

1940: Anzacs in England.

The historical moment when the 'sons of Anzac' first inhabit the Anzac Legend.

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Thesis Abstract

This investigation examines the much broader cultural and socio-historical concept of the Anzac Legend and the military traditions of the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) encapsulated in the 'digger myth'. The investigation will do this by assessing the extent to which the men of the 6th Division 2nd AIF, specifically the 18th and 25th Brigades, inhabit and negotiate both of these ideals in England in 1940. Societal changes during the inter-war period are assessed as they relate to Australian identity and specifically the notion of 'Britishness'. The men's own self-actualization and the British perception of Anzac is examined using archival material and literature.

Introduction

In England's North on a mid-winter's evening on Thursday 4th January 1940, *The Evening Chronicle* in Newcastle-upon-Tyne printed a short article on page 8. The banner ran: "500,000 cheer the new Anzacs" and reported on the half-million strong crowd in Sydney 9,500 miles away attending a farewell parade for the soldiers of the Second Australian Imperial Force (2nd AIF).¹ The first convoy of 10,000 men of 6th Division's 16th Brigade marched past the Town Hall and took the salute of 2nd AIF Commander General Thomas Blamey and Governor General Lord Gowrie as Gracie Fields' tune 'Wish me luck as you wave me goodbye' echoed down George Street. After their embarkation at Circular Quay on a hot Sydney morning, the brigade's naval convoy departed Australia for deployment in the Middle East. A few months later the 17th Brigade would follow and rendezvous with the 16th Brigade in Egypt at Suez, on the opposite side of the canal where the original Australian Imperial Force (1st AIF) had trained for Gallipoli in 1915.

The 3rd convoy of the 6th Division 2nd AIF sent another 10,000 Australian troops from Australian shores in May 1940. The 18th Brigade, however, would not, initially at least, join their divisional comrades in Egypt. Instead the convoy was diverted to the United Kingdom to assist in providing a garrison defence in preparation for the expected German invasion. Only after the Battle of Britain would the threat of invasion pass, and the brigade was sent to sea again, this time rendezvousing with the rest of 6th Division in the Middle East in January 1941.

Recruitment numbers for the 2nd AIF had received a major boost after the announcement of the successful Dunkirk evacuation. Only two days before the 18th Brigade disembarked at the port of Gourock in Scotland on 16th June 1940, *The Scotsman* published a story about recruiting authorities in Melbourne being swamped by 30,000 men in two weeks, "propelled by the desperate situation in England and France."² With the Homeland in peril, the loyal sons of Empire responded as they had in 1914 to defend her. The article decreed that "history was repeating itself" with the contingent of volunteers consisting of "a

¹ *The Evening Chronicle*, Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, '500,000 cheer the new Anzacs', Thursday 4th January 1940.

² *The Scotsman*, Edinburgh, June 14th 1940.

significant number of six footers,” hyperbole about the Australian fighting man that had not been seen in the British press since the last war.

The two British newspaper articles from 1940 speak to the major themes of this thesis; an examination of how the Anzac Legend and the ‘digger myth’ shaped the experience and reception of these so-called “Sons of Anzac” who found themselves garrisoned in the United Kingdom in 1940. The Anzac Legend had been forged from the sacrifice the men of the 1st AIF; made on the ridges and spurs of the Gallipoli peninsula, in the Middle East and on the Western Front between 1915-18. The ambition to “create a hero out of the common Australian soldier” was driven by the political and cultural hierarchy of the time to further a nationalist agenda and establish the basis of an Australian identity distinct from British identity.³ The ideas in the archetype of this legend were not new and were grounded in previous bush legend where the frontier was an essential element in the forging of an ‘Australian’ masculine character. In keeping with these legends, the journalist and official war correspondent of 1914-18 Charles Bean wrote of the Anzacs that they were “waiting for battle as if they were ‘yarning’ at the stock-yard fence or the gate of the horse paddock in the Australian Bush.”⁴

The 1940 newspaper articles clearly illustrate the British perception of elements of the Anzac tradition; the eagerness of the men to join the fray, their impressive physicality, and their reputation as soldiers. What is not evident, and what will be a major investigative feature of this work, is how the 2nd AIF negotiated their way between inhabiting the noble ideas codified in the Anzac Legend and the less esteemed ideals encapsulated in the ‘digger myth’ which served both AIFs as an informal code of conduct during both world Wars. Graham Seal explained the differences between the Anzac Legend and ‘digger myth’ succinctly. He argued that the ‘digger myth’ was the folklore of the diggers themselves consisting of the “informal, unofficial, private ethos and expressions” included in the “language, narratives, verse, song, customs and shared beliefs” of the soldiers. Much of this folklore is itself derived from the nineteenth century “ideal Australian type – the bushman.”⁵

By examining the deployment of the 18th Brigade 2nd AIF to the United Kingdom, this investigation aspires to aid our understanding of the Anzac Legend and the ‘digger myth’ and

³ Hoffenberg, Peter, ‘Memory and the Australian War Experience 1915-18’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 36, January 2001, page 113.

⁴ Bean, Charles, *Letters from France*, New York, 1917, page 203.

⁵ Seal, Graham, *Inventing Anzac: The Digger and National Mythology*, UQP, St Lucia, 2004, pages 2-3.

the extent to which 'Britishness' occupied an element of both of these multi-conceptual ideals. The study of the experience of the 2nd AIF in England provides a data-set from which broader judgements about the evolution of the Anzac Legend and the 'digger myth' during the inter-war period can be explored. The extent to which elements of both traditions were visible in their inhabitation by the 18th Brigade and the 25th Brigade (which was formed in the United Kingdom in 1940), is assessed by examining a range of private and public records. The deployment of the 18th Brigade is a unique moment in the Battle of Britain in the United Kingdom. The threat of the Nazi invasion in that country pre-dated the opening of the North African theatre of the Second World War in September 1940.⁶ Much of the discussion on Australia's contribution in the Second World War begins with deployment to North Africa and the Middle East and later the Pacific. The 18th and 25th Brigade's experience in the United Kingdom is of value because it deals with the interwar legacy of the Anzac Legend before Australians once again found themselves in combat.

The role of the 2nd AIF in battles such as Bardia and Tobruk are known to history as the first time the "new Anzacs" went into action.⁷ A more accurate rendering of the historical record sees the Anzacs of 1940 facing the Nazi threat directly in the United Kingdom itself, enduring Luftwaffe air-raids during the Blitz, and assisting British and other Dominion forces in preparation for a German invasion throughout the summer and autumn of 1940. This investigation will contribute to the field of Australian military history an area hitherto unexplored. There is no literature that speaks directly to this subject matter. This is key to what is at stake in this project and what it has to offer the discipline. It is unique, as it examines the operation of the Anzac Legend in the minds of the Second World War Australian soldiers, and how it was perceived by the British public, at the historical moment the Legend was first inhabited by a new generation of Australians.

This investigation consists of three chapters, each of which addresses a distinct conceptual issue. The first chapter discusses the operation of "Britishness" as a constituent element within Australian identity by 1940. 'Britishness' is discussed as it relates to the

⁶ Playfair, Major-General I. S. O., with Stitt RN, Commander G. M. S., Molony, Brigadier C. J. C. & Toomer, Air Vice-Marshal S. E. (1954). Butler, J. R. M., ed. 'The Mediterranean and Middle East: The Early Successes Against Italy (to May 1941)'. *History of the Second World War, United Kingdom Military Series I*, 3rd Impression 1959, page 210-211.

⁷ Stockings, Craig, *Bardia: Myth, Reality and the Heirs of Anzac*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2009, page 26. Stockings work is used primarily as a study for reasons leading to the diversion of the third convoy to assist Great Britain, and for discussion by the 6th Division troops pertaining to the ideals of the Anzac Legend.

national consciousness and to what extent it impacted the decisions of Australia's political class to enter the Second World War, and deploy the 18th Brigade to the United Kingdom. The second chapter discusses the historical development of the Anzac Legend and the 'digger myth', and examines the archival record to assess the extent to which the men of the 2nd AIF in England in 1940 negotiated both of these ideals. The final chapter assesses the degree to which British perceptions of the 18th Brigade reflected aspects of the Anzac Legend and the 'digger myth'.

It is an accepted historiographical theme that Australia's national identification and ties of kinship with Great Britain had begun to alter after 1915. This evolution had begun previously in the 1830s, with the first born "currency lads and currency lasses" of the New South Wales and Victorian colonies who claimed an individuality and national character as distinct from Great Britain.⁸ Russel Ward distilled the evolution of this 'Australianness' into distinctive characteristics in his important work *The Australian Legend* published in 1958 which discussed the interplay of myth within the landscape of Australian identity.⁹ Ward argued that "National character is not, as was once held, something inherited; nor is it, a figment of the imagination of poets, and publicists. It is rather a people's idea of itself and this stereotype, though often absurdly romanticised or exaggerated."¹⁰ Some of these characteristics of the "typical Australian" in the national myth are his abilities as a "practical man" who is "rough and ready in his manners and quick to decry any appearance of affectation in others" and who is "a great improviser, ever willing to have a go' at anything."¹¹ These values

⁸ Cunningham, Peter, *Two Years in New South Wales: A Series of Letters, Comprising Sketches of the Actual State of Society in that Colony; of Its Peculiar Advantages to Emigrants of Its Topography, Natural History, Etc*, Henry Colburn, London, 1827. This term "currency lads and currency lasses" appeared in the Surgeon-Superintendent to the colonies Peter Cunningham's 1827 book. In Letter XXI he wrote that the "colonial born brethren are best known by the term "Currency, in contradistinction to Sterling, or those born in the mother-country". It was a name used to evoke the inferiority of the "pound currency to the pound sterling at that time".

⁹ Bridge Carl, 'Anglo-Australian Attitudes: Remembering and Re-reading Russel Ward', King's College London, 2008 in *Journal of Australian Colonial History*, Vol.10, No.2, 2008 <http://www.une.edu.au/humanities/jach/>. Ward's book is a product of its context and as such limits its reach by focusing more so on masculine identity at the expense of Australian female identity in society up to the 1950s. With regard to this particular criticism of the text, Bridge notes that "Russel Ward's colleague, Miriam Dixon, in *The Real Matilda* (1976), spoke up for the female half of the Australian population whose characteristics were, to say the least, muted in Ward's very masculinist text".

¹⁰ Ward, Russel, *The Australian Legend*, Melbourne, 1958, pages 1-2.

¹¹ Ibid, page 4.

formed the basis of a character archetype essential to the nationalist “anti-British” rendering of the Australian story, driven by a radical nationalist narrative from the 1890s.¹²

Although nationalistic sentiments forged from the First World War had furthered an Australian political identity and individuality as quite distinct from Great Britain, Australia went to war in 1939 to support Great Britain. In September 1939, Prime Minister Robert Menzies declared that “as a consequence of the persistence of Germany in her invasion of Poland” that “Great Britain has declared war, with the result that Australia is also at war”. The support for Menzies’ decision evidenced by the lack of opposition in Parliament and in newspapers would illustrate that little had happened in the inter-war period to alter the realities of Australia’s ties of kinship, and strategic dependence on Great Britain.¹³ This chapter provides a political explanation examining the conflicting pressures weighing on the policymakers at the time. A focus of this chapter is to assess the extent to which a nationalist “anti-British” agenda played a part in this decision to go to war.¹⁴ The conflicting aims of the British and Australian governments as to what end this force “with no clear aim” was to serve, highlight the precarious location of ‘Britishness’ within Australian identity in 1939.¹⁵ Furthermore, the place of ‘Britishness’ as it influenced the enlistment motivations of the men of the 18th Brigade is also assessed in this section. This is done also to determine to what extent notions of ‘Britishness’ figured in the identity of the new Anzacs in the 18th Brigade as they made their way to the “old country”.

The chapter concludes with a discussion on the current place of ‘Britishness’ in Australian historiography. Historians including David Day and Neville Meaney have “created a new exclusive nationalist history written against Britain and its supposed betrayals beginning with the abandonment at Singapore.”¹⁶ Meaney argued that the radical new “teleological history has seen Australia’s past as a story of ‘thwarted’ nationalism, a thwarting which was the result of British manipulation.”¹⁷ It is ironic that considering such circumstances, ‘Britishness’ remained as a defining element in the national mindset in the

¹² Meaney, Neville, ‘Britishness and Australian Identity: The Problem of Nationalism in Australian History and Historiography’, *Australian Historical Studies* (116), 2001. See this work for discussion about radical nationalist historiography in chapter I of this thesis.

¹³ Day, David, *Menzies and Churchill at war*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1986, page 8.

¹⁴ *The Armidale Express and New England General Advertiser*, Sun 3rd Sep 1939, page 2 in *Trove*, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/193667822>

¹⁵ Charlton, Peter, *The Thirty Niners*, MacMillan Publishing Melbourne, 1981, page 242-243.

¹⁶ Meaney, Neville, ‘Britishness and Australia: Some reflections’, *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Volume 31, Issue 2, 2003, page 124.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, page 125.

decades following the Second World War. It was evident in the language of an unlikely champion of its cause – Prime Minister John Curtin – who announced as late as 1944, well after what he himself had deemed the fall of Singapore as a British betrayal, that Australians were “over 90 per cent British stock – and in every other aspect, the Australian people are a replica of Britain and the way of life in Britain.”¹⁸ These conflicting aspects of ‘Britishness’ as a defining element of Australian identity are examined against the actions and writing of the men of the 18th Brigade in England in chapter II.

The second chapter of the thesis explains the historical development of both the Anzac Legend and ‘digger myth’. The majority of the chapter explores the men of the 2nd AIF’s time in England from June to December 1940 negotiating these distinct paradigms. This is a novel era of scholarship as there is no literature that examines the 2nd AIF experiences in England in detail, nor any that does so considering how the men inhabit the Anzac Legend and ‘digger myth’.

Regarding the presence of Anzac Legend in historical scholarship and contemporary discussion, Jane Ross states that the “truth or otherwise of Anzac is a moot point. What is important is that people accept it and use it as a cultural symbol, as an expression of their identity and aspirations.”¹⁹ The Anzac Legend as a set of institutionalised traditions took hold in the public sphere in the inter-war era. The Legend’s ideals were noble in design and aspired to gather together the upright and wholesome elements of the Australian character. Eric Hobsbawm observed how “invented traditions are vulnerable to, and even intended for, political manipulation.”²⁰ The Anzac Legend from inception was used as a political tool to generate a narrative of national birth that held currency with the 2nd AIF volunteers. At times they would struggle to live up to its lofty ideals in England whilst on active service in 1940. The Anzac ideals and traditions created by the 1st AIF were held in high esteem in the thoughts of the men of the 2nd AIF. Indeed, men enlisted in 1939 not just to escape “the greyness of Australian life” but because it was “a chance to emulate the feats of their fathers and elder brothers – feats that were now legend.”²¹ This chapter compares the actions of the

¹⁸ Ibid, page 127.

