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The Transformation of Australian Military Heroism During the First World War

Rhys Cooper

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ORCID: 0000-0002-2652-2400

School of Historical and Philosophical Studies

The University of Melbourne

Abstract

This thesis examines how Australian heroism was defined and represented during the First World War. I present an in-depth analysis of two sets of primary sources: Victoria Cross (VC) medal citations and Australian wartime newspapers. Victoria Cross citations are official British military descriptions of battlefield acts that have earned a serviceman the VC medal and therefore offer a window into how British and dominion commanders awarded and prescribed heroism. My analysis of all British and dominion VC citations, from the institution of the medal in 1856 to the end of the First World War in November 1918, show that the type of act that was primarily awarded the VC changed in late 1916 and early 1917. While most VCs were awarded for acts of saving life before this point, this changed to an emphasis on acts of killing. Statistics compiled from VC citations also show that Australians were exceptional in the way they were awarded the medal during the conflict, receiving proportionally more awards for killing and fewer for life saving than any other British or dominion nation. Analysis of major Australian newspapers' representations of military heroism during the war reveals a similar trend. Australian newspapers primarily represented stretcher-bearers and wounded men as the heroes of Gallipoli in reports throughout 1915, yet from the entry of Australian forces into the Western Front in 1916, newspaper representations of heroism focused far more on men who killed the enemy.

This thesis offers an original contribution to the literature by showing how and why pre-war ideals of heroism transformed in Australia during the course of the First World War. It specifically identifies the dominant model of Australian heroism that existed in 1914, and traces how it was displaced by new ideals of heroism considered more necessary and apt for the conditions of the Western Front. In identifying the shifting ideals that were officially recognised and widely represented as epitomising the highest forms of military valour, this thesis is the first to examine the nature of Australian *hegemonic heroism* during the First World War. In analysing the dominant heroic model in Australia during the First World War and showing how and why this model transformed over the course of the conflict, this study presents new insights into the nature of heroism and masculinity in wartime Australia.

Declaration

I certify that:

1. this thesis comprises only my original work towards the PhD;
2. due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used;
3. the thesis is fewer than 100 000 words in length, exclusive of tables, maps, bibliographies and appendices.

Signed:

Rhys Cooper

Date: 21 November 2019

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Abbreviations

AIF	Australian Imperial Force
APA	Australian Press Association
ANZAC	Australian and New Zealand Army Corps
AWM	Australian War Memorial
BEF	British Expeditionary Force
BNA	British National Archives
CEF	Canadian Expeditionary Force
CO	Conscientious Objector
GHQ	British General Headquarters
INS	Imperial News Service
MOOC	Massive Open Online Course
NAA	National Archives of Australia
NCO	Non-Commissioned Officer
NLA	National Library of Australia
RFC	Royal Flying Corps
SMH	*Sydney Morning Herald*
UCS	United Cable Service
VC	Victoria Cross

Introduction

In the final year of the First World War, Lieutenant Arthur Muriel of the First Australian Imperial Force (AIF) carried a wounded officer to safety under the close-range fire of an enemy machine gun.[1] For his act, Muriel was recommended for a Victoria Cross (VC) medal, the highest military decoration for gallantry available to members of British and dominion forces. Muriel's VC recommendation was ultimately unsuccessful.[2] Unlike other Australian servicemen whose VC recommendations had been approved, Muriel's name and act are not on display in the Australian War Memorial's Hall of Valour; they do not appear in any of the numerous books about the medal; and there are no streets named after him or busts of his likeness found in his hometown of Melbourne.[3] Lieutenant Muriel displayed courage when rescuing a comrade at the risk of his own life, yet as the historian Michael Lieven has noted, "the courageous man becomes a hero only when he is declared to be one."[4] Heroism, by its very nature, can only exist through recognition by others. Such recognition can come in a variety of forms. For the modern soldier, it has traditionally been the military medal that has distinguished mere courage from heroism, but military heroes have also been made through media and literary representations. Military forces, governments, and writers select the ideals and actions that underpin heroism, and through this process of recognition and representation, military heroism is constructed to reflect and legitimise the ideological standards and goals of the state.[5] As this thesis will show, Lieutenant Muriel's VC recommendation was not rejected because the officer's actions lacked sufficient courage, but because the type of courage he displayed did not comply with the heroic standard set by the British military and of 1918.

On the Western Front, two years prior to Muriel's actions, Private William Jackson took part in a raid on German trenches near Armentières. An official military account of

1 "Arthur John Chilvers Muriel Victoria Cross Recommendation," 1918, AWM, 31, https://s3-ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/awm-media/collection/RCDIG1067905/document/5484616.PDF.

2 The VC recommendation process will be discussed in greater detail on page 11 of this chapter.

3 "Service Record of Arthur John Chilvers Muriel," 1914-1920, B2455, NAA, https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Gallery151/dist/JGalleryViewer.aspx?B=7990018&S=1&N=34&R=0#/SearchNRetrieve/NAAMedia/ShowImage.aspx?B=7990018&T=P&S=1.

4 Michael Lieven, "Heroism, Heroics and the Making of Heroes: The Anglo-Zulu War of 1879," *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies* 30, no. 3 (1998): 419.

5 Gray Cavender and Sarah Prior, "Constructing the Military Hero," *International Journal of Criminology and Sociology* 2 (2013): 469.

the evening describes how Jackson, an 18-year old from the small town of Gunbar in New South Wales, captured and led a German soldier through intense shelling and machine-gun fire back to the Allied lines. On learning that members of his raiding party remained wounded and in the open, Jackson "immediately went out again under very heavy shell fire and assisted in bringing in a wounded man."[6] The young private then returned to the battlefield and "with a serjeant [*sic*] was bringing in another wounded man, when his arm was blown off by a shell."[7] Despite losing his right arm above the elbow, Jackson re-entered no man's land to search for other stranded comrades.

Although Jackson's act was similar in nature to Muriel's—in that both men saved their comrades' lives at great risk to their own—Private Jackson's act occurred at a point in the war when the saving of life in battle was still awarded and reported as one of the highest feats of heroism. As such, unlike Muriel, Jackson was awarded the VC. While Muriel and his act went unreported and forgotten, Jackson's actions were soon recounted widely in Australia, with his hometown newspaper the *Riverine Grazier* describing how their "Gunbar boy" had earned "the most coveted military decoration."[8] Newspapers across the country described Jackson and his act as having demonstrated—as Adelaide's the *Advertiser* described—"the greatest coolness and bravery."[9] At least 75 further articles on Jackson appeared across the country in September 1916, in major city publications such as the *Sydney Morning Herald*, Melbourne's *Argus*, and Perth's *Daily News*, as well as in regional publications like Mackay's *Daily Mercury* and Hobart's *Daily Post*.[10] All reports lauded Jackson and his feat as heroic.

Since the creation of the VC in 1856, a very high proportion of battlefield actions that earned this "most coveted military decoration" and which were praised for heroism in Australian newspapers, resembled Private Jackson's action. Victoria Cross awards and Australian newspaper reporting recognised and celebrated acts in which servicemen had risked their own wellbeing to save the lives of imperilled comrades. Such a focus on the act of saving lives on the battlefield had been the crux of British military and civilian

6 "The London Gazette 29740," 8 September 1916, The Gazette Archives, 8870.

7 *Ibid*.

8 "The Most Coveted Military Decoration," *Riverine Grazier,* 12 September 1916, 2.

9 "Australian Heroes," *Advertiser*, 11 September 1916, 4.

10 "Private William Jackson," *SMH*, 12 September 1916, 2; "Victoria Cross Won by Five Australians," *The Argus*, 11 September 1916, 6; "Victoria Cross Heroes," *Daily Post*, 11 September 1916, 3; "Victoria Cross Anzacs," *Daily Mercury,* 12 September 1916, 5; "Victoria Crosses," *Daily News*, 9 September 1916, 5.

ideals of heroism since at least the Crimean War of 1853 to 1856, when the VC was established and first awarded. These ideals remained prevalent at the outbreak of the First World War. This was a model of heroism based on reformed principles of medieval chivalry—now often referred to as "neo-chivalry"—that mixed ideals of social etiquette, imperialism, and religious morality. Neo-chivalry underpinned the ideals of masculinity in British colonies, and then dominion nations, from the eighteenth century to the First World War. Across the Empire, men were educated to believe that the highest traits of valour could be demonstrated through helping others, both in civilian life and in combat. The nineteenth-century war hero and influential founder of the boy scouts, Robert Baden-Powell, presented chivalry as an instructional code to guide men "to help others, especially women and children, and not to think of their own trouble or risk so long as they do a good turn to others needing help."[11] It was this trait of neo-chivalry, so prominent in late-Victorian imperial culture, which was primarily recognised and represented as heroic in the early stages of the First World War. Selflessness in the cause of helping others was the act for which Private William Jackson received a VC and the praise of Australia's newspapers.

Yet the heroic ideals that neo-chivalry informed were profoundly challenged during the First World War. While Private Jackson received a VC for saving life on a battlefield of the Western Front in 1916, Lieutenant Muriel was deemed ineligible for the same honour for a similar act, in the same theatre of war, in 1918. In the interim between Jackson and Muriel's courageous actions, the ideals that underpinned officially recognised and widespread representations of heroism had profoundly changed. The hero was no longer one who displayed neo-chivalric qualities—such as saving others' lives—on the battlefield. This change in the model of British and dominion heroism followed a change that had occurred in modern warfare more broadly. As has been often observed by historians of the conflict, the battlefield conditions of the First World War were unprecedented.[12] The mass introduction of barbed wire, machine guns, repeating rifles, smokeless powder, and modern artillery, alongside the recruitment and conscription of

11 Sir Robert Baden-Powell, *Young Knights of the Empire: Their Code, and Further Scout Yarns* (London: C Arthur Pearson, 1917), 23.

12 Lawrence Sondhaus, *World War One: The Global Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 58; John Keegan, *The First World War* (New York: Random House, 2011), 27; Margaret MacMillan, *The War That Ended Peace: How Europe Abandoned Peace for the First World War* (London: Profile Books, 2013), 297, 304; Michael Howard, "Men against Fire: Expectations of War in 1914," *International Security* 9, no. 1 (1984): 41–57.

massive national armies, created circumstances that led to stagnant trench warfare and desolate no man's lands.[13] In this environment, acts of saving life—the most commonly awarded and represented act of nineteenth-century military heroism—became far more difficult to perform compared to prior wars of open battlefields, cavalry charges, and manoeuvre. British military leaders initially attempted to apply old battle strategies to a new type of war, but by the end of the Battle of the Somme, in November 1916, most British commanders realised that a strategy of attrition was required to win a war of attrition.[14]

How was Australian military heroism defined and represented during the First World War? What events influenced the reshaping of such definitions? This thesis explores, for the first time, the evolution of how Australian heroism was recognised and represented during the course of the First World War. My findings draw upon analysis of two sets of primary sources: VC citations and Australian wartime newspapers. Victoria Cross citations are official British military descriptions of battlefield acts that earned a serviceman the VC medal. They offer a window into how British and dominion forces awarded and prescribed heroism. I have undertaken quantitative and textual analyses of VC citations to show that the specific type of act that was primarily awarded the VC changed in late 1916 and early 1917. This was a change from acts of saving life to acts of killing. Statistics compiled from VC citations also show that Australians were exceptional in the way they were awarded the medal during the conflict, receiving proportionally more awards for killing and fewer for life saving than any other British or dominion nation.

Analysis of major Australian newspaper representations of military heroism during the war reveals a similar trend to that found in analysis of VC citations. Australian newspapers primarily represented stretcher-bearers and wounded men as the heroes of the Gallipoli landings and campaign in reports throughout 1915, yet from the entry of Australian forces into the Western Front in 1916, newspaper representations of heroism

[13] Paul Cornish, *Machine Guns and the Great War* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword Books, 2009), 7, 42, 139; Diana Preston, *A Higher Form of Killing: Six Weeks in World War I That Forever Changed the Nature of Warfare* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015), 20–24; Nicholas Murray, *The Rocky Road to the Great War: The Evolution of Trench Warfare to 1914* (Lincoln: Potomac Books, Inc., 2013), 16–19; Alan Kramer, *Dynamic of Destruction: Culture and Mass Killing in the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 76–82.

[14] Timothy Travers, *The Killing Ground: The British Army, the Western Front and the Emergence of Modern War, 1900-1918* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword Books Limited, 2003), 66–70.

focused far more on men who killed the enemy. By exploring heroic models in both VC citations and the Australian press, I have been able to undertake a fine-grained analysis of how, when, and why recognition and representation of Australian military heroes changed during the First World War.

This study approaches the ideal of modern military heroism through a cultural history perspective, with a view to enabling new insights into how and why the awarding of the VC and representations of heroism in Australian newspapers changed over the course of the First World War. The result of this approach is a broader view of how heroic ideals were reshaped by the military in order to guide men's actions in battle and repackaged by Australian newspapers to influence the public's view of war-related issues at home. Such recognised and represented ideals of heroism underpin the Anzac legend, continuing to influence modern Australian memory and commemoration of the First World War today.

The First World War Hero in Modern Australia

The study of Australian First World War heroism is the study of a modern ideology that informs concepts of national identity. While a large body of scholarship exists on Anzac mythology and its place in modern Australia, to date there exists no work that has examined the important role of wartime representations of heroism within the legend. In identifying the specific and dominant characteristics that underpinned Anzac heroism—and how these characteristics changed over the course of the war—this thesis offers a new perspective on what the Anzac legend represents, how it was created, and the importance of the VC and the wartime press in shaping such an enduring myth.

Nearly 308,000 Australians served overseas during the First World War and between 60,284 and 72,500 died during the conflict.[15] Australians fought in New Guinea, Turkey, the Middle East, and in Western Europe. They were involved in several decisive actions, such as helping to stop the German Spring Offensive at Villers-Bretonneux in April 1918 and breaking through the Hindenburg Line in September 1918.[16] While

[15] Ernest Scott, *Australia During the War*, 9th ed (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1943), 874; AG Butler, *The Australian Army Medical Services in the War of 1914-1918* (Melbourne: AWM, 1938), 896; David Noonan, *Those We Forget* (Melbourne: Melbourne Univ. Publishing, 2014), 213.

[16] CEW Bean, *Anzac to Amiens* (Canberra: AWM, [1946] 1983), 338-339.

Australian participation and losses in the conflict were numerically slight compared to other belligerent nations like Britain, Germany, and France, the First World War continues to occupy a central place in mainstream representations and understandings of Australian identity.

This centrality of Anzac in popular Australian memory is demonstrated in the estimated $558 million that Australian governments and corporations spent on First World War commemoration events and resources between 2014 and 2018—a stark figure in contrast to the $200 million collectively spent by all other participatory nations on centenary commemoration.[17] This is despite Australian losses of the war representing less than one percent of the total military deaths of all Allied forces.[18] Much of this money was focused on Anzac Day, an Australian annual public holiday established commemorating the date of the Allied landings at Gallipoli in 1915. The Australian War Memorial describes the day as a time for Australians to reflect and remember the "the spirit of Anzac, with its qualities of courage, mateship, and sacrifice," and as a day which "continues to have meaning and relevance for our sense of national identity."[19] While interest in, and commemoration of, Anzac Day waned in Australia during the 1960s and 1970s, there was a revival of interest in Anzac and its commemoration during the 1980s.[20] This was in part a result of Bill Gammage's influential 1974 book, *The Broken Years,* that presented and contextualised hundreds of Australian soldiers' wartime diary entries, thus humanising our vision of the Australian digger.[21] The "meaning and relevance" that the First World War continues to have in modern Australian society was proven during the

17 David Stephens, "Anzac Commemoration Spending around $500 Million – and Rising," *Honest History*, 17 April 2015, accessed 5 February 2016, http://honesthistory.net.au/wp/anzac-commemoration-spending-around-400-million-and-rising-factsheet/.

18 Philip J Haythornthwaite, *The World War One Source Book*, 5th ed. (London: Brockhampton Press, 1998), 382.

19 "Anzac Day | The AWM," *Australian War Memorial*, n.d., accessed 3 December 2018, https://www.awm.gov.au/commemoration/anzac-day.

20 Jenny Macleod, "The Fall and Rise of Anzac Day: 1965 and 1990 Compared," *War and Society* 20, no. 1 (May 1, 2002): 150–152.

