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### 'Such a Great Space of Water between Us': Anzac Day in Britain, 1916-39

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# 'Such a Great Space of Water between Us': Anzac Day in Britain, 1916–39

BRUCE SCATES AND FRANK BONGIORNO  
WITH REBECCA WHEATLEY AND LAURA JAMES

*The historiography of early Anzac Day in Britain has focused on the spectacular marches of troops through London streets while neglecting the more personal forms of Anzac observance. This article explores the early history of Anzac Day graveside pilgrimage in Britain as an example of how the Empire's bereaved sought to cope with their grief in the immediate postwar years. The later decline of the pilgrimage movement was the result of the growing role of the state in caring for war graves and the shifting character of Anzac Day in Britain, which increasingly centred on London.*

At a quarter-past 10 a thousand of the Australian troops came swinging over Waterloo Bridge in column of four. Fine strong men they were, with bronzed faces. They marched casually but not carelessly, and their body movements suggested above all else health and strength.<sup>1</sup>

ERIC ANDREWS HAS DESCRIBED the first Anzac Day commemoration in London in 1916 as 'a propaganda triumph', an effort to conceal the terrible truth that the Gallipoli campaign had been a failure.<sup>2</sup> *The Times*, describing Londoners' reactions to the marching Australians and New Zealanders that day, commented that

A people habitually cynical and silent in its public manner found itself moved for once to visible emotion, and was not ashamed ... Our people are hungry for the chance of expressing their deep emotions—of loyalty, of patriotic enthusiasm, of profound confidence in our just cause, of passionate admiration for the men who fight our battles.<sup>3</sup>

Yet, even allowing that for the British Empire the worst of this already appalling war still lay ahead—the battle of the Somme was a little over two months away—the one emotion that received no attention in this reflection was grief. The first

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<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, 26 April 1916, 2.

<sup>2</sup> E. M. Andrews, *The Anzac Illusion: Anglo-Australian Relations during World War 1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 88–91. See also Eric Andrews, '25 April 1916: First Anzac Day in Australia and Britain', *Journal of the Australian War Memorial* 23 (October 1993): 13–20.

<sup>3</sup> *The Times*, 26 April 1916, 7.

Anzac Day consolidated the Australian Prime Minister, Billy Hughes' position in Whitehall, promoted the imperial cause and, through coverage in the Australian press, might have briefly helped stimulate recruitment. But a focus on the political uses of Anzac Day in Britain has marginalised a wider spectrum of emotional responses to the mass killing of the war. Jingoistic nationalism was not the day's only theme. *The Times'* commentary was also about the management of emotions.

The emphasis in histories of early Anzac Day observance on public display—the stirring spectacle of marching feet—or on rousing speeches and sermons, has obscured the private observance and meanings of Anzac Day in the period up to 1939.<sup>4</sup> Some of the earliest Anzac Days in Britain were small rather than large events, took place in isolated cemeteries scattered across Britain rather than London, and centred not on proud display of marching bodies but the decent disposal of the dead.<sup>5</sup> While official public spectacle was prominent in the major London ceremonies—especially those involving triumphal marches such as in 1916, 1919 and 1937 (the latter coinciding with the coronation of George VI)—many Anzac Day activities focused on local sites, the graves of Australian and New Zealand soldiers buried in cemeteries. Tanja Luckins, in a study of the early history of Anzac Day in Australia, has similarly emphasised the place of collective mourning—especially by women wearing black—in wartime (1916–18) and immediate postwar commemoration, while arguing that female civilian grief was increasingly marginalised between the wars as Anzac Day was transformed into an occasion claimed by returned diggers as their own.<sup>6</sup> This article builds on these insights to recover other private, local and forgotten dimensions of remembrance, and explore their significance for our understanding of the early development of Anzac Day in Britain.

This localised Anzac Day observance can only be understood in the context of how people of the interwar period made 'sites of mourning' out of 'sites of memory'.<sup>7</sup> Pilgrimage to burial sites was part of a larger effort, as Ana Carden-Coyne has put it, to 'heal by transforming the memory of violence'.<sup>8</sup> Both

<sup>4</sup> Mary Wilson, 'The Making of Melbourne's Anzac Day', *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 20, no. 2 (August 1974): 197–209; Richard Ely, 'The First Anzac Day: Invented or Discovered?', *Journal of Australian Studies* 9, no. 17 (1985): 41–58; Andrews, '25 April 1916'; Martin Crotty and Craig Melrose, 'Anzac Day, Brisbane, Australia: Triumphalism, Mourning and Politics in Interwar Commemoration', *The Round Table* 96, no. 393 (December 2007): 679–92; J. G. Pavils, *Anzac Day: The Undying Debt* (Adelaide: Lythrum Press, 2007); John A. Moses and George F. Davis, *Anzac Day Origins: Canon DJ Garland and Trans-Tasman Commemoration* (Canberra: Barton Books, 2013). But for a discussion of early Anzac Days (in Australia and New Zealand) that emphasises private and collective emotion, see Tanja Luckins, *The Gates of Memory: Australian People's Experiences and Memories of Loss and the Great War* (Fremantle: Curtin University Books, 2004), 81–106, 142–8, 189–208.

<sup>5</sup> Bart Ziino, *A Distant Grief: Australians, War Graves and the Great War* (Perth: University of Western Australia Press, 2007), 177–8.

<sup>6</sup> Luckins, 81–106, 189–208.

<sup>7</sup> Jay M. Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

<sup>8</sup> Ana Carden-Coyne, *Reconstructing the Body: Classicism, Modernism, and the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 21, 112.

spectacle and pilgrimage sought to comfort the grief-stricken. Official public ceremonies in London did so through the rhetoric of manliness and vigour—the marching Anzacs were ‘gorgeously hard and fit’—and by paying tribute to the glorious sacrifice of the fallen.<sup>9</sup> Yet the classical image of dead bodies made perfect through sacrificial battlefield death was disrupted by the presence of the blind, the limbless and the maimed.<sup>10</sup> Meanwhile, local visits to cemeteries to place flowers on the graves of the dead were similarly haunted by the troubling reality of the soldier’s decaying body. In each case, rituals performed to honour the war dead grappled with the reality of a conflict that had wrecked bodies and destroyed life with an unmatched efficiency. In this context, rituals emerged that combined established forms of commemoration, such as the laying of flowers on individual graves, with a broader cultural need to recognise the value of lives cut short by the mass slaughter of the Western Front. These rituals, as we will show, were framed by the identities of family, nation and empire.

### Mourning the dead: the body and commemoration

In 1915 John Francis Naughton, a twenty-three-year-old baker from Charters Towers, went to Gallipoli. His war was soon over. Thrown into bitter fighting near Walker’s Ridge, Naughton was severely wounded, carried to the beach and evacuated to Lemnos. It took Driver Naughton twenty-four hours to reach anything even resembling a hospital. By the time he received ‘proper’ medical care, wounds to his legs and hands were fly-blown and septic. Too badly wounded to be patched-up and returned to the front, Naughton was sent to Britain. Both his hands were amputated and surgery on the right knee was painful and extensive. For a time, he did the rounds of hospitals but then complications set in. Naughton died of kidney disease in November 1916. A parcel of personal effects was sent to his mother in Australia and the body itself bundled up for burial. Yet death did not end his indignities. Naughton’s body was left in an open grave in Kensal Green cemetery; exposure to the elements led to ‘consequences’, as one anxious report put it, ‘better imagined than described’. It was several weeks before the plot was filled in, and then only after protests by the London branch of the Australian Natives’ Association (ANA). A few weeks later, a simple wooden cross was raised over the grave. Even so, Naughton’s remains did not rest ‘peacefully’. In 1921 the remainder of his body was exhumed and placed in a plot set aside for Australian soldiers in the same cemetery.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> *The Times*, 26 April 1919, Anzac Day, Newspaper Clippings Collection, Australian War Memorial (hereafter AWM).