¹⁹ Ross, Jane, *The Myth of the Digger: The Australian Soldier in Two World Wars*, Hale & Iremonger, Sydney, 1985, page 199.

²⁰ Hobsbawm, E. and Ranger, T. (eds), *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge, UK, 1983, page 307, in Seal, page 169.

²¹ Charlton, page 242.

2nd AIF in England against those of their forbears in the 1st AIF twenty years earlier, and assesses the degree of continuity in both forces inhabitation of the Anzac Legend.

With regard to the 'digger myth', Ross argued that its importance lies in the fact that the men themselves believed in the existence of this set of ideological conventions. The myth was evident in the 18th Brigade conduct in England in 1940. Gavin Long argued in Series I of *Australia in the War of 1939-45*, "how sharply conscious many of them were that this was the test of their equality with the old AIF in which their fathers had served, and which, for them, was the sole founder of Australian military tradition."²² John Laffin believed that "right from the beginning the 2nd AIF took over the traditions of the original AIF. The new diggers were intensely conscious of themselves as trustees of the Old Diggers' glory and courage."²³ However, there was a darker side to the 'digger myth' that came with their reputation for military success. In examining the more negative aspects of the 2nd AIF occupation of England, the chapter examines the challenges faced by the soldiers irregularly inhabiting both of these traditions – the nationalistic Legend of Anzac which had informed what it was to be an Australian, and the 'digger myth' which told them how to be an Australian soldier.

The final chapter assesses the degree to which British perceptions of the 18th Brigade reflected aspects of the Anzac Legend and the 'digger myth'. The British experience of Australians in England during the Great War influenced how the British perceived the Australians in 1940. How the 'myth' and legend was carried on in England in 1940 is explored in this chapter and an assessment made, of how British perceptions of the Australian as a fighting man had been changed or reinforced by the behaviour of the 2nd AIF. Again, there is no specific literature that speaks directly to this element of Australian military history and this study seeks to make a contribution to the field. The methodological approach will utilise qualitative archival sources and literature together with inferences drawn from published literature. This chapter examines the nature of British perceptions regarding the imminent arrival and deployment of the new Anzacs. Commentary and opinion pieces appearing in the press, interviews with members of the British public, and accounts from the men of the 18th and 25th Brigades themselves all add to the tapestry on the inhabitation of the Anzac Legend

²² Long, Gavin Merrick, *Australia in the War of 1939-1945. Series I – Army, Volume I – To Benghazi* (1961 reprint), Australian War Memorial, page 163.

²³ Laffin, J, *Digger: The Story of an Australian Soldier*, Corgi, Australia 1960 in Ross, page 125.

for the first time since its inception. Much of the material sourced for this section is contained in newspaper articles located in the archives of Australian and British newspapers.

This investigation challenges assumptions about Australian identity as it related to 'Britishness' as a core element by 1939. This concept establishes the investigative framework explored in the decision to go to war in 1939, and the decision to divert the 18th Brigade convoy to England in 1940. 'Britishness' as a component of individual identity is examined against the men's motivation in volunteering for the 2nd AIF. 'Britishness' is also assessed as a constitutional element within the Anzac Legend and the 'digger myth', in the lived-in experiences of the Australian soldiers in England in 1940. This investigation establishes a line of argument illustrating the fragility of Anzac as an ideal against the strength of the 'digger myth's less auspicious elements. These elements were inhabited with ease and with greater regularity by the men, particularly as their stay in the South of England extended after the threat of German invasion had diminished towards the end of 1940.

Chapter I: Britishness or Australianness' - aspects of Australian identity and the deployment of the 18th Brigade to Great Britain in 1940.

World War II began on the morning of the 1st September 1939. The journalist William Shirer learnt of the news at 6am from another American war correspondent Sigrid Schultz also stationed in Berlin. Whilst Shirer was not surprised to learn that Germany had invaded Poland, he was still “numbed ... paralysed” at the news from Schultz on the other end of the telephone. In his diary entry only the day before on the morning of the 31st August, Shirer’s frustrations at the impending inevitability of conflict were manifest: “How can a country go into a major war with a population so dead against it?”²⁴ Shirer’s own optimism for a peaceful resolution to the escalation of international tension since 1938 had been quashed with the announcement of the Russo-German pact. Indeed, Shirer notes that the “seething activity” on the Wilhelmstrasse throughout the day of the 31st August was between Russia and Germany only, which meant that the “British note” would most probably go unanswered by Hitler.²⁵ Two weeks before in a cable to Neville Chamberlain on the 18th August, the Australian Prime Minister Robert Menzies expressed the conundrum appeasement had become. Menzies hoped that “efforts should be made to ensure that Poland adopts a reasonable and restrained attitude” as Hitler advanced on Poland just a fortnight before the war was declared.²⁶ Efforts at appeasement continued for two days after Schultz’s early morning phonecall to Shirer in Berlin, as low-flying aircraft dropped bombs on Polish towns and citizens in the open. British reluctance ceased with Chamberlain’s declaration of war at 11.15am on the 3rd September.²⁷

The historical orthodoxy maintains that with minimal reflection and consultation, Menzies rushed to the aid of Great Britain to whom he believed Australia owed its existence. The traditional Menzies narrative holds that Menzies’ conception of Australian identity was set deep within the bounds of Australia’s historical relationship to, and as an offset and creation of, Great Britain. Indeed, the evidence for this argument is supported by historians who point to the fact that Menzies committed Australia to a war with Germany less than an

²⁴ Shirer, William L, *Berlin Diary*, Hamish Hamilton, London, October 1941, page 154-155.

²⁵ Ibid, page 155.

²⁶ Henderson, Anne, *Menzies at War*, NewSouth Publishing, Sydney, 2014, page 49.

²⁷ Ibid, page 51.

hour after British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain's declaration.²⁸ The historical picture which held sway in the literature until relatively recently was of an Australia "without control of its own foreign relations", and her Prime Minister declaring war simply "as a result" of the British decision.²⁹ An increasingly robust understanding of Menzies himself and the declaration of war has evolved in the scholarship to challenge the dominance of the nationalist driven rendering of the Australian story. Menzies' decision to commit Australia to another war was not a naïve automatic response of an "Anglophile slipping unthinkingly into the mentality of 1914"³⁰ but a calculated and deliberate choice congruent with the national interest. For Menzies, the protection of national integrity in a hostile international system lay in the concept of imperial defence. This principle held that British strength was the best guarantee of Australian strength.³¹

Prime Minister Menzies' decision set in motion the investigative feature of this case-study: the deployment of the 18th Brigade, 6th Division, 2nd AIF to the United Kingdom in June 1940. This chapter explores the political landscape and events that led to the declaration of the war and the deployment of the 18th Brigade to Great Britain. Menzies' decisions are explored within a wider discussion about the different conceptions of Australian identity that had developed by 1939. The extent of national and individual 'Britishness' and 'Australianness' are appraised firstly at a national level in the decision to enter the war, and secondly in the motivations of the men who enlisted in the 2nd AIF in 1939. The decision to deploy the 18th Brigade to the United Kingdom is examined to conclude the chapter.

The official reason for Australia's involvement in the Second World War still remains widely accepted. In Series 4 of *Australia in the War of 1939-1945* (1952), Paul Hasluck argued that Australia entered the war because of "a widespread political and emotional commitment to the British Commonwealth."³² Hasluck went further explaining that "Australia's interests were inextricably linked to those of Britain" and specifically stated the vulnerability a British defeat would expose Australia to with regards to "pressure from Germany" and "security

²⁸ Beaumont, Joan, *Australia's War 1939-45*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1995, page 1.

²⁹ Ibid, page 1-3.

³⁰ Ibid, page 4.

³¹ Stockings, page 26.

³² Hasluck, Paul, *Australia in the War of 1939-1945. Series 4 - Civil, Volume I - The Government and the People, 1939-1941*, Australian War Memorial, Canberra, ACT, 1952, page 155 in Beaumont, page 2.

against Japan.”³³ Despite the speed in joining the cause, it would take the Australian government nearly two weeks to decide what the nature of the Australian contribution would be. On the 15th September 1939, Menzies announced the formation of an expeditionary force, the 6th Division, which would consist of 20,000 volunteers.³⁴ The national reluctance is illustrated by Menzies’ own hopes for appeasement. Stuart Macintyre explains “why the ardour of 1914 gave way to such reluctance in 1939”³⁵ in his account of what can be seen as the paradox of Menzies himself. Menzies wasn’t a migrant escaping England like his predecessors Fisher and Cook, which perhaps explains why his attachment to the old country was more fervent. Instead Menzies’ “idealised homeland was a rich expanse of history and literature, institutions and traditions and the source of all that was good.”³⁶ Even after Menzies visited England for the first time in 1935 and the “establishment bestowed on him praise for the eloquence of his fealty” a dogged realpolitik informed his position to repeatedly encourage Britain to accede to Hitler’s demands lest Britain become involved in another European war which would mean “Australia might be exposed to Japanese aggression.”³⁷ Menzies was also prescient of the cost of the last war in that “250,000 Australians were still being assisted by war pensions in 1939, the cost of ex-service benefits a fifth of the Government’s expenditure in addition to the interest payments on the £300 million debt incurred to fight the war”³⁸ for Britain. It would appear that Menzies’ loyalty to Great Britain and his own ‘Britishness’ conflicted with the political reality of Australia’s isolated and exposed international position in the 1930s. Indeed, the Anzac Legend itself – a subject of the following chapter in this thesis – contained a double-bind: it “enshrined the valour of the men who answered the call, but it included memories of a reliance on British strategy and British generals that made many Australian’s wary of both.”³⁹

Despite any doubts Menzies may have had to the nation itself, the concern for the position of Great Britain and the concept of loyalty to her was “fundamental to Australian political culture.”⁴⁰ This is most evident when we consider that other Dominion nations of

³³ Ibid, page 3.

³⁴ Stockings, page 28.

³⁵ Macintyre, Stuart, *Australia’s Boldest Experiment – War and Reconstruction in the 1940s*, NewSouth Publishing, Sydney 2015, page 20.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid, page 21.

³⁹ Ibid, page 22.

⁴⁰ Lowe David, “Chapter Seven: Australia in the World”, in Beaumont, page 166.

Canada, South Africa and Éire, unlike Australia, “made a point of announcing their declarations of war as the results of independently reached decisions,” further reflecting Australia’s inherent political ties to Great Britain.⁴¹ A revision of the archival record has challenged historical assumptions about the extent of Menzies’ fealty to England and instead revealed that it was Menzies’ “seeming readiness to commit Australia to the conflict has tended to hide his real reaction to the war”, and that the words he used in the 3rd September broadcast to the nation such as “tragedy, wanton crime” and “agony” best describe his true feelings.⁴² However, there is still a relevancy to the perception that the 2nd AIF was “an anachronism in 1939 ... a foolish gesture to the idea of Empire” which made little sense as “Australia had little reason to feel grateful to Great Britain either from the 1914-18 war or the economic policies during the depression.”⁴³

The historical image of the two key Australian policymakers of the time, Prime Minister Robert Menzies and High Commissioner to the United Kingdom Stanley Melbourne Bruce, is of leaders who put a high priority on ensuing loyalty to England. They were certainly statesmen who were “straddling two distinct worlds, one British and the other Australian.”⁴⁴ Representations of Bruce in particular in the broader scholarly literature have presented him as an “Anglophile reactionary and wearer of spats” and as a politician who “put British Imperial interests before Australian interests.”⁴⁵

However, as scholarship has progressed, historians are able to provide a more full-bodied representation of Bruce and Menzies with regard to their ‘Britishness’, and the extent to which ‘Britishness’ informed their decisions to commit Australia to another major conflagration. Revisionist historians argue against this “imperial fallacy” contending that along with Bruce, “Lyons and Menzies should be seen not as Anglophiles and Imperialists but rather as Australian nationalists.”⁴⁶ Tsokhas and Ross argue that these key leaders laid the

⁴¹ Ibid, page 167

⁴² Day, *Menzies and Churchill at War*, op. cit., page 8.

⁴³ Charlton, page 242. The economic policies referred to by Charlton consisted primarily of the orthodox economic plan by Sir Otto Niemeyer who warned Australia had two years “to get its house in order” before a tranche of external debt matured in 1932.

⁴⁴ Lee, David, *Stanley Melbourne Bruce - Australian Internationalist*, Bloomsbury, London, 2010, Introduction: page ix.

⁴⁵ Ibid, Introduction: page x.

⁴⁶ Tsokhas, Kosmas, *Markets, Money and Empire: The Political Economy of the Wool Industry*, Melbourne University Press, Victoria 1990 and Ross, A.T., *Armed and Ready: The Industrial Development and Defence of Australia 1900-1945*, Turton & Armstrong, Sydney, 1995, in Lee, David, *Bruce* op. cit., Introduction: page xi.

basis for a “self-reliant defence posture and capacity to manufacture armaments” through driving hard bargains with successive British governments in the inter-war and early war years.⁴⁷ The narrative of the interwar period, particularly the 1920s under Stanley Bruce was ‘Men, Money and Markets’, in which Australia sought British migration, British investment and preferential access for Australian produce.⁴⁸ The criticism Menzies and Bruce attracted in maintaining an outward ‘Britishness’, should instead be viewed as an independent nation building exercise. Radi argues that Bruce’s endeavours in particular to attract British experts in science and technology and in banking and finance, as well as his “willingness to accept British strategic planning in matters of defence” should instead be recognised as “being part of a wider strategy to ensure that the links forged by trade and investment would strengthen the country to which Australia looked for its defence.”⁴⁹ Bruce’s stance throughout the 1920’s and 1930’s instead establishes him as an Australian nationalist. This challenges and subverts radical nationalist assumptions that ‘anti-Britishness’ was an important element of Australian identity as the movement towards Federation gathered pace in the late nineteenth century. For Radi, Bruce’s ‘Britishness’ is more a veneer than historical truth. In his role as High Commissioner to the United Kingdom in the 1930s he was unhappy about the United Kingdom’s habit of deciding foreign policy on its own while expecting the Dominions to provide military forces when needed. However, for Bruce, the integrity of Australia’s national defence lay in a united approach by all the Dominions and he was opposed then, and until 1939, to “any breaching of the diplomatic unity of Empire.”⁵⁰ Charlton argued that a posture of outward ‘Britishness’ was a strategy used by Bruce in advancing the national position. His patrician background worked well for him as he was accepted by Whitehall’s establishment as he advanced the Australian position by cautioning against sending an expeditionary force until the Japanese intentions in the Pacific were known.⁵¹

Further examination of the composition and interpretation of national identity unearth what Neville Meaney argued was “the problem of nationalism in Australian history

⁴⁷ Ibid, Introduction: page xii.