21 Bill Gammage, *The Broken Years: Australian Soldiers in the Great War* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Publishing, [1974] 2010).

centenary period when hundreds of thousands of Australians across the country attended dawn services and commemoration events on Anzac Day.[22]

A regular feature of these events has been the notion that modern Australians should emulate the values and behaviours that were demonstrated by the Anzacs during the war. On the centenary of Anzac Day in 2015, then Australian Prime Minister, Tony Abbott, used his speech, delivered at Gallipoli, to praise the men who had landed and fought there one hundred years earlier. He also encouraged modern Australians to "be more like them."[23] Similarly, a mission statement of the organisation Camp Gallipoli, which held nation-wide commemoration events in 2015 and 2016, outlined its aim to "instil the Anzac ideals of mateship, courage, inclusiveness and self-sacrifice into the youth of Australia."[24] In the lead-up to the centenary of the armistice, at least ten major News Corp Australia websites published an article entitled "Modern Australians should remember and emulate ANZAC [*sic*] courage," with video links to the Sky News Australia presenter Peta Credlin encouraging her audience to imitate Australian servicemen of the First World War by "having a bit of backbone."[25]

[22] "As It Happened: Australians Mark Anzac Day," ABC News, 25 April 2014, accessed 1 February 2016, https://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-04-25/live3a-anzac-day-2014/5409444; "Anzac Day 2015: Australia Commemorates Centenary," ScribbleLive Embed, 25 April 2015, accessed 1 February 2016, http://livenews.abc.net.au/Event/Anzac_Day_2015_Australia_commemorates_centenary; Helen Davidson *et al.*, "Anzac Day 2016: Commemorations and Controversy – as It Happened," *The Guardian*, 25 April 2016, accessed 31 January 2016. https://www.theguardian.com/news/live/2016/apr/25/anzac-day-2016-tens-of-thousands-attend-dawn-services-live; "Anzac Day Services Abroad," 25 April 2017, accessed 14 May 2018, https://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/anzac-day-2017-thousands-turn-out-for-dawn-services/news-story/fe8559990bccfeae8d05d6938b789b61; "Messages of Pride, Love and Sacrifice as Australia Pauses to Mark Anzac Day," ABC News, 25 April 2018, accessed 14 May 2018, https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-04-25/anzac-day-2018-commemorations-underway-across-australia/9694142.

[23] Sarah Kimmorley, "Here's the Touching Speech Prime Minister Tony Abbott Gave at the Dawn Service in Gallipoli," Business Insider Australia, 25 April 2015, access date 1 February 2016, http://www.businessinsider.com.au/heres-the-touching-speech-prime-minister-tony-abbott-gave-at-the-dawn-service-in-gallipoli-2015-4.

[24] "Camp Gallipoli 2016 – Centenary Commemoration," *Camp Gallipoli,* n.d., accessed 28 January 2016, https://www.campgallipoli.com.au/.

[25] Articles under this title were published in: *The Australian*, 8 November 2018, accessed 6 March 2019https://www.theaustralian.com.au/video; *Daily Telegraph*, 8 November 2018, accessed 6 March 2019, https://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/national/modern-australians-should-remember-and-emulate-anzac-courage/video/0a606167430763a664adeedbc656c149; *News.com.au*, 8 November 2018, accessed 6 March 2019, https://www.news.com.au/video; *NT News*, 8 November 2018, accessed 6 March 2019, https://www.ntnews.com.au/news/national/modern-australians-should-remember-and-emulate-anzac-courage/video/0a606167430763a664adeedbc656c149; *The Mercury*, 8 November 2018, accessed 6 March 2019, https://www.themercury.com.au/news/national/modern-australians-should-remember-and-emulate-anzac-courage/video/0a606167430763a664adeedbc656c149; *Herald Sun*, 8 November 2018, accessed 6 March 2019, https://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/national/modern-australians-should-remember-and-emulate-anzac-courage/video/0a606167430763a664adeedbc656c149; *Gold Coast Bulletin*, 8 November

While the Australian War Memorial has broadly defined Anzac characteristics as being "courage, mateship, and sacrifice," these traits are based on the examples of a small group of military heroes.[26] Peter Stanley has shown there to be a "recent concentration on Victoria Cross heroes as major 'carriers' of the Anzac legend."[27] This is evident in the numerous books, newspaper articles, commemorative statues and plaques across the country.

The increasing prevalence of the VC in Australian remembrance of the war is also demonstrated by the Australian War Memorial's "Hall of Valour," a major, permanent exhibition, which lists the names of all Australian VC recipients and the actions for which they were awarded. During commemoration of the centenary of armistice in November 2018, while fellow newspapers under the News Corp Australia umbrella were encouraging Australians to "emulate ANZAC courage," the *Weekend Australian* included a magazine supplement entitled "A History of Courage: Australia's 100 Recipients of the Victoria Cross."[28] The magazine offered information on the lives of each of Australia's VC recipients, as well as the acts they undertook to be awarded the medal. First World War recipients of the VC influence modern conceptions of the war and Australia's role within it, while also setting standards for modern Australians to emulate.

Historiographical Review

In the introduction to a 2016 social sciences collection entitled the *Handbook of Heroism and Heroic Leadership*, Scott Allison, George Goethals, and Roderick Kramer outlined two methods for identifying heroism; the objective approach, in which heroism is "one or more actions that are deemed to be morally good;" and the subjective approach, which

2018, accessed 6 March 2019, https://www.goldcoastbulletin.com.au/news/national/modern-australians-should-remember-and-emulate-anzac-courage/video/0a606167430763a664adeedbc656c149; *The Cairns Post*, 8 November 2018, accessed 6 March 2019, https://www.cairnspost.com.au/news/national/modern-australians-should-remember-and-emulate-anzac-courage/video/0a606167430763a664adeedbc656c149; *Geelong Advertiser*, 8 November 2018, accessed 6 March 2019, https://www.geelongadvertiser.com.au/news/national/modern-australians-should-remember-and-emulate-anzac-courage/video/0a606167430763a664adeedbc656c149; *Townsville Bulletin*, 8 November 2018 accessed 6 March 2019, https://www.townsvillebulletin.com.au/news/national/modern-australians-should-remember-and-emulate-anzac-courage/video/0a606167430763a664adeedbc656c149.

[26] "Anzac Day | The AWM," *Australian War Memorial*, n.d., accessed 3 December 2018, https://www.awm.gov.au/commemoration/anzac-day.

[27] Peter Stanley, "A Hundred in a Million," *Griffith Review*, Issue 48, n.d., accessed 13 December 2018, https://griffithreview.com/articles/hundred-million/.

[28] Steve Waterson, "A History of Courage: Australia's 100 Recipients of the Victoria Cross," *The Weekend Australian*, 10 November 2018.

asks "if heroism is good, who defines what is good?"[29] While social and cultural histories of heroism have largely focused on exploring the latter approach, most military histories tend to take the "objective" approach when describing heroes and heroism. In 1945, Lord Moran wrote *The Anatomy of Courage,* which offered a psychological study of soldiers' actions in the First World War.[30] While a pioneering work, Moran's focus was on individual soldiers' courage and not the broader social themes or constructions of heroism. Similarly, the seminal military histories of the First World War such as John Keegan's *The First World War* (1998), Hew Strachan's *European Armies and the Conduct of War* (1983) and *To Arms* (2001), and David Stevenson's *The History of the First World War* (2004), offer extensive accounts of the conflict but describe acts of heroism without exploring the ideal itself or its contextual importance.[31] Such brief and narrow outlines of heroism are reflective of broader military history as well as the numerous books written about the VC.

Allen Frantzen has described First World War propaganda as having presented "the surface of heroic masculinity as a free-floating fantasy while leaving the substance of the virtue unexamined" and until recently such a criticism could rightly be made of publications about the VC.[32] Most works have focused on the specific actions, men, wars, and national militaries that earned the medal without analysing the social forces that marked such actions as representing the highest forms of heroism.[33] While many of these

[29] Scott T Allison, George R Goethals, and Roderick M Kramer, *Handbook of Heroism and Heroic Leadership* (London: Routledge, 2016), 5, 6.

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

[31] John Keegan, *The First World War* (New York: Random House, 1998); Hew Strachan, *The First World War: Volume I: To Arms* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Hew Strachan, *European Armies and the Conduct of War* (London: Routledge, 1983); David Stevenson, *1914-1918: The History of the First World War* (New York: Penguin, 2004).

[32] Allen J Frantzen, *Bloody Good: Chivalry, Sacrifice, and the Great War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 14.

[33] Max Arthur, *Symbol of Courage: A History of the Victoria Cross* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 2004); Michael Ashcroft, *Victoria Cross Heroes* (London: Headline Review, 2006); Ruth Sheppard and Lord Ashcroft, *Extraordinary Heroes: Amazing Stories of Victoria Cross and George Cross Recipients* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2010); Peter de la Billière, *Supreme Courage: Heroic Stories from 150 Years of the Victoria Cross* (London: Hachette, 2011); Kevin Brazier, *The Complete Victoria Cross: A Full Chronological Record of All Holders of Britain's Highest Award for Gallantry* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword Military, 2010); Bryan Perrett, *For Valour: Victoria Cross and Medal of Honor Battles* (London: Cassell Military, 2005); Paul Oldfield, *Victoria Crosses on the Western Front August 1914-April 1915: Mons to Hill 60* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword, 2014); John Glanfield, *Bravest of the Brave: The Story of the Victoria Cross* (Stroud: Sutton, 2005); Philip A Wilkins, *The History of the Victoria Cross: Being an Account of the 520 Acts of Bravery for Which the Decoration Has Been Awarded and Portraits of 392 Recipients* (London:

texts offer useful encyclopaedias or overviews of VC actions, such as the *VCs of The First World War* series **(**2011–2014) written by Gerald Gliddon, Stephen Snelling, Peter Cooksley, Peter Batchelor, and Christopher Matson, they provide no critical analysis of what such acts tell us about the social ideals that underpinned heroism or masculinity at the time.[34]

Publications that offer descriptions of VC actions, and biographies of those who earned them, make up the vast majority of literature printed about the award.[35] Books that list the VC actions awarded to specific national forces are also numerous.[36] All such volumes offer details about the creation of the medal and the official strictures of its eligibility. Some also provide brief and basic descriptions of heroism and valour. Peter de la Billière's *Supreme Courage* (2011) stands out in this group of narrative texts about the VC because it devotes a whole chapter, "On Courage," to identifying the qualities that constitute heroic virtue.[37] De la Billière defines courage as "a quality that enables men to meet danger without giving way to fear."[38] While he does examine the differences between physical and moral as well as "hot and cold" courage, he draws no connection to

Andrews, 2012); John Winton, *The Victoria Cross at Sea: The Sailors, Marines and Naval Airmen Awarded Britain's Highest Honour* (Philadelphia: Casemate Publishers, 2016).

[34] Stephen Snelling, *The Naval VCs: VCs of the First World War* (Gloucestershire: History Press, 2002); Stephen Snelling, *VCs of the First World War: Gallipoli*, Reprint edition (Gloucestershire: History Press, 2011); Stephen Snelling, *VCs of the First World War: Passchendaele 1917* (Gloucestershire: The History Press, 2012); Gerald Gliddon, *VCs of the First World War: Spring Offensive 1918* (Gloucestershire: The History Press, 2013); Gerald Gliddon, *VCs of the First World War: The Sideshows* (Gloucestershire: The History Press, 2014); Gerald Gliddon, *For Valour: Canadians and the Victoria Cross in the Great War* (Toronto: Dundurn, 2015); Gerald Gliddon, *The VCs of World War I: Final Days 1918* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2004); Gerald Gliddon, *VCs of the First World War: Somme 1916* (Gloucestershire: The History Press, 2012); Gerald Gliddon, *VC's of the First World War: Cambrai 1917* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2004); Peter Cooksley, *VCs of the First World War: The Air VCs* (Gloucestershire: The History Press, 2013); Peter F. Batchelor and Christopher Matson, *VCs of the First World War: 1915 The Western Front* (Gloucestershire: The History Press, 2011.

[35] See footnote 31 for list of these publications.

[36] Nicolas Brasch, *For Valour: Australia's Victoria Cross Heroes*, Our Stories (Newtown: Walker Books Australia, 2013); Richard Doherty and David Truesdale, *Irish Winners of the Victoria Cross* (Dublin: Four Courts Press Ltd, 2000); Gliddon, *For Valour*; Glyn Harper, *In The Face Of The Enemy: The Complete History Of The Victoria Cross And New Zealand* (Sydney: Harper Collins Australia, 2010); John Nadler, *Valour Road* (Toronto: Penguin Canada, 2014); Allison Paterson, "For Valour: Australia's Victoria Cross Heroes," *Magpies* 28, no. 1 (March 2013): 23; Jaswant Singh, *Till Memory Serves: Victoria Cross Winners of India* (New Delhi: Rupa and Co, 2007); Anthony Staunton, *Victoria Cross* (Melbourne: Hardie Grant Publishing, 2005); Maj Gen Ian Cardozo, *The Bravest of the Brave: The Extraordinary Story of Indian VCs of World War I* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016); Robert Macklin, *Bravest: Australia's Greatest War Heroes and How They Won Their Medals* (Crows Nest: Allen and Unwin, 2011).

[37] Billier, *Supreme Courage*.

[38] *Ibid*., 10–13.

the broader historical and social influences that inform ideals of heroism.[39] Such texts present VC actions and recipients in a vacuum, with no links to the types of social or masculine ideals that underpinned, and continue to underpin, notions of heroism.

Unlike these histories, recent academic studies of the VC have focused less on the recipients of the award and concentrate instead on the administrative processes, contextual variables, and political pressures that shaped the manner in which it was conferred. Hugh Halliday's 2006 study examined the citations of servicemen who were recommended for the VC but did not have their applications approved.[40] Halliday concluded that military politics and public relations, rather than just the merit of an action, influenced the outcome of VC recommendations.[41] A similar investigation by Gary Mead in 2015 identified the awarding process of the VC as having been "peppered with anomalies, contradictions, prejudice and favouritism" throughout its history.[42] Adding to this body of work is Isobel Mayering's 2009 research paper for the Australian War Memorial. [43] Mayering investigated where and why Australian VC recommendations did not succeed and argued that many injustices in VC conferrals occurred as a result of problems within its administrative processes.[44] All three works offer strong cases that the VC has not always been administered consistently or fairly. Yet a lack of quantitative analysis in Halliday and Mead's investigations means that the issues they outline in the awarding of the VC were not necessarily endemic. Mayering's argument is predominantly based on her own identification and matching of particular administrative officials' handwriting on primary sources. Mayering's research outlines possibilities rather than being able to draw firm conclusions. These studies represent the only available sources that examine the recommendation process and all clearly demonstrate the difficulties in ascertaining at what stage and by what hand VC recommendations were denied or downgraded. Importantly, however, these studies together show how the VC was used and misused as a tool of

39 *Ibid*.

40 Hugh A Halliday, *Valour Reconsidered: Inquiries Into the Victoria Cross and Other Awards for Extreme Bravery* (Montreal: Robin Brass Studio, 2006).

41 Halliday, *Valour Reconsidered.* 2-31.

42 Gary Mead, *Victoria's Cross: The Untold Story of Britain's Highest Award for Bravery* (London: Atlantic Books Ltd, 2015). 211.

43 Isobel Mayering, "Victoria Crosses: The Vagaries of Valour" (Canberra: AWM, 2009).

44 *Ibid*.

influence by recommending and awarding officers, a theme that will be discussed further in Chapter Three of this thesis.

The most important analytical works about the VC for the present study have been Victoria D'Alton's 2011 investigation into the AIF's awarding processes during the First World War and Melvin Charles Smith's 2008 quantitative examination of the evolution of the medal over the course of its history.[45] D'Alton's Masters thesis offers an overview and analysis of the technical, administrative, and bureaucratic aspects of the VC awarding process specific to the AIF on the Western Front.[46] She has outlined how the AIF's misinterpretation of a British General Headquarters (GHQ) order resulted in Australian servicemen being unnecessarily overlooked for VC recommendations.[47]

Smith's *Awarded for Valour* uses statistics to chart the awarding of the VC over the course of its history.[48] He has argued that the types of actions that earned VC awards underwent a change over the course of the First World War and that the likeliest catalyst for this shift was Field Marshall Sir Douglas Haig's promotion to Commander-in-Chief of British forces in December 1915.[49] While this thesis provides further evidence to support Smith's argument that the official military ideals of heroism changed during the war, I disagree with Smith's assertion that Haig's appointment as Commander-in-Chief was the primary catalyst for this shift. As the following chapters will show, there is statistical evidence that suggests Haig's ascent to the top military position did influence the way the VC was awarded but not to the same extent as events such the Battle of the Somme (1 July-18 November 1916), the VC directives of August and September 1916, or the Allied implementation of attrition strategy in May 1917. Furthermore, Smith's work does not—and does not seek to—evaluate the specific importance of the VC to Australian society. Thus, while the first chapters of this thesis follow a similar methodology to Smith, and support some of his conclusions, the arguments, intentions, and broader focus of this study differ greatly to those in *Awarded for Valour*.

