The broken years: Australian soldiers in the Great War

Description

Before the First World War most Australians shared the emotions and traditions of the British Empire. Proud of their British heritage, anxious to raise the Imperial status of Australia, they were eager to fight and, if need be, to die in defence of their race and country. But
the horror and tragedy of the conflict brought fundamental changes in outlook. Many of the pre-war enthusiasms persisted, but the days of unquestioning allegiance to Empire were beginning to come to an end, to be replaced by the bittersweet tradition of Anzac. Dr Gammage shows how and why these changes took place. Using the diaries and letters of one thousand front-line soldiers of the First Australian Imperial Force, most of them now part of a unique collection housed in the Australian War Memorial in Canberra, he reconstructs the motives and expectations with which these men volunteered and the experiences they encountered. He highlights and examines the new attitudes to war and to the homeland that developed and foreshadows the important effects in Australia of the changed outlook brought home by the survivors. Those who have returned from war will recognise immediately the raw realities faced by the 'diggers', the growing disillusionment, and the hopes for the future. Those with fathers, husbands, or brothers who served, and all those concerned with what happens to men at war, cannot fail to be moved by the simple dignity of the men’s accounts, or by the understated courage with which they wrote to their families of the miseries they endured. This book, written with sensitivity and scholarly care, must be read if we are to understand war and its impact on the ethos of a nation.

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The next year Australian forces fought campaigns on the Western Front and in the Middle East. Throughout 1916 and 1917 losses on the Western Front were heavy and gains were small. In the following year Australian and other allied troops advanced into Palestine and captured Gaza and Jerusalem; by 1918 they had occupied Lebanon and Syria and on 30 October 1918 Turkey sued for peace. For Australia, the First World War remains the costliest conflict in terms of deaths and casualties.  Bruce Scates, “Soldiers’ journeys: returning to the battlefields of the Great War”, Journal of the Australian War Memorial 40 (2007). Ann Elias, “War, flowers, and visual culture: the First World War collection of the Australian War Memorial”, Journal of the Australian War Memorial 40 (2007). In Australia, the outbreak of World War I was greeted with considerable enthusiasm. Even before Britain declared war on Germany on 4 August 1914, the nation pledged its support alongside other states of the British Empire and almost immediately began preparations to send forces overseas to engage in the conflict. The first campaign that Australians were involved in was in German New Guinea after a hastily raised force known as the Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force was dispatched from 'Broken from the inside': how four devastating years are still shaping us. Skip to sections navigation Skip to content Skip to footer.  In the years immediately after the war, about 8000 ex-soldiers died and at least 550 men committed suicide (the suicide statistics were never properly recorded). Two years after the war, recognising the worth of planes in Australia’s peaceful vastness, Fysh and McGinness, together with Fergus McMaster, a businessman who had served as a gunner and dispatch rider in France, established the Queensland and Northern Territory Aerial Services. White Australia began dealing with those it deemed "undesirable" or a threat at home during the Great War by detaining and deporting thousands of mainly German-Australians, including naturalised Australians. When the war broke out in 1914, it was a certainty
that, because of longstanding economic, family and defence ties, Australia, along with New Zealand, would stand alongside Britain. The then Prime Minister Andrew Fisher was quick to pledge the country’s support to “the last man, the last shilling”. Also early in the war, Australian troops captured the German radio transmitters in Rabaul and Nauru and conquered all of German New Guinea. At first the Australian forces were intended only to defend Australia, but in 1915 the Australia New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC) departed for Europe. 8. Australia’s national debt increased greatly as a result of the Great War. Rosano 3 years 9 months. 12. Australian soldiers were disrespectful to their superiors. The next year Australian forces fought campaigns on the Western Front and in the Middle East. Throughout 1916 and 1917 losses on the Western Front were heavy and gains were small. In the following year Australian and other allied troops advanced into Palestine and captured Gaza and Jerusalem; by 1918 they had occupied Lebanon and Syria and on 30 October 1918 Turkey sued for peace. For Australia, the First World War remains the costliest conflict in terms of deaths and casualties. Bruce Scates, “Soldiers’ journeys: returning to the battlefields of the Great War”, Journal of the Australian War Memorial 40 (2007). Ann Elias, “War, flowers, and visual culture: the First World War collection of the Australian War Memorial”, Journal of the Australian War Memorial 40 (2007). In Australia, the outbreak of World War I was greeted with considerable enthusiasm. Even before Britain declared war on Germany on 4 August 1914, the nation pledged its support alongside other states of the British Empire and almost immediately began preparations to send forces overseas to engage in the conflict. The first campaign that Australians were involved in was in German New Guinea after a hastily raised force known as the Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force was dispatched from ‘Broken from the inside’: how four devastating years are still shaping us. Skip to sections navigation Skip to content Skip to footer. In the years immediately after the war, about 8000 ex-soldiers died and at least 550 men committed suicide (the suicide statistics were never properly recorded). Two years after the war, recognising the worth of planes in Australia’s peaceful vastness, Fysh and McGinness, together with Fergus McMaster, a businessman who had served as a gunner and dispatch rider in France, established the Queensland and Northern Territory Aerial Services. White Australia began dealing with those it deemed “undesirable” or a threat at home during the Great War by detaining and deporting thousands of mainly German-Australians, including naturalised Australians. When the war broke out in 1914, it was a certainty that, because of longstanding economic, family and defence ties, Australia, along with New Zealand, would stand alongside Britain. The then Prime Minister Andrew Fisher was quick to pledge the country’s support to “the last man, the last shilling”. Also early in the war, Australian troops captured the German radio transmitters in Rabaul and Nauru and conquered all of German New Guinea. At first the Australian forces were intended only to defend Australia, but in 1915 the Australia New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC) departed for Europe. 8. Australia’s national debt increased greatly as a result of the Great War. Rosano 3 years 9 months. 12. Australian soldiers were disrespectful to their superiors.