⁴⁸ ‘Stanley Bruce, Prime Minister of Australia’. *National Archives of Australia Online*, (Canberra), http://www.nma.gov.au/primeministers/stanley_bruce, site accessed 15th April 2017.

⁴⁹ Radi, Heather, ‘Stanley Melbourne Bruce’, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 7, (MUP), 1979, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/bruce-stanley-melbourne-5400>, site accessed 10th June 2016.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Charlton, page 10.

and historiography.⁵² Meaney argued that 'Britishness' as an element of Australian identity has not been examined sufficiently because past discourses about its place in the national story have been hobbled by the "tyranny of nationalism's assumptions about the past."⁵³ Essentially, it has been nationalism's determinist teleological view of history that "European Australians have been engaged from early in their history in an inexorable struggle for national independence"⁵⁴ that has shouted down alternative narratives from emerging. The alternative historiographical narrative contests that the British race remains pre-eminent as the enduring foundation of the national story, the evidence of which is seen in the reluctance of Australia to separate from Great Britain.

The historical legitimacy of the nationalist narrative and its assumptions about the past are powerfully contained within the evolution of events along the way to the Australian settlement of 1901.⁵⁵ These include the demand for colonial self-government, the ethos of the diggers on the goldfields and the emergence of this in a literary form by the radical nationalists of the 1890s including Henry Lawson and A.B. Patterson. Indeed, teleological evidence for this argument continued to build beyond Federation with the Anzac experience, Billy Hughes's demand for individual representation at Paris in 1919 and in the League of Nations and finally with Curtin's denunciation of the British betrayal at Singapore.⁵⁶ In the inter-war period the diggers of 1940 themselves would have been impacted by what Holbrook argues was an "historiographical interregnum - a pause in the recording of the Australian story",⁵⁷ or at least an Australian story that was driven by the nationalist camp led by Charles Bean whose notions of 'Australianness'⁵⁸ were captured in the egalitarianism he lauded as essential to the success of the 1st AIF. Bean's praise of the digger as "a very 'square' man who

⁵² Meaney, Neville, 'Britishness and Australian Identity ... op cit., page 76.

⁵³ Ibid, page 78.

⁵⁴ Ibid, page 76.

⁵⁵ McAuley, Ian, 'Updating the Australian Settlement', CPD Website (Centre for Policy Development), published June 2005, <http://cpd.org.au/2005/06/updated-the-australian-settlement/>, accessed 12th September 2016. The Australian federation began with a set of principles which Paul Kelly called 'The Australian Settlement'. Kelly distilled these into five elements: White Australia, Industry Protection, Wage Arbitration, State Paternalism and Imperial Benevolence.

⁵⁶ Meaney, 'Britishness and Australian Identity ... op cit., pages 76-77.

⁵⁷ Holbrook, Carolyn, *Anzac: The Unauthorised Biography*, NewSouth Publishing, Sydney, 2014, page 32. Holbrook charts this "inter-war interregnum of the Australian story" discussing the rival ideologies of the two men who controlled and crafted the Australian story at this time. Charles Bean, lapsed Anglophile and editor of *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918* (1921-41) and Ernest Scott who "found his moral bearings in the cause of British imperialism" evidenced in his work *A Short History of Australia* (July 1916).

⁵⁸ White, Richard, *Inventing Australia*, Chapter 8: Diggers and Heroes, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1981, page 126. White says that "the digger came to stand for all that was wholesome, descent and Australian" and that not only "did he embody Australianness, but he was its greatest protector".

valued frankness highly, a man who owned no class distinctions,⁵⁹ was anti-British to the extent that it reflected a disdain for the class system and most certainly would have weighed upon the development of a sense of self amongst the new Anzacs by 1940. Bean carefully rendered the uniqueness of the Australian soldier's identity as distinct from the "humble-minded British 'Tommies' who would look up to the Australian private as a leader", who would lead them into "good things or evil" depending on whether he was a "good or bad Australian."⁶⁰

The nationalist anti-British narrative gathering pace would no doubt have affected the 1939 diggers view of their own identity. It is certain that many of the early 2nd AIF volunteers' views were influenced by the widely circulated tales of British military incompetence during the First World War. This anti-British perspective established the parameters to interpret defeats at Gallipoli as the result of a failure of British command and strategy, not the heroic Anzacs.⁶¹ Indeed, further 'anti-Britishness' as a theme would have developed in the 2nd AIF from the stories disseminated by returning First War diggers about England itself. A consensus amongst many developed whereby they began to "turn their eyes back to Australia as a source of sustenance, creating a highly idealised picture of their homeland".⁶² They were seeing Australia with new eyes. Andrews argues that returning diggers were "disappointed and disillusioned with the England they visited" and that consequently "many Australians during the war began to reassess their identification or affiliation with their British 'cousins' - the first major challenge to the Australian sense of Britishness".⁶³ Andrews continues: "their growing experience of England and the English left the Australians heartily disaffected. The climate was atrocious, London was dirty, and the British class system and snobbery quickly grated on the Australian tourists". One letter described how the soldier "hated England" and that "they ought to give England to Germany and apologize for the state it is in."⁶⁴ At times this 'anti-British' theme was recorded by the 2nd AIF men in the letters voicing similar

⁵⁹ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 22nd June 1907, page 6 in White, Richard op. cit., page 126. It is worth noting that Charles Bean wrote this article published in the Herald in 1907 nearly a decade before Gallipoli, in which many aspects of the 'digger legend' are in evidence, in particular the role of the frontier on the forging of the rugged and self-reliant Australian character.

⁶⁰ Bean, Charles, *First World War Official Histories*, Vol. I, op. cit., page 47.

⁶¹ Rickard, John, *Australia: a cultural history*, Longman Publishing, London and New York, 1988, page 119, in Gare, Deborah, 'Britishness in Recent Australian Historiography', *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 43, Cambridge University Press, Dec. 2000, page 1148.

⁶² Andrews, E.M., *The Anzac illusion: Anglo-Australian relations during World War I*, Cambridge, 1993, page 185, in Gare, page 1151.

⁶³ Ibid, page 1148.

⁶⁴ Ibid, page 1151.

concerns 20 years on. One letter was troubled by the prevalence of venereal disease in the capital and stated how he found “the people careless and dirty, and venereal disease prevalent, and beyond a few notices in public conveniences there is little attempt to combat the last evil. Although there are brothels in Queensland, venereal disease is not rampant in Australia. I know that England will eventually prevail in the struggle, but I look in vain for the man who will rebuild the nation in the years to come.”⁶⁵

Whilst we can accept there was a popular view of British military incompetence and significant challenges to ‘Britishness’ as a key Australian ideological component, it is evident that assumptions in the nationalist narrative are infused with illogicalities. Consider how on the outbreak of the First World War it was clear that the popular view of Australian nationalism was well and truly in step with loyalty to Great Britain and the imperialist tenet of the Australian place within the empire.⁶⁶ Holbrook explains that the ideas of the radical nationalists peaked in the mid 1890s “before being swamped by the rising tide of jingo-imperialism embraced by Australians” in response to the Boer war and Russian and Japanese activities in the Pacific. By 1914, Lawson himself was “baying for German blood and the Bulletin magazine was making the case for conscription.”⁶⁷ This episode illustrates clearly the importance of the dual components of ‘Australianness’ and ‘Britishness’ in the national consciousness, as the nation supported Great Britain in this enterprise, and would do so again in 1939. Consider also the case of Bean himself, and the importance of Great Britain as a central pillar within his powerful nationalist rhetoric. After his confidence in the British was shaken in the initial years of the conflict, Bean’s diary entries from 1917 reveal his “mission to document the difference between the British and the uniquely Australian components of the Australian male” and to prove Australians were “equal if not superior to that from which we had sprung.”⁶⁸ Bean’s pre-war deference to Empire had evolved now that he had “prised himself free from the British embrace”, his diary entries give substance to his image of an

⁶⁵ *The Spectator*, “An Anzac on England”, published 20th September 1940.

⁶⁶ White, page 124. Holbrook argues that although Bean’s “ardent devotion to Britain and Empire would fade in later years”, the emerging nationalism of the *Official History of Australia in the war of 1914-18* is “located firmly within the bounds of British Imperial Identity”. The initial volumes of the Official History craft a national story of Australians as “a thriving offshoot of the great British race”.

⁶⁷ Ibid, page 126.

⁶⁸ Holbrook, *Anzac* op. cit., page 48.

Australia he envisages “without a monarchy and free from the snobbery of the class system.”⁶⁹ However, it is clear that Bean’s aim in *The Official History* wasn’t to excoriate ‘Britishness’ from what it was to be Australian. He was actively involved in a process engineered towards locating the national story as a success within the overall British story. At Gallipoli and the Western Front, for Bean, Australians had become better ‘Britishers’. Indeed, the illusion of the exclusively ‘Australian’ nationalist conception of history has been illustrated in the post nationalist age in the failure of Australia to attain an independence from the United Kingdom⁷⁰. Meaney argues that after the First World War and into the 1960s Australia never lost hope in the unity of British peoples even in the face of constant disappointment. He argues that our real “community of culture” lay with the British yet our “community of interest” was practiced independently of these traditional ties⁷¹.

With a full-time military force of only 3000 men and militia not legally bound to serve overseas, raising the first 20,000 sons of Anzac proved difficult with enlistment quotas for each state filling slowly. In NSW where the quota was set at 6300, only 3400 had enlisted by the 13th October 1939.⁷² It is possible to consider the extent to which the overall reluctance of men to enlist, when set against the enthusiasm of 1914, in a wider discussion about where the enlistees of the 18th Brigade located themselves by 1940 within the different models of national identity. Either they were firmly ‘Australian’ adhering to the radical nationalist model, or their conception of nationalism and the driving force motivating their enlistment was set within an explanation of national identity that located Australia’s place within the British empire. The most accurate picture seems to be that ‘Australianness’ and ‘Britishness’ were in most cases not mutually exclusive and that even by 1939 – after the so called crucible of nation-building had occurred in Gallipoli and the Western Front - being a good Australian meant being a good ‘Britisher’. Charlton’s study of the volunteers of 1939 captures the class conscious motivation of these men to become part of the new history of the AIF. “I’d sooner

⁶⁹ Ibid, pages 47-48.

⁷⁰ Meaney, ‘Britishness and Australian Identity’ ... op cit., page 78. Meaney discusses the “puzzle” that this historical choice illustrates for the historian David Day. In the face of the greatest provocation Australia didn’t cut ties and establish an individual identity. Meaney describes Day who “wanted to tell a story of how the great betrayal at Singapore led to national emancipation but he ended up writing *Reluctant Nation*.”

⁷¹ Meaney, ‘Britishness and Australia’ ... op. cit., page 87-88. Meaney cites foreign policy decisions of Chifley and then Menzies in the 1950s supporting the British in the Middle East and allowing the Woomera rocket testing program, only after the central safeguard of our “community of interest” i.e. the ANZUS Treaty and the US Alliance had been affirmed in 1951.

⁷² Charlton, page 17.

be Anzac than Lord. I'd sooner be Anzac than Thane" was the expression of the new recruit Jo Gullett quoted in the *Australia in the War of 1939-45*.⁷³

James Mills explained that his motivation was guided by his belonging to the British Empire – "We were proud of it and the feeling remains to this day."⁷⁴ Mills' statements reflect how large sections of Australian society viewed the world "through an imperial imagination."⁷⁵ To a large extent, the nation and the 2nd AIF volunteers "reacted to the world with an imperial instinct which dominated Australia's institutional memory, its sporting memory, its religious memory, its military memory and its ceremonial memory. Being British was central to their identity and from that flowed their understanding of the world and the policy to be followed."⁷⁶

The duality of 'Australian-Britishness' on the eve of the Second World War is evidenced as Mills describes how the "hero worship" of the achievements of the Anzacs were taught in school within a greater discussion of their contribution to the British Empire.⁷⁷ Mills' compulsion is driven by an awe of the Anzacs and his devotion to the British Empire. A similar mixture of impulses drove Ted Pugh who "joined to get back to England and my family" but "thought the Anzacs superb".⁷⁸ The 'thirty-niners', one-third of whom would find themselves in England in 1940, all held in high regard the diggers that had gone before them, but had different understandings of 'Britishness or Australianness' within Australian identity. For many of the 'thirty-niners' the most compelling reason to join sat well outside academic discourses about the nature of identity, and was instead driven by the prospect they may succeed in emulating the feats of their forebears. One of the early 6th Division volunteers reflected on his motivations for enlistment: "The men who joined the army were the type who stood up on trams and gave their seats to women. I wanted to be part of this ragtime army ... to live the life of an adventurer with the duties of a citizen."⁷⁹

⁷³ Long, Gavin, *Australia in the War of 1939-1945. Series 1 - Army, Volume I - To Benghazi*, (1961 reprint), Australian War Memorial, Canberra, page 57, in Charlton, page 27.

⁷⁴ Mills, James, quoted in Charlton, page 28.

⁷⁵ Waters, Christopher, *The empire fractures: Anglo-Australian conflict in the 1940s*, Melbourne, 1995, page 6, in Gare, page 1152.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Mills, James, quoted in Charlton, page 28

⁷⁸ Pugh, Ted, Ibid, page 24.

⁷⁹ Long, page 59, Ibid, page 27.