45 Victoria D'Alton, "Behind the Valour: A Technical, Administrative and Bureaucratic Analysis of the Victoria Cross and the AIF on the Western Front, 1916-1918," Masters Dissertation, University of New South Wales, 2011; Melvin Charles Smith, *Awarded for Valour; A History of the Victoria Cross and the Evolution of British Heroism* (Bassingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

46 D'Alton, "Behind the Valour."

47 *Ibid*., 93.

48 Smith, *Awarded for Valour,* 156.

49 *Ibid*.

One of the major arguments in this thesis is that popular representations of heroism are interconnected with broader social values and are therefore mutable. In his examination of how ideals and representations of heroism interacted with broader social values of a given place and time, the pioneering work of Paul A Hutton has provided a conceptual and methodological path for this study.[50] Hutton first explored the relationship between social values and military heroism in 1976. He analysed representations of General George Custer in books, paintings, and films that had been created in the century since the General's death at the Battle of Little Bighorn in 1876. Hutton argued that heroic representations of Custer in literature and art, and the ideals that underpinned them, were transformed significantly over the twentieth century.[51] Custer was represented as a military hero from the late nineteenth century to the 1960s but came to be depicted in art and history as a murderer of Native Americans. Hutton concluded that heroes are constructions, which prove a "testament to the values and aspirations of those who admire them."[52] Hutton saw the military hero as a barometer of broader social values and noted how the perceptions and reconstructions of the hero alter to complement the evolution of such ideals.

In 1980, CI Hamilton's article "Naval Hagiography and the Victorian Hero" supported aspects of Hutton's study by arguing that the concept of heroism was specific to society's values and goals at a particular time.[53] Hamilton analysed the letters of mid-Victorian-era servicemen in the British navy and found that they held conceptions of heroism underpinned by the Christian and imperial values of British society and the British state at that time. According to Hamilton, "the warrior as hero could apparently be virtually the very highest form of human being" but only if they were seen to embody the highest forms of societal values.[54] These two studies by Hutton and Hamilton show how representations of military heroism have mirrored the social values and norms of society at a particular time and are therefore subject to change.

[50] Paul A Hutton, "From Little Bighorn to Little Big Man: The Changing Image of a Western Hero in Popular Culture," *The Western Historical Quarterly* 7, no. 1 (1976): 19.

[51] *Ibid*.

[52] *Ibid*.

[53] CI Hamilton, "Naval Hagiography and the Victorian Hero," *The Historical Journal* 23, no. 2 (1980): 391.

[54] *Ibid*.

Through the late 1970s and 1980s a body of scholarly literature examined the nature of Victorian British heroism and masculinity, as well as how such ideals underwent a crisis and reformation during the First World War. In 1979, Eric J Leed used firsthand accounts of soldiers' experiences of the First World War from both sides of the conflict to argue that the nature of front line combat transformed men's ideals and identities.[55] Leed contended that for those who had experienced the battlefields, the old values of martial heroism became inauthentic and meaningless.[56] The transformation of men's self-image, and the subsequent shift in represented ideals of British masculinity during the First World War, has also been examined in Elaine Showalter's *The Female Malady* (1987).[57] Showalter argued that the large numbers of men who suffered from shell shock during the conflict represented "a crisis of masculinity and a trial of the Victorian masculine ideal."[58] The values that Showalter identifies as representing idealised masculinity during the time of the First World War—such as a willingness to sacrifice oneself in war for the good of God, King, and country—are similar in nature to those explored in this thesis as underpinning the British military hero. Thus the "trial of the Victorian masculine ideal" which Showalter describes, is indicative of a trial of the Victorian *heroic* ideal.[59]

Showalter was part of a broader movement in feminist history that emerged in the 1970s and which explored masculinities as a means to better understanding the roles of women and other subjugated groups. One of the key texts that investigated the interrelatedness of masculinities and femininities is Margaret and Patrice Higonnet's 1987 book chapter, "The Double Helix."[60] The Higonnets showed that while women undertook essential work in Britain and France during the world wars, their activities were always framed as being in support of heroic military men, who were fighting and dying for their country. The double helix therefore describes a social dance, in which the "woman

55 Eric J Leed, *No Man's land: Combat and Identity in World War 1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

56 *Ibid*.

57 Elaine Showalter, *The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and English Culture, 1830-1980* (New York: Penguin Books, 1987).

58 *Ibid*., 171.

59 *Ibid.*

60 Margaret and Patrice Higonnet, "The Double Helix," in *Behind the Lines*, *Gender and the Two World Wars*, ed. Margaret Higonnet, Jane Jenson, Sonya Michel, Margaret C Weitz, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 31–48.

appears to have taken a step forward as the partners change places—but in fact he is still leading her."[61]

The subject of gender constructions and the relationship between masculinities and femininities during the wars of the twentieth century represented a focal point of historical and sociological research during the 1990s. The result was a distinct expansion of research into the nature of masculinity in history, with a particular focus on how war and masculinity were connected. In 1992 a collection of essays edited and introduced by Michael Roper and John Tosh argued that masculinity was essential to understanding both the behaviour of men in the past and men's continued power over women, homosexuals, minorities, and other marginalised groups.[62] Having established that the concept of masculinity was as fluid as a society's ideals, the authors argued that the First World War caused a major change in the existing perceptions of the Victorian military hero and thus the dominant model of British and dominion masculinity.[63]

The argument that there exist many types of masculinities, and that these models interact and change over time, was defined and explored in the sociologist RW Connell's 1993 book, *Masculinities*.[64] Connell's influential theory of a "hegemonic masculinity" posited that masculinities are standards and patterns of practice that men participate in and which have differing positions in a broader gender order.[65] The dominant model of masculinity within that order exerts power over all other models of masculinity and femininity within the gender hierarchy. While Connell's work did not specifically investigate masculinities during wartime, her theory supported historians' arguments that men, and particularly heroic warriors, were represented within wartime societies as exemplifying the highest ideals of a national character.

Joy Damousi and Marilyn Lake's co-edited *Gender and War* (1995), demonstrated how Australian soldiers of the First World War came to represent hegemonic masculinity during wartime and have continued to dominate ideals of the man and citizen in Australian

61 *Ibid*., 35.

62 Michael Roper and John Tosh, *Manful Assertions: Masculinities in Britain Since 1800* (London: Routledge, 1991), 4-6.

63 *Ibid*.

64 Raewyn Connell, *Masculinities* (Richmond: University of California Press, 1995).

65 *Ibid*., 77.

society ever since.[66] The collection focused on Australian experiences of the wars of the twentieth century.[67] Collectively, the contributions demonstrated how "warfare and military service have played key roles in national histories and in the fashioning of gender identities" and argued that it is the Australian First World War soldier that remains the embodiment of national masculine ideals.[68]

From the mid-1990s to the mid-2000s, a number of social and cultural historians looked to define the constructs of heroic masculinity that existed during and immediately after the First World War. Many of these works drew upon a "popular memory" approach, which considered the influence of shared, public narratives and prevalent cultural interpretations of war—such as newspapers, films, and books—on individuals' private memories of the war experience.[69] The theory of popular historical memory was proposed by the Popular Memory Group at the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in 1983 and was a method used by historians such as Graham Dawson and Alistair Thomson when examining how popular, heroic, and cultural memories of war influenced veterans' memories of their experiences.[70] Dawson's 1994 book, *Soldier Heroes*, traced how representations of soldierly heroism provided core principles for British men to imitate and found that "the soldier hero has proved to be one of the most durable forms of idealized masculinity within Western cultural traditions since the time of the Ancient Greeks."[71] Dawson built upon the work of Connell by considering how the construction of heroic masculinity in public narratives both prescribed and constrained the way in which individuals explained and sometimes remembered their wartime experiences.[72] The popular memory approach supported the argument made by Paul Fussell in his 1975 book, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, that the words and phrases used to represent war

66 Joy Damousi and Marilyn Lake, *Gender and War: Australians at War in the Twentieth Century* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

67 *Ibid*.

68 *Ibid.*, 1.

69 Michael Roper, "Re-Remembering the Soldier Hero: The Psychic and Social Construction of Memory in Personal Narratives of the Great War," *History Workshop Journal* 50, no. 1 (January 2000): 181-204.

70 Graham Dawson, "The Theory of Popular Memory and the Contested Memories of the Second World War in Britain," in *Myths, Gender and the Military Conquest of Air and Sea*, ed. Katharina Hoffmann, Herbert Mehrtens, and Silke Wenk (Oldenburg, Germany: BIS Verlag, 2015).

71 Graham Dawson, *Soldier Heroes: British Adventure, Empire, and the Imagining of Masculinities* (London: Psychology Press, 1994).

72 *Ibid*.

were not just entrenched and inescapable, but were knowingly used to shape and soften British soldiers' and civilians' understandings of modern conflict.[73]

In the same year Dawson released his *Soldier Heroes*, the Australian historian Alistair Thomson also used a popular memory approach to understand how Australian veterans remembered their experiences of the First World War.[74] Thomson concluded that veterans described their experiences with the same language and themes as those of broader public remembrance. Veterans recalled their experiences through the lens of the "Anzac Legend" that emerged in Australian public commemoration of the war after the conflict.[75] Roper further investigated this theme by examining how soldiers' individual experiences of the First World War were remembered and told "within public narratives of soldiering."[76] Like the studies by Dawson and Thomson, Roper's work focused on the individual's "re-remembering" of experience in relation to broader social narratives of masculinity and heroism. Such research has shown the important interplay between popular culture and the personal forming of ideals like heroism, particularly as it relates to memory. Thus, the importance of cultural markers of heroism, such as VC awards and newspaper articles, were shown to have great influence on how individuals remembered war. This stream of historical inquiry coincided with other studies that focused on how dominant pre-war heroic ideals directly informed British men's beliefs and actions.

In 1996, JA Mangan posited that the male middle-classes of pre-war Britain were indoctrinated through sport, juvenile literature, poetry, and art to achieve what the historian described as a "muscular, militaristic and manly" model of masculinity.[77] Mangan's core argument was that middle-class British boys were trained to be imperial soldiers through the British public schooling system.[78] Similarly, Michael Paris's book, *Warrior Nation* (2000), has argued that popular representations of war and heroism in Britain from 1850 to the First World War were a means of inculcating the ideals of military heroism to young men to encourage them to defend and expand the British

[73] Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975).

[74] Alistair Thomson, *Anzac Memories: Living with the Legend* (London: Oxford University Press, 1994).

[75] *Ibid*., 21-35.

[76] Roper, "Re-Remembering the Soldier Hero," 183.

[77] JA Mangan, "'Muscular, Militaristic and Manly': The British Middle-Class Hero as Moral Messenger," *International Journal of the History of Sport* 13, no. 1 (March 1996): 28–47.

[78] *Ibid*.

Empire.[79] Mangan and Paris both describe masculinity in the immediate pre-war era as a set of purposeful constructions that aimed to further British imperial ambitions by forming men's beliefs and actions.

The idea that the British government, press, and military used acts of heroism to garner public support for war and imperial expansion is explored in Michael Lieven's 1998 study of British heroic representations during the Anglo-Zulu war of 1879.[80] Lieven examined literature written during and after the conflict alongside newspaper reports—which were largely based on official military accounts—to show how the British military hero was represented during this period. He argued that, "military heroes in the genre of the imperial adventure story and in the representation of 'real' events are hardly distinguishable, for they are 'made' to serve the same purposes."[81] He demonstrated this by comparing eyewitness accounts of particular events against their heavily modified representations in newspapers, books, and VC citations. By showing that heroic events described in VC citations and newspaper articles during the Anglo-Zulu war were often fabricated, Lieven identified how such representations amounted to purposeful constructions of military heroism rather than mere descriptions of events. Lieven has shown how intractably linked heroism and empire were in 1897, as well as how representation and—as is made clear in his extensive examination of literature and newspaper accounts—misrepresentations of heroic acts in war served as a "powerful weapon in countering…distaste and imbuing imperial expansion with a sense of heroic and moral purpose."[82] Lieven's study has served as an important methodological, as well as theoretical, model for this thesis.

Keith Surridge's 2001 article also has detailed how British ideals of the hero were constructed to fit social values and imperial aims.[83] Surridge focused on British national heroes, arguing that the rise of Lord Kitchener as Britain's most renowned hero between 1890 and 1914 outlined broader insecurities about the strength of the British Empire.[84]

[79] Michael Paris, *Warrior Nation: Images of War in British Popular Culture, 1850-2000* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

[80] Lieven, "Heroism, Heroics and the Making of Heroes."

[81] *Ibid*., 419.

[82] *Ibid.*, 438.

[83] Keith Surridge, "More than a Great Poster: Lord Kitchener and the Image of the Military Hero," *Historical Research* 74, no. 185 (August 2001): 299.

[84] *Ibid*.

Surridge viewed the British experience in the Second Boer War as representing a decline in imperial power and argued that Lord Kitchener's perceived stoicism, militarism, and Christianity meant that he served as an "icon for a new, uncertain age."[85] While Lieven and Surridge measured the construction of British heroism through different means—with Lieven's focus on soldier heroes and Surridge's on national ones—both concluded that British military heroism was an influential construction informed primarily by imperial and Christian ideals and that these constructions changed as the ideals that underpinned them evolved.

The historian Allen Frantzen has provided further insight to the interplay between Christian, imperial values and British masculinity and heroism in his 2003 book, *Bloody Good*.[86] Frantzen argued that by 1914, British masculinity was underpinned by the principles of neo-chivalry, which valourised the ideal of self-sacrifice for the protection of the State, the Empire, Christian values, and the defenceless.[87] Frantzen's research into literature and media from the medieval period to the late twentieth century clearly demonstrated that the ideals of medieval chivalry—repurposed for the age and now referred to in their nineteenth-century context as neo-chivalry—permeated pre-war and wartime Britain.[88] Yet he also found that the ideals of this neo-chivalry required profound transformation to survive the Western Front and evolved into a more violent model based on what Frantzen described as "anti-sacrifice"—the act of violence as a form of personal sacrifice.[89] Frantzen's research has made it possible to view and describe the multitude of influences and ideals that shaped the construct of British military heroism through a single behavioural model of masculinity—neo-chivalry.

By the early twenty-first century, a large body of historical research had been produced that linked the British and dominion hero of the Victorian and Edwardian eras with British state ambitions and broader ideals of masculinity. So strongly established in the historiography are these connections that in 2011 the historian Jeff Hearn believed it "an understatement to say that men, militarism, and the military are historically,

85 *Ibid*.
86 Frantzen, *Bloody Good*.
87 *Ibid*., 21.
88 *Ibid*., 158.
89 *Ibid*., 20, 181.

profoundly, and blatantly interconnected."[90] The studies I have outlined here have established that masculinities are multiple and fluid social constructions and that the model of the military hero is usually hegemonic in this social order. They show that just as masculinities are constructed to reflect and guide social norms, so too are concepts of the hero. These heroic constructions can shape individuals' actions, language, and memory. Such constructions of heroism can also alter as a result of shifting state goals and broad social ideals. Scholarship has also demonstrated that the British construct of military heroism did change over the course of the First World War.

This body of social and cultural historical research has provided a broad theoretical and methodological platform on which I explore the role of First World War military heroes and their place within the broader gender and heroic structure of the time. This thesis is based on the premise that during the First World War, the dominant model of masculinity in the social gender order was the military hero. I expand on the works discussed by exploring how the First World War altered the core ideals of masculinity and how this change particularly affected—and continues to affect—Australian representations of masculinity, heroism, and national identity.