<sup>10</sup> *British Australian and New Zealander* (hereafter BANZ), 26 April 1928, 7.

<sup>11</sup> Service dossier number 963 for Driver J. F. Naughton, National Archives of Australia (hereafter NAA), B2455, NAUGHTON JOHN FRANCIS; A. T. Sharp to A. Fisher, 19 March 1917, ‘Arrangements in connection with graves of the fallen Australian soldiers buried in Europe’, NAA: A11489/1 2350/2; Michael B. Tyquin, *Gallipoli: The Medical War: The Australian Army Medical Services in the Dardanelles Campaign of 1915* (Sydney: New South Wales University Press, 1993).

As late as 1917, the protocols of remembrance and burial remained unsettled. Only officers killed overseas, or who died from wounds or illness in Britain, were entitled to individual graves. Enlisted men were often buried in common plots, as many as twenty corpses piled unceremoniously one on top of another. Naughton's grave was left open to receive other bodies in just this way. When a push was on, the demand for graves increased and the time it took men to die from their wounds made the management of cemetery space a complicated business.<sup>12</sup> As we show below, the treatment of John Naughton's body—and the bodies of other Australian and New Zealand troops killed at Gallipoli—would have far-reaching consequences for the way Anzac Day would be observed in Britain, and for the structure of commemoration generally.

Soldiers' remains were intermingled in more ways than one. British War Office policy discouraged the practice of dedicated Australian or New Zealand hospitals; treating Dominion and British troops together was thought to foster 'imperial ties' as well as being more practical. There were some dedicated Australian and New Zealand bases, notably in Harefield and Brockenhurst, and these soon had purpose-built cemeteries established beside them. But by 1919, 2,135 members of the First Australian Imperial Force (AIF) were buried in common or individual plots in some 343 graveyards across Britain.<sup>13</sup> Civilian and soldier, Dominion and British troops, were mixed indiscriminately, and in some cases, private memorials marked these graves. Officers expected certain privileges and the regiment raised sturdy monuments recording name, rank and epitaph. But a standard wooden cross only became the norm after protest from soldiers' loved ones. Until then, as one distressed relative put it, soldiers were often buried 'like a criminal at Dartmoor' with only a mound of earth to mark their passing. Finally, even a grave as controversial as Naughton's fell into neglect. Far from the care of friends or immediate family, and largely untended by busy authorities, Australian graves were (as one soldier discreetly put it) 'in need of attention', forgotten, overgrown, their hastily installed crosses broken and tilting.<sup>14</sup>

Honouring the graves of the dead was a great innovation of the First World War. The Prince of Wales' National Committee for the Care of Soldiers' Graves was established in the year Naughton died and included representatives from both Britain and the Dominions. It was succeeded in 1917 by the Imperial (later Commonwealth) War Graves Commission. From 1916, the authorities had moved to adopt principles that would end the age-old anonymity of the war

<sup>12</sup> Imperial War Graves Commission, Minutes of proceedings, NAA: A209 A2909/2, A453/1/3.

<sup>13</sup> *Anzac Bulletin*, 11 April 1919, 14.

<sup>14</sup> Bruce Scates, *Return to Gallipoli: Walking the Battlefields of the Great War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 41–8; Cpl. K. Wright, F. K. Graybert and Sgt. W. E. Taylor, response to 'Instructions to Personnel detailed to visit cemeteries—Visits to graves of AIF soldiers—Anzac Day 1919', AWM: 25, 135/4. One of the first cemeteries to be 'beautified' adjoined the hospital base at Harefield. A 'headstone appeal' in 1917 replaced original wooden crosses with 'white marble scroll design headstones'. These private memorials raised by the men themselves remain to this day, at variance with the uniform headstones issued by the War Graves Commission: *Harefield Park Boomerang*, July 1917, 12, and January 1918, 11.

dead and that dictated the charter of the Imperial/Commonwealth War Graves Commission. Every man, regardless of his rank, would be buried in an individual grave, each honoured with a standard memorial, and their families at home entitled to choose an epitaph. Graves would be cared for by the state 'in perpetuity'; the well-tended rows of glistening white tombstones were the product of the Commission's tireless labours, transforming the war's battlefields into gardens of remembrance.<sup>15</sup>

As the Naughton case suggests, Australia and the other Dominions played a role in determining these protocols. Well before the war had ended, the ANA lobbied for better treatment of the war dead. This effort was an extension of its wartime role in assisting invalided soldiers. Having taken shape in 1915 as wounded and ill Australian soldiers began arriving in Britain, the ANA's London branch ran a successful Anzac Buffet (near AIF Headquarters in Horseferry Road) during the war. It provided beds, comforts, food and fellowship for Australian servicemen.<sup>16</sup> As casualty lists lengthened, the ANA concerned itself with the dignified treatment of the dead as well as with the comfort of the living. The Australian government responded to its lobbying of organisations by offering to meet the cost of individual plots, arguing for separate Australian cemeteries and charging the AIF with the task of surveying existing graveyards. Distance, as the Canadian Sir Thomas McKenzie explained to the Prince of Wales' Committee, fuelled an intense sense of anguish:

It was hardly realised by the authorities in this country how much it would affect the people on the other side of the world if they knew that men were being buried in common graves. Most of the relatives of the men who had fallen were anxious to know something of the graves and would later on require photographs. He thought they should encourage as much as possible separate burial plots for which they, like the Australians, were willing to pay anything reasonable.<sup>17</sup>

The dignified treatment of the war dead was the most enduring consequence of this agitation. But it also had more immediate ramifications, influencing how Anzac Day was marked in Britain. From 1916, Australian graves became a regular site of pilgrimage.

The first such visits were low-key affairs. As in the case of the graves of soldiers who died in Australia, the families of dead soldiers—for many had relatives in Britain—their comrades, and the hospital staff who had nursed

<sup>15</sup> Phillip Longworth, *The Unending Vigil: A History of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, 1917–1967* (London: Constable, 1967); Julie Summers, *Remembered: The History of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (London: Merrell in association with the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, 2007). For a more critical reading, see Scates, *Return to Gallipoli*, 41–8; Maria Tumarkin, *Traumascapes: The Power and Fate of Places Transformed by Tragedy* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Publishing, 2005).

<sup>16</sup> J. E. Menadue, *A Centenary History of the Australian Natives' Association 1871–1971* (Melbourne: Horticultural Press, n.d. [1971]), 167–8.

<sup>17</sup> Minutes of the Prince of Wales National Committee for the Care of Soldiers' Graves, 17 January 1917, 'Arrangements in connection with graves of the fallen Australian soldiers buried in Europe', NAA: A11489/1 2350/2.



them, tended soldiers' graves on Anzac Day. The lax conventions surrounding the governance of graveyards sometimes proved in a family's interest. Sister Bennett raised a private memorial on her brother-in-law's plot in Wandsworth, an initiative that in 1916 still prompted 'no objection' from the authorities.<sup>18</sup> Even more extraordinary was the relocation of some soldiers' bodies, a startling breach of the protocol that they should be buried near where they died. On Anzac Day 1919, Sergeant W. E. Taylor visited Private C. V. Walker's grave in Bishopstone churchyard cemetery, Salisbury:

I found the grave in good order and the Rector's family placing flowers on the same. The Rector is the deceased's uncle and had the body brought from Lark Hill and interred it in his own cemetery in virgin soil.

