.watoday.com.au/sport/afl/robertssmith-the-no-1-ticket-holder-at-freo-20120320-1vgri.html>.

Robertson, Emily. 'Propaganda at Home (Australia).' In *1914-1918-online, International Encyclopaedia of the First World War*, edited by Ute Daniel, Peter Gatrell, Oliver Janz,

Heather Jones, Jennifer Keene, Alan Kramer, and Bill Nasson. Issued by Freie Universität Berlin, Berlin, 17 February 2015. doi: 10.15463/ie1418.

Scully, P.J. 'Spence, Louis Thomas (1917–1950).' Australian Dictionary of Biography. Accessed 18 March 2019, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/spence-louis-thomas-11741>.

Siminot, Suzanne. 'Gold Coast's Lee Kernaghan's Anzac album "Incredibly Emotional" to Make.' *Gold Coast Bulletin*, 30 March 2015, <https://www.goldcoastbulletin.com.au/entertainment/gold-coasts-lee-kernaghans-anzac-album-incredibly-emotional-to-make/news-story/6e144c5e4960e0d62d3545fd57effe71>.