The Australian Case

As the core aim of this thesis is to outline how the First World War influenced dominant ideals of the Australian hero, it is important to understand what these ideals were prior to and during the first year of the conflict. The representations and realities of an Australian national identity—and the central place of the masculine hero within it—has been the topic of a long-standing discussion among Australian historians. Charles Bean's official histories of the First World War (1921-1942) presented a model of Australian characteristics, based on his observations of the actions and attitudes of AIF men, that has proven influential and enduring.[91] Unusually for a work of history at that time, Bean wrote about the men fighting the war as much as he described the greater narrative of generals and military operations. While Bean discussed cases of shell shock and indiscipline among the AIF, he focused mainly on the qualities exhibited by Australian men during the

[90] Jeff Hearne, "Men/Masculinities War/Militarism-Searching (for) the Obvious Connections?," in *Making Gender, Making War: Violence, Military and Peacekeeping Practices*, ed. Annica Kronsell and Erika Svedberg (London: Routledge, 2011), 35.
[91] CEW Bean, *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918*, (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1921-1942).

war. In Bean's representations, the Australian man was heroic, laconic, loyal to his comrades, industrious, and sceptical of authority but still dutiful. Importantly, Bean viewed and represented Australian characteristics as being separate from and superior to British traits, a belief that was not shared by fellow author of the official histories Ernest Scott, but which was reiterated by Australian mid-century, Marxist historians such as Brian Fitzpatrick, Geoffrey Serle, and Russel Ward.

Most influential among these historians was Russel Ward and his 1958 book, *The Australian Legend*.[92] Drawing on the work of Australian bush poets, Ward described Australian national characteristics as broadly consisting of mateship, practicality, physical prowess, humour, and a deep-seated sense of egalitarianism.[93] More than this, Ward argued that such traits, created in the nineteenth century by male rural workers, endured and expanded through the First World War.[94] While Ward's work was highly influential in the decades following its publication, his conclusions in *The Australian Legend* were criticised for relying too heavily on the inaccurate representations of Australian life invented by the bush poets.[95]

Richard White's 1981 book, *Inventing Australia*, convincingly argued that instead of attempting to capture the realities of Australian identity, the bush poets were trying to create a unique Australian hero that differed from the British model.[96] Dennis Altman's article "The Myth of Mateship" (1987) and Bruce Scates's "Socialism, Feminism and the Case of William Lane" (1990) have both contended that the dominant representation of Australian masculinity, as created by the bush poets, adapted in 1914 from suiting the context of the bush to better befitting the conditions of the battlefield.[97] Both writers examined the Australian masculine ideal of "mateship," and showed how, at the outbreak of war, "the rhetoric of mateship was appropriated by the militarist fervour of the day."[98] Martin Crotty's 2001 book *Making the Australian Male* further argued that this

92 Russel Braddock Ward, *The Australian Legend* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958).

93 *Ibid*., 183.

94 *Ibid*., 228-230.

95 For more on Australian Marxist historiography of the war see: Carolyn Holbrook, *Anzac: The Unauthorised Biography* (Sydney: NewSouth, 2014), 50-62.

96 Richard White, *Inventing Australia: Images and Identity 1688-1980* (Sydney: George Allen and Unwin, 1981).

97 Dennis Altman, "The Myth of Mateship," *Meanjin* 46, no. 2 (1987): 163; Bruce Scates, "Socialism, Feminism and the Case of William Lane: A Reply to Marilyn Lake," *Labour History*, no. 59 (1990): 45–58.

98 Scates, "Socialism, Feminism and the Case of William Lane," 55.

transformation of the rural Australian worker into the Anzac soldier meant that the traits of the bush hero were transformed into the masculine characteristics of the British military hero.[99]

While traits such as mateship and egalitarianism were represented in bush poetry, news articles, and books as being unique qualities of Australian masculinity in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, Crotty has pointed out that British literature still dominated the reading of most Australians. He has argued that "the relative paucity of Australian material available" meant that British representations of masculinity remained prevalent in Australian society.[100] He has contended that while bush poetry may have shaped ideals of masculinity and Australian identity among some segments of Australian society—arguing that such representations were particularly influential among the working classes—it was British masculine ideologies that were imparted to the middle and upper echelons of Australian society prior to the First World War.[101]

Understanding how Australian writers have represented heroism, both during and since the First World War, has also been essential to developing a conceptual framework for this thesis. Robin Gerster's important 1987 book *Big-Noting* was a path-breaking investigation into the construction of Australian wartime and post-war heroism.[102] Gerster examined Australian heroic constructions by exploring the literary representations of the Australian soldier both during and after the war.[103] Gerster's core argument was that Australian war writers—whether of newspaper articles, poetry, or books—had "written more in the manner of publicity agents for the 'Digger' as an exemplar of heroic racial characteristics than as disinterested observers of human conflict."[104] While Gerster's research offered insight to the literary construction of an Australian heroic model, it did not investigate this construct's adaptation to the realities of war in any detail.

99 Martin Crotty, *Making the Australian Male: Middle-Class Masculinity 1870-1920* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2001).

100 *Ibid*., 97.

101 *Ibid.*

102 Robin Gerster, *Big-Noting: The Heroic Theme in Australian War Writing* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1992).

103 *Ibid*.

104 *Ibid*., ix.

Gerster's work initiated a series of studies that have questioned the representations of Australian servicemen presented by First World War writers. In 1993, Annabel Cooper further examined Charles Bean's war reporting and history writing and argued that his efforts were largely responsible for the enduring legacy of Anzac heroism that continues to influence Australian remembrance.[105] Cooper also applied Connell's theory to the Australian context by arguing that such written constructions of Anzac heroism placed women in the role of potential victims in order to bolster the image of soldier heroes.[106] Cooper has therefore suggested that the continued reverence for Anzac heroes in modern Australia contributes to the displacement of women's efforts and experiences during the First World War.

Cooper's arguments are similar to those put forward by the eminent Anzac historian Ken Inglis in his 1987 article "Men, Women, and War Memorials".[107] Inglis examined the vast number of memorials that commemorate the First World War across Australia and showed that women were rarely mentioned and almost never depicted in such monuments.[108] In his seminal 1998 book, *Sacred Places*, Inglis broadened his examination of Australian commemoration of the First World War to show how the rituals and imagery of war monuments had created a proto-religious "cult of Anzac" which had marginalised groups within Australian society and served to promote conservative political values.[109] Inglis revealed that commemoration of the First World War was intricately linked with the Anzac legend, and that memorialisation and rituals influenced popular understandings of Australia's history.

In the 2010 collection *What's Wrong with ANZAC?* Marilyn Lake *et al.* also examined the central place of the Anzac in Australian history and how it continues to influence modern understandings of national values and identity.[110] The collection questioned the validity of many of the widely-held understandings of Anzac at the time of

105 Annabel Cooper, "Textual Territories: Gendered Cultural Politics and Australian Representations of the War of 1914–1918," *Australian Historical Studies* 25, no. 100 (April 1993): 410.

106 Cooper, "Textual Territories," 410.

107 Ken Inglis, "Men, Women, and War Memorials: Anzac Australia," *Daedalus* 116, no. 4 (1987).

108 *Ibid*., 35-59.

109 Ken Inglis, Jan Brazier, *Sacred Places: War Memorials in the Australian Landscape*. 3rd ed. (Melbourne: Melbourne University Publishing, [1998] 2008), 65, 129.

110 Marilyn Lake *et al.*, *What's Wrong with ANZAC?: The Militarisation of Australian History*, 1st ed. (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2010).

publication, and argued that the central place of this mythology in Australians' understandings of the past limits and distorts its history.

Peter Stanley's book of the same year, *Bad Characters*, filled in some of the gaps left by *What's Wrong with ANZAC?* by exploring how misrepresentations of the Anzacs have distorted the history and remembrance of the men themselves.[111] Stanley challenged the widely propagated idea that all or most Australian soldiers of the First World War were selfless heroes, instead outlining how the men of the AIF represented a microcosm of the society from which they were from. Stanley offers examples of widespread dissertation, criminality, and mutiny in the AIF, succinctly arguing that "many were Anzac heroes…some were criminals…some were both."[112] While Lake *et al.* have shown the detrimental effects that the focus on Anzac have on broad understandings of national history, Stanley has demonstrated how the wartime glorification of the Anzacs has led to continued misrepresentations and misunderstandings of Australia's military experience during the First World War.[113] Both Lake et al. and Stanley's books caused controversy at the time of their release in 2010, but they represented a broader field of literature that had, and would go onto, question the place and accuracy of Australia's military mythology.[114]

More recently, Carolyn Holbrook looked to understand why modern Australia is "so emotionally attached to a military event that took place nearly 100 years ago?"[115] In her 2014 book, *Anzac: The Unauthorized Biography*, Holbrook sought to answer this question by examining how Anzac has been viewed and presented in literature, works of history, and politics. She demonstrated that one of the key reasons for Anzac's durability as the nation's preeminent legend over the past century was the fluidity of its ideals based on changing ideological contexts. The book outlined how the core qualities of the Anzac soldier were influenced by imperialist, nationalist, socialist, feminist, and religious perspectives over time. Further, Holbrook argued that while Anzac has been used by Australian leaders in recent decades for political capital, its important place in modern

111 Peter Stanley, *Bad Characters: Sex, Crime, Mutiny, Murder and the Australian Imperial Force* (Millers Point: Pier 9, 2010).
112 *Ibid*.
113 *Ibid*.
114 Tom O'Lincoln, "Non-Fiction Review – What's Wrong with Anzac?," *Overland Literary Journal* (blog) (Overland literary journal), accessed August 12, 2020, https://overland.org.au/2010/07/non-fiction-review-%e2%80%93-what%e2%80%99s-wrong-with-anzac/.
115 Holbrook, *Anzac: The Unauthorised Biography*, 14.

Australian identity—at least since its resurgence in popular culture in the 1980s—had largely been due to Australians' interest in "our favourite story of national genesis."[116] Holbrook provided a uniquely broad examination of Anzac and its role in modern Australia. This study builds upon her work by demonstrating the important place of heroes within both wartime and modern representations of the Anzac legend.

Representations of Cowardice in the First World War

If wartime recognition and representations of heroism can offer us an understanding of the ideals and behaviours that were most valued in British and dominion societies, representations of cowardice demonstrate the behaviours that were widely abhorred and discouraged. Cowardice, and responses to it, are subjects that have inspired a rich field of scholarship over the past forty years. Marilyn Lake's 1975 book *A Divided Society* was one of the first to explore the organisation and operations of White Feather Leagues—which delivered symbols of cowardice to civilian men who were perceived to be eligible for military service but had not volunteered—in Australia during the conflict.[117] Lake focused on the divisions created by the war in Tasmania and noted that White Feather Leagues served as a civilian-led driver for enlistment.[118] Such shaming of men, who were regularly described by the Australian press as "shirkers," was important for the Australian war effort because the AIF was an all-volunteer force, unlike many other national forces involved in the conflict. Thus, the label of cowardice was used as a means of shaming men into enlisting in the Australian forces.

Shaming men into enlisting was also one reason why representations of cowardice in British and Australian wartime newspapers focused on Conscientious Objectors (COs). A large body of work has examined the experiences of COs during the First World War and has shown that it was these men who most regularly attracted the classification of "cowards" by Allied governments and the press.[119] Lois Bibbings has undertaken the most

[116] *Ibid*., 105.

[117] Marilyn Lake, *A Divided Society: Tasmania During World War I* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1975).

[118] *Ibid*., 27.

[119] The most notable being: Ann Kramer, *Conchies: Conscientious Objectors of the First World War* (New York: Franklin Watts Ltd, 2013); Marcus Sedgwick, *Cowards: The True Story of the Men Who Refused to Fight* (Columbia: CreateSpace, 2013); Karyn Burnham, *The Courage of Cowards: The Untold Stories of First World War Conscientious Objectors*, 1st edition (Barnsley: Pen and Sword Military, 2014); Peter

thorough examination into the experiences and treatment of British COs during the conflict. In her 2003 article "Images of Manliness," Bibbings showed that the "official view" of the British government towards COs "seemed to centre upon fears that, if objectors attracted widespread sympathy or support, the legitimacy of military compulsion and, indeed, of the war effort might have been undermined."[120] Bibbings has also argued that for this reason British newspapers represented the CO "to be the most heinous cultural criminal."[121] Bibbings's 2011 book, *Telling Tales About Men*, has given greater insight to the motivations, representations, and understandings of COs and has shown that these were surprisingly varied.[122] Yet her work has also clearly outlined how the British government and press predominantly portrayed COs—despite how varied their reasons for objection were—as cowardly "unmen."[123]

The experiences of the First World War differed greatly for British and Australian COs. While British COs attempted to abstain from compulsory military service, there existed no compulsory service in Australia during the war. This might be why the exemption claims of COs, made during the brief CO exemption trials that took place in Australia in 1916 that aimed to press COs into non-combatant war work, were shown by the historian Bobby Oliver to be almost entirely based on religious grounds.[124] Oliver investigated the experiences of Australian COs during the First World War in her 1997 book *Peacemongers*. Oliver focused on the 1916 CO "exemption trials," which were a series of local courts held around the country that assessed whether individuals were exempt from war work on the basis of their conscientious objections to the conflict.[125]

Brock, *"These Strange Criminals": An Anthology of Prison Memoirs by Conscientious Objectors from the Great War to the Cold War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004).

120 Lois Bibbings, "Images of Manliness: The Portrayal of Soldiers and Conscientious Objectors in the Great War," *Social and Legal Studies* 12, no. 3 (2003): 337.

121 *Ibid.*, 343.

122 Lois Bibbings, *Telling Tales about Men: Conceptions of Conscientious Objectors to Military Service during the First World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011).

123 *Ibid*.

124 Bobbie Oliver, *Peacemongers: Conscientious Objectors to Military Service in Australia, 1911-1945* (Freemantle: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1997).

125 *Ibid.*

In 2015, I published a study that examined COs' representations in Australian newspapers.[126] I argued that because Australian forces relied on voluntary enlistment, the ridicule of COs in the Australian press was particularly severe. I showed that Australian COs were depicted as the polar opposites of Australia's military heroes, instead being mocked as effeminate "heroes of the fireplace."[127] The Australian press regularly placed COs in a hierarchy of masculinity, often describing them as being less "manly" than German POWs and women.[128] This section offers just a brief summary of studies into the representations of cowardice during the First World War. What this field of scholarship has shown is that cowards were often held in comparison to military heroes on an ill-defined hierarchy of masculinity. In this hierarchy, soldier heroes represented the highest masculine values and behaviours, while COs exhibited the lowest.

Two Types of Hero: Killing and Saving Life

To measure the dominant social constructs of heroism that existed during the First World War, this study focuses on two core battlefield acts: killing the enemy and saving comrades' lives. These acts were selected because they were awarded and reported far more than any other heroic deed. For example, of the 628 VCs awarded during the First World War, 551 conferrals—or 89 percent—were granted for acts of killing and/or saving life.[129] Killing and saving life also offer binary models of heroism, the former being an act of violence and the latter an example of humanitarian selflessness. Thus, by tracking the prevalence and nature of how these actions were represented over the course of the conflict, and identifying that both recognition and representation shifted decisively from focusing on saving life to killing, it has been possible to show how the dominant archetype of Australian heroism changed in response to the First World War.

126 Rhys Cooper, "Heroes of the Fireplace: Conscientious Objectors in Australian Newspapers during the First World War," in *Fighting Against War: Peace Activism in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Phillip Deery and J. Kimber (Melbourne: Leftbank Press, 2015), 130.

127 *Ibid*.

128 *Ibid*.

129 The methodology and sources used to arrive at these figures will be discussed in detail in the "Methodology" section of this chapter and in Chapter One.

The act of killing in war has been the subject of studies undertaken by Joanna Bourke and Dave Grossman.[130] Both works identify that the essential, "characteristic act of men at war is not dying, but killing."[131] Yet the authors disagree on the level of influence that popular representations of heroism had on servicemen's actions. While Grossman has argued that it was pressure to conform to social norms that forced men to kill in war, Bourke has contended that killing was something that men did for enjoyment, connected to but not motivated by representations of heroism.[132] Both researchers show that twentieth-century representations of conflict encouraged, and revered, the act of killing during wartime. Indeed, both Bourke and Grossman indicate that military and government authorities believed that men could be persuaded into wanting to kill the enemy.