Walker's extended family had purchased the plot, raised a small monument and 'look after the grave as one of their own ... correspond[ing] with the deceased's mother in Australia'. Walker's mother lived in Longreach, Queensland. As Taylor watched the Reverend Rait and his children lay their wreaths, he must have found that placename, Longreach, particularly appropriate.<sup>19</sup>

Graves near to British family members might be visited on the anniversary of a soldier's death or at the request of a loved one. But as its place in the commemorative calendar became increasingly secure, Anzac Day seemed to many the *most* appropriate time of remembrance. Surviving visitor books in local churchyards suggest private pilgrimages often took place on 25 April. 'Pilgrimage' was the term chosen by contemporaries, whether their activities were directly related to the dead or not. Like the Street Shrine movement (the first wave of memorialisation of the war dead in Britain), employing the term 'pilgrimage' shows how mourners clutched for a traditional language of consolation to commemorate 'their' dead.<sup>20</sup>

### Anzac pilgrimage

The first large-scale pilgrimage to Australian graveyards occurred in 1918. In this case, it was not friends or families who organised the movement but, rather, a group the ANA liked to call their 'fellow countrymen'. The expatriate community was mobilised through the London branch of the ANA and the pages of the *British Australasian*, then the unofficial organ of Australians and New Zealanders abroad. The call went out from Australia House to 'honour the brave representatives of the Commonwealth who have died in our midst':

<sup>18</sup> E. E. Bennett to AIF HQ, undated (May 1917), and AIF HQ to E. E. Bennett, 19 May 1917, in NAA: A11489/1 2350/2.

<sup>19</sup> Sgt. W. E. Taylor, response to 'Instructions to personnel detailed to visit cemeteries—Visits to graves of AIF soldiers—Anzac Day 1919', AWM: 25, 135/4.

<sup>20</sup> Visitors' Book, St Mary the Virgin Church, Harefield; Bruce Scates and Rebecca Wheatley, 'War Memorials', in *The Cambridge History of the First World War*, ed. Jay Winter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 535.



it is felt by the members of the London branch of the ANA that it would be very fitting if a pilgrimage was undertaken on Anzac Day (25th April), and floral tributes placed on the various graves, and, if possible, arrangements made whereby such tokens of remembrance will be renewed from time to time. Seeing that the burials have taken place in so many localities, it may perhaps be difficult to carry out the scheme absolutely, but much may be done.<sup>21</sup>

Much was. Teams of ANA members and their supporters rallied around Australians' graves, bedecked them with flowers—the coincidence of Anzac Day with the arrival of the northern spring being helpful—and weeded and tended them. Activities such as these were much more a focus of community activity than short-lived processions in London. Pilgrimages lent the expatriate community a sense of involvement, fostered a feeling of national as well as imperial belonging, and offered purposeful action in the face of mass bereavement. And while Anzac Day marches provided spectacle, pilgrimages were intended 'to bring comfort to those whose loved ones will not return'.<sup>22</sup> Naughton's case reminds us that comfort was needed. As the *British Australasian* noted,

There was a time when our gallant men who died in this country of wounds or sickness had very scant consideration given to them . . . Their funerals were not honoured, and their graves were neglected. Happily this carelessness is now mainly a thing of the past, and the improvement is very largely due to the persistence of the A.N.A. in pressing upon those concerned their duty to the soldiers here and their people at home.<sup>23</sup>

The statement hints at tensions in the relationship between Dominion and Empire which Andrews has explored for the wartime period.<sup>24</sup> It was, by implication, imperial 'authorities' who had neglected Australia's (and New Zealand's) dead. For the sake of those 'at home', the ANA would tend 'our soldiers' (emphasis added) memory.<sup>25</sup> Here was a response that reflected the dual loyalty of Anglo-Australians, at once ardently imperial but also proud of their status—and perhaps increasingly so in the wartime context—as a distinct nation.

Such efforts, however, extended well beyond the ANA and expatriate community. A remarkable example of local activity occurred at Peterborough, where Australians appear not to have been directly involved. In July 1916 an Anzac named Thomas Hunter who had been wounded at Pozières was travelling in a Red Cross train through Peterborough on his way to a hospital in Yorkshire when his attendants decided that he was too ill to continue. He died in Peterborough Infirmary.<sup>26</sup> The death of 'The Lonely Anzac', as he soon became known, struck a local chord. In fact, although Hunter, a Broken Hill miner on enlistment, presented himself as an orphan in his army papers, his father was still living in County

<sup>21</sup> *British Australasian* (BA), 28 March 1918, 7.

<sup>22</sup> BA, 14 April 1921, 20.

<sup>23</sup> BA, 28 March 1918, 1.

<sup>24</sup> Andrews, *Anzac Illusion*.

<sup>25</sup> BA, 28 March 1918, 1, 7.

<sup>26</sup> *Peterborough Citizen*, 1 August 1916, 3.

Durham. Hunter himself was a recent emigrant to Australia, arriving in 1910. The Mayor decided he should receive a civic funeral, which was arranged by the Infirmary's secretary. More remarkably, the local newspapers began a subscription for a memorial. Sufficient money was raised not only for a stone and Celtic cross to be laid at his grave, but also for a bronze plaque in Peterborough Cathedral. While the effort was clearly orchestrated by local elites, the 'pathetic' fate of the Australian had evidently attracted much local sympathy.<sup>27</sup>

If the rhetoric in the local press is any indication, the attention that Thomas Hunter's body received from this community arose from a sense of gratitude and obligation to a man they believed to be an Antipodean who had travelled across the world and sacrificed his life for empire so far from 'home'. A poem composed in Hunter's honour expressed these sentiments:

With British pride, in British soil,  
Amidst our own dear dead  
We laid him, freed from warrior's toil,  
In a true warrior's bed.  
His tomb, as long as it shall stand,  
Shall keep alive his worth,  
And link this spot of Motherland  
With those who sent him forth.<sup>28</sup>

The messages accompanying the funeral wreaths and later donations suggested that some citizens were motivated by intensely personal impulses. Floral tributes came 'from a soldier's mother', while another was offered 'with deep sympathy to someone's darling boy'.<sup>29</sup> Subscriptions later came from 'An Anzac's Wife' and 'A Soldier's Lonely Mother'.<sup>30</sup> And initially at least, local people did their best not to forget. For Anzac Day 1918, prompted by the ANA's campaign, they were invited to make donations that would permit laurel wreaths being laid on the bronze plaque in the cathedral and on Hunter's grave. Local dignitaries, religious and civil, conducted services on both sites.<sup>31</sup>

That same year, 'simple but solemn services' were held at cemeteries containing Australians across England. Over two hundred patients at Harefield Hospital made their way to the nearby cemetery, joined (an appreciative writer noted) by a contingent of Voluntary Aid Detachments, 'their smart uniforms ... spirited marching and bonnie faces the admiration of everyone'. By the end of

<sup>27</sup> John W. Harvey, *The Lonely Anzac: A True Son of Empire* (Bourne, Lincs.: Birches Publishing, 2003); *Peterborough Advertiser*, 12 August 1916, 5; 19 August 1916, 2, 5; 26 August 1916, 5; 2 September 1916, 2, 3; 9 September 1916, 3, 6; 4 November 1916, 2; 22 December 1917, unpaginated; *Peterborough Citizen*, 8 August 1916, 4; 15 August 1916, 4; 29 August 1916, 4; 5 September 1916, 4; 18 December 1917, 3. We are indebted to Simon Sleight for sharing his research and insights on the 'Lonely Anzac'.