Soon after Menzies' proclamation of the 15th September 1939 announcing the formation of the 6th Division, the 2nd AIF hierarchy began to establish itself as an enterprise exclusive to the regular Australian militia and prepared to raise the force of 20,000 volunteers. The 6th Division consisted of 3 brigades (16th, 17th, and 18th Brigades) with the 18th Brigade consisting of 2/9 Battalion raised from Queensland, the 2/10 Battalion from South Australia and the 2/11 Battalion from Western Australia.⁸⁰ The 2nd AIF chiefs ensured the message was clear to these men volunteering for overseas service: they were to be the heirs of Anzac. Their 6th Division shoulder patches consisting of a narrow border of grey cloth mirrored those of the 1st AIF.⁸¹ Stockings maintains that these volunteers were a "cut above" the regular militia in the degree of motivation they exhibited, and that soon after its establishment the Division radiated confidence.⁸² The tag "economic conscripts" jarred.⁸³ In fact the 5 shillings per day payment for the 2nd AIF volunteers was less than the 8 shillings per day a volunteer militiaman received.⁸⁴ Responding to pressure from Churchill "to see Australians in France by Spring" but ever conscious of Australia's unguarded position in the Pacific, Menzies agreed to send the first convoy of the 16th Brigade, which departed on the 10th January 1940 for training in the Middle East.⁸⁵ Menzies' concern about Australia's isolation was evidenced in his decision to hold back deploying the second convoy until "after an interminable wait", they departed on the 15th April 1940.⁸⁶ The third convoy, consisting of the three battalions of the 18th Brigade, the 2/12 Battalion (consisting in equal numbers of Tasmanians and Queenslanders) ready to join the 7th Division on arrival, and the 6th Division anti-tank regiment including one-third of its artillery, departed on the 8th May 1940.

The first attempt by the British to separate the 2nd AIF came in early May when the British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden attempted to divert the second and third convoys to the United Kingdom. Menzies and the 2nd AIF chiefs were adamant that unless Italy joined the war and the Red Sea became un-safe the 2nd AIF would remain as a collective force. Their nationalist agenda and a perceptive political realism shaped this position. This itself was

⁸⁰ Stockings, page 29.

⁸¹ Ibid, page 30.

⁸² Ibid, page 34.

⁸³ Beaumont, page 8. NSW Labour politician Eddie Ward tagged the 6th Division volunteers as 'economic conscripts' and '5 bob a day murderers'.

⁸⁴ Long, page 25. Long states that volunteer militiamen were paid 8s per day, an unmarried private in the AIF was paid 5s per day in Australia, with an extra 2s per day after embarkation for overseas. This was less than the 8s 6d per day dole, not to mention the average basic wage of £2 16s.

⁸⁵ Stockings, page 38.

⁸⁶ Ibid, page 43.

informed by a memory of British carelessness with 1st AIF lives in France and a growing realisation that the British war cabinet were failing to acknowledge the real Japanese threat to Australia. Day argues that the key Australian decision-makers were approaching with horror a “realization that Australia was seen in London as an expendable outpost of Empire”.⁸⁷ A “furious exchange of cables” followed which resulted in the second convoy maintaining its original course to join the 16th Brigade in the Middle East.⁸⁸ Menzies’ hand was forced on the 10th May 1940 when Germany invaded the Low Countries and the “ever increasing chance of Italian belligerency” meant that the Red Sea was no longer safe. Menzies accepted advice from the Admiralty and made the decision to divert the third convoy to Great Britain that day.⁸⁹

The arguments in this chapter illustrate the broadening historiographical arena which revise the reasons for the Australian involvement in the Second World War. Central to this discussion is the notion of ‘Australian-Britishness’ as a compelling reason for entry into the conflict. It is not doubted that ‘Britishness’ was for most people the foundational element of Australian self-actualisation, and ‘Britishness’ informed key Australian decision makers to declare support for Great Britain in the war against Germany in September 1939. However, the discussion has illustrated the nuances and location of ‘Britishness’ within Australian identity were one of other major components which influenced Menzies’ declaration. Elements of ‘anti-British’ nationalism were most certainly evident in the historical sources which recount the 2nd AIF volunteers’ reasons for enlisting. ‘Britishness’ and ‘Australianness’ are assessed in a different context in the following chapter, as aspects within the Anzac Legend and ‘digger myth’. The following chapter will also assess the extent the 2nd AIF men on active-service in the United Kingdom in 1940 inhabited these ideals.

⁸⁷ Day, David, 'Loosening the bonds: Britain, Australia and the Second World War', *History Today*, Issue 38, London, 1988, page 17.

⁸⁸ Stockings, page 43.

⁸⁹ Ibid, page 44.

Chapter II: The 'Thirty-Niners' in England - negotiating The Anzac Legend and the 'digger myth'.

On the morning of the 1st May 1940 the men of the 2nd AIF 6th Division, 18th Brigade assembled on the parade ground at Ingleburn barracks in Sydney to hear a farewell address by General Thomas Blamey. Blamey, himself a veteran of the 1st AIF and custodian of Anzac and now Corps Commander of the 2nd AIF, "told the boys to behave themselves when they go away and remember they represented Australia".⁹⁰ Perhaps it was his own inhabitation of the less publicly venerated aspects of the Anzac Legend that impelled Blamey to caution the men on their conduct.⁹¹ Blamey's foreboding would be proved right. Leslie Morshead's mixed group of Queenslanders, South Australian's, Tasmanians and composite supporting troops vacated the Ingleburn barracks and sailed on the 5th May 1940 in a grand convoy of converted passenger liners consisting of the *Queen Mary*, the *Empress of Canada* and the *Mauretania*. Even before the third convoy of the 2nd AIF 6th Division received word of the diversion to the United Kingdom, the men of the 18th Brigade were jacking up. "Ugly scenes developed" when the men on the *Queen Mary* were unable to take shore leave in Fremantle as the ship was too large for the wharf.⁹² Soldiers refused to do duties. More restrictions were placed on them which grated on them further. The Tasmanians smashed up the picture show bringing an end to entertainment and, thankfully, routine informational lectures.⁹³ Three weeks into their voyage the men remained frustrated and restless. Reports were made that officers were afraid of their men. The opportunity of shore-leave in Cape Town provided a much hoped for respite from ship-board life but South African authorities, already having dealt with the first two convoys of Australians were wary. The men of the 2nd AIF had already "ripped up the place" and the South African police were getting ready for the next installment. They would "simply turn the tear gas on them" if required.⁹⁴

⁹⁰ Matthews, Geoffrey Ronald (Colonel, DSO ED, 2/10 Battalion AIF and 2/9 Battalion AMF b: 1910 d: 1987), Private Diary 1939-41, Australian War Memorial Canberra ACT, Private Record: PR89/079, 1st May 1940.

⁹¹ Maloney, Shane, 'Thomas Blamey & Douglas MacArthur', *The Monthly*, October 2006, Schwartz Media, accessed 25th September 2016, <https://www.themonthly.com.au/issue/2006/october/1315451408/shane-maloney/thomas-blamey-douglas-macarthur>. Blamey himself had a reputation for "womanising and drunkenness". Furthermore, it is on the public record that Blamey's Victorian Police Badge (#80) was returned to him after being found in a Melbourne brothel in 1938 whilst he was Commissioner of Police in that State.

⁹² Herrick, John (Private), in Charlton, page 75.

⁹³ Raine, James (Private), in Charlton, page 75.

⁹⁴ Ibid, page 76.

The new Anzacs that did get to run riot in Cape Town had grown up as the first generation of young Australians who venerated the military achievements of the men of the first AIF. They had been the first to be educated in the new national narrative that saw Gallipoli as a baptism of fire that had heralded the attainment of nationhood and a national coming of age.⁹⁵ For the men of the 2nd AIF the social values of mateship, loyalty and courage, had taken shape “into a national legend about Diggers.” The baton was seen to pass easily from the first generation of Anzacs to the second. The men of the 6th Division would enter the North African battle of Bardia, after their time in England, as “the embodiment of the Anzac Legend.”⁹⁶

This chapter examines the origin and key components of the Anzac Legend which developed in the inter-war period and shaped Australian national identity. The evolution of the ‘digger myth’, as a body of defining characteristics created by the soldiers themselves to provide a framework for them to live up to, is also discussed. The essence of the research aim of this chapter is to assess the extent to which the men of this case study were affected by the Anzac Legend, and to examine the forms by which the men inhabited the multi-faceted ‘digger myth’ whilst in England in 1940. It is uniquely important as a study of Australian military traditions as an investigation of the first instance since 1918, whereby the new Anzacs negotiate the Anzac Legend and ‘digger myth’.

Charles Bean was appointed as Australia’s official war correspondent in the Great War and was “the man who first formulated and gave shape to the Anzac Legend”⁹⁷ via his production of the twelve-volume *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918*. Bean would become the driving force behind the establishment of the Australian War Memorial which would enshrine and perpetuate the Anzac Legend. He was highly influenced by the “martial nationalist ideology of the age where war was the ultimate test of character.”⁹⁸ He constructed a powerful story of national birth from the moment the 1st AIF had hit the beaches of Gallipoli. Bean codified the characteristics of the ideal ‘digger’ inhabiting the Anzac Legend into a number of distinct aspects which included: his “abilities to endure

⁹⁵ Stockings, page 289.

⁹⁶ Ibid, page 290.

⁹⁷ Bendle, Mervyn, ‘Charles Bean and the Anzac Legend’, *Quadrant Online*. Published Nov 2014, site accessed 10th June 2016, <https://quadrant.org.au/magazine/2014/11/charles-bean-origins-anzac-legend/>.

⁹⁸ Holbrook, Carolyn, “Marxism for Beginner Nations: Radical Nationalist Historians and the Great War”, *Labour History* No 103 (Nov 2012), page 124.

hardship on the frontier”, his “abilities as a horseman”, and the digger’s disregard for “authority that had been inherited and not won through the attainment of proven ability and respect.”⁹⁹ For Bean, the Anzacs had paid the “price of nationhood in blood and tears”¹⁰⁰ creating the nation and mythologizing their achievements forever in the process. As the Catholic newspaper, the *Freemans Journal* asserted on the 27th April 1916, “Australians really knew themselves, that we are at last a nation, with one heart, one soul, and one thrilling aspiration.”¹⁰¹ Gallipoli was the catalyst: “Before the Anzacs astonished the watching nations, our national sentiment was of a flabby and sprawling character ... we were no better than a joint in the tail of great Empire. Anzac Day has changed all that.”¹⁰²

Through the *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918*, Bean, as editor and principal author, would perpetuate such ideas, building the Anzac Legend. Graham Seal explains that the Anzac Legend has evolved to become a “cultural process and institution involving the formal official apparatus of Anzac Day, the RSSILA and the politics of nationalist and military pragmatics.”¹⁰³ The custodians of the Anzac Legend advanced it through the broad Australian community and in the process produced a national story. The Legend’s historicist nature also ensured its progression throughout society.¹⁰⁴ Catriona Elder maintains the Legend took hold like other national legends as it produced “a mythic

⁹⁹ Bean, Charles, *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918, Volume I – The Story of ANZAC from the outbreak of war to the end of the first phase of the Gallipoli Campaign, May 4, 1915*, Chapter III – The ‘A.I.F.’, Australian War Memorial, Canberra, ACT, 11th ed., 1941, pages 47-48.

Bean argues that the “The Australian was half a soldier before the war” because of his rural upbringing. Bean continues: “He learns something of half the arts of a soldier by the time he is ten years old-to sleep comfortably in any shelter, to cook meat or bake flour, to catch a horse, to find his way across country by day or night, to ride” and because of the annual military style campaign fighting bushfires of which he says “more than any other human experience, resembles the fighting of a pitched battle”. Good horsemanship argued Bean, was essential to the frontier existence which had galvanised the digger: “any Australian who, before the war, walked a mile when there was a horse at hand which could be ridden was looked upon as wanting in intelligence”. The success of the AIF was due in a large part to its functioning as a meritocracy. Bean believed that “the fact that a man had received a good education, dressed well, spoke English faultlessly and belonged to the “officer” class would merely incline them (the soldiers), at first sight, to laugh at him, or at least to suspect that he was guilty of affectation-in their own language, ‘putting on dog”.

¹⁰⁰ *Freeman's Journal*, Vol LXVII No 4037, Sydney, April 1916, in Trove <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-title464>, “Anzac Day – The Birth of a Nation” <http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/115306974/12807922>, accessed 2nd June 2016.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Seal, Graham, *Inventing Anzac: The Digger and National Mythology*, UQ Press, St Lucia QLD, 2004, page 4-7.

¹⁰⁴ Docker, John, ‘Manning Clark’s Henry Lawson’ in *Labour History*, No. 37, Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, Nov., 1979, page 4. In Docker’s explanation of historicism’s workings on the Bush Legend and later the Anzac Legend, he argues that “Historicism was often closely associated with nationalism, and promoted concepts like the national way of life or spirit or character or being”. Like the bush legend, the Anzac Legend contains at its core a nationalistic romance populated by heroes as the genre of its’ communication

connection between nationhood and personhood in the form of how the nation arises naturally from the character of its people.”¹⁰⁵ The Anzac Legend is the most compelling recent example of that connection. It informed notions of Australian national identity and masculinity with the creation of a new national archetype - the “Aussie bloke.”¹⁰⁶

Carolyn Holbrook explains how the Anzac Legend developed from the “initial flowering of radical nationalism” and the bush myth through the work of writers including Henry Lawson and Joseph Furphy through the pages of nationalist publications such as the *Bulletin* in the 1890s.¹⁰⁷ The public Anzac Legend which evolved in the 1920s had been significantly challenged with the assault from the great depression, and altered through the passage of time and the changing political dynamic in Australia in the 1930s.¹⁰⁸ The diggers had been betrayed for their service in the 1st AIF by the government failing to deliver its lofty promises to the diggers in the soldier settlement scheme.¹⁰⁹ This failed enterprise revealed the hollowness of the ‘agrarian myth’ at the heart of Bean’s assumptions about the bush and the bushman at the central core of the Anzac Legend.¹¹⁰ Indeed, the accuracy of the Legend’s composition would be challenged much later particularly by the ‘new military history’ of the 1st AIF in the 1970s¹¹¹. Lloyd Robson argued that Bean’s analysis was “anti-cultural” to the extent that “the role of the bourgeoisie and that great section of Australian urban society which

¹⁰⁵ Elder, Catriona, *Being Australian: Narratives of National Identity*, Allen & Unwin, Melbourne, 2007, page 28.

¹⁰⁶ Elder, page 27.

¹⁰⁷ Holbrook, *Marxism* op. cit., page 125-6.

¹⁰⁸ Lee, David, *Stanley Melbourne Bruce: Australian Internationalist*, Bloomsbury, Sydney, 2010, page 77. Lee explains how the Australian economy was diminishing by 1929. Stanley Bruce’s policies had failed to reach the heights of their ambition. Furthermore, the aspirational elements of the digger legend were challenged with the failure of the soldier settlement schemes.

¹⁰⁹ Holbrook, Carolyn, *Anzac: The Unauthorised Biography*, NewSouth Publishing, Sydney, 2014, see page 32-33 for Holbrook’s discussion on the “historiographical interregnum” of first world war literature in the inter-war period which worked to further the public adoption of the Anzac Legend.