In contrast, Jessica Meyer's 2019 book *An Equal Burden* examines the experiences and reputation of the British Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC) during the First World War.[133] Meyer has argued that the men of the RAMC were considered by other servicemen to be "slackers in khaki" at the start of the war.[134] Yet her research of diaries and men's poetry suggests that during the course of the conflict, the men of the RAMC were considered by many soldiers to be heroes.[135] Meyers designed a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) in 2015 entitled "World War 1: Changing Faces of Heroism."[136] The MOOC argued that "heroic ideals were reformed by the experience of industrialized warfare, rather than, as some have argued, simply destroyed by it."[137] Meyers argued that it was acts such as saving and prolonging life—shown through the high esteem that many in the British forces held for men of the RAMC—that became the primary ideals of heroism by the end of the war. Meyers's argument is the opposite of that put forward in

130 Joanna Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing: Face-to-Face Killing in Twentieth Century Warfare* (London: Granta Books, 1999); Dave Grossman, *On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society* (New York: Open Road Media, 2014).

131 Bourke, *Intimate History of Killing*, xiii.

132 *Ibid*., 95; Grossman, *On Killing,* 144.

133 Jessica Meyer, *An Equal Burden: The Men of the Royal Army Medical Corps in the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

134 *Ibid*., 165.

135 *Ibid*., 183.

136 FutureLearn, "World War 1: Changing Faces of Heroism - Online Course," n.d., FutureLearn, accessed 22 April 2019, https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/ww1-heroism.

137 Jessica Meyer, "Re-Examining First World War Heroism," *Beyond the Trenches* (blog), 9 January 2015, accessed 13 August 2019, http://beyondthetrenches.co.uk/re-examining-first-world-war-heroism.

this thesis. This may be because while Meyers has used letters and diary entries to form her argument, I have instead examined medal citations and newspaper representations. We therefore offer two different but entirely compatible arguments about the nature of heroism during the First World War. Meyers has outlined how heroism was understood and experienced by British soldiers, while I offer a model of heroism that was prescribed by the British and Australian militaries and presented by the Australian press.

The methodology of this thesis allows for an examination of the dominant representations of heroism on the home front and within the military, as well as their use as a tool of influence by military and government leaders during the First World War. Unlike Grossman or Bourke, I consider it impossible to measure how widespread representations of the hero influenced specific battlefield actions such as saving life or killing with the sources available. Instead, this thesis focuses on the recognition and representation of heroism—and the influence it was supposed to have—rather than attempting to measure how such propaganda influenced or failed to influence the thoughts and actions of Australians during the war.

Despite there being an extensive body of historical, sociological, cultural, and legal scholarship that has examined the relationship between masculinity and the military during the time of the First World War, research into the nature and constructions of heroism remains sparse. Madigan noted in 2013 that, "despite the centrality of courage and cowardice in popular representations of war, behaviour in combat, and military strategy, these themes have occasioned remarkably few historical studies."[138] While there exist some brief analyses of the great changes that British and dominion heroic values underwent during the course of the First World War, no study has wholly examined the nature of this change, why it occurred, and how it may have influenced wartime constructions of heroism on the home front. This dearth in research led the philosopher Angela Hobbs to state in 2018 that "the question of whether classical ideals—or indeed any ideals—of heroism can survive the filth and mass death of the trenches [of the First

138 Edward Madigan, "Courage and Cowardice in Wartime," *War in History* 20, no. 1 (2013): 5.

World War] is an issue open to more objective considerations and one which warrants serious debate."[139]

This thesis offers an original contribution to the literature by showing how and why pre-war ideals of heroism transformed in Australia during the course of the First World War. It specifically identifies the dominant model of Australian heroism that existed in 1914 and traces how it was displaced by new ideals of heroism considered more necessary and apt for the conditions of the Western Front. In identifying the shifting ideals that were officially recognised and widely represented as epitomising the highest forms of military valour, this thesis is the first to examine the nature of Australian *hegemonic heroism* during the First World War—a concept firmly connected to Connell's gender order theory, but which this study is the first to specifically explore.[140] In identifying the ideals and actions that underpinned the dominant heroic model in Australia during the First World War, and showing how and why this model transformed over the course of the conflict, this study presents new insights to the nature of heroism and masculinity in wartime Australia and seeks to answer two questions: did the First World War change military recognition and popular representations of heroism in Australia? If so, how and why did this change manifest?

Sources and Methodology

To track the changes that occurred in recognised and represented military heroism in the Australian forces over the course of the First World War, I have examined two key mechanisms for the proliferation of wartime information and propaganda. My aim was to understand how key ideals of heroism were transferred to both the Australian public as well as those serving in Australian forces. As such, this study examines the types of behaviours that were praised and encouraged through the awarding of the VC and through the reports of three major Australian newspapers. The way heroism was awarded and depicted through these avenues of propagation during the First World War was carefully surveyed. In doing so it was possible to identify the types of actions that constituted heroism over the course of the First World War. The specific methods used to conduct this

[139] Angela Hobbs, "Who Lied? Classical Heroism and World War I," *Classical Receptions Journal* 10, no. 4 (October 2018): 387.

[140] Connell, *Masculinities*.

research will be elaborated further in each chapter, but a survey of broad aims and methods is presented here.

The VC was, and remains, the premier decoration for gallantry in combat available to members of British and dominion forces.[141] As such it was the supreme marker of recognised heroism for servicemen and was used by British general headquarters to reward and motivate heroic behaviour.[142] The VC was therefore examined in detail because it represented the highest, most revered, and most reported military honour available to Australians during the war. Furthermore, for a VC to be awarded, it underwent an extensive application and awarding process. Each VC required the approval of the British Secretary of State for Defence and Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces, the Victoria Cross Committee, and the King.[143] Thus all recommended acts required the approval of those in charge of conducting the British war effort. Through understanding the types of actions that were awarded the VC, it has been possible to evaluate the characteristics that were officially sanctioned as being heroic. This information also allowed me to track how specific heroic characteristics, particularly the acts of saving life and killing, became more regularly recognised as epitomising the highest form of military heroism.

In order to properly understand the most militarily valued characteristics of heroism, as well as the change that occurred in such values during the First World War, the VC citations of all 1,180 recipients awarded between the founding of the medal in 1856 to the end of the First World War in 1918 have been accessed and assessed. Each citation has been evaluated to ascertain why the VC was conferred and then categorised into one or more of the following classifications: *explicitly conferred for saving life; explicitly conferred for killing the enemy; conferred for saving life and killing the enemy; conferred for other reasons*. The method has made it possible to conduct both textual evaluations of VC citations as well as broader statistical analyses. Victoria Cross statistics are presented as proportions in most cases, which allows direct comparisons between

141 Lionel Wigmore and Bruce A Harding, *They Dared Mightily* (Canberra: AWM, 1986).

142 While women were not, and are not, excluded from the Victoria Cross Warrant, no woman has yet received the award. During the First World War, women's lack of success in attaining the Victoria Cross was likely due to their roles predominantly lying outside of the conditions stated in the Warrant for eligibility, as well as the reluctance of officers to recommend or award a woman the VC.

143 D'Alton, "Behind the Valour," 60–61.

periods, wars, years, battles, and national forces. All statistics presented in this study are round towards the nearest integer and half towards positive infinity, meaning that all figures 0.5 and above have been rounded up.

By using qualitative and quantitative research methods in such a way, I offer a new view of the broad patterns of VC conferrals, as well as the language used to describe VC actions in official citations, and how both changed during the war. This method has also made it possible to qualify and quantify the types of actions that were awarded the VC throughout the conflict. As such the shift in militarily awarded heroism that occurred between 1916 and 1917, particularly in the cases of Australian conferrals, is clearly observable. The method of categorisation and statistical analysis used in this thesis is discussed in more detail, with examples of citation texts, in Chapter One.

The other major component of this study's methodological approach was a survey of three major Australian newspapers' representations of heroism during the course of the war. While investigating VC conferrals offers evidence of the types of heroism that eligible servicemen were awarded for and encouraged to emulate, my investigation of newspapers shows how heroism on the front was represented to the Australian public. Millions of words, constituting tens of thousands of articles were published about the war in Australian newspapers between 1914 and 1918. For many Australians, newspapers represented the only means of gaining information about the war. It has been convincingly argued that the war reporting of Charles Bean, Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett, and Philip Gibbs was integral to the formation of the Anzac legend.[144] That such war correspondents had so much influence over how the war is remembered demonstrates the authority that wartime newspapers had in Australian society. Thus the effects of newspapers' representations of military heroism and masculinity during the war were influential and lasting.

This study examines three major wartime newspapers from different capital cities in Australia. This method has allowed for an in-depth analysis of the types of characteristics that were reported as being examples of Australian heroism on the front. All copies of Melbourne's *Argus*, Sydney's *Sydney Morning Herald* (*SMH*), and

144 Fay Anderson and Richard Trembath, *Witnesses to War: The History Of Australian Conflict Reporting* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Publishing, 2011); Kevin Fewster, *Expression and Suppression: Aspects of Military Censorship in Australia During the Great War* (Sydney: University of New South Wales, 1980); Midford, *From Achilles to Anzac*; Sarah Midford, "Constructing the 'Australian Iliad': Ancient Heroes and Anzac Diggers in the Dardanelles," *Melbourne Historical Journal* 39, no. 2 (May 2011): 59 .

Adelaide's *Advertiser* published between August 1914 and November 1918 were examined thoroughly for their representations of military heroism. These newspapers were selected because of their high readerships and because their articles were syndicated, subscribed to, or stolen by other newspapers around the country. As Chapter Four will detail, strong censorship laws introduced by the *War Precautions Act 1914* and the press's reliance on official military despatches for news meant that there was little variation in how the war was reported by Australia's newspapers. Thus, a review of these three major publications offers an accurate view into the broader newspaper landscape of Australia during the First World War.

The exploration of both VC conferrals and Australian wartime newspapers offers a holistic view of how military heroism was primarily recognised, promoted, and represented to British and dominion soldiers and the Australian public during the First World War. Analysis of VC statistics demonstrates just how fundamentally the conditions of the First World War changed the type of heroic acts that were recognised and awarded by British GHQ. Exploration of Australian wartime newspaper reporting shows that widespread representations of military heroism also altered dramatically over the course of the conflict.

Alongside Australian wartime newspapers and VC citations, other primary resources have been essential for understanding the recognition and representation of heroism during the First World War. Australian VC recipients' diaries were accessed through the Australian War Memorial (AWM) and National Archives of Australia (NAA) and offered valuable insight into such men's views of the VC, as well as information about recruitment tours around Australia that some undertook. Regimental despatches and orders sent between the AIF and GHQ were also accessed at the AWM and British National Archives (BNA) and have offered essential information about Australian commanders' misunderstandings of VC recommendation and awarding procedures during the conflict. The adaption of such VC awarding procedures during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was also explored through research of official British military and government documents at the BNA. These were supplemented by the writings of Field Marshall Douglas Haig, many of which were published by Gary Sheffield and John Bourne or were found in the National Archives of Scotland's digital collection. The

AWM's online database of military awards was also essential to finding Australian servicemen who had been recommended for the VC, but not awarded it.

Primary sources were also vital in exploring the Australian press during wartime. Editorial meeting minutes and press censorship conferences between newspaper editors and representatives of the Australian government accessed at the National Library of Australia (NLA) offered key evidence that major newspapers were in-step with the ideals and aims of the pro-war Australian executive. The NAA's collection of "Returns of Prosecutions Instituted" under the laws of the *War Precautions Act 1914* showed that the Australian government targeted newspaper editors for publishing stories viewed as being detrimental to the war effort and therefore offered further evidence of the need for Australia's newspapers to comply with government censorship restrictions. Charles Bean's diary entries, accessed through the AWM, NLA, and in Kevin Fewster's published collection, demonstrated how censorship strongly restricted war correspondents' ability to report the conflict.[145] These sources provided an outline of Australian press restrictions during the war, showing how newspaper coverage of the conflict was standardised and homogenous. Thus, the three major newspapers surveyed in this study are representative of the broader Australian mainstream press.

Chapter Outline

To identify the shift in recognition and representations of Australian heroism that occurred between 1914 and 1918, this thesis has been broken into two parts. Part I (Chapters One to Three) focuses on the VC, its institution, development, how and why it was awarded, and its perceived influence upon Australian soldiers and civilians. Part II (Chapters Four and Five) examines Australian wartime newspapers and the acts, traits, and ideals that such publications reported as being heroic over the course of the conflict. Through the use of these two sets of primary sources, it has been possible to identify a distinct shift in how heroism was recognised by the military and reported on by the Australian press.

Chapter One introduces the history and administrative processes of the VC and statistically examines the types of actions that were awarded the medal between 1856 and 1916. The resultant figures show that the VC was awarded for the same types of

[145] CEW Bean and Kevin Fewster, *Bean's Gallipoli: The Diaries of Australia's Official War Correspondent* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 2007).

battlefield actions, in much the same proportions, from its inception in 1856 to the Battle of the Somme of 1916. This was a period in which neo-chivalric ideals informed British heroism and masculinity and thus this chapter also examines the prominence and nature of neo-chivalry in Britain and Australia during this time. Textual analyses of VC citations are also presented in this chapter and provide further insight into how the ideals of neo-chivalry informed the recognition of heroic acts from the mid-nineteenth century to the first years of the First World War. The results of this quantitative and qualitative analysis show that British officers and commanders viewed the act of saving life on the battlefield as the highest form of military heroism between 1856 and 1916.

Chapter Two examines the influence of the Battle of the Somme, the appointment of General Douglas Haig as Commander-in-Chief of British forces, and the British and Allied implementation of an attrition strategy on how the VC was awarded. Near the end of the Somme campaign a noticeable change occurred in how the VC was awarded to British and dominion soldiers. Saving life on the battlefield was no longer the dominant model of awarded heroism and was replaced by the act of killing. This chapter examines VC statistics and citations to show that the actions and language of heroism underwent a transformation in late 1916 that lasted for the remainder of the war. I briefly examine the British military experience on the Western Front, with a focus on the British Expeditionary Force's (BEF) commanders and the military strategies employed to defeat the enemy. I argue that a number of factors likely influenced the shift in how heroism was recognised through the VC: the ascension of Haig as BEF commander, the forced attrition of the Somme battlefields, and the official implementation of attrition strategy by Allied forces on the Western Front. This change in strategy meant that the primary goal of the British and dominion soldier had shifted from taking enemy ground (in what General Haig hoped would prove a decisive breakthrough), to taking enemy lives. This chapter outlines how killing became the key act of British and dominion awarded heroism as a result of the events of late 1916 and early 1917.

Compounding this shift towards an awarding process that had begun to focus on killing, statistical evidence indicates that Australian soldiers were awarded the VC far more regularly for killing, and far less frequently for saving life, than their British counterparts. Chapter Three examines this disparity between Australian and other British and dominion forces. This chapter also shows how the VC was seen and used as a tool of

influence, aimed at motivating soldiers to perform specific acts in battle as well as being used by the Australian military, government, and press to influence public opinions on recruitment and conscription on the home front. Widespread and constant public exposure to the deeds and opinions of Australian VC recipients meant that, when the VC began being awarded in greater proportions for killing—particularly in the Australian case—there was a parallel shift in how heroism was depicted on the home front.

As Chapter Three demonstrates, there was a great deal of journalistic material written about Australian military heroes during the First World War. Many articles outline, often in detail, the specific heroic traits that such men embodied. These works provided potent and widely read representations of the core characteristics that constituted military heroism. Chapter Four examines three major Australian newspapers' depictions of military heroism in the early years of the First World War. Much like the actions that received VCs, such newspaper representations of Australian heroism during this time praised men who had exhibited the type of acts found in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century heroic literature. This chapter therefore establishes that newspaper representations of heroism remained significantly unchanged between 1899 and 1916.

Chapter Five follows the same methodology as Chapter Four, tracking the gradual changes that occurred in represented heroism between late-1916 and November 1918. With the failure of the Somme campaign, the implementation of an attrition strategy, the introduction of British propaganda in Australian newspapers, and stricter governmental controls on what newspapers could publish, the nature of reported heroism fundamentally altered. Reported heroism of the early years of the war, which had focused so prominently on heroic wounded and the saving of life, shifted during this period towards a focus on killing. Reports of the Western Front saved much of their praise for AIF men who killed the enemy and those who served in medical or stretcher-bearing roles largely disappeared from newspaper descriptions of battle. Alongside the shift identified in how VCs were awarded, this chapter shows that the representation of heroism during the First World War also profoundly altered.