<sup>28</sup> *Peterborough Advertiser*, 22 December 1917, unpaginated. The poem, 'To Australia', was by A. G. Darley.

<sup>29</sup> *Peterborough Advertiser*, 5 August 1916, 7.

<sup>30</sup> *Peterborough Advertiser*, 9 September 1916, 3.

<sup>31</sup> *Peterborough Citizen*, 23 April 1918, 3.

the Anzac Day service all the 'mounds and headstones were smothered with flowers'. A closing address by the hospital chaplain reminded mourners of the 'brave deeds done' at Gallipoli and how the British Empire stood 'as one man'. Aside from patients and hospital staff, the local Red Cross also played a role in these proceedings, and both Vera Deakin and Mary Chomley (who directed the Society's Wounded and Missing Bureau and Prisoner of War Department respectively) engaged in similar activities in London. The sheer number of Australian servicemen and women in Britain, the sizeable AIF administration based at Horseferry Road, and an active community of expatriates keen to assist the war effort, made these pilgrimages possible.<sup>32</sup>

The war's end hastened the pace of the pilgrimage movement. It was not just that the cessation of hostilities signalled the end of much other volunteer work, freeing time and resources for Anzac commemoration, or that marking war graves on Anzac Day reinforced Australia's claims on the British victory. In 1919 Alfred Thomas Sharp, the secretary of the London ANA and principal organiser of the movement, warned of the inevitable coming flood of Australian pilgrims; by 1921, as many as ten thousand Australians a year were touring French and Belgian battlefields. The cemeteries in England, Sharp explained, must be fit to receive them.<sup>33</sup> Nor was this duty of care confined to graveyards around London. Although the floral tributes mounted deepest at Brookwood, Harefield and Wandsworth, Brockenhurst in Hampshire, Abbey Lane in Sheffield, Gloucester and Motherwell also hosted 'short commemorative services'; supporters in Glasgow vowed to 'place a floral tribute on each Australian grave in that city'; and parties of pilgrims set out from Birmingham, Cardiff, Cheltenham, Lincoln, Portsmouth and the old Australian base at Salisbury. By 1921 Sharp had done much to create a movement extending 'the length and breadth of the old land': he had placed a floral tribute on 'practically every grave' in Britain 'of these brave overseas soldier lads'.<sup>34</sup>

This was an effort and it drew on a much wider network of support than the expatriate community. Many of the movement's keenest supporters, as Sharp acknowledged, were Australian not by birth so much as 'sympathy'. They included families whose sons had served alongside Anzac forces in Gallipoli, nurses who had cared for them in Britain, and townsfolk with fond memories of 'the distinctive slouch hats of the colonials'. In some cases, Australians buried in Britain acted as surrogates for loved ones whose graves, being in Turkey or France, they could not so readily visit. Supporting the Anzac pilgrimage assuaged the common grief of empire, as letters to the organisers testify. The widow of the British soldier who had been killed at Gallipoli while serving in the 29th Division explained that since she could not 'put flowers on his grave', she intended

<sup>32</sup> *Harefield Park Boomerang*, 2 July 1917, 73; *Box Hill Reporter*, 14 April 1916, AWM: Anzac Day, Newspaper Clippings Collection.

<sup>33</sup> *BA*, 17 April 1919, 5; *Manchester Guardian*, 26 April 1921, AWM: Anzac Day, Newspaper Clippings Collection.

<sup>34</sup> *Nottingham Journal*, 18 April 1921; *Cardiff Western Mail*, 25 April 1921, AWM: Anzac Day, Newspaper Clippings Collection; *BA*, 17 April 1919, 5; 14, 21 April 1921, 1, 20; 6 April 1922, 5.



Figure 1. 'Amidst our own dear dead': A. T. Sharp, founder of Anzac pilgrimage in Britain, locates and honours an Australian's grave, undated (Australian War Memorial, J00599)

'visiting some Australian graves on Anzac Day' and 'thereby honouring his memory'. A mother whose son was buried in France wished 'to "adopt" a lonely Australasian grave in England, and keep in touch with the relatives overseas. People in France are doing the same for her'. In both cases these women performed the role of what Jay Winter has called 'fictive kin'; their use of the term 'adoption' is telling.<sup>35</sup> Sharp's Anzac pilgrimages performed a restorative role, consoling individual grief while also promoting imperial harmony and belonging. Mindful of 'justifiable criticism in earlier days', he handed out messages of sympathy and support from General Birdwood, the much feted commander of the ANZAC forces at Gallipoli.<sup>36</sup>

'Fictive kin' seems the ideal appellation for these self-appointed mourners. And kinship in this sense means a familiar link, an emotional community of mourners and a wider connection between Australia and Empire. Edith Primrose, for example, attended the funeral of Gunner Nicholas Neill in Glasgow. It was not just that Lady Primrose placed 'a beautiful wreath of roses' on the flag-draped coffin. Or that she, and her close circle of Red Cross workers, attended to that lad 'of quiet disposition and Christian character' in his final

<sup>35</sup> Jay Winter, 'Forms of Kinship and Remembrance in the Great War', in *War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century*, eds Jay Winter and Emmanuel Sivan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 40.

<sup>36</sup> *BA*, 1 May 1919, 12; 21 April, 12 May 1921, 4.

hours. All these details of his death and burial were forwarded to the family back in Melbourne, enabling them to visualise that 'upland grave' with 'the lofty Ben Lomond in the distant background'. These (as Jay Winter notes in another context) were the 'practices of remembrance' and 'memory activists' ensured a community of mourners 'were bonded not [so much] by blood ties but by experience'. '[S]ites of memory', he concludes, are created not just by nations but 'primarily by small groups of men and women who do the work of remembrance'. Lady Primrose and her Red Cross Fellowship were one such group; as were Sharp and the fraternity of the ANA. The latter's home was thrown open to sick and lonely servicemen 'and many of the mothers of Australian soldiers (who have died in hospital) have received a nice letter from this man saying that he or his wife followed their son to his last resting place'.<sup>37</sup>

The Anzac pilgrimage might have spread the 'length and breadth of England'. And it certainly had an inclusive character, attracting the support of Australians and New Zealanders, combatants and civilians, Dominion and Empire alike. But can we accept the *British Australasian's* repeated claim that the annual Anzac pilgrimage 'was not confined to any one class in the community'? At one level, the paper cited heartfelt messages from George V. At another, 'a widow at Weymouth, who did laundry work for the Australian soldiers when at that camp', offered to distribute floral tributes. In palace and scullery alike, (that journal boldly asserted) there was a 'grateful remembrance of the brave sons of Australasia who fought and died'. Or was there? No doubt, many working-class families felt genuine affinity with the bereaved Dominion families. Like them, they had lost loved ones in war; for them too, these soldiers' graves were too far away to visit. Yet to suggest that Anzac pilgrimage was something other than a largely middle-class activity would be misleading. The organisers of the movement were not washerwomen in Weymouth but the social elite of the expatriate community. Sharp occupied 'an important position' as an Australian immigration officer in London; Lady Primrose was the (third) wife of Sir John Ure Primrose, First Baronet of Glasgow; and Charles Billyard-Leake, variously described as 'an Australian millionaire' and 'a great hearted gentleman', gifted his country estate at Harefield for use as a convalescent hospital.<sup>38</sup> Angela Woollacott has shown that Australian women who came to London were diverse in their backgrounds, circumstances and occupations.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>37</sup> N. E. Neill, Red Cross Wounded and Missing Enquiry Bureau Files, AWM: 1DRL/0428; Jay Winter, *Remembering War: The Great War between Memory and History in the Twentieth Century* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), 136; *Geelong Advertiser*, 12 September 1917, 5.