¹¹⁰ Fry, Ken, ‘Soldier Settlement and the Australian Agrarian Myth after the First World War’ in *Labour History*, No. 48, Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, May 1985, page 32. 37% of the 10,565 settlements of Victorian diggers in the 1925 Royal Commission were considered having a fair prospect of success.

¹¹¹ Quirk, Kate, ‘The Colonial Goldfields: Visions and Revisions’, *Australasian Historical Archaeology*, Vol. 26, Australasian Society for Historical Archaeology, 2008, page 16. Sir General John Monash disagreed with Bean about the importance of the frontier as an influence on the men of the 1st AIF. Monash believed the key factor in the success of the 1st AIF had been the importance of democratic institutions. For Monash, the frontier itself was a myth that had been exaggerated by nationalist romantics like Bean in his time as a travelling journalist “seeking to record frontier life not as it was but as he wished it to be”.

sought to develop European capitalistic and middle-class values”¹¹² found no place in his analysis. Ken Fry argued that the image of Australian masculinity by the 1930s had shifted from “the image of the bushman turned soldier tended to give way to the image of the bronzed lifesaver of the Australian coastal beaches.”¹¹³ However, the men of the 18th Brigade accepted that the Anzac Legend exerted a powerful influence on the shared “national story.”¹¹⁴ They did not see the inadequacies, flaws, exaggerations and exclusions of the Anzac Legend and the dangers of the “relentless militarisation of Australian history” that many Australian historians would identify as the centenary of Anzac approached.¹¹⁵

Because it sought to craft a national narrative, the Anzac Legend ultimately exaggerated the mortal deeds of men and forged their actions into the stuff of mythology. We can see evidence of the Anzac Legend literally being “crafted” by the 2nd AIF custodians in England in 1940. Captain Matthews recorded in his diary the arrival of a “press contingent to take photos of the Coy. at work.” He noted that “a selection of hard faces was made and photographed as dinkum Aussies.”¹¹⁶ Matthews’ comment highlights that even before they had gone into combat and notwithstanding their behaviour on the convoy and in South Africa, the 2nd AIF hierarchy was focused on controlling and perpetuating their official brand of Anzac. The legend that the likes of Bean had created was now continually and carefully being crafted by the 2nd AIF. It was seeking to reinforce the consensus that had already emerged around Anzac. In promoting an agenda, Seal argues that the custodians of the Anzac Legend were determined to leave out some of the more unsavory characteristics of the 1st AIF including the “diggers vehement racism and prejudice against allies.”¹¹⁷ This casual racism which evoked a posture of racial superiority remained largely unchanged in Australian society between the wars and was inherited by the 2nd AIF. While heading to England on the *Mauretania*, Captain Matthews diarised that it was “very funny to see the police chasing the niggers away with truncheons” and how his “troops spent the afternoon throwing things at

¹¹² Robson, Lloyd, ‘The origin and character of the first A.I.F., 1914–1918: Some statistical evidence’, in *Historical Studies*, Volume 15, Issue 61, 1973, page 741, in Travers, Richard, ‘What kind of men were the diggers? The example of the 2nd/1st Battalion’, MA by Research thesis, UNSW, Sydney, 2014.

¹¹³ Fry, pages 42–43.

¹¹⁴ Elder, page 27.

¹¹⁵ Lake, Marilyn and Reynolds, Henry, *What’s Wrong with Anzac? The Militarisation of Australian History*, New South Publishing, Sydney, 2010, preface viii. The authors assert that their purpose in writing is to “encourage a truthful and critical debate about the uses of the Anzac myth” and to “do justice to Australia’s long anti-war tradition”.

¹¹⁶ Matthews, Private Diary 1939–41, 24 June 1940.

¹¹⁷ Seal, page 65.

niggers”¹¹⁸ whilst waiting to disembark for leave in Capetown. While prejudiced against non-whites was characteristic across broader Australian society of the time, the 2nd AIF’s embrace of the 1st AIF’s anti-British sentiment was seen as more problematic. The 1st AIF Brigade hierarchy were aghast at the “expressions of contempt for the British officers and the class for the digger they represented.”¹¹⁹ Diggers in England in 1940 would struggle to live up to the romanticised Anzac ideal but, in reality, maintained many of the habits of their forefathers.

The ‘folklore’ of the diggers which would become mythologised almost institutionally into the ‘digger myth’, contained the “informal, private ethos and expressions of the diggers including language, narratives, verse, song, and shared beliefs and customs.”¹²⁰ Graham Seal argued that the ‘digger myth’ established itself in the folklore and behaviour of the First and Second World War soldiers themselves. The ‘folklore’ contained a code of conduct and expectations that AIF soldiers could abide by and adhere to.¹²¹ Although the soldiers of the 18th Brigade would be shaped by the Anzac Legend which gathered pace in public commemoration through the 20s and 30s, in England, as soldiers of the 2nd AIF, they would attempt to define themselves by living up to and inhabiting the digger myth. Paul Fussell argues that myths serve an essential purpose for societies as “mythologising is essential to the process of grieving and provides a way of making sense of events that would otherwise seem calamitous.”¹²² The digger myth that sprang from the 1st AIF would serve the men of the 18th Brigade as a pseudo code of conduct in England in 1940. Jane Ross argued that the 2nd AIF took on board the exact same characteristics of the men in the 1st AIF because of an “intuitive understanding or *verstehen*” by the men of what it was to be an Anzac.¹²³ George Johnston attempted to define the essence of the digger myth arguing that Australian soldiers had demonstrated that there was “something different about them” – that they were “activated” by what would become the key tenets of the digger myth: “simple codes of loyalty, adventure, and comradeship” with the capacity “derived from the frontier experience” to “triumph by his

¹¹⁸ Matthews, Private Diary 1939-41, 26 May 1940.

¹¹⁹ Seal, page 65.

¹²⁰ Ibid, page 3.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Fussell, Paul, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, England, Oxford University Press, 1975 quoted in Travers, “Who were the men of the 2AIF?”, op cit., page 9

¹²³ Ross, Jane, *The Myth of the Digger: The Australian Soldier in Two World Wars*, Hale & Iremonger, Sydney, 1985, page 198. Ross argued that the digger myth exhibits “sociological plausibility” and is a key element to consider for historians studying the “military functioning of the First and Second AIFs.”

spiritual powers over seemingly insuperable physical difficulties."¹²⁴ Diaries and letters make it clear that these men felt pressure to live up to the digger myth and the reputation of the 1st AIF. On the converted passenger liners and ports of call on the way to England in May 1940, it appeared, for all the wrong reasons, that the behavior of the men of the 18th Brigade was adhering to the digger codes and reputations their forebears had constructed during the Great War.

The men of the 18th Brigade would have been well exposed to the digger folklore and the informal traditions of the 1st AIF even before volunteering in 1939.¹²⁵ The digger myth they would inhabit in England in 1940 was "already full-blown, polished and resplendent with over two decades of sacred polish applied around the land each Anzac day."¹²⁶ It was ready and waiting for them to walk into as they donned the slouch hat of the 2nd AIF. Ross argues that the 2nd AIF diggers would have undergone a process of socialisation into the digger traditions which began in basic training occurring at camps such as the Ingleburn Army Barracks where elements of the 1st AIF had trained a generation before.¹²⁷ Matthews' diary attests to this socialisation process at Ingleburn when he describes the group bonding experiences provided by route marches, playing football and boxing matches. The men occupy the larrikin component of the digger myth early in training as Matthews attests, awarding "four chaps detention for being drunk" and casually noting how "somebody stuck a bayonet in somebody else's bum last night."¹²⁸ The soldiers of 1939 would have quickly grasped that failure to live up to the model of the rugged bushman esteemed in the digger myth meant they would be met with instant ridicule. Even more so when the frontier influences of the digger myth were unsuccessfully inhabited by an Officer! Captain Matthews described the derision Staff Captain Dodds endured on brigade parade at Ingleburn because he "can't ride a horse for nuts." Clearly, Captain Dodds isn't living out the digger tradition as not only was he a poor

¹²⁴ Johnston, George, 'Anzac ... a myth for all mankind' in *Walkabout* 31(4), April 1965, page 13 in Ross, page 20.

¹²⁵ For the most recent research on the composition of 1st AIF based on the AIF Database at UNSW, see Bou, Jean & Dennis, Peter, *The Australian Imperial Force*, Chapter 4, 'The Composition of the AIF', Vol. 5 of Jeffrey Grey (ed.), *The Centenary History of Australia and the Great War*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 2016.

¹²⁶ White, page 147.

¹²⁷ Ross, page 159. Ross discusses this notion of socialisation into digger traditions that occurred at the Ingleburn Army Barracks in Sydney. In Lawson Glassop's 1944 novel *We Were the Rats*, the protagonist describes his feelings after being wished "Good luck, Digger": "a glow went right through me ... I was a Digger too".

¹²⁸ Matthews, Private Diary 1939-41, 1st April 1940.

horseman but his appearance on parade on a Clydesdale horse was “a signal for all the dogs in the camp to gather round him (about twenty) ... one trying to grab the Captain's horse's tail” to the chortling amusement of the entire brigade.¹²⁹

Recent scholarship into the 1st AIF by historians such as Peter Stanley has shown that the digger myth served to exaggerate the noble qualities of the diggers whilst downplaying or excluding negative traits and deeds.¹³⁰ Similar patterns of behavior can be evidenced in the 2nd AIF. Cape Town became a “town in turmoil”, with the arrival of the 18th Brigade. Public drunkenness from the Australians was rife and fueled a range of anti-social and criminal acts including the theft and misuse of the city fire engines. In ways reminiscent of the 1st AIF's experience in Cairo in 1915,¹³¹ Captain Matthews reported on the interaction between the drunken Australian troops and the “niggers where some men were taken off to native quarters and robbed”. He reports that “one man was knifed and left to die” and leaves us to read between the lines when he notes: “some truly disgusting sights in the brothels reported by piquet officers, picquets chasing away niggers with bayonets, everywhere picquets hauling in drunks.”¹³² After successfully mopping up the carnage and re-boarding the ship, getting out of Cape Town became the next problem when a large group of men attempted to charge past the sentries on the ship's gangway after deciding they wanted more action back in town.¹³³ It is evident that certain elements of the digger myth remained constant between the 1st AIF and the men of the 18th Brigade on their way to war in 1940.

It is also evident from the sources the double-bind of the ‘digger myth’ infusing the men with confidence in the AIF as a military outfit, but also, as Stockings argued, putting on them “considerable personal and collective pressure to live up to the ‘Digger’ myth.” He argues that the ‘digger myth’ “was a psychological force which both drove and obsessed them.”¹³⁴ Letters and diary entries of the 18th Brigade colourfully illustrate the men's excitement upon joining the digger tradition. This is particularly true on their arrival in England and then in the ensuing weeks when the Nazi invasion seemed imminent. Private Michael Kelly 2/10 Battalion discussed his feelings of joining the digger tradition: “we feel like

¹²⁹ Ibid, 29 April 1940.

¹³⁰ For a detailed account of the dark side of the Anzac Legend see Stanley, Peter, *Bad Characters: Sex, Crime, Mutiny, Murder and the Australian Imperial Force*, Australia, Allen & Unwin, 2010

¹³¹ For a detailed account of the reputation of the 1AIF in Cairo see Adam-Smith, Patsy, *The Anzacs*, ‘Chapter 8: The Battle of the Wazzir’, Nelson Publishers, Victoria, 1978.

¹³² Matthews, Private Diary 1939-41, 27th May 1940.

¹³³ Ibid, 28th May 1940.

¹³⁴ Stockings, page 288.

we are in a real army now, we are not training anymore and operate under service conditions ... our new war uniforms were issued to us and we have all been sewing our colour patches on.”¹³⁵ Now firmly a part of the ‘digger myth’, Kelly felt emboldened: “Fritz is coming over on Sunday so the papers say although I think we are ready for him.”¹³⁶ Private James Raine’s diary entries reveal his own mythologisation by the inter-war hagiography of 1st AIF achievements, and illustrates how the digger myth engendered in the men a certainty of belief in their effectiveness as a fighting force. His self-belief was evident: “There’s 20,000 men in the convoy. How they can win a war is beyond me but I guess we’ll do it once again.”¹³⁷ However, statements from the writer John Laffin also capture the internalised pressures that the men of the 18th Brigade felt: “We were intensely conscious of ourselves as trustees of the old Diggers’ glory and courage ... we were fearful we would let it down.”¹³⁸ Men were fearful of sullyng the image of the 1st AIF diggers, which Stockings argues is one of many factors that would drive the 6th Division at Bardia and contributed to the overwhelming defeat of the Italians in early 1941.

The statutes of the ‘digger myth’ itself contained many attributes particularly central to the idea of egalitarianism. Clare Rhoden discusses features of the digger tradition, and henceforth the myth that the 1940 Anzacs in England would be inhabiting, in her study of discipline in the BEF and the AIF in the first world war. Rhoden argues that the “explicit egalitarian values of Australian society, the Australians’ attitude to the war as work rather than a crusade for ideals” contributed to the diggers self-identification and their wider image as “laconic, irreverent, cavalier Anzacs in Great War narrative accounts.”¹³⁹ For the diggers in France in the 1st AIF soldiering was work. A British officer noted that when the Australians “came out of the line they came like tired men who had finished a job of work.”¹⁴⁰ Also for the men of the AIF in contrast to the BEF, there was a tangible equality between officers and regular ranks.¹⁴¹ Evidence that the AIF Officers were exposed to fire and would not retreat to dugouts like their British counterparts is provided by G.D. Mitchell, MC, DCM in his 1937

¹³⁵ Kelly, Michael (Private) 2/10 Battalion 2nd AIF, Letter to Father from England, 17 August 1940

¹³⁶ Kelly, Letter to Mother from England, 17th August 1940.

¹³⁷ Raine, in Charlton, page 77.

¹³⁸ Laffin, J, *Digger: the story of the Australian soldier*, London, 1959, page 132, in Ross, page 125.

¹³⁹ Rhoden, Clare, “Another Perspective on Australian Discipline in the Great War: The Egalitarian Bargain”, Melbourne University, published in *War in History*, 19(4), Sage Publishing, UK, 2012, page 446.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, page 457.