Military heroism is at the heart of the Anzac legend and is specifically celebrated by the Australian media, prominent leaders, companies, and sportspeople. Yet, given the primacy of killing in the deeds that are now commemorated, the central place of the Anzac hero in Australian memory demands further scrutiny. Within the Hall of Valour are

accounts of Australian VC heroism that describe how men like Lieutenant Dominic McCarthy, "single-handed killed twenty of the enemy;" how Sergeant Stanley McDougall "charged the enemy's second wave single-handed with rifle and bayonet, killing seven;" and how Lieutenant George Ingram "without hesitation, dashed out and rushed the post at the head of his men, capturing nine machine guns and killing 42."[146] The conclusion of this thesis considers how prevalent the commemoration of these types of violent acts remains in Australian society, and how acts of killing remain—if only latently—central to our commemoration of the war and influence the ideals and behaviours of modern Australians.

[146] "The London Gazette 31108," 3 January 1919, The Gazette Archives, 306; "The London Gazette 30667," 30 April 1918, The Gazette Archives, 5354.

Part I

Chapter One: The Victoria Cross (1856–1916)

In June 1854 Charles Lucas, a 20-year-old Irishman, was serving as mate on the HMS Hecla when a Russian shell landed on deck. Lucas seized the explosive and threw it into the Baltic Sea immediately before it detonated, demonstrating, as his subsequent Victoria Cross (VC) citation described, a "remarkable instance of coolness and presence of mind."[1] Lucas was the first ever recipient of the VC. His act exemplified many of the key attributes that underpinned the dominant model of British and dominion heroism during the Victorian era, often now referred to by scholars as "neo-chivalry." Neo-chivalry comprises a system of beliefs and behaviours that influenced British and dominion ideals of masculinity between the eighteenth and the early twentieth centuries. Lucas's act of selflessness, sacrifice, and the preservation of life perfectly demonstrated its core principles. In the eighteenth century, British society had undergone a revival of medieval values and by the time of Lucas's action, such neo-chivalric ideals were used by commanders in the British military as a guide for recognising and rewarding British heroism.

The very first VC action of the First World War shared many of the same qualities as Lucas's act in 1854. During the Battle of Mons on 23 August 1914, English Corporal Charles Ernest Garforth's squadron was pursued by German troops and cut off from retreat by barbed wire.[2] Under machine-gun fire, Garforth cut the fence, thereby allowing his squadron to escape.[3] His VC citation detailed this act as well as two other incidents that occurred on 3 September in which he had carried wounded men to safety when under enemy fire.[4] Much like Lucas's act, Garforth's feats exemplified the core attributes of neo-chivalry: coolness, devotion to duty, selflessness, discipline, honour, courtesy, and a willingness to sacrifice one's life for the benefit of others. This case also demonstrates that the ideals of neo-chivalry continued to influence the way in which British and dominion heroism was officially recognised by the British military.

1 "The London Gazette 21971," 24 February 1857, The Gazette Archives, 257.

2 Paul Oldfield, *Victoria Crosses on the Western Front August 1914- April 1915: Mons to Hill 60* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword, 2014), 7.

3 *Ibid*.

4 "The London Gazette 28976," 13 November 1914, The Gazette Archives, 9374.

The VC conferrals and their citations offer a useful prism for understanding the nature and evolution of official British views of heroism. Such a prism allows us to ask important questions about the nature of heroism and its relationship to warfare. To what extent did official ideals of and prescriptions for heroism change between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries? Was heroism redefined as a result of the First World War? If so, what factors drove such transformation? This chapter asks these questions specifically of the ideals that underpinned British heroism because, as has been noted in the introduction to this thesis, during the First World War the standards of Australian military heroism were almost entirely determined by British senior commanders. As also discussed in the introduction of this thesis, Australian social identity was extensively enmeshed with British values and ideals. Thus, while there were slight differences in how heroism was recognised and rewarded between Australian and British national forces, the social standards that informed heroism as well as the military administrative and command processes that determined the prescription and recognition of Australian heroism, were largely British.

Over the next two chapters I examine the nature of actions that were awarded the VC between 1854 and 1918. I use qualitative analysis to explore the language used in official VC citations, as well as to identify and categorise the core reasons that each VC was awarded. This allows me to present quantitative data and analysis to explore trends in the types of actions that were most commonly recognised by the British military command as being of the highest heroism. Through this approach it has been possible to survey the core ideals that underpinned officially recognised military heroism in British and dominion forces between 1856 and 1918, as well as to track how the First World War affected such ideals.

The statistics and citations discussed in the next two chapters examine how the VC was awarded to all British and dominion forces between 1856 and 1918. Yet it is important to note here that nationality did play a role in determining how VCs were awarded. This was particularly the case for Australian servicemen who, over the course of the First World War, received proportionately more VCs for killing the enemy and fewer for saving life than any other national force. Chapter One briefly examines how the VC was awarded to different nations over the course of the nineteenth century and First World War. Chapter Two further explores VC statistics to identify the significant rupture in

ideals and understandings of heroism that occurred during 1916, while Chapter Three offers a detailed examination of how the VC was awarded to men in the Australian forces. It must be noted that the examination of Australian VCs is limited by the small number of medals that were conferred to Australian servicemen between the start of the Second Boer and end of the First World War. While these figures are low, they broadly follow wider trends in how the VC was awarded to all British and Dominion personnel. Effort has been made to ensure that the information and language used in VC citations has been considered alongside and in relation to the VC conferral statistics. The conclusions made in the following three chapters are therefore supported by a combination of qualitative and quantitive analysis.

The VC conferrals of Lucas and Garforth demonstrate the ongoing connection that existed between ideals of neo-chivalry and the official recognition of military heroism during the mid-nineteenth to early-twentieth centuries. Lucas had imperilled his own life in order to save a situation in which his vessel and many of his crewmates were in mortal danger. Garforth risked the fire of enemy machine guns to ensure he and his comrades escaped otherwise certain capture and death. In both instances, these men displayed altruistic, courageous, and humanitarian qualities on the battlefield. Viewed in isolation, the fact that both Lucas and Garthforth's actions merited the highest military award for heroism available to British and dominion service personnel suggests that the ideals that underpinned concepts of officially recognised heroism did not fundamentally change between the battles of Sevastopol in 1854 and Mons in 1914.

This chapter establishes that the neo-chivalric ideals, which strongly influenced hegemonic heroism in British and dominion societies during the nineteenth century, remained the dominant model of military heroism until late 1916. This model of heroism was incongruous with the battlefields First World War, a conflict of modern weapons and massed armies where victory in combat was largely reliant on strength in manpower rather than on individual acts of neo-chivalric heroism. Yet, due to the strategies employed and ideals held by British military commanders, this neo-chivalric model of heroism endured the first years of the world's first mass-mechanised war.

The History and Processes of the Victoria Cross

Victoria Cross citation and conferral data are examined in depth throughout this thesis and it is therefore essential to contextualise such information by exploring the history of the medal's inception, awarding processes, and administration from its creation through to the end of the First World War. The medal had its origins in the need to find a new way of recognising gallantry in the ranks. During the Crimean War, acts of bravery by members of the British Navy and Army were widely reported in newspapers throughout Britain. Such accounts of the conflict brought attention to the issue that, outside of mentions in despatches and brevet promotions, there existed no means by which men in the ranks could be officially recognised and rewarded for heroism by the British military.[5] As a result of such widespread newspaper coverage of heroism in the ranks, on 18 December 1854 the Member of Parliament, Captain GT Scholl, moved in the British House of Commons that an award or order be instituted with the purpose of acknowledging individual acts of valour carried out by members of the British services.[6] Scholl's motion was not carried, but it prompted the British Secretary of State for War, the Duke of Newcastle, to write a letter to Prince Albert on 20 January 1855 advocating the creation of a gallantry award for which all British servicemen would be eligible.[7] Nine days after writing this letter, the Duke announced to the House of Lords that Queen Victoria had been consulted and advised to "institute a Cross of Merit which would be open to all ranks of the Army in future."[8] Details of the award were finalised over the following year.[9] On 29 January 1856, Queen Victoria issued the Victoria Cross Warrant and backdated the award in order to cover acts that had occurred since British entry into the Crimean War in 1854.[10]

The Warrant lamented the fact that under past practices in the British services "those who by their valour have particularly signalised themselves remain undistinguished from their comrades."[11] It also stipulated that the VC would reward individual servicemen

5 "The London Gazette 21846," 5 February 1856, The Gazette Archives, 411.

6 Wigmore and Harding, *They Dared Mightily*, 9.

7 T. Robert Fowler, *Valour in the Victory Campaign: The 3rd Canadian Infantry Division Gallantry Decorations 1945* (Burnstown: General Store Pub. House, 1995), 218.

8 Michael Ashcroft, *Victoria Cross Heroes: Volume 2* (London: Biteback Publishing, 2016), 24.

9 *Ibid*.

10 *Ibid*., 7-10; Wigmore and Harding, *They Dared Mightily*, 9–10.

11 "The London Gazette 21846," 411.

for heroic actions and noted that it would therefore be "highly prized and eagerly sought after by men of our Naval and Military Services."[12] The two key prerequisites for the award that were initially outlined by the original VC Warrant, and which remained in place through to the First World War, were clauses five and six. Clause five of the Warrant ordained that, "the Cross shall only be awarded to those officers or men who have served Us in the presence of the enemy, and shall have then performed some signal act of valour, or devotion to their country."[13] Clause six stipulated that there was to be a "perfectly equal footing in relation to the eligibility for the Decoration, that neither rank, nor long service, nor wounds, nor any other circumstance whatsoever, save the merit of conspicuous bravery shall be held to establish a sufficient claim to the honour."[14] For the first time in British history, then, there now existed an award for military heroism that was available to all ranks within the services. The VC was also designed to reward the highest forms of heroism, which meant that the lowest ranked soldiers could be recognised as having displayed greatest valour.

Several changes were made to this original Warrant between 1856 and 1914. In 1867, Queen Victoria signed a Royal Warrant that extended eligibility of the VC to all members of "Local Forces raised, or which may be raised, in Our Colonies or their dependencies."[15] This alteration meant that members of dominion forces in Australia and throughout the empire were eligible for the VC. Australians fought under British command during the Second Boer War and First World War and their VC recommendations were ultimately assessed by British senior officers and government officials. Official recognition of Australian military heroism was therefore determined through the prism of British heroic ideals and war strategy.

Another significant change in how the VC was awarded involved servicemen who had died in battle. Until the Second Boer War there had existed an unofficial policy that disallowed the posthumous awarding of VCs. In August 1902 the British War Office changed this rule and allowed the VC to be awarded for "acts of valour which would, in the opinion of the Commander-in-Chief of the forces in the field, have entitled them to be

12 *Ibid.*
13 *Ibid.*
14 *Ibid.*
15 Royal Warrant quoted in Wigmore and Harding, *They Dared Mightily*, 11.

recommended for that distinction had they survived."[16] The updated policy led to the award of 159 posthumous VCs during the First World War, 25 percent of the total VCs conferred during the conflict.

The awarding process was also drastically altered between the time of the Crimean War and the First World War. While the original Warrant allowed for on-the-spot conferrals to be made by senior commanders who witnessed acts of valour, by 1914 the recommendation process for the VC consisted of multiple layers of scrutiny. Each VC recommendation underwent assessment from battalion, brigade, division, corps, Allied General Command, the War Office, the Secretary of State for War, and the King of the United Kingdom and the British Colonies.[17] Such a process meant that each battlefield action awarded the VC had demonstrated the highest form of heroism according to all levels of military command, the British government, and the monarch.[18]

The following section outlines the recommendation and awarding processes of the VC that were in place during the First World War. Much is owed to Victoria D'Alton and her Masters thesis of 2011.[19] D'Alton specifically investigated the nature of the VC's administrative system as it related to recommendations for Australian servicemen between 1916 and the end of the First World War. D'Alton's study stands alone in its detailed examination of this process and has proven an invaluable resource.

The long process of a VC application is typified in the case of Lance Corporal Thomas Axford. At the Battle of Hamel on 4 July 1918, Axford had advanced with his platoon into enemy territory before noticing that an adjoining platoon had been caught in uncut barbed wire and were under the fire of German machine guns.[20] Alone, the South Australian attacked the German gun positions with bombs, rifle fire, and his bayonet, killing ten and capturing six enemy combatants.[21] As well as having seized several machine guns from the enemy, Axford also aided many Australian soldiers stranded in no

16 "The London Gazette 27462," 8 August 1902, The Gazette Archives, 5085.
17 "The London Gazette 21846," 411.
18 Wigmore and Harding, *They Dared Mightily*, 9.
19 D'Alton, "Behind the Valour."
20 "Service Record of Thomas Leslie Axford," 1914-1920, B2455, NAA, 32.
21 *Ibid*.

man's land.[22] Through his "initiative and gallantry" Axford "undoubtedly saved many casualties, and materially assisted towards the complete success of his company in the task assigned to it."[23] Axford's actions were witnessed by several other soldiers and were most likely transcribed by a senior member of his platoon, as was procedure.[24] A senior NCO or officers may have gathered information regarding Axford's actions after the battle had concluded.[25]

To investigate and compile written accounts of individual heroic actions was a standard part of post-battle procedure and these were usually collected via notebooks given to selected NCOs and officers specifically for the task.[26] Junior officers and senior NCOs were usually asked by their company commander to list possible recommendations for bravery awards, along with any anecdotal evidence available.[27] These details were then sent to the company commander, who would add any comments he saw fit before sending the documents to a battalion adjutant for ordering and analysis.

Axford's action would have been witnessed, documented, and passed up the battalion chain of command, where the battalion adjutant compiled witness reports, completed the application form for the appropriate gallantry award (in this case the VC) and wrote the official account of events.[28] Once the application for Axford's VC had been officially lodged via the battalion adjutant, it was passed onto the battalion commander. In Axford's case this was Lieutenant Colonel Edmund Alfred Drake-Brockman.[29] Drake-Brockman assessed the application and passed it onto the 4th Brigade's Deputy Assistant Adjutant General (DAAG) and to the brigade commander, General John Monash.[30] In most cases the DAAG would conduct interviews with eyewitnesses and recommend to the brigade commander whether or not the application should be approved.[31] Having received

22 *Ibid*.

23 *Ibid*.

24 D'Alton, "Behind the Valour," 58.

25 *Ibid*.

26 William Spencer, *Medals: The Researcher's Guide* (Kew: National Archives, 2008), 61.

27 D'Alton, "Behind the Valour," 58.

28 *Ibid*.

29 MJ Crook, *The Evolution of the Victoria Cross: A Study in Administrative History* (Tunbridge Wells: Midas Books, 1975), 204.

30 *Ibid*.

31 D'Alton, "Behind the Valour," 60.

Monash's endorsement, Axford's recommendation was passed to divisional level, where more investigations into the action would have taken place.

From division level, Axford's application went to the Deputy Assistant Adjutant and Quarter Master at corps headquarters whose job it was to ensure that all specific administrative and VC warrant requirements had been met.[32] The Quarter Master would have approved and passed on Axford's recommendation, along with a duplicate copy and witness reports, to the Australian Corp commander General William Birdwood.[33] Axford's paperwork was then forwarded to Major General William Payton at Allied General Headquarters, who assessed the recommendation and presented it to the Commander-in-Chief, Field Marshall Douglas Haig.[34] After Haig had approved the recommendation, it was dispatched to the War Office in London and further scrutinised by the VC Committee.[35] In 1918 this committee comprised the Deputy Chief of Imperial General Staff, the Deputy Military Secretary, and the Secretary of the War Office.[36] The committee would again ensure that all aspects of the Royal Warrant for the VC had been met, and on doing so, would submit Axford's recommendation to the Secretary of State for War, who assessed the evidence and nature of the action for the last time before presenting it to the King.[37] Approval from King George V was guaranteed, as no monarch had ever disallowed a VC recommendation.[38] After the King's approval, an official citation was published in the *London Gazette*.[39] Upon his citation's publication Axford was officially confirmed as a VC recipient.

As D'Alton's study clearly identifies, there existed many limitations and problems with the VC recommendation and approval system that affected all eligible forces during the First World War. The type of battle and battlefield could influence the number of VCs that were awarded. For example, of the 64 VCs awarded to Australians during the First World War, 55 of those were earned on the Western Front. As there was a higher concentration of men and battles on the Western Front than any other theatre, such a bias

32 *Ibid*.
33 Crook, *The Evolution of the Victoria Cross*, 204.
34 D'Alton, "Behind the Valour," 60.
35 Glanfield, *Bravest of the Brave*, 54–55.
36 *Ibid*., 55.
37 D'Alton, "Behind the Valour," 61.
38 Halliday, *Valour Reconsidered*, 20–21.
39 Spencer, *Medals*, 78.

in the figures is to be expected. Yet unlike the remote battlefields of the Middle East or the steep hillside battlefields of the Dardanelles, those on the Western Front were flat, concentrated, and easily visible. It was therefore more likely that acts of gallantry could be more easily witnessed on the Western Front compared to other theatres.

