

Premier's ANZAC School Prize

Lest we forget



The statue above is in the battle field of Fromelles. The statue represents the mateship and bravery of the ANZACS.

The life size bronze of an Aussie carrying his wounded pal is an impressive and fitting memorial to the 257 officers and 6,823 other ranks who became casualties here on 19th July 1916.

By Matthew Leigh

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Q: Using a case study of a fallen soldier on the Western Front, what lessons can be learnt from studying the Great War of 1914-1918?

WWI was a huge learning experience for the world, but a very costly one at that. World leaders learnt that wars couldn't be run from their own countries. We saw in WWII that commanders were put into the field to control and plan attacks. With new technology bringing better weapons and vehicles, new ways of fighting had been discovered. Germany also learnt that greed will only bring them pain, the Allied forces worked on starving the Central Powers by cutting off food, water, ammunition and other supply routes. Bigger countries found out that if their smaller allies got into arguments with other countries, they would have to step in and try to resolve it, which resulted in human losses for their country. Greed was a big part of WWI, as the war unfolded the greedy leaders and their countries were brought down.

Lawrence Carthage Weathers was in the 43rd Battalion in the Australian infantry, Weathers died of wounds on the 29th of September 1918. His memorial details are in France 212 Unicorn Cemetary Vend'huile.

The 43rd battalion left for Egypt in June 1916, they arrived in Egypt then underwent further training in Britain. After months of training the 43rd landed on the Western Front in late December. During 1917 the 43rd were bogged down in bloody trench warfare in Flanders, The 43rd then took part in the battle of Messines, then in October the third battle of Ypres (often called Passchendaele). The Australians called this "wipers" because they couldn't pronounce it properly. The battles that took place around Ypres were some of the biggest battles in WWI; millions of soldiers were killed on these bloody fields. Trees were stripped bare and buildings were completely flattened. Nothing was left standing.

Throughout 1918 the 43rd spent a lot of time fighting in the Somme valley, during April the 43rd helped stop the Germans spring offensive at Villers-Bretonneux. This attack was the German's last ditch effort to win the war. Villers-Bretonneux was known as pay back for the battle of Fromelles. Downing, an Australian soldier wrote in his diary. "Bayonets passed with ease through grey-clad bodies and were withdrawn with a sucking noise."¹

¹ Les Carlyon "The Great War" Pan Macmillan 2006 pg 351

The Australians killed and killed, they said this is for what happened at Fromelles. The ANZACS got revenge on the Germans for killing their mates. At the start of Glasgow's attack, he recalled on an Australian officer using very simple words, "Boys, you know what you have to do, get on with it."²

People admired this about the ANZACS they knew what they had to do and they did it, if there were injured men left on the field there was no way they would still be there by night fall or day break.

Sir Douglas Haig started the third battle of Ypres, the first and second were started by the Germans. The third battle of Ypres resulted in a little gain in ground, then finally the eventual capture of Passchendaele village by British and Canadian forces on the 6th of November. Gaining little bits of land then holding your ground, then gaining some more, was the key to winning the ridge. This is called the "bite and hold tactic." Many men were lost. There were over 310,000 casualties for the BEF (British Expeditionary Forces) and 260,000 for the Germans, there were also many more from other countries. If Haig called off the offensive earlier many men would still have been alive, Haig's victory proved no strategic advantage, after the Germans recaptured it in the Spring offensive in March 1918. Haig blamed General Gough not the bad weather or the terrain.

Weathers is a perfect example of an Australian Soldier, he showed mateship, determination, valour, conspicuous bravery and complete devotion to duty. An example of these such things is; just north of Peronne on the 2nd of September, Weathers accompanied by a bombing party advanced on a strongly fortified enemy trench, Corporal Weathers moved forward, alone, attacking with hand grenades whilst under heavy fire, he then returned for more grenades and advanced once again with three other men. They were suffering under very heavy fire without any care for personal safety he mounted the parapet and started bombing the trench. With the support of his comrades they captured 180 prisoners and three machine guns. Because of Weathers' determination and will to protect his fellow comrades the final objective was successfully captured. Weathers earned a Victoria Cross the highest military honour for British servicemen in the battle of Mont St Quentin, this was the only V.C awarded in the division.

The ANZACS suffered their greatest losses from 20th Sept- 31st Oct 1918 more than 8,000 ANZACS were killed and over 30,000 wounded. People can learn that to be successful they need a plan, Haig did not plan his attacks well enough, and he needed more maps and knowledge of where the enemy were and what they were doing.

² Ibid., pg 367

The battle of Passchendaele shows the bravery of the soldiers, they were fighting a battle which seemed impossible, but with courageous and heroic efforts success was achieved. Although the ANZACS efforts were in vain it no way minimises the incredible efforts and successes in the hell that is best known as Passchendaele. A lesson to be learnt from WWI is that greed only attracts misfortune, wanting more, demanding more will only result in trouble for themselves and their country. If people were not so worried about what they could have and just concentrate or work harder to make their possessions or land they already have better. Instead of causing heartache and pain to millions of other innocent people around the world, by trying to rule their countries and take their belongings.