¹⁴¹ For further discussion of Officer-Soldier relations in the Australian Army, readers will find useful Pratten, Garth, *Australian Battalion Commanders in the Second World War*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 2009.

memoir: “in the AIF such separation of men and officers under fire was ‘not done’ ... We were a long way apart from our English brothers. In our army, the man was nearer to the officer, the officer nearer to the man. We were not hounded by the fear that our men would not respect us if we associated too closely with them.” Rhoden also believes that volunteering and the absence of conscription imbued the diggers with an arrogance which would inform the digger myth. Because “volunteering is transactional, and because it implies a balance between giving and receiving” it would “play a part in their superior self-conception”¹⁴² and led to a condescending attitude towards the British soldierly traditions. The volunteers of the 2nd AIF maintained this ‘egalitarian bargain’ and consequently questioned the nature of British military tradition. Promoted in July 1940, now Major Geoffrey Matthews derided the British military tradition whilst on leave in Bournemouth. Moving around the seaside town, he reported he and his fellow officers: “got tired of returning salutes to Tommy soldiers so spent the day dodging them.”¹⁴³ Here again is evidence of the anti-British element of the digger myth in the lived in experiences of the 1940 Anzacs in England.

Unlike the egalitarian bargain of Anzac, the British Army still maintained what Garry Sheffield calls ‘the deferential bargain’ with their men,¹⁴⁴ whereby as the Lord looked after his vassals so too would the Officer oversee the welfare of his men in the trenches. In 1940 as in 1918, the code of the digger myth was hostile to a system that saw men “lorded over by half-baked schoolboys invested with the infallibility of gods and the dignity of potentates.”¹⁴⁵ Like their forebears, the Anzacs of 1940 saw themselves in a partnership with their officers in a shared enterprise. Matthews went so far as to extend the egalitarian bargain to King George VI. He reported speaking casually and on equal terms with the King when the Sovereign visited the Austforce training camp near Salisbury.¹⁴⁶

Men of the 18th Brigade upon arriving in Great Britain began to inhabit the multi-faceted digger myth in different ways. Sources reveal the genuine struggle the men had grappling with the notion of their loyalty to Empire enshrined in the Anzac Legend on one

¹⁴² Mitchell, G.D., *Backs to the Wall: A Larrikin on the Western Front*, St Leonards, Sydney 2007, page 149, in Rhoden, page 457.

¹⁴³ Matthews, Private Diary 1939-41, 22nd June 1940.

¹⁴⁴ Sheffield, G.D., *Leadership in the Trenches: Officer-Man Relations, Morale and Discipline in the British Army in the Era of the First World War* (London, 2000), pp. 61-76, in Rhoden, page 446.

¹⁴⁵ McKinney, J.P., *Crucible*, Sydney, 1935, page 200, in Rhoden, page 455. McKinney criticised the class-oriented paternalism he witnessed in “the quivering delight Tommies seemed to take in saluting”.

¹⁴⁶ Matthews, Private Diary 1939-41, 3rd July 1940.

hand, which was undermined by the anti-English component of the 'digger myth'. On receiving news of the diversion on board the *Queen Mary*, John Herrick's diary recorded: "Words can't express my feelings on hearing news we are going to England."¹⁴⁷ This sentiment was echoed by Anthony Eden now serving as Secretary of State for War. The diversion gave Eden "incomparable pleasure in welcoming the Anzac Divisions here."¹⁴⁸ The diary of James Raine provides a counter-narrative to John Herrick whose inhabitation of the digger myth is fused with a love of Empire. As the convoy steamed up the Clyde and docked at Gourock near Glasgow, Raine dismissed as "a lot of baloney" the welcome speeches from "big shots, reporters and the Commander of the Scottish Army (forget his name)". The message from the King who "seems pleased we are here" is also "a lot more baloney."¹⁴⁹ Raine inhabited the cynical, anti-authoritarian, anti-British elements of the digger myth. His inheritance of digger tradition imbued him with a national superiority and an arrogance previously discussed by Rhoden. He dismissed the heartfelt welcome and talk of heroes as the 18th Brigade arrived in time to assist Great Britain in its hour of need and he diarised: "I suppose we feel like heroes. I don't and never will."¹⁵⁰

For men like Private Raine, they believed they were inhabiting a military tradition with mythical abilities to overcome insurmountable odds and win battles. Although cynical, he is ultimately empowered by the digger myth he inhabits and he believes the hyperbole from the reporter who tells him that "Britain and France have dropped their bundles", and now the "Australians as good untrained as trained ... need to get shoved in."¹⁵¹ Matthews' diary at times also illustrates the impact that the request for support for Australian troops twice in thirty years had on how British military prowess was esteemed by the 2nd AIF. Fundamentally, the sources reveal a disappointment with the British military hierarchy which extended at times to the British public. Matthews noted the "disgust" many of his men felt towards the English in Bournemouth one night on leave where "the local populace" were ignorant of the sacrifice the diggers were making, the risks to their own lives in order to protect an unappreciative public "who didn't care they were Australians."¹⁵²

¹⁴⁷ Herrick, John, in Charlton, page 75.

¹⁴⁸ Charlton, page 72.

¹⁴⁹ Raine, James, in Charlton, page 77.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, page 76.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Matthews, Private Diary 1939-41, 2nd June 1940.

The anti-English sentiments of the ‘digger myth’ failed to dissuade the digger-tourists from inhabiting an important element of the myth. The letters of Private Michael Kelly provide an illuminating insight into the operation of this element of the myth on English shores for the first time since the last remnants of the 1st AIF left England, belatedly in 1919. Kelly’s letters reveal his obsession with obtaining leave and seeing the country. Jeff Kildea discusses the notion of the ‘digger tourist’ in the first war as a positive attribute as it “implied their behaviour was curious and inquisitive, not destructive.”¹⁵³ Unlike the other Allied and German soldiers who went home on leave, the Australians went travelling like tourists.¹⁵⁴ Kildea notes that three hundred thousand Australians went overseas between 1915-1918, an opportunity which wasn’t open again until Private Kelly’s generation arrived in England in 1940. Kelly desired amongst all else to get to spend more time in London. Whether this was to see the heart of the British Empire or retrace the steps of the 1st AIF is not clear. Kelly, however, behaves with the same tourist guise and gaze as the 1st AIF soldier. What is also clear is his intention to document his soldiering experiences as a tourist. His letters discuss his efforts with his Kodak camera photographing aspects of camp life and on leave¹⁵⁵. Kelly relishes the time in the capital visiting Westminster Abbey, St Paul’s Cathedral and the Houses of Parliament.¹⁵⁶

Wartime London also offered the diggers culturally risqué experiences not enjoyed back home. Captain Matthews clearly enjoyed his trips to London where he “saw a show at The Windmill Theatre: a lot of naked women. Would cause a sensation in Australia but alright here.”¹⁵⁷ This is redolent of many of the accounts of First World War Anzacs on leave in France.¹⁵⁸ The sources also bring to light the 1940 Anzacs love of the English countryside. In the same letter Kelly describes the Company getting “led astray by the guides on a manoeuvre” in really beautiful countryside which “like Australia is sunny but not hot and with no dust.” Major Matthews’ diary crafts a particularly evocative image of the contextual blend of beauty and danger in the summer of 1940 in England. His account of the train journey between Scotland and Salisbury which passes through “a perfect countryside aspect dotted

¹⁵³ Kildea, page 122.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid. The author’s extension of the Australian ‘soldier as tourist’ thesis using ideas from Richard White.

¹⁵⁵ Kelly, Letter to Father from England, 10th October 1940.

¹⁵⁶ Kelly, Letter to Father from England, 31st August 1940.

¹⁵⁷ Matthews, Private Diary 1939-41, 13th July 1940.

¹⁵⁸ For a detailed account of Anzacs on leave in Paris during the First World War, see Travers, Richard, *Diggers in France: Australian Soldiers on the Western Front*, ABC Books 2008.

with thatched houses” firmly locates Matthews inhabiting the tenet of the digger as tourist. The fact that Matthew’s journey continues through York which only “1/4 hour after passing through, enemy bombers dropped eggs and killed some people”¹⁵⁹ locates him as a soldier who inhabited the cavalier aspects of the digger myth and the digger as adventurer.

This chapter has described the origin and development of the Anzac Legend which developed in the inter-war period and has shaped Australian national identity. The discussion has also charted the evolution of the ‘digger myth’, as a collection of ideals for the soldiers of the AIF to live by. The sources illustrate that men of the 2nd AIF were cognisant of the notions within the Anzac Legend as a cultural construct and aimed to emulate the best facets of this ideal. This chapter has also used source material to examine the forms by which the men inhabited the multi-faceted ‘digger myth’ whilst in England in 1940. It must again be stated that the study is important, as it assesses the operation of Australian military traditions in conflict for the first time since the conclusion of the First World War.

¹⁵⁹ Matthews, Private Diary 1939-41, 19th June 1940.

Chapter III: How did British perceptions of the 2AIF reflect aspects of the Anzac Legend and the ‘digger myth’?

Whilst walking his usual beat on the Colchester High Street on the night of the 14th February 1941, Police Constable Edwards was about to experience first-hand the dark side of the digger myth. At 10.15pm on this cold Friday night, P.C. Edwards was nearing the end of his shift and heading back to headquarters when he noticed a dark saloon car stationed in front of the Capo Hotel. Two Australian soldiers were standing on the footpath whilst the car was parking. Sensing something amiss Edwards shone his flashlight at the car revealing the absence of any index plates on the front. Walking towards the Australians and tracking around the back of the vehicle, the constable could see that the car was without rear index plates as well. P.C. Edwards approached the driver's side and leaning down he motioned for the Australian soldier behind the wheel to wind down the window. When asked by P.C. Edwards if he was the owner of the vehicle, Private Gordon Harold Price of the 2/10 Battalion 18th Brigade 2nd AIF responded that “the car belonged to one of our diggers out the back”¹⁶⁰. His suspicions further raised, the constable asked Price to step out of the car so as to examine his license and his record of permission to drive to the car. The soldier did so and upon assuming an upright position, Price, who Edwards noted in his account of the incident was exceptionally tall “at least 6ft 4in.”, gave the constable “a violent push” just as another car was passing in the street.¹⁶¹ Edwards stumbled backwards and almost fell in front of the oncoming vehicle, and then gave chase to his attacker who was hightailing it down the High Street subsequently losing sight of his man in the pursuit.

P.C. Edwards and fellow officers later caught up with Price at the 2nd AIF HQ at Le Cateau Barracks on the outskirts of Colchester. One wonders if the path between Le Cateau Barracks and the Colchester Police HQ had become well worn, by the time the final reinforcements of the 18th Brigade departed England for the Middle East. Price was interviewed and charged with a number of traffic offenses. The list of charges does not include assaulting a member of the Colchester Police Force. The Chief Inspector's submission to the Officer Commanding 2nd AIF Depot Personnel at Le Cateau reads: “I

¹⁶⁰ Price, G.H. (Private) (file) 2/10 Battalion, 2nd AIF Case Records, PR63 70.500.58, Australian War Memorial, Canberra, ACT, June 1941, Statement of P.C. Edwards, page 17.

¹⁶¹ Ibid, page 18.

forward information in the attached report for such action as you deem necessary.”¹⁶² This devolution of authority evidenced in the letter from the Chief Inspector to 2nd AIF command highlights a fundamental challenge to the regular processes of law and order posed by accepting an occupying force into Great Britain. This problem would be magnified to a much greater extent with the arrival of 3 million GIs in England from the United States in the year after the departure of the 18th Brigade.¹⁶³ The 2nd AIF whilst in England were not subject to the laws of that country but were instead subject to the 2nd AIF military-legal apparatuses. It could be argued that military law was not as tough as the laws of the realm. The delicate balance between authority and volunteer soldiers engendered by the egalitarian bargain ensured this status-quo.¹⁶⁴ As with their forebears in the First World War, Australian soldiers were free to inhabit either the noble or shadier aspects of the ‘digger myth’ – indeed the legal situation which set them apart from the locals unleashed some men like Private Price onto the British public. There was a Faustian element to accepting the help of a garrison force which could weigh heavily at times on the overall British perception of the Australian fighting man.

This chapter is about the degree to which British perceptions of the ‘sons of Anzac’ in 1940 reflected aspects of the Anzac Legend and the ‘digger myth’. The study reveals a degree of continuity between the 1st AIF and the 2nd AIF, particularly in the new diggers’ negotiation and inhabitation of the ‘digger myth’ as a quasi-code of conduct for Australian soldiers. By examining the way in which the myth was inhabited by the men of the 18th Brigade, the study also highlights how societal changes by 1939 had modified aspects of the Anzac Legend as a national ideal. British perceptions of the new Anzacs from outside the 2nd AIF and Australia provide a unique insight into the transnational power of the Anzac Legend two decades after its emergence. This chapter uses private Australian records as well as English newspaper articles of the time to explore these themes. Evidence from the 2nd AIF occupation is at times set against the later ‘occupation’ of the United Kingdom by American soldiers.

¹⁶² Ibid, Colchester Police, Submission of records (Price, G.H) to 2nd AIF HQ Le Cateau Barracks Colchester, 21 February 1941.

¹⁶³ Ellwood, David, ‘The American challenge in uniform: the arrival of America’s armies in World War II and European women’, published in *European journal of American studies* Vol 7, 2012, page 1. Ellwood states that the American occupation of England during the war was called the ‘friendly invasion’. He argues that although “it was generally friendly – it was undoubtedly an invasion”. The legal framework designed to make this work was unique in that “US authorities accepted no limits to their sovereignty, and Parliament had to pass a special act, half in secret, to give the US armies exemption from British law”.

¹⁶⁴ Rhoden, see discussion of egalitarian bargain in the previous chapter.

In its original design, the Anzac Legend emerged as a national motif that sought to capture the virtuous attributes of the Australian soldier. Despite the larrikin and anti-authoritarian associations of the digger, British civilians were still influenced, at least initially, by the positive idea of the Anzac Legend which had been crafted a generation before. The British had six months to make their judgments about the 9052 men of the 2nd AIF (Austforce) under Brigadier Sir Leslie Morshead.¹⁶⁵ The British communities that first engaged with the Australians over a prolonged period from June 1940 were those villages and towns surrounding the Tidworth Training Camp on the Salisbury Plain in Wiltshire. In mid-October 1940 Austforce relocated to Colchester moving from camp-tents to the shelter provided for winter quarters at Le Cateau Barracks.¹⁶⁶ Many Londoners would also come into contact with the 2nd AIF during their six month deployment, no doubt stimulating memories for some British civilians of the reputation of an earlier generation of Australian soldiers.

British newspapers were united in their expressions of gratitude on the arrival of the Anzacs. Many writers of these articles choose to compare the 2nd AIF deployment to the 1st AIF. The theme was very much the return of a pantheon of heroic cousins. *The Newcastle Journal's* headline of the 21st June 1940 read: "Hail Anzacs!" and described how with "aircraft raiding our shores our dashing cousins are here to meet the enemy onslaught."¹⁶⁷ *The Aberdeen Journal* continued this familial theme donning the Anzacs the "physical perfection of the British race" recognising the 'Britishness' within the ideals of the Anzac Legend they had inherited and were fighting for.¹⁶⁸ Perhaps the same writer perceptively recognised that the Anzac spirit which "scorns Hitlerism" and where "saluting was against their antipodean nature", also included having a "flair for finding trouble and keeping it in its place."¹⁶⁹ One wonders if the writer was referring to the diggers' reputation for causing trouble in English towns while on leave.

¹⁶⁵ Morshead, Leslie (Lt Gen), *Private Records: Operational Papers*, Series 6/1, Australian War Memorial, Item number: PR 3DRL 2632. On 23 June 1940, Brigadier Morshead reorganised Austforce into two battalions, the 18th which had travelled from Sydney and the 25th which comprised one battalion of the 18th and other composite supporting troops on the Convoy. The 2nd AIF in Great Britain in 1940 never exceeded 10,000 men.

¹⁶⁶ 2/31 Infantry Battalion, Unit War Diary, June-July 1940, Australian War Memorial, Item number: 8/3/31, 16th October 1940.

¹⁶⁷ *The Newcastle Journal*, 'Hail Anzacs', Friday 21st June 1940.

¹⁶⁸ *The Aberdeen Journal*, 'Anzacs Arrive!', Friday 21st June 1940.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

Nevertheless, the moral effect of the arrival of these close to 10,000 men with a pedigree as hard fighters was significant. Their courage was uplifting for a harried British public now standing alone. Consider the statement from one soldier given to a dockside reporter: "I thought we had finished with them. We were wrong. Now we have come to finish them for always."¹⁷⁰ These were the brave 'Sons of victorious Anzac' returning to mother-England to conclude the mission. It was certainly true that the media made much of this addition to the defending garrison and articulated the Anzac Legend's egalitarian-democratic component; *The Times* referred to the troops as "men of splendid physique and free minds, ideal soldiers of democracy".¹⁷¹ Geoffrey Shakespeare, Under Secretary for Dominions, said to the 2nd AIF on their arrival that he "pitie[d] their enemies", and that they were ready to "inherit the spirit of your fathers."¹⁷² The dockside scene is an image of the fusion of many of these ideals within the Anzac Legend that had evolved as the 2nd AIF arrived back in England. 'Britishness' is evident with some of the 6th Division photographed playing bagpipes, quayside reunions with family members and soldiers, and a nod to the fighting tradition of Anzac evident in a photograph of a 2/10 Battalion Sergeant with a Prussian pickelhaube helmet who said it was "a souvenir of the last war that he hoped to return to its owner."¹⁷³

The many faces of the Anzac Legend would be exhibited to the British public across the six-month occupation by the 2nd AIF. No doubt some guises would be more appreciated than others. Consider the message from Field Marshal the Right Honourable Lord Birdwood of Anzac, former G.O.C. of the 1st AIF and perhaps one of the only British military elite caste to be held in high regard by Australian First World War soldiers. On visiting the 2nd AIF units on the 12th July, Birdwood's message speaks of the Anzac tradition being passed on to the 2nd AIF who, because of the "physique and bearing of the men", are "worthy successors of the old AIF".¹⁷⁴ One could argue that Birdwood, prescient through four years of experience with the Anzacs, was expecting a continuity of conduct between AIFs during their stay in England and realised that 'high jinks' would occur. However, Birdwood knew that when required the men would without question inhabit the warrior aspects of the Anzac

¹⁷⁰ *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, 'Anzacs in Britain', Thursday 20th June 1940.

¹⁷¹ Stewart, Andrew, 'The Battle for Britain: Dominion forces in the UK during the Battle of Britain', *History Today*, London, June 2015, page 12.

¹⁷² *Daily Record*, 'Anzacs are Here!', Friday 21st June 1940.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁴ 2/9 Infantry Battalion, Unit War Diary, Communique from Lord Birdwood, 12th July 1940.

Legend “and the new AIF” would “give a good account of themselves as the old AIF never failed to do so.”¹⁷⁵ The *Nottingham Evening Post*, which lauded the Anzacs on their arrival, also made comment on the “smaller stature” of the 2nd AIF “compared to their Anzac kinsmen of the previous war.”¹⁷⁶ Although the newspaper softened the judgement by commenting that the men were “just as tough and wiry”¹⁷⁷, their observation raises an intriguing line of inquiry probably too large for the remit of this investigation. To what extent were British perceptions of Anzac influenced by constructions of the 1st AIF during and after the war? Had Bean’s narrative of the 6 foot-tall ‘noble-bushman’ influenced the currency of memory of the diggers? Had public memory in England of the 1st AIF diggers been influenced by official accounts and histories both British and Australian? Or had the British perception of the 1st AIF Anzacs, which would influence their reception of the successors, been shaped by their own direct experiences with hundreds of thousands of Australian servicemen between 1915-1919?

Perhaps the 8000 marriages between the 1st AIF men and British women went some way to engineering a positive discourse in Britain in the inter-war period.¹⁷⁸ In fact the Queensland government was concerned enough about the extent of relationships between 2nd AIF men and British women, that they issued proclamation encouraging men on overseas service to marry ladies back in Australia by proxy.¹⁷⁹ Private Michael Kelly, 2/10 Battalion, a good Catholic boy if ever there was one as evidenced in his very honest letters, allays any hopes his parents may have had of him finding a wife in England. “I’m not married yet”, Kelly postures: “nor am I likely to be as I am not that stuck on English girls”, who are “alright I suppose, but only just.”¹⁸⁰ However, love is all around Kelly who writes: “a fair number of the chaps have married over here and there are several engagements and any number of romances”.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ *Nottingham Evening Post*, ‘Welcome Anzacs!’, Wednesday 3rd July 1940

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Beckett, Roger, ‘The Australian Soldier in Britain: 1914-18’, in *Australians in Britain: The Twentieth-Century Experience* (Editors: Bridge Carl, Crawford, Robert, Dunstan, David) Monash University Publishing, Victoria, 2009, page 6. Most couples returned to Australia. Beckett notes that bigamous marriages of members of the AIF became a matter of serious concern. This was in a large part due to a situation where many British women were unsure of their future with men away at the front. In June 1918 an AIF Order required that any soldier marrying in church must produce a certificate showing his ‘marital condition’. It could be argued that letters sent back home to family members by these war-brides engendered and furthered positive perceptions of Anzac.

¹⁷⁹ *The Northern Whig*, Tuesday 3rd September 1940.

¹⁸⁰ Kelly, Letter to Father, 10th October 1940.

As in the First World War, many English women in 1940 were charmed by the Australians and drawn to them when they lived up to the noble aspirations of the Anzac Legend. This development perhaps foreshadows the arrival of the hundreds of thousands of American servicemen in England from 1942. Ellwood argues that the United States soldiers possessed a “currency of power in their material riches” which the Australian soldiers did not wield.¹⁸¹ Indeed, the greatest impact of the American soldiers was on the women of Great Britain. American ‘soft power’ led to a situation where “never in history has there been such a conquest of women by men as was won by the American army in Britain in World War II.”¹⁸² If we recall Captain Geoffrey Matthews 2/10 Battalion’s account of the night in Bournemouth where his men complained about an unappreciative populace, it is worth considering one female witness’s reflections on the American troops visit to the same city; “I suppose we were as jubilant as everyone else in the country when the Americans came into the war. In Bournemouth we had seen troops of almost every colour and nationality, but when these GIs hit town, commandeering our homes and our countryside, we were captivated at once. With their smooth, beautifully tailored uniforms, one could hardly tell a private from a colonel. They swaggered, they boasted and they threw their money about, bringing a shot in the arm to business, such as it was, and an enormous lift to the female population.”¹⁸³

The American servicemen were inhabiting their own myth acquired from a consciousness born of frontier conquest similar to the 2nd AIF’s own ‘bush myth’. The GI arrogance, similar to the diggers’ arrogance as discussed by Bean as a notable feature of the 1st AIF, was more akin to “an assertiveness especially strong in young men under arms.”¹⁸⁴ There are similarities to the 2nd AIF conduct as Coates argues that the American confidence was “inspired by patriotism verging on chauvinism, men totally confident of the value of their mission and of their cultural superiority, American occupiers sometimes behaved with a swagger that even the most well-disposed country found difficult to endure.”¹⁸⁵ There is a strong case that Anzac confidence also sprang from a sense of cultural superiority – as many of

¹⁸¹ Ellwood, page 4.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Coates, Ken, ‘The American Rampant: Reflections on the Impact of United States Troops in Allied Countries during World War II’, *Journal of World History*, Vol. 2, University of Hawaii Press, 1991, page 208. For an extended discussion see Schrijvers, Peter, *The Crash of Ruin: American Combat Soldiers in Europe During World War II*, NYU Press, 2001.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid, page 209.

the men believed (like Bean did) that they were a supreme offshoot of the British Empire. It is interesting to note another similar pattern in the Australian and American occupations – both forces exhausted their welcome. It is evident that although the American presence was greatly appreciated, as time went on “the lax discipline and conspicuous consumption of the invaders upset plenty of male minds and by mid-1944 even the GI’s themselves could tell the British were getting “edgy.”¹⁸⁶ This was a feature of the 2nd AIF occupation in 1940 as digger larrikinism fatigued the local authorities and elements of the general public.

The 2nd AIF Unit War Diaries and British newspapers of 1940 have ample evidence of Australians inhabiting the noble aspects of the Anzac Legend further perpetrating a positive perspective of the Australians. Whilst the sources are not overly animated in their accounts of the welcome Anzacs received from Londoners on “taking over London again”, some accounts indicate that Londoners were helpful in assisting the digger-tourists as “self-appointed guides to Anzac tour-groups through Westminster Abbey.”¹⁸⁷ The *Nottingham Evening Post* reported Londoners welcoming Anzacs by “letting them have the run of the place”. Perhaps the most interesting observation in the article addresses this change in the British perspective of Anzac in the inter-war period. The reporter writes: “the insular aloofness of three decades ago is gone, the Anzac is no stranger and has written in history’s ledger numerous items which the Londoner acknowledges as a most honourable debt to be paid by him in coinage on behalf of the old country.”¹⁸⁸

This theme of a thawing in the British perspective of the diggers is evident in *The Observer* which reports how the coastal holiday town of Bexhill On Sea welcomed Australians of the 2nd AIF, “just as they did twenty-five years ago with a dance at the Sackville Hotel.” The article labours the point stating that the “frigidity” of Britain is just an appearance and the people of Bexhill keen to welcome the Anzacs.”¹⁸⁹

The sources also bear witness to the ‘noble bushman’ aspect of the Anzac Legend as it was lived-in by the 2nd AIF men employed in teams as foresters felling timber for the war effort.¹⁹⁰ The headline from the *Daily Mirror* on the 4th December 1940 of “Anzac bushmen

¹⁸⁶ Ellwood, page 12.

¹⁸⁷ *Nottingham Evening Post*, ‘Anzacs in London’, Wednesday 26th June 1940.

¹⁸⁸ *Nottingham Evening Post*, ‘Welcome Anzacs!’, Wednesday 3rd July 1940

¹⁸⁹ *The Observer*, Bexhill-on-Sea, ‘Heroic Anzacs’, Saturday 21st December 1940

¹⁹⁰ *Daily Mirror*, London, ‘Anzac bushmen in our forests’, Wednesday 4th December 1940.

in our forests” supported by a large photograph of a team of shirtless diggers (in December!) felling trees provided great propaganda value for the 2nd AIF hierarchy. These examples disseminated a positive image of the diggers amongst the British, and serves today as evidence of the vision of Anzac itself as an official construction serving an agenda of the 2nd AIF custodians. Men also spent time working on Scottish farms whilst on leave at the behest of Hospitality Scotland,¹⁹¹ and the Unit War Diaries contain numerous examples of requests from local farmers inviting soldiers to visit their farms to admire their prize stock.¹⁹²

Idealism is burdened with an unsustainable ambition. This was true for the Anzac Legend as its’ exalted aspirations were tested in the lived-in experiences of the 2nd AIF in England in 1940. Sources illustrate the tangible shift between the British public’s perception of the 2nd AIF inhabiting the gallant elements of the Anzac ideals and their occupation of the darker elements of the ‘digger myth’. Captain Matthews’ diary attests to this pattern. Aside from the reflection on the Bournemouth episode, Matthews recorded numerous instances of the British gratitude and their welcoming demeanour towards their Anzac defenders. Indeed, the early British reporting on the Australian contingent was positive. This was in part influenced by the service the Anzacs were providing training local village Home Guard squads for the real possibility of them being engaged against marauding German paratroopers. The villagers had faith in the abilities of the Australian fighting man as protectors. Matthews diarises his time spent tramping between village watering holes during the late summer evenings of 1940 where “whole villages turned out to see us train the LDV squad” and afterwards being “entertained with a supper of jellied eels at the Inn.”¹⁹³

However, in the same diary entry Matthews reported the embarrassment he endured having to return the mascot one of his Company had stolen to the owners of ‘The Old Boot Inn’. As time went on and the direct threat of German invasion subsided, villagers began to tire of the larrikin element of the Australians. Just as the novelty of the Australians with their “distinctive uniform and raw manners wore off” for Londoners during the Great War, many British civilians became sick of the ‘high jinks’ of the diggers.”¹⁹⁴ The 2/9 Battalion Unit War

¹⁹¹ 2/9 Infantry Battalion, Unit War Diary, 2nd September 1940.

¹⁹² Ibid, Invitation to visit J. K. Harvey's farm to see his prize Guernseys near Winchester, 17th August 1940.

¹⁹³ Matthews, Private Diary 1939-41, 16th July 1940.

¹⁹⁴ McKernan, Michael, *The Australian People and the Great War*, Nelson Publishing, West Melbourne, Victoria, 1980 in Kildea, *Anzacs in Ireland*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2007.

Diary records a pattern of 'high jinks' which no doubt hardened the British perceptions towards their protectors. On the 25th August the battalion was issued a general warning about the level of noise parties were making as they returned from leave. On the same day men were warned to stop thieving from the local inhabitants.¹⁹⁵ A few days later the men were told to stop refusing to pay the local buses the 1/6 fare from Salisbury to Lopcombe Camp as it was "reflecting poorly on the AIF".¹⁹⁶

This resurgence of the darker side of the digger played out by the 'Sons of Anzac' in the same vicinity by their 1st AIF forebears, grated and affirmed for many British civilians underlying concerns about the returning Anzacs. Indeed, Beckett writes of the Australian troops in the vicinity of the Salisbury Plain camps in the months after the 1918 Armistice: "For discipline and regulations they cared not a jot. They fought the military police. Some of the worst characters deserted their regiments and lived rough in the adjacent woods in far worse than Robin Hood fashion."¹⁹⁷ Just as the 2nd AIF diggers would arrogantly and ungraciously expect free travel in 1940, so too had their predecessors who "whilst in camp jeered at their officers, and insisted on lifts to Salisbury in every passing car, and made themselves a general nuisance to the world around them."¹⁹⁸ In the days leading up to the order to "Stand To" issued on the 7th September in readiness for the German invasion and its' relaxation on the 24th September, 2nd AIF men were warned for ignoring red traffic lights in town, warned to stop "promiscuous shooting of rabbits" with their service revolvers and were instructed to behave themselves in the camp entertainment tent.¹⁹⁹ October began with Private Wilson's court-martial.²⁰⁰ Stewart argues that once the possibility of a German invasion passed in the weeks after the Battle of Britain, the troops were "growing frustrated at the lack of any opportunity to fight the Germans."²⁰¹ There is a strong case of evidence from this six-week period for the 2/9 Battalion, which justifies any impatience the British felt towards the diggers. It contributed towards the development of a negative British perception of Australian cultural norms.

¹⁹⁵ 2/9 Infantry Battalion, Unit War Diary, 25th August 1940.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid, 28th August 1940.

¹⁹⁷ Beckett, page 12.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid, page 11.

¹⁹⁹ 2/9 Infantry Battalion, Unit War Diary, 2-3 September 1940.

²⁰⁰ Ibid, 5th October 1940.

²⁰¹ Stewart, page 18.

British esteem for the Australian soldier experienced a commensurate decline directly inverted to the ascendancy of the poor conduct of the Australians. The rap sheet of Private Price provided further insight. Price, who was aged 19 at the time of the Colchester affray, enlisted on the 20th October 1939 and was convicted four times in the six-month period before embarking Sydney on the 5th May 1940. The offences related to periods of AWL or disobeying lawful commands.²⁰² It is apparent that Price was well institutionalised into the larrikin elements of the ‘digger myth’ and the corresponding disdain for authority at Ingleburn. On arrival in England, however, it appears that Price engaged with the task at hand and took the job of soldiering seriously throughout the summer when an invasion appeared imminent. Others did not – one man from 25th Brigade (the other 2nd AIF Brigade in England in Austforce) went AWL for 18 days during the period of heightened tension beginning in early August just before the camp area of 2/31 Battalion was bombed by the Luftwaffe on the 13th August.²⁰³ Once the threat of invasion had ameliorated Price returned to his earlier patterns of behaviour. He went AWL on the 16th November and upon being discovered and brought back for detention the same evening, he escaped the guards and absconded until he appeared again on the 2nd December. What he did during this extended break from military service, or where he sought refuge, is absent from the official record.²⁰⁴ Price received 75 days detention for his efforts and was docked 17 days pay. It was only a matter of days after this period of detention expired that Price stole the car whilst at Le Gateau Barracks and headed into Colchester.

The 2/31 Battalion war diary provides further insights into the poor behaviour of Australian soldiers and their impact on the British public. The diary holds almost daily entries recording a member of the unit being fined for an offence of an indiscriminate nature. The escalation after the Battle of Britain is illustrated in the summary of offences committed across the two-month period from the 31st October to the 4th December. For example, on the 31st October Privates McIver, Buckley and Hannon were charged with breaking out of Barracks; on the 10th November Private Feeley was killed by a bomb in London whilst AWL; a week after Feeley’s death a conference between the 2/31 Brigade Corporals and the

²⁰² 2nd AIF Case Records, Private G.H. Price, Statement of Service, pages 7-8.

²⁰³ 2/31 Infantry Battalion, Unit War Diary, 10th August 1940.

²⁰⁴ Note: In his discussion of the 1st AIF diggers in *Anzacs in Ireland* (UNSW Press, 2007) Jeff Kildea stated that Ireland provided “A perfect haven for absentees and deserters”. AWL was acknowledged by Bean as a problem for the 1st AIF as there no death penalty functioning as the “recognised preventative of desertion”. It was thought that most deserters favoured “Ireland where they get more sympathy”, page 139.

staff of the 'Red Lion Hotel' was arranged attempting to ascertain the Corporal who started a significant riot in the hotel the night before.²⁰⁵ Being absent without leave was an endemic problem in the battalion. On the 4th December nearing the date for the brigade to deploy to the Middle East, a brigade officer and a picquet of 30 men travelled to London to attempt to find the 267 Australian soldiers who were then AWL. The expedition had no success.²⁰⁶

At the same time as the 18th Brigade arrived in the United Kingdom, a London-based Canadian diplomat commented that the 25,000 of his newly arrived "countrymen were looked upon by their hosts as an army of friendly barbarians who for some incomprehensible reason have come to protect him from his enemies."²⁰⁷ It cannot be doubted that there existed a degree of snobbery amongst English elites towards the dominion forces, and some trepidation towards the nature of their occupation no doubt because it was open ended in its time-frame.

However, the diggers of the 2nd AIF 6th Division left behind a populace ultimately very thankful for their service. The British military echelons were particularly gracious in their praise. Indeed, the message the 2/10 Battalion of the 18th Brigade received from the Commander in Charge Home Forces, General Sir Alan Brooke, at sea on the 25th November was ebullient in its commendation of the diggers. Brooke's communique thanked all ranks of the 2nd AIF who arrived "at a critical period when their presence was most welcome not only on military grounds but because of the moral effect on the civil population arising from the knowledge that troops from the Dominions were taking part in the defence of the United Kingdom".²⁰⁸ Brooke's message best summarises the feelings of the civil population he refers to and what the sources in this investigation illustrate. That the overall civilian impression of the Australian fighting man was positive – the nearly 10,000 diggers in-country provided an essential military service during Great Britain's darkest hour, and at the same time their presence and reputation as hard fighting men buoyed the morale of the people. It is of no doubt that discipline was a problem for 2nd AIF hierarchy, but nothing they couldn't manage within the bounds of their internal judicio-administrative processes.

²⁰⁵ 2/3 Infantry Battalion, Unit War Diary, 31st October - 18th November 1940.

²⁰⁶ Ibid, 4th December 1940.

²⁰⁷ Stewart, op. cit., pages 6-7.

²⁰⁸ 2/10 Infantry Battalion, Unit War Diary, Communique from C.I.C Home Forces, 25th November 1940.

This chapter has illustrated how the predicament of the citizens and authorities of Colchester was felt 20 years earlier by Londoners exhausted by four years of war and fatigued by years of digger-antics. Specifically, Londoners in 1918 were worn-out with the 50,000 digger tourists rotating through the capital in the first six months of that year, of which at most times nearly 10,000 were AWL.²⁰⁹ There is a general consistency of diggers inhabiting the larrikin elements of the 'digger myth' across both AIFs, that had to be tolerated by the British public in return for services rendered. The chapter illustrates that although the British perception of the 1st AIF diggers had waned over time, relations between the 1st AIF and the British "remained generally good to the end."²¹⁰ Beckett maintains there is little evidence of the disillusionment described by some writers, "other than the inevitable war-weariness (of the diggers in this instance) that was general by 1918 and where opportunities existed for social integration with the locals these were seized with enthusiasm by the Australians."²¹¹ This chapter has accounted for the British perception of the 2nd AIF in a similar fashion. The more anti-social elements of the 'digger-myth' were endured by a British public for the most part thankfully considerate of the service the diggers were providing.

²⁰⁹ Beckett, page 16.

²¹⁰ Ibid, page 14.

²¹¹ Ibid.

Conclusion

'Britishness' remained a core component of Australian identity on the outbreak of the Second World War. This thesis has explored the extent of Australian national 'Britishness' within the context of Anzac Legend through the experiences of the 18th Brigade, 2nd AIF during its deployment to the United Kingdom in 1940. 'Britishness' had remained one motivator for enlistment by the men of the 18th Brigade but in competition with this notion was an anti-British sentiment that inhabited both the Anzac Legend and the 'digger myth'.

David Day has argued Australia could never develop a sense of national identity until a clear sense of national interest separated the nation from Great Britain.²¹² After the turn towards the United States following the Anglo-Australian capitulation at Singapore, Australian leaders were still "unable to delineate in their own minds where their own 'Britishness' ended and their 'Australianness' began".²¹³ Day cited Menzies' own freedom to explore a possible political career in Westminster after losing office as Australian Prime Minister in 1941 as evidence of this fact. Furthermore, R.G. Casey stood aside from his position as Australia's Minister to the United States in 1942, to take up positions for the British government firstly in Cairo and then as Governor of Bengal.²¹⁴ These vignettes indicate that there was a degree of fluidity between 'Britishness' and 'Australianness' for key members of Australia's political class. The story of 'thwarted nationalism' and Australia's reluctance to forge a new identity separate from Great Britain after the war, is an essential motif in Day's work on 'Britishness' in the post war era.

This thesis examined 'Britishness' up to 1942 and illustrated that there was a core of the political class, who did have a clear sense of national interest separate from Great Britain. This theme was explored as it applied to the inter-war political elite in Australia in the most recent scholarship on Robert Menzies and Stanley Bruce.²¹⁵ The revisionists argue that both men were nationalists dedicated to the national interest. However, their nationalist agenda was constrained by an historical context characterised by the rise of fascism and Australia's position within the Imperial Defence Scheme.

²¹² Day, David, *The Great Betrayal: Britain, Australia and the Onset of the Pacific War, 1939-42*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1988, page 353.

²¹³ Ibid, page 354.

²¹⁴ Conley Tyler, Melissa, Robbins, John and March, Adrian (eds.), *R.G. Casey: Minister for External Affairs 1951-60*, The Australian Institute of International Affairs, Deakin, ACT, 2012, page 8.

²¹⁵ See Lee, *Stanley Melbourne Bruce* op. cit., cited in chapter I.

The experience of the 'thirty-niners' demonstrates the diverse loyalties of the Australian soldier in 1939. The 18th Brigade's experience in the UK highlights these competing ideas. For many, 'Britishness' was inherent in their conception of what it was to be a good Australian. 'Britishness' for these soldiers was a core element of the Anzac ideal driving the Anzac Legend with which they had grown up. However, many 6th Division volunteers were motivated not for the love of empire but because they held the Anzac Legend and "their potential involvement with it in respectful awe".²¹⁶ Just as many had joined the 1st AIF in 1914-18 seeking adventure, the archival record illustrates that many men joined the 2nd AIF for the chance to serve overseas and emulate the exploits of their forebears.²¹⁷ These volunteers conceived of Australia as an independent entity to Great Britain, just as men did in 1914 when their nation was just 13 years old. Patsy Adam-Smith argued that a significant factor in arousing some of the original Anzacs in signing on was their determination to prove the worth of the nation.²¹⁸ She argued that many 1st AIF volunteers, as well as considerable numbers of the political class, had a clear sense of national interest separate from Great Britain. The radical nationalists had crafted a powerful anti-British narrative that galvanized men of both eras into action.

By the late 1960s the Anzac Legend was in clear decline. Holbrook argues that the Legend's "triumphant nationalism that had been primed by a belief in the superiority of the British race", could no longer be sustained in the face of atrocities committed by the Nazis in the name of racial science.²¹⁹ Indeed, deprived of its sustaining ideology Great War commemoration declined until a resurgence in the 1980s. Holbrook explained the rise of the new breed of Anzac, a reformed Anzac Legend, replacing the race-based martial legend with a "gentler brand" that prized mateship, loyalty and sacrifice.²²⁰ It could be argued that from its inception Anzac couldn't live-up to itself. The climate of appeasement in the inter-war period illustrated a reluctance throughout society to regain the martial glory esteemed in the legend's code. This was evident in the lack of enthusiasm to join the Anzac Legend during the 'phoney

²¹⁶ Stockings, page 34.

²¹⁷ Adam-Smith, Patsy, *The Anzacs*, Nelson Publishers, Victoria, 1978, pages 6-10. When asked why they joined the 1AIF, many men's responses indicated it was no one single reason. Often a duty to empire was listed as a secondary motivation to more significant factors including; "the chance to have a good time", "to feel the pitch of excitement that nothing else engendered" and "because the Germans were butchering Belgian babies".

²¹⁸ Ibid, page 11. Adam-Smith wrote "patriotism was the dominating sentiment of the time". Although "a document had been signed, a parliament prorogued", a selfless act of valour was required to "crown their coming of age".

²¹⁹ Holbrook, *Anzac* op cit., page 116.

²²⁰ Ibid.

war' period up to the fall of France in 1940.²²¹ Radical nationalism and the "chest beating martial spirit of the previous era was a casualty of the Great War".²²² Although, elements of Anzac are recognisable in the actions of the 18th Brigade throughout their deployment in England, it became apparent that the men had a difficult time living up to the aspirations of Anzac. It is evident in their inhabitation of Bean's rugged frontiersman aspect of the legend, in their role as self-sacrificing protectors readying the people of England for German invasion, and palpable as the archetypal legend was crafted by 2nd AIF image-makers around them. In England's South, the British public's appreciation of the service of the 2nd AIF was heartfelt. Sources illustrate a very positive British perspective of the Australian fighting man during this time demonstrating a continuity with the reputation Australians had forged as fierce fighters in the Great War.

The British were not so enamored of the Australian soldier's inhabitation of the unofficial AIF traditions in the 'digger myth'. The 'digger lore' that Seal discussed had gathered pace in the inter-war era and permeated the cultural being of the nation in "issues of *Aussie* and *Smith's Weekly*, in smokos and reunions and funerals and the singing of songs."²²³ Seal continued; "The next generation were exposed to all this and were already diggers long before they followed in their fathers' footsteps across the battlefields of the new conflict".²²⁴ The 'digger-larrikin' has been explored in this investigation as the anti-social aspects of the 'digger myth' clouded the perspective of the British towards the Australians. This was judged to be increasingly significant when digger idleness grew as the threat of invasion relaxed. This too was mirrored by the conduct of the 1st AIF troops in England in 1918, and in the declining British perception of American soldiers after two and a half years of occupation by June 1944.²²⁵

²²¹ Day, *Betrayal* op cit., page 25.

²²² Holbrook, *Anzac* op. cit., page 212.

²²³ Seal, page 147.

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ Barr, Niall, *Yanks and Limeys: Alliance Warfare in the Second World War*, Vintage Publishing, London, 2015, Chapter 11: 'Over There, Over Here', page 327-363.

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