The failure or success of a gallantry recommendation could also often rely upon the administrative skill of a unit adjutant. If VC recommendations sent up the chain of command by unit adjutants did not follow the administrative guidelines set by GHQ or contained administrative mistakes, their recommendation risked being downgraded to a lesser medal or rejected entirely.[40] It was likely no coincidence that the Australian 5th Division, which had frequent memoranda sent from headquarters requesting that their unit adjutants amend and improve their submissions of VC recommendations, finished the war with fewer VC recipients than any of its Australian counterparts.[41] By contrast, no recorded incidents—outside corps-wide amendments to recommendation application guidelines—were specifically directed towards Thomas Axford's 16th Brigade, which finished the war as the most decorated in the AIF.[42] The way in which VC recommendations and their composite evidence were written and compiled before being submitted to headquarters may have affected the likelihood of an award being confirmed. It is therefore probable that administrative practices influenced the forms that hegemonic heroism took.

The nationality of VC recipients and the enemy that they were fighting seem to have also been factors that influenced how VCs were awarded. For example, during the course of the First World War, the Indian Army was the only national force among the British, dominion, and colonial services to receive more VCs for saving life than for taking it. As we will explore in depth in Chapter Three, Australian forces were awarded proportionately more VCs for killing and fewer for saving life than any other eligible nation during the First World War. Smith has also noted that the VC was initially awarded differently for colonial wars than it was in European ones.[43] He has argued that this was largely a result of the varying types of battles that British forces encountered across the

[40] D'Alton, "Behind the Valour," 65.

[41] *Ibid*., 68; "Letter, DAA and QMG ANZAC to GOC 1st Division," 20 August 1915, AWM 25, 391/22, AWM.

[42] D'Alton, "Behind the Valour," 47.

[43] Smith, *Awarded for Valour,* 74.

Empire, where "facing bodies of disciplined Russians supported by artillery was not the same as facing Maori rebels, cannibalistic Andaman Islanders, or assegai-wielding Zulus."[44] This is, of course true, but it does underplay the imperial and racial standards that likely influenced when and why the VC was awarded.

In other respects, Smith does offers excellent insight into the imperial and national factors that may have influenced the award through his in-depth statistical analyses of Britain's nineteenth-century wars. Yet Smith's study has also shown that such imperial and racial factors are difficult to trace in any measure outside of the statistics. It is likely that the differences in how the VC was awarded between national forces and across different conflicts was a result of individual military commanders' views of heroism. For instance, General Douglas Haig, who became commander of British and dominion forces in late-1915, made the comment in 1914 that he was not in favour of the VC "being granted for bringing in wounded officers or men in European warfare."[45] Haig did not clarify the reasons for his position and, given that many VCs were awarded for this specific action on the Western Front during Haig's time as Commander-in-Chief, it is clear that he did not consistently apply this rule throughout the conflict.[46]

Haig's view of how the VC should be awarded in European warfare was not based on the official VC Warrant, and therefore shows that he applied his own understanding of heroism to the award process. An application's success or failure was dependent on senior officers' personal opinions, subjectivities, and in particular, their understandings of gallantry. Recommendations for gallantry awards, especially in the case of the VC, required the approval of various senior officers and commanders.[47] These men had the power to downgrade or completely reject a recommendation without being required to specify why. At the time it was believed that offering reasons for an application's rejection might lead to unwanted and time-consuming appeals.[48] Therefore, the specific details for a recommendation's success or failure were usually withheld and are difficult to ascertain from remaining archival sources.

[44] *Ibid*.

[45] *Ibid*.

[46] Haig's role in re-shaping the parameters of the VC will be examined in much greater detail in Chapters Two and Three.

[47] D'Alton, "Behind the Valour," 95.

[48] *Ibid*., 81.

As I will outline later in this chapter, actions that were awarded the VC between 1856 and 1916 were often very similar in nature. The VC statistics for this period show that acts in which servicemen saved comrades' lives on the battlefield were viewed as the greatest exemplifications of heroism by the officers of national forces who lodged VC recommendations as well as the senior British commanders who approved them. Statistics therefore indicate that understandings of what the highest military heroism specifically entailed were commonly shared among British and dominion leaders. These concepts were informed by the neo-chivalric ideals that underpinned hegemonic masculinity in Britain and dominion nations of the era. Throughout the Crimean War, the Second Boer War, and at the outbreak of the First World War, there existed a strong link between the types of acts that were awarded the VC and the ideals of neo-chivalry.

Neo-chivalry and the Victoria Cross

Neo-chivalry became the dominant system of masculinity in British and dominion societies largely as a reaction to the uncertainty and dislocation caused by the French and Industrial Revolutions in the late eighteenth century.[49] At a time of rapid and drastic social change, the British gentry looked back to an age in which their power was nearly absolute.[50] Many in the upper echelons of British society viewed the Middle Ages as a time to be revered and sought a return to its values. As Lucy Delap and Sue Morgan have astutely pointed out, the Middle Ages represented "an age of simple faith and loyalties and the source of much that now appeared to be sacred and threatened."[51]

More than just a means of escapism, the values of Britain's medieval past offered an opportunity for national and imperial enhancement. Richard W Kaeuper has shown that "powerful neo-medievalism took root in a belief that foundations of national greatness or cultural identity lay, in some measure, in medieval ideas and forms."[52] The following century witnessed a great revival of medieval forms in British art, literature, architecture and thought, which coincided with Britain's period of high imperialism. Mark Girouard's research into this "Return to Camelot" during the Victorian and Edwardian eras described

[49] Michèle Cohen, "'Manners' Make the Man: Politeness, Chivalry, and the Construction of Masculinity, 1750–1830," *Journal of British Studies* 44, no. 2 (2005): 317.

[50] Lucy Delap and Sue Morgan, *Men, Masculinities and Religious Change in Twentieth-Century Britain* (London: Springer, 2013), 127.

[51] *Ibid*.

[52] Richard W. Kaeuper, *Medieval Chivalry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 16.

an extraordinary series of examples from just one year. In 1912 a best-selling London play focused on the chivalry of St George in shining armour; the captain of the Titanic was widely praised for having perished with his ship; and the Duke of Marlborough took part in a jousting competition at Earl's Court.[53] The British fascination with the Middle Ages had strengthened over the course of the nineteenth century and the "chivalry of the Knights," as Robert Baden-Powell termed it, served as the core example and archetype of masculinity.[54]

In 1908, Baden-Powell's enormously successful *Scouting for Boys: A Handbook for Instruction in Good Citizenship* taught readers that chivalry was a core part of "manliness".[55] Baden-Powell's book listed and described all the values of neo-chivalry. These were obedience, discipline, loyalty, a sense of fair play, humility, courteousness, honour, and a willingness to sacrifice one's life for a greater cause.[56] Girouard's study into British society and neo-chivalry concluded that in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries all British men "knew that they must be brave, show no sign of panic or cowardice, be courteous to women and children, be loyal to their comrades, and meet death without flinching."[57] The sacrifice of one's wellbeing in order to help another in danger was, especially within the military context, the strongest value of neo-chivalry. While boys' imperial adventure stories, schooling, the growing prominence of scouts, the army, and "muscular Christianity" imparted more violent ideals of masculinity in the late nineteenth century, Praseeda Gopinath's investigation into chivalry in British society offers strong evidence that "despite these shifts through the Victorian and pre–World War I eras, the qualities of gentlemanliness retained a certain sense of continuity."[58] Thus sacrifice and risk-taking in the service of empire and countrymen remained the preeminent display of neo-chivalric manliness.[59]

53 Mark Girouard, "A Return to Camelot," *The Wilson Quarterly* 5, no. 4 (1981): 178.

54 Robert Baden-Powell, *Scouting for Boys: A Handbook for Instruction in Good Citizenship* (London: Pearson, 1910), 175.

55 *Ibid*.

56 *Ibid*.

57 Girouard, "Return to Camelot," 179.

58 Praseeda Gopinath, *Scarecrows of Chivalry: English Masculinities After Empire* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2013), 32.

59 This point is well argued in Alexander Watson and Patrick Porter, "Bereaved and Aggrieved: Combat Motivation and the Ideology of Sacrifice in the First World War," *Historical Research* 83, no. 219 (2010): 164.

A number of studies have also noted the links that existed between British imperialism and neo-chivalric masculinity during the nineteenth century. In his extensive works on British masculinity and empire, JA Mangan has shown that "the imagery of chivalry penetrated deeply into the fabric of late Victorian culture."[60] This included, according to Mangan, ideals of imperialism and literary depictions in which "imperial heroes were regularly compared to Knights, and Empire was the Holy Grail."[61] John M McKenzie has similarly argued that the "language and imagery of chivalry had been so far absorbed into the fabric of Victorian life and thought that it was automatic to see the gentleman, the hero, and the soldier exclusively in terms of the medieval paladin."[62] Examples of imperial neo-chivalry appeared most regularly in boys' literature.[63] This was true both in Britain and throughout the colonies.[64] Mangan has recently shown that there existed in Australia and Canada a plethora of children's literature written in the late-nineteenth century that celebrated a "dominion chivalric code."[65] He has argued that such literature was written in order to "retain an imperial connection and emphasise an imperial uniformity."[66] The works of Australian historians Robert Dixon and Julie Andrews have also shown how strongly these British ideals of imperialism resonated in Australian

60 JA Mangan, "Duty unto Death: English Masculinity and Militarism in the Age of the New Imperialism," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 12, no. 2 (1995): 16–17.

61 *Ibid*.

62 John M MacKenzie, *Popular Imperialism and the Military: 1850–1950* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), 87.

63 Victor Kiernan, "Tennyson, King Arthur and Imperialism," *Culture, Ideology and Politics* (London: Routledge Revivals, [1982] 2016); Dennis Denisoff, *The Nineteenth-Century Child and Consumer Culture* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2008); Jeffrey Richards, *Imperialism and Juvenile Literature* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989); Heather Streets, *Martial Races: The Military, Race and Masculinity in British Imperial Culture, 1857–1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004).

64 Robert Dixon, *Writing the Colonial Adventure : Race, Gender and Nation in Anglo-Australian Popular Fiction, 1875-1914* (New York : Cambridge University Press, 1995); JA Mangan, *Noble Specimens of Manhood: Schoolboy Literature and the Creation of a Colonial Chivalric Code* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017); Joseph Bristow, *Empire Boys : Adventures in a Man's World, Reading Popular Fiction: 2* (London : HarperCollins Academic, 1991); Richard Phillips, *Mapping Men and Empire: A Geography of Adventure* (London: Routledge, 1997); John Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities in Nineteenth Century Britain: Essays on Gender, Family and Empire, Women and Men in History* (London: Longman, 2004); Allen Warren, "Citizens of the Empire: Baden-Powell, Scouts and Guides, and an Imperial Ideal," in *Imperialism and Popular Culture,* ed. John M Mackenzie, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, [1986] 2017).

65 Mangan, *Noble Specimens of Manhood*, 4.

66 *Ibid.,* 19.

societies in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.[67] British and Australian forms of masculinity were therefore strongly informed by ideals of imperialism.

Despite a general accordance among historians about the primacy of neo-chivalric values in British understandings of manliness and heroism, the extent to which such ideals permeated British and by extension Australian and other dominion societies remains an area of contention. Girouard has argued that while ideals of chivalry were prominent and influential for upper- and middle-class British combatants who fought in the First World War, such values were not important to soldiers from the working class.[68] Watson and Porter have agreed that wartime chivalric ideals were mostly evident through the letters of educated, middle-class servicemen who "were most exposed to its rhetoric in the pre-war period."[69] Yet Frantzen has provided clear evidence that literature such as boys' morality guidebooks, which extolled the virtues of neo-chivalric manliness, were aimed at working-class readers from the mid-nineteenth century.[70] Baden-Powell's 1908 treatise on scouting and neo-chivalry was certainly aimed at boys of all classes. Baden-Powell made it clear throughout his guide that a "gentleman is anyone who carries out the rules of chivalry and the knights."[71] Indeed, Frantzen has shown that "one of the hallmarks of the chivalric moral literature of the Victorian period is its criticism of decadent aristocrats unworthy of the ideals they had inherited."[72] Similarly, Barbara Korte's research into the nineteenth-century boys' magazine *Chums* found that the magazine's tales of neo-chivalric heroism were targeted at both middle- and working-class boys.[73]

In fact, the notion that a private was just as capable of heroism as an officer was built into the rationale for creating the VC in 1856. As discussed earlier, the Duke of Newcastle's letter to Prince Albert of 1855 argued that it was not fair that men of the ranks

[67] Dixon, *Writing the Colonial Adventure*; Julie Lightfoot, "The 'Australian Britons': Australian Attitudes to Imperialism and the Shaping of a National Identity in the Boer War," Honours Thesis, 1993, University of Melbourne.

[68] Girouard, "Return to Camelot."

[69] Watson and Porter, "Bereaved and Aggrieved," 153.

[70] Frantzen, *Bloody Good,* 16–17.

[71] Baden-Powell, *Scouting for Boys*; Girouard, "Return to Camelot," 187.

[72] Frantzen, *Bloody Good*, 16–17.

[73] Barbara Korte, "Chums (1892-1932): Heroes and Things in a British Boys' Periodical," Masters Dissertation, Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg, 2016.

who performed acts of heroism were not recognised for their gallantry.[74] To that point only officers and NCOs had been awarded decorations for heroic acts in battles, while men in the ranks were rewarded with promotion or mentions in official despatches.[75] The creation of the VC signalled that gallantry and chivalry were no longer the sole preserves of the middle- and upper-classes.[76] Neo-chivalric heroism could be achieved by anyone and this was a concept that most men on the front lines during the First World War seemed to be aware of. These men were raised on the literature of neo-chivalric and imperial heroism written by Newbolt, Henty, Tennyson, and Haggard, and found in adventure magazines like *Chums*. They were pupils of schooling systems and classical educations that had taught and promoted neo-chivalric masculinity. They played team sports that espoused and trained them in neo-chivalric ideals and they operated in a military that rewarded acts that displayed the widely understood tenets of neo-chivalry. The men who entered the First World War did so with clear notions of the types of deeds and values that constituted heroism.[77]

While the code of neo-chivalry allowed and condoned violent actions—provided they were for a noble and worthy cause—the main feature of neo-chivalric heroism was sacrifice and benevolence on the battlefield.[78] Indeed, soldiers' letters from the early years of the First World War widely described heroism as an act of sacrifice.[79] This was, according to Watson and Porter, a continuation of pre-war, "deeply ingrained sacrificial ideologies."[80] These ideologies influenced both actions on the front lines of the First World War and official recognition and commendation of such actions.

Measuring the Victoria Cross

[74] T. Robert Fowler, *Valour in the Victory Campaign: The 3rd Canadian Infantry Division Gallantry Decorations 1945* (Burnstown: General Store Pub. House, 1995), 218.

[75] Ashcroft, *Victoria Cross Heroes*, 7.

[76] John Price, *Everyday Heroism: Victorian Constructions of the Heroic Civilian* (London: A&C Black, 2014), 16.

[77] Korte, "Chums (1892-1932)," 32; Frantzen, *Bloody Good*, 153; JL Cranfield, "Chivalric Machines: The Boer War, the Male Body, and the Grand Narrative in the Strand Magazine," *Victorian Literature and Culture* 40, no. 2 (September 2012): 549–73.

[78] This is best argued in Frantzen, *Bloody Good*.

[79] Watson and Porter, "Bereaved and Aggrieved," 164.

[80] *Ibid*.

Studying patterns in the awarding of the VC reveals the influence that neo-chivalric ideals had on British military commanders' concepts of heroism from the mid-nineteenth century to the start of the First World War. To measure such patterns, I have analysed and categorised the citations of all 1,180 VCs conferred to men of British and dominion forces between the award's creation in 1856 and the end of the First World War in 1918. My aim is to understand the specific types of actions that were recognised as representing the highest form of heroism. To achieve this, I have categorised each VC into one or more of the following classes:

- Explicitly conferred for saving life
- Explicitly conferred for killing the enemy
- Conferred for both saving life and killing the enemy
- Explicitly conferred for seizing/holding territory
- Actions that indirectly saved lives
- Actions pivotal to operation
- Other

Through this methodology, I have been able to determine that the vast majority of VCs awarded during the examined period were explicitly conferred for either saving life or killing. As discussed earlier, of the 628 VCs conferred during the First World War—the key focus of this study—89 percent (n. 551) were explicitly conferred for either saving life or killing the enemy. For this reason, I have focused my study on these actions, and traced how regularly each was awarded between 1856 and 1918.