<sup>38</sup> *Geelong Advertiser*, 12 September 1917, 5; AT Sharp Papers, AWM PR04809; Charles Mosley, ed., *Burke's Peerage, Baronetage and Knightage*, 107th ed., 3 vols (Wilmington, DE: Burke's Peerage (Genealogical Books) Ltd, 2003), vol. 3, 3219; [www.harefield-jun.hillingdon.sch.uk/About+Us/Our+Anzac+Story](http://www.harefield-jun.hillingdon.sch.uk/About+Us/Our+Anzac+Story) (accessed 10 October 2013); *Daily News* (Perth), 11 May 1932, 6.

<sup>39</sup> Angela Woollacott, 'Australian Women in London: Surveying the Twentieth Century', in *Australians in Britain: The Twentieth-Century Experience*, eds Carl Bridge, Robert Crawford and David Dunstan (Melbourne: Monash University ePress, 2009), ch. 3. See also Angela Woollacott, *To Try Her Fortune in London: Australian Women, Colonialism and Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

Nonetheless, there was certainly a cohort of well-off women in the expatriate community in a good position to involve themselves in Anzac pilgrimages.<sup>40</sup> Provincial initiatives also appear to be the work of zealous, philanthropically-minded expatriates, such as Mrs Crow of 'Boomerang' Bath, and the equally 'indefatigable' Mrs Montague Robinson of Walton. The latter worked 'competently and unselfishly [on] behalf of the Anzacs, living and dead' as only a woman of independent means could afford to. During the war, she visited the New Zealand camp at Walton-on-Thames, and after it she regularly tended graves. Robinson 'single handedly' organised a memorial pilgrimage to New Zealand graves on the tenth anniversary of the landing, mobilising 'all branches' of Walton's 'religious and public life'.

A procession, composed of the fire brigade, local band, Boy Scouts and Girl Guides, made their way to the cemetery, where they were gathered together around the New Zealand graves, the local council, the vicar, and the church choir, a representative of the Lord-Lieutenant of Surrey, and many well known residents of the District.

Perhaps not quite *all branches* of public life: trade unions, workers' clubs and cooperatives are conspicuous by their absence. But there was a respectable attendance of New Zealand expatriates—respectable in both senses of the word.<sup>41</sup>

As Mrs Robinson's procession reminds us, the church was a prominent patron of pilgrimage, fashioning early Anzac Days in Britain just as it did in Australia. When Anzac Day fell on a Sunday, 'special services were held in many centres by the clergy'. The date, 25 April, also fell conveniently close to Easter and appears to have inspired a spate of sermons on the 'triumph of victory over death'. Village rectors marshalled their congregations into processions to grave-sites; the vicar of Harefield church cordially invited all of London to attend his sermon and even declared 'his willingness to make all arrangements re trains'.<sup>42</sup> Other pilgrimages relied on quasi-military and ardently imperial networks, with patriotic leagues and returned soldiers' organisations at the forefront. 'At Cheltenham and Lincoln the Pilgrimage is carried out by the local Remembrance Day Association', the *British Australasian* reported, while Glasgow's brave offer to place a flower on every Australian grave was made by St George's Ex-Service Men's Club.<sup>43</sup> And although the ANA saw the pilgrimage movement as a vehicle for nationalist sentiment, it also worked within an imperial paradigm. A letter of appreciation from Buckingham Palace numbered among Sharp's most treasured possessions.

<sup>40</sup> Carl Bridge, 'Australians in the England and Wales Census of 1901', in *Australians in Britain*, eds Bridge et al., 4.11–4.13.

<sup>41</sup> *BA*, 14 April 1921, 1, 4; *BANZ*, 30 April 1925, 20; 24 August 1933, 5.

<sup>42</sup> *BA*, 7, 21 April 1921, 17, 10; 20 April 1922, 10; *Cannock Chase Courier*, 23 April 1921, AWM: Anzac Day, Newspaper Clippings Collection.

<sup>43</sup> *BA*, 20 April 1922, 10.



Leadership of the Anzac Day pilgrimage movement was middle-class; it was middle-aged as well. By the 1920s, Sharp and Robinson were both in their late fifties. The same might be said of the bereaved themselves. The average age of men killed in the first AIF was twenty-six and their mothers, as one commentator bluntly remarked, 'were not young'.<sup>44</sup> Younger people were often present but their participation was carefully regulated. Boy Scouts and Girl Guides marched in military formation, leading processions into the cemetery. The boys could also be relied on for a lusty rendition of 'Fight the Good Fight' while mastery of the bugle was essential if the 'Last Post' and 'Reveille' were to be sounded. Schools adjoining the larger Australian cemeteries provided teams of junior mourners. Like the flowers they carried, children were artfully arranged for photographers' benefit. One Australian woman wrote with 'heartfelt thankfulness' to 'the Headmaster of Harefield School and the dear children who carried and spread flowers on the graves of our sleeping heroes'. 'My late husband was passionately fond of children and of flowers', she added, a note of intimacy assuming the character of conversation.<sup>45</sup>

### Mingling pride and sorrow: the politics of pilgrimage

Anzac Day commemoration in Britain shored up patriotic and imperial sentiment, claimed victory and, as the frequent euphemism of 'sleeping heroes' suggests, sanitised the waste of war. Letters to the organisers of pilgrimages were 'full of pathos and tragedy'; many emphasised the remoteness of Australia, what Bart Ziino has called the 'distant grief' of mourners:<sup>46</sup>

It is very kind of people in the Old Land to keep our sons and brothers' graves in order. There is such a great space of water between us that we think all the more of the fact that there are such kind and thoughtful friends in the Mother Country.<sup>47</sup>

Several expressed a desire to visit the grave themselves, although, given the expense of such a visit, they had to concede that it 'does not seem possible'. Another spoke for 'every mother in Australia whose son has been laid to rest abroad'; her lad 'has had the prayers of his mother answered in the knowledge that he is not forgotten'. For these women, the annual Anzac Day pilgrimage, observed from afar, was less about national pride than grief and remembrance.

<sup>44</sup> BA, 20 April 1922, 10; 24 August 1932, 5; Jane McMillan to W. M. Hughes, 14 November 1921, NAA: A458 L337/7; *Aldershot News*, 22 April 1921, AWM: Anzac Day, Newspaper Clippings Collection; for a demographic profile of the First AIF see Leslie Lloyd Robson, *The First AIF: A Study of Its Recruitment* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1982).

<sup>45</sup> BA, 7, 25 April 1921, 17, 1; 12 May 1921, 5; *Daily Telegraph* (Sydney), 9 June 1925, AWM: Anzac Day, Newspaper Clippings Collection; A. T. Sharp, 'Annual Pilgrimage to Australian and New Zealand Graves in the United Kingdom: Anzac Day, 25th April, 1921', printed circular, 1921, State Records Office of Western Australia (hereafter SROWA), Office of the Agent General, Subject Files, Series 2838, Consignment 1150, Item 1522.042.

<sup>46</sup> Ziino.

<sup>47</sup> BA, 14 April 1921, 20.



'It is ... a great comfort to us who are so far away to know that there are loving kind hearts and hands who are tending the graves of our dear ones'.<sup>48</sup> Ideally, the hands were those of an Australian and it was the stated aim of the pilgrimage movement 'to ensure that upon each grave is placed flowers by the hands of their own people'. That was not always possible, but other means were contrived to maintain this connection with homeland.<sup>49</sup>

Scholars of commemoration have explored the process whereby the front was 'transplanted' to Australia. Flanders poppies and Gallipoli pines were planted by memorials, soil carried from one country to another, the metal name-plates on original wooden crosses 'returned' to a dead soldier's loved ones.<sup>50</sup> Anzac Day in Britain suggests that this traffic also went in the opposite direction. Waratah, pohutukawa and wattle were stowed in the 'freezing chambers' of ocean liners, dried sprigs of rosemary and the ashes of wreaths duly despatched from Australia to London.<sup>51</sup> AIF cemeteries in Britain were to 'use Australian stone to the fullest possible extent'; this, the defence minister explained to the Governor-General, was 'for sentimental reasons'. Gum and rimu were raised in Kew Gardens and painstakingly transplanted across the south of England.<sup>52</sup>

At the graves themselves, an attempt was made to establish a loved one's presence, thereby building a 'bridge' to Australia. In 1922 Sharp announced that 'a duplicate of the memorial card laid on each grave may be sent to the bereaved ones 13,000 miles away by the same kindly hand that decorates the grave'. These 'tokens of loving care' would be accompanied by 'a few sympathetic words, evidence that 'memory remains when guns are silent ... distance ... bridged ... and bitter loss solaced'. Perhaps that was hoping for too much. 'Gratitude and pathos are eloquent in the replies received by the helpers', Sharp conceded, 'for time does not always evidence the healing power claimed for it'.<sup>53</sup>

These rituals and sentiments suggest complex emotional responses, what one mother called 'mingled feelings of both pride and sorrow'. They also expose the emotional world of the surrogate mourner. On regular pilgrimages to the New Zealand cemetery at Brockenhurst, Mrs Salwey 'acted the mother's part' and tended the graves. She also walked the cemetery at night, and composed a poem for the men buried there.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> BA, 14 July 1921, 1.

<sup>50</sup> Ziino, ch. 6; Bruce Scates, *A Place to Remember: A History of the Shrine of Remembrance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), ch. 4; and Scates, *Return to Gallipoli*, ch. 1; G. R. Harrison Collection, Mortlock Library of South Australia, PRG 1022.

<sup>51</sup> Anzac Fellowship of Women, Minutes, 13 January, 6 March 1925, March 1927, National Library of Australia (hereafter NLA), MS 2864; *Birmingham Post*, 26 April 1924, AWM: Anzac Day, Newspaper Clippings Collection.

<sup>52</sup> G. F. Pearce to Sir Ronald Munro-Ferguson, 31 January 1917, 'Arrangements in connection with graves of the fallen Australian soldiers buried in Europe', NAA: A11489/1 2350/2; Imperial War Graves Commission, Minutes of proceedings, NAA: A209 A2909/2, A453/1/3.

<sup>53</sup> BA, 20 April 1922, 10.

And the moonlight links by the shadows that fall,  
 One mound to the other—each white cross tall—  
 Where names are graven clear;  
 I wait for a footstep—or shadow to pass,  
 But only the dewdrops steal up from the grass,  
 None but the absent draw near.

Salwey felt the presence of the dead, ‘the cheery lads’ who had passed through her Hampshire village. But she also shared a frail sense of communion with the bereaved mothers far ‘across the water’. Their ‘wounded hearts’ joined with her own on that ‘cross crowned hill’ of Brockenhurst.<sup>54</sup>

Mrs Salwey’s poem reflects the postwar revival of spiritualism, the belief that one could communicate with the dead. Anzac rhetoric also developed this theme. As one newspaper commented of the 1916 march, ‘For near each stalwart fellow strode, to imaginative people, in mystical comradeship, the shadow of a friend left out there in the land sacred for ever to them’.<sup>55</sup> In both the poem and the press account of Anzac Day, the physical violence of the war was erased and the body of the deceased reimagined as alive and whole again. But Salwey also took solace in a more conventional form of Christianity, confident that when the ‘last trumpet from Heaven’ sounded, the acres of New Zealand’s dead would be reborn to paradise. Bridging distance and death was a purpose of such pilgrimage. But the pilgrims were also often lonely themselves, having suffered their own bereavement. And although they lived at the centre of empire, their dead were also sometimes far from them.

On Anzac Day 1924, Mrs E. M. Primrose attended a wreath-laying at the Cenotaph and then a lengthy service at St Clement Danes. Throughout the service, she pondered the loss of her only son at Gallipoli, a loss shared with thousands of families across the Empire. Like Salwey, Primrose committed her feelings to verse, a way of revealing the private loss at the core of public commemoration:

He was born to me ‘neath Southern Skies.  
 Cold of the sand and blue of the sea;  
 Laughter lived in those dear grey eyes,  
 The little island of Lemnos lies  
 Near where his grave must be.  
 And I alone, where we planned to meet  
 Sisters in grief so far away  
 Do you wait as I wait for the sound of feet,  
 Across the turf and along the street,  
 Always on Anzac Day?

<sup>54</sup> *BANZ*, 1 March 1923, 20.

<sup>55</sup> *Daily Mirror* (London), 26 April 1916, AWM: Anzac Day, Newspaper Clippings Collection.

One might question the quality of Salwey's and Primrose's verse but not the depth of emotional investment that inspired it. It is little wonder that Primrose became such an important figure in the pilgrimage movement. Like the British widow whose soldier was also killed at Gallipoli, she adopted a grave in London as a substitute for her own son's grave.<sup>56</sup>

### The decline of pilgrimage

The zenith of Anzac pilgrimage in Britain was the early 1920s, when processions of mourners, sometimes numbering several hundred, would descend on graves across Britain. Then the movement fell into sharp and steady decline. The year 1925, the tenth anniversary of the landing, signalled a brief respite, with impressive commemorative services being held at larger cemeteries.<sup>57</sup> Walton-on-Thames, the site of a large number of New Zealand graves as a result of the presence of a wartime military hospital nearby, remained a focus of official New Zealand activities throughout the interwar years, with an annual service usually being held in St Mary's Church. The Australian pilgrimage tradition, moreover, was revived on 24 April 1937 when members of the coronation contingent visited their fellow countrymen's graves at Brookwood Military Cemetery, 'many of them finding the last resting-place of an old comrade or member of their own unit'.<sup>58</sup> Yet although Anzac Day pilgrimage continued after the very early years, it did not maintain its early vigour. The later 1920s and 1930s saw an alteration in the shape of commemoration, which marginalised pilgrimage to gravesites. How and why did this happen?

In a sense, the success of the pilgrimage lobby was a cause of its undoing. Calls to honour the men's graves contributed to the process by which their care passed to the state. It is notable that when the 1937 visit to Brookwood occurred, a representative of the Imperial War Graves Commission was present.<sup>59</sup> Today, the graveyards' upkeep is the duty of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, a vast bureaucracy managed from Maidenhead in England. Former Dominions such as Australia are represented on the Commission; indeed, they help to fund it. But there is no space here for direct expatriate involvement. Nor, ironically, was there space for soldiers themselves. State intervention in the management of graveyards displaced earlier efforts to pay 'a soldier's tribute' to 'the honoured dead'. In May 1917, R. H. Maxwell, a non-commissioned officer at the Australian General Hospital in Harefield, announced 'a headstone appeal' to 'beautify' the graves of former comrades. His Commanding Officer, Lt.-Col. Yeatman, was amongst the first to subscribe. By war's end, over ninety graves in

<sup>56</sup> E. M. Primrose, 'Anzac Day 1924', *BA*, 1 May 1924, 22.

<sup>57</sup> *BANZ*, 30 April 1925, 20.

<sup>58</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 28 April 1930, AWM: Anzac Day, Newspaper Clippings Collection; *BANZ*, 29 April 1937, 23.

<sup>59</sup> *BANZ*, 29 April 1937, 23.

what Maxwell called 'the Anzac portion' of the cemetery were marked with headstones. All were of the same pattern—a stone scroll set on a flat pedestal recording name and rank. Those involved in the considerable work of preparing the site and raising the funds clearly believed they were erecting a permanent memorial. But in October 1918, Yeatman announced the suspension of the project. The Commander of AIF Headquarters had written to him 'discouraging' their efforts and suggesting permanent memorials could only be erected from 'a national point of view'. In the postwar period 'national' interests were subsumed by an even larger imperial project. While the Imperial War Graves Commission may not have removed soldiers' headstones at Harefield, they certainly destroyed many other private memorials, imposing 'one uniform design, based on some determined plan'.<sup>60</sup>

As the intervention at Harefield suggests, commemoration became increasingly codified by the state in the postwar period. And its centre of gravity shifted. London had always played an imposing role in hosting Anzac Day; the marches of 1916 and 1919 were some of the largest seen in that period. Sharp had also secured the cooperation of Australia House's Australian Graves Registration Branch as a source of information for pilgrims about burial grounds and the addresses of deceased soldiers' next-of-kin.<sup>61</sup> But the opening of Australia House in the Strand in August 1918 was a turning point in Anzac Day commemoration in Britain, both in terms of its spatiality and class meanings. The day became increasingly associated with London, Australia House and the precinct around Aldwych and the Strand.<sup>62</sup> Olwen Pryke has shown that the coincidence of the war with the building's construction influenced how it was understood as a symbol of Australian identity. At a luncheon following the opening ceremony, Billy Hughes told the assembled soldiers and nurses that people would in future see in the building 'the memory of the glorious deeds you have done upon the fields of battle. It will be a monument to our heroic deeds—a commemoration in blocks of stone of deeds that will ever live'.<sup>63</sup> At least one local press correspondent seemed to agree, remarking that '[t]he great majority of Londoners will regard it as a superb war memorial of the heroism of Australian soldiers'.<sup>64</sup> According to Pryke, Australia House was 'designated an immense mausoleum of the Australian war dead'. Part of the building was set aside as a 'memorial chamber', where maps, railway timetables and an elaborate system of index cards guided visiting pilgrims to the graves of their dead.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>60</sup> *Harefield Park Boomerang*, 2 May, 2 July 1917, 5, 11; May, October 1918, 212, 163; AWM: Anzac Day, Newspaper Clippings Collection.

<sup>61</sup> A. T. Sharp, 'Anzac Day Pilgrimage to Graves in the United Kingdom', printed circular, n.d. [1920], SROWA: Office of the Agent General, Subject Files, Series 2838, Consignment 1150, Item 1522.042.

<sup>62</sup> Olwen Valda Pryke, 'Australia House: Representing Australia in London, 1901–1939' (PhD thesis, University of Sydney, 2006), 152.

<sup>63</sup> Quoted, *ibid.*, 154.

<sup>64</sup> Quoted, *ibid.*, 153.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 252.

A few months after the opening came Anzac Day 1919, a carefully choreographed affair designed as an opportunity for the Australians to bid their British hosts farewell and thank them for their hospitality, and for the locals to show their appreciation. Five thousand Australian troops—'picked men' representing the five Australian infantry divisions and led by Sir John Monash on his grey horse—marched from near Buckingham Palace to Mansion House and beyond, via the Strand. This 'splendid monotony of brawn and sinew' marched with flags flying and, with the permission of the Lord Mayor, fixed bayonets, a rare privilege for any soldiery in the City of London. Vast crowds lined the streets and twenty or so planes flew noisily—and some thought dangerously—in Royal Air Force machines borrowed for the day by Australian airmen. Equally daring were the antics of 'Aussie' soldiers witnessing the procession: 'trees were thick with men', the *Mail* reported, and 'perched high ... electric [lampposts] ... Only flies, you would say, could cling there. Australians and little boys can cling where flies cling'. The balconies were a sea of khaki and blue uniforms; the latter, the colour worn by wounded men. There was much 'coo-eeing' as the Prince of Wales arrived and, more menacingly, especially in view of the Australian troops' well-earned reputation for misbehaviour, 'now and then they all fell to whistling like parrots—a forcible, though cryptic, comment ... on the Australian Military Police, and especially on those who were in earshot'. At the eastern end, a dais was set up from which the Prince of Wales, accompanied by Hughes, Churchill, Haig, Birdwood and Chauvel, took the salute. At the end of the ceremony, a vast wave of khaki surged forward, with 'the Australians anxious apparently either to stand on it or to tear it to pieces for souvenirs'. Mounted police eventually restored order.<sup>66</sup>

The 1919 ceremony established the centrality of Australian space on the Strand to Anzac Day commemoration. In the afternoon, a service was held at adjacent St Clement Danes, thereby inaugurating a tradition of Anzac Day services in that ancient church, where oranges and lemons would compete each year with floral tributes. It came to be called 'the sanctuary of Australia House', a designation that owed everything to its Anzac Day role.<sup>67</sup> The hint of riot and disorder associated with the 1919 ceremony would disappear with the working-class army that had produced it. Instead, Anzac Day ceremony increasingly became an expression of a respectable and well-off expatriate community and part of the ritual of many Australian tourists who found themselves in London on 25 April. The spatial context of Australia House was critical in this transformation, for the building became closely associated with an affluent travelling class who took advantage of its wide-ranging facilities, which included the nomination of individuals for invitations to royal garden parties and

<sup>66</sup> Peter Stanley, *Bad Characters: Sex, Crime, Mutiny, Murder and the Australian Imperial Force* (Sydney: Pier 9, 2010); *Daily Mail*, 24 April 1919; *Evening News* (London), 25 April 1919; *Daily Telegraph* (London), 23, 26 April 1919; *The Times*, 24, 26 April 1919; *Anzac Bulletin*, 2 May 1919; AWM: Anzac Day, Newspaper Clippings Collection.

<sup>67</sup> See *BA*, 27 April 1922, 10, for an early example of a ceremony in St Clement Danes.

presentations at Court. These visitors were enjoined to treat the building as a home away from home. Critics of Australia House, on the other hand, claimed it had become the haunt of ambitious 'social climbers'.<sup>68</sup>

There is good reason to believe that Anzac Day itself was not immune to these influences. With the return of the AIF and New Zealand Expeditionary Force to their respective countries, a commemoration protocol crystallised around the Cenotaph in Whitehall and St Clement Danes. The former became the undisputed centre of imperial commemoration, the latter the unofficial chapel of expatriate Australians and New Zealanders. Every Anzac Day, official parties laid wreaths at Whitehall, attended a service at St Clement Danes and retired across the Strand to Australia House and refreshments. The protocol varied little through the years. The High Commissioner himself was often prominent in the commemoration—a kind of vicar in a parish devoted to the civil religion of Anzac—and Australian expatriates played a significant role in these ceremonies. Arthur Mason, the organist at St James, Piccadilly, but formerly City Organist of Sydney, turned out faithfully each year for the St Clement Danes service, while a clergyman who had spent part of his career in Australia, sometimes an ex-AIF chaplain, typically led the ceremony.<sup>69</sup>

Even the most dedicated custodians of remembrance, like the local branch of the Anzac Fellowship of Women, developed social events in preference to pilgrimage. These became fashionable occasions, on which the wearing of black was by no means obligatory. Anzac Day handily coincided with the beginning of the traditional London social season and appears to have taken its place in this context rather too comfortably.<sup>70</sup> Lady Forster, the wife of the former Governor-General, presided each year at a stylish party, which was—as she put it herself in 1937—a chance for 'renewing old friendships and making new ones'.<sup>71</sup> The shape of London Anzac commemoration was in this way changed by interwar 'pleasure culture', in which women's often painful memories were perhaps temporarily healed by sociability, entertainment and display.<sup>72</sup>

Yet at the same time, as in Australia, postwar commemoration sometimes served to exclude women.<sup>73</sup> Pilgrimages had proceeded at a leisurely pace and while few women made speeches, they were at the centre of wreath-laying. The shift of Anzac services to the Cenotaph, however, changed the tempo and geography of remembrance. Official proceedings began at 11.00 am, the High

<sup>68</sup> Pryke, 219–31, 236, 250, 262; Simon Sleight, 'Australia's House', in *The High Commissioners, Australia's Representatives in the United Kingdom, 1910–2010*, eds Carl Bridge, Frank Bongiorno and David Lee (Canberra: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2010), 223–4.

<sup>69</sup> 'Memorandum: Anzac Day Services, 7 January 1932', Anzac Day Celebrations in London, NAA: A461, B317/1/2; also reports of Anzac Day ceremonies in the *BA* and, its successor, the *BANZ*, for the period 1920–39.

<sup>70</sup> *BANZ*, 2 May 1935, 16.

<sup>71</sup> *BANZ*, 29 April 1937, 19.

<sup>72</sup> Carden-Coyne, 117–18.

<sup>73</sup> Joy Damousi, *The Labour of Loss: Mourning, Memory and Wartime Bereavement in Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 36; Luckins, 194–7.

Commissioners of Australia and New Zealand and representatives of the British, French and Indian Armies, the Royal Navy, the Royal Navy Division and the Merchant Navy laying their wreaths with military precision. Whitehall was sealed off from traffic for that part of the ceremony alone, and 'spectators other than Representative Detachment ... kept back on the pavement'. Timing was of the essence, an official memorandum explained, and a ten-second pause between each wreath deemed sufficient for 'recollection and reverence'. 'The very restricted space available', it was noted, 'does not permit of any places being provided for ladies in the official party'. Women (and others outside the official party) approached the Cenotaph only after these formalities were over, presumably dodging London traffic to do so.<sup>74</sup>

Women were not the only ones sidelined. By the late 1920s veteran groups in Australia also occasionally protested at their place being taken by civilian politicians or British generals. 'In Australia Anzac Day is properly looked upon as the "Diggers" day of commemoration for their fallen comrades', L. H. Pike (secretary of the Brisbane Returned Sailors' and Soldiers' League) explained, '[in London] I saw [a few] A.I.F. men present, but they were lost in a crowd of curious sightseers'. Pike likened Anzac Day at the Cenotaph to 'Here we go Round the Mulberry Bush', the number of men in British uniform or civilian attire depleting any real meaning for a digger. Here we see a tension again in the work of remembrance, between authorised state ritual and individual understandings of war and loss, and between empire and nation.<sup>75</sup>

Anzac Day's meaning changed much over this period, with commemoration assuming a less solemn character than visits to graveyards. Reports of Anzac Day services in St Clement Danes refer to the occasional 'suppressed sob' breaking the two minutes' silence, but Anzac Day also prompted lectures, dinners and even the occasional ball.<sup>76</sup> There was still space for mourning and reflection, but also a wider social and cultural agenda. Perhaps it had to change, if the war were to be made meaningful for a generation that had not experienced its horrors. Winter and Sivan have argued that collective memory has a shelf-life and is 'vulnerable to decay'; it can 'die out or ... be given a new lease of life'. While regular rehearsal, such as that exemplified by the Anzac graveside pilgrims, might help keep war remembrance alive, the passage of time and arrival of a new generation will pose challenges to commemorative rituals.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>74</sup> Memorandum dated 6 November 1929; Sir Granville Ryrie (High Commissioner) to John Huxham (Agent General for Queensland), 3 April 1929; 'Gallipoli and Anzac Day 1935', Memorandum dated 12 December 1935, 'Anzac Day Celebrations in London', NAA: A461, B317/1/2; *BANZ*, 31 March 1927, 20; undated clipping from *Daily Mail* and account in the diary of Sgt. P. F. Weaven, 25 April 1919, 3DRL/6041.

<sup>75</sup> L. H. Pike to T. Trumble, 29 April 1929, 'Anzac Day Celebrations in London', NAA: A461, B317/1/2.

<sup>76</sup> *BANZ*, 2 May 1935, 16.

<sup>77</sup> Jay Winter and Emmanuel Sivan, 'Setting the Framework', in *War and Remembrance*, eds Winter and Sivan, 16, 30–1.





Figure 2. The geography of remembrance: Australian diplomats and their wives, led by the High Commissioner, Joseph Cook (bearded and in the group on the right, standing closest to the Cenotaph), gather around the Cenotaph in London on Anzac Day some time in the 1920s. In the interwar period, official ceremonies like this one effectively displaced pilgrimages to graves scattered across Britain (National Archives of Australia: M3614, 12)

Today, John Naughton's grave is located in the Australian section of Kensal Green cemetery. Sixteen of his countrymen lie buried beside him, all with the individual plot Alfred Sharp insisted on. Nearby, 416 British troops are interned in a mass plot the size of a tennis court, a reminder of the different shape commemoration may well have taken had it not been for Sharp's agitation. Naughton's next-of-kin declined the Imperial War Graves Commission's invitation to draft an epitaph. But an inscription alongside his grave underscores the loss felt by distant families, unable ever to visit the grave of a loved one: 'Our tears are the flowers on your grave'.

Australians continue to lay flowers on soldiers' graves in Britain. Every Anzac Day, what organisers and participants describe as 'pilgrimages' are held at the Australian cemetery at Harefield and the 'Lonely Anzac's' grave in Peterborough. But commemoration today is more a spectacle than anything else, a media event centred around the new official memorial at Hyde Park rather than the isolated graves Sharp's generation tended. As the Great War moves from memory to history, Anzac Day—in Britain and elsewhere—will shed old meanings and take on new ones.

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