A picture of the Passchendaele (third battle of Ypres) battle field. You can see why so many soldiers died, the mud was thick and deep and there was hardly any cover.

By Matthew Leigh

As another soldier arrives in heaven
To Saint Peter he will tell
Another soldier reporting sir
I've spent my time in hell

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Q: *What does the ANZAC spirit mean to me?*

The ANZAC spirit is an inspiration to me; if I could be half as gutsy, determined, tough, heroic, brave and unselfish like the ANZACS were in the Great War of 1914-1918 I would be very proud of myself. The men and women who served for Australia were not just soldiers, nurses or people who made ammunition or food, they were heroes. I feel so honoured that so many people risked their lives to protect our country so that all Australians could stay in their home land and live freely for many generations to come. When I think of the ANZAC spirit I feel very proud to be Australian. To know that another person has given their own life, for you to grow up and be happy.

I have a Great Uncle who fought in WWII (1939-1945) on the Western Front, when he tells me stories of fellow soldiers being injured and seeing an Australian soldier run out into the line of fire to save them, in doing so putting his own life in great danger. These acts of mateship and bravery are a large part of the ANZAC spirit. This is an example of what was forged in WWI, risking their own life to save a mate. Australian soldiers were well known for it. E.P.F Lynch wrote about mateship and his journey in his diary whilst in the trenches in 1916. He commented on how most Australian men enlisted because their mates did, they did not want to see their mates head off to war without them by their side. "They enlisted because of the urging spirit of pulling together, this is mateship undefined."¹ "The men were not keen on killing other people; they were given guns and grenades and used them as their mates did, to the full. Mateship is born and rediscovered when a country calls, this is how it should be and how it ever must be."² When I think of my Uncle and how brave he and other people were, it just inspires me to achieve the best I can in life, to make the most of the opportunity that these men and women gave me.

An example of mateship was seen in Australia's first major battle in Europe. The battle was known as Fromelles, the ANZACS received orders to attack three German lines of trenches, they advanced and took the first two trenches going straight through "no man's land." When the ANZACS got to the second trench they went on further to discover there was no third trench. Meanwhile the Germans had made it back into the first two trenches and they started to put heavy fire onto the

¹ E.P.F Lynch "Somme Mud" ed Will Davies, Random House, 2006 pg 199

² Ibid., pg 200

ANZACS out in the open, they dropped to try and find cover filling sand bags with mud and getting into bomb craters to get out of the line of fire. Night came and the ANZACS made their way back to Australian trenches crawling on all fours. British High Commanders did not let the Australians retrieve their wounded mates; the ANZACS could hear their comrades calling for help. The ANZACS could not leave them behind, one Australian commander walked across the battlefield to the German trenches and made a truce, and he even offered himself as a prisoner. Whilst he talked his men tried to find as many wounded ANZACS as they could. Australian soldiers forged this image in WWI of never leaving a fellow ANZAC behind; they would risk their own life to try and get their mate back. Just like Lawrence Weathers, risked his own life trying to take out a machine gun nest, to protect his mates, he succeeded.

When I am doing something really important like playing in my footy Grand Final last year, I thought about the ANZACS, they didn't get to do this because they were either killed or injured whilst defending our country. Thinking of this made me more determined to achieve something great. I made a split second decision to dive and then mark and kick a match sealing goal, this is nothing compared to the ANZACS but they make me not worry about what could happen, just do it because you might end up regretting it later on in life and asking yourself "what if." This year in a footy game I was injured really badly, I was tackled onto a sprinkler and ripped all the skin off my knee; I looked down to discover I could see my knee cap. Whilst on the stretcher getting carried off I thought "ha-ha," the ANZACS would have gotten up and shot at the enemy again, and I'm lying on a stretcher saying "ouch that hurts a lot." I didn't worry about my knee too much that day because I thought of the ANZAC spirit and said to myself "cheer up they had a lot more pain then you will ever experience." I believe thinking of the ANZACS took my mind away from my misfortunes, and think how lucky I really am.

The men and women who fought in the Great War sacrificed their lives for me and all of us to live. I believe we should live our lives to the full, and whilst doing that always remember the people who gave their own life for us to have families, grow old and hopefully live a happy healthy life. I think we as Australians owe the ANZACS something, by making sure the ANZAC spirit is recognised and remembered for many generations to come.

ANZACS are true legends and heroes, these two words are used too much these days, I think people forget the real meaning of the words the ANZACS are the people who earned these names, sometimes I wonder if today right now in Australia would people still make that ultimate sacrifice? I think not. The amount of pride

and respect they had for their country and their mates was amazing, this respect and pride has been lost over the years which is a real shame. The respect and pride is what we as Australians should carry on into future generations. I hope to take some of the respect and pride with me, in my life and do my part to remember and tell the legend of the ANZAC.



The cemetery at Fromelles, in France. The Battle took place in July 1916.

By Matthew Leigh

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