My methodology closely follows that of Melvin Charles Smith. In his 2008 study, Smith explored statistics from the medal's inception in 1856 to the wars of the twenty-first century. Smith used VC citations to categorise acts into four broad classes, "humanitarianism," "war-winning," "symbolic," and "special."[81] Smith's is an exceptional work of historical statistical analysis, yet his broad definitions for why a VC was awarded have not allowed him to see the relationship between the Allied implementation of an attrition strategy in late-1916 and officially recognised military heroism. By examining and categorising VC citations into the more specific acts of "killing" and "saving life," I have been able to measure the strong connections between the VC, masculine ideals, and

[81] Smith, *Awarded for Valour,* 96.

for the first time, military strategy. Such textual analyses have also allowed me to identify the language and themes of VC citations and how these changed over the course of the war.

In many of the VC citations examined in this study, the main reason that the medal was awarded to a serviceman was clearly identifiable. For instance, the VC citation of Private John Alexander of the 90th Perthshire Light Infantry, clearly outlines why he had been awarded the medal:

> After the attack on the Redan, 18th June, 1855, went out of the trenches under a very heavy fire, and brought in several wounded men. Also, when with a working party in the most advanced trench, on 6th September, 1855, went out in front of the trenches, under a very heavy fire, and assisted in bringing in Captain Buckley, Scots Fusilier Guards, lying dangerously wounded.[82]

As saving life is the only action mentioned in Alexander's citation, I have categorised it as being "explicitly conferred for saving life."

Similarly, instances where the VC was awarded specifically for killing were easily identifiable. Fighting in the Second Boer War, Corporal John James Clements of the South African Forces was clearly awarded his VC for an act that involved killing:

> On the 24th February, 1900, near Strijdenburg, when dangerously wounded through the lungs and called upon to surrender, Corporal Clements, threw himself into the midst of a party of five Boers, shooting three of them with his revolver, and thereby causing the whole party to surrender to himself and two unwounded men of Rimington's Guides.[83]

The destruction and capture of enemy combatants are the only outcomes of Clement's action described in his citation. Thus, I categorised Clement as having been awarded "explicitly for killing the enemy."

Not all of the citations examined are as clear cut, however. As shall be discussed, many VC citations written before 1916 described the act of killing in ambiguous and/or euphemistic terms, such as "dispersing" or "disrupting" the enemy. In these situations, it has been essential to assess the context of the action in order to identify the primary reason for the VC's conferral. For example, the VC citation of Alfred Ind—a Shoeing Smith in the British Army's Royal Horse Artillery—detailed how at Tafelkop, South Africa in

[82] "The London Gazette 21971," 657.
[83] *Ibid.*

1901 he "stuck to his gun under a very heavy fire, when the whole of the remainder of the Pompom team had been shot down, and continued to fire into the advancing Boers till the last possible moment.[84] While Ind's citation does not mention his actual killing of enemy troops, the description of his "continued fire into the advancing Boers" strongly suggests that this was a killing action.[85] As such, I have categorised Ind's act under "explicitly conferred for killing the enemy," alongside similar citations that describe the "dispersion" or "clearing up" of enemy troops and the use of weapons against the enemy to "great effect."[86]

Another challenge that emerged in categorising acts for the purpose of statistical analysis was deciding on how to categorise citations that mentioned both killing and saving life. Sergeant-Major John Grieve of the British Army's 2nd Dragoons was awarded the VC for having:

> Saved the life of an Officer, in the Heavy Cavalry Charge at Balaklava, who was surrounded by Russian Cavalry, by his gallant conduct in riding up to his rescue and cutting off the head of one Russian, disabling and dispersing the others.[87]

It is likely that Grieve was awarded the VC for saving the life of an officer, as these are the first words of his citation. Yet the citation also describes his killing, wounding, and "dispersing" of enemy troops and it cannot be known to what extent this VC was awarded for the saving or taking of life.[88] For a citation to be included in the categories of "explicitly conferred for saving life" or "explicitly conferred for killing the enemy," it had to be specifically and discernibly awarded for such an act. As such, I categorised Grieve's actions in the statistical category of "conferred for both saving life and killing the enemy."

Results of Victoria Cross Statistical Analysis (1856–1916)

[84] "The London Gazette 27465," 15 August 1902, The Gazette Archives, 5328.
[85] "The London Gazette 27465," 5328.
[86] *Ibid*.
[87] "The London Gazette 21971," 24 February 1857, The Gazette Archives, 655.
[88] "The London Gazette 21971,"655.

Between 1856 and 1916, VCs were consistently awarded for explicitly saving life more than for any other action (see Chart 1 below). In the conflicts that took place during the Victorian period between 1856 and 1904—when the ideals of neo-chivalry were at their zenith—life saving was the preeminent act of military courage. Of the 552 VCs awarded between Crimea and the end of the Second Boer War, 193 (35%) were explicitly awarded to men who had saved their comrades' lives.[89] In contrast, only 93 VCs (17%) were awarded specifically for acts in which men had killed enemy combatants.

Of the 46 men awarded the VC throughout 1914, 19 (41%) were awarded for life saving acts and 15 (32%) for killing the enemy. Saving life therefore remained the preeminent act of the British and dominion military hero. Yet while VC conferrals for acts of saving life remained high, more VCs had been awarded for acts of killing than in any other single year of warfare since the medal's creation.

This trend continued in 1915, the first year in the award's history that acts of killing were more regularly conferred than for acts of life saving. With British and dominion soldiers fighting on the Western Front and at the Gallipoli peninsula during 1915, 117 VCs were awarded. Of these, 40 (34%) were granted for saving life and 47 (40%) for killing the enemy. Compared to 1914, there is a clear proportional rise in the number of medals awarded for killing, as well as a drop in the number awarded for acts of saving life in 1915.

[89] All statistics presented in this study have been rounded towards the nearest integer and half towards positive infinity.

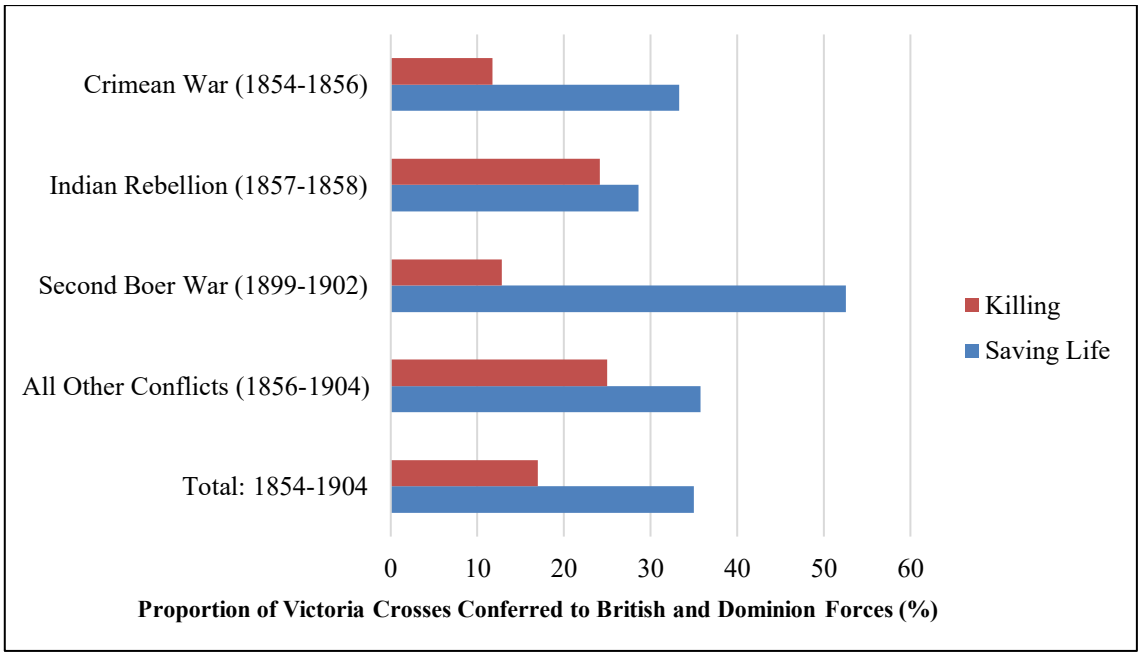


Chart 1 Proportion of Victoria Crosses Conferred to British and Dominion Forces (%) for Killing and Saving Life (1854-1904). The reasons given in British and dominion VC citations show that VC conferrals were awarded in higher proportions for saving life, and lower proportions for killing, between 1854 and 1904. [90]

Here were some of the early signs that the war hero could not survive modern combat in his traditional, neo-chivalric form. Omer Bartov has noted that the "lethal combination of the machine gun and barbed wire, backed by heavy artillery capable of firing millions of shells put a sudden and inglorious end to the European image of war as an exercise in chivalry."[91] Yet, despite the unprecedented death and destruction on the battlefields of 1914 and 1915, the ideals of neo-chivalrous heroism lingered. Bartov himself later acknowledged that, "reality took a long time to undermine…the chivalric image."[92] Between 1914 and 1916, the traditional neo-chivalric ideals that underpinned VC awards, and ideas about heroism more broadly, began to weaken. More men were

[90] The wars fought by British and dominion forces during this period listed in the figure as "All other conflicts" include: Zulu War (1879), New Zealand Land Wars (1845–1872), Second Afghan War (1878–1880), Anglo-Persian War (1856–1857), Third China War (1856–1860), Taiping Rebellion (1850–1864), Umbeyla Campaign (1863), Bombardment of Shimonoseki (1863–1864), Bhutan War (1864–1865), The Gambia, Andaman Islands Expedition (1867), Abyssinian War (1868), Looshai Expedition (1871–1872), First Ashanti Expedition (1895–1896), Perak War (1875–1876), 9th Cape Frontier War (1877–1879), Anglo-Zulu War (1879), Second Afghan War (1878–1880), Basuto War (1880–1881), Second Naga Hills Expedition (1879–1880), First Boer War (1880–1881), Sudan Campaign (1881–1889), Burma, Hunza-Naga Campaign (1891), Mahmand Campaign (1897–1898), Tirah Campaign (1897–1899).

[91] Omer Bartov, "Man and the Mass: Reality and the Heroic Image in War," *History and Memory* 1, no. 2 (1989): 106.

[92] *Ibid*., 110.

awarded the VC for killing than ever before. Nevertheless, while killing became a more prominent aspect of VC awards, the saving of life was nearly equally awarded. Thus, the neo-chivalric tradition of heroism remained; the hero could be both aggressive and humanitarian.

In 1916 the proportion of VC awards conferred for saving and taking life was almost equal (see Chart 2 below). Of the 83 VCs bestowed that year, 28 (33%) were for acts that explicitly saved lives and 31 (37%) awarded to servicemen for killing the enemy. That the proportionate number of VCs awarded for each action remained nearly identical to those awarded in 1915, and near to the figures of 1914, is significant given the military events that occurred during that year.

Both the Battle of the Somme—which raged between July and November 1916 and cost the Allies 656,000 casualties—and the Battle of Verdun—which was fought between February and December 1916 and led to an estimated 377,000 French casualties—had forced the Allies into a war of attrition, in which killing the enemy was the only means to victory.[93] As will be discussed in the next chapter, such battles of attrition directly conflicted with the heroic ideals of neo-chivalry. Additionally, in December 1915, General Douglas Haig became British Commander-in-Chief.[94] This was a role that included the responsibility of approving or disallowing actions that had been recommended for the VC and evidence indicates that Haig was not eager to award the medal for acts of lifesaving on the battlefield.[95] In Haig's diary entry of 4 December 1914, he described how King George V had "expressed the opinion that the grant of the Victoria Cross for carrying a wounded man out of action was justified and was beneficial."[96] To this Haig had responded that while "each case must be judged on its merits…as a rule in civilised war such efforts did the wounded man harm and also tended to increase loss of valuable lives."[97] There is no other evidence, outside of the awarding records themselves, that further clarify Haig's views on the awarding process of VCs. The evidence that does

[93] William Philpott, *Bloody Victory: The Sacrifice on the Somme and the Making of the Twentieth Century* (London: Hachette UK, 2009), 602–3; John Connor, *Someone Else's War: Fighting for the British Empire in World War I* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019), 174.

[94] Stevenson, *1914-1918: The History of the First World War*, 175.

[95] Gary Sheffield and John Bourne, *Douglas Haig: Diaries and Letters 1914-1918* (London: Hachette, 2015), 78–9.

[96] *Ibid*.

[97] *Ibid.*

exist has led Smith to argue that Haig's appointment to Commander-in-Chief marked a significant shift away from how the medal had been traditionally awarded.[98] More will be said about Haig's view of the VC and the way in which it was awarded after his assumption of the top job in the British military in the next chapter.

Chart 2 Proportion of Victoria Crosses Conferred to British and Dominion Forces (%) for Killing and Saving Life (1856-1916). While Victoria Crosses were awarded more often for acts of life saving between 1856 and 1904, the acts of killing and saving life were awarded in similar proportions between 1914 and 1916.

Victoria Cross figures show that in 1916 official notions of martial heroism were based on much the same understandings and ideals as those that had been in place in 1856. Yet these statistics also show that the model of neo-chivalric military valour had begun to erode in the face of large-scale, twentieth-century warfare. This was only a partial weakening of the traditional model of military heroism, however. From the British naval bombardment in the Baltic Sea in 1854, to the mud of the Somme in 1916, the VC had continued to be awarded in very similar proportions to acts that exhibited neo-chivalric ideals. The act of saving life continued to be awarded as an example of high military valour.

Key Themes in VC Citations (1856–1916)

[98] Smith, *Awarded for Valour,* 160.

It was not just the proportions of awards conferred for certain acts that remained largely unchanged between the Crimean and the First World Wars, but the citation descriptions of such acts as well. Despite the large-scale use of machine guns, repeating rifles, and long-range heavy artillery on First World War battlefields—that is to say, the transformation of warfare itself—VC citations of the First World War described the same types of acts, in much the same language, as they had done through the wars of the nineteenth century. The specific themes that consistently appeared in VC citations offer us insights into the precise concepts of heroism that were held by British military commanders and government leaders during the periods examined. This section examines some of the specific acts that were consistently awarded the VC between 1856 and 1916. In doing so it outlines the collective ideals of heroism that existed among British military and government leaders during this period. This section also provides more context to the statistical categories of "saving life" and "killing" by exploring VC citations in greater detail. It provides evidence that the specific acts chiefly awarded the VC did not alter between 1856 and 1916 and therefore further demonstrates how the standard of official heroism remained largely unchanged between the Crimean War and the first years of the First World War.

Carrying the wounded

The act of carrying wounded men from the battlefield earned more VCs between 1856 and 1916 than any other action. Braving enemy fire in order to rescue men—usually officers—from the dangers of the battlefield and carry them to safer positions was an act that exhibited the same neo-chivalric ideal as tossing a near-exploded bomb over a trench parapet. Both required a willingness to sacrifice oneself in order to save the lives of others. That carrying wounded men from the battlefield was so commonly and consistently awarded the VC throughout the nineteenth century and in the first years of the First World War shows how important the ideal of humanitarian self-sacrifice was to the process of identifying military heroism. No battlefield action could better display that a soldier was, as John Batty wrote in his popular book on the subject in 1890, "imbued with the spirit of chivalry [by being] ready, if needs be, to make sacrifice for the lives of others, without counting the cost." [99] Carrying wounded men to safety away from the battlefield (henceforth referred to as "carrying") perfectly encapsulated Batty's widely-held and

[99] John Batty, *Spirit and Influences Of Chivalry* (New York: Routledge, [1890] 2011), 78.

long-lasting understanding of chivalry, as well as the concepts of martial heroism that such an understanding informed.

Although regularly awarded the VC throughout the nineteenth century, acts of carrying varied little in nature or description. British officer Lieutenant Gerald Graham's VC citation is representative of many others in its concise account:

> Determined gallantry at the head of a Ladder Party, at the assault of the Redan, on the 18th June, 1855. Devoted heroism in sallying out of the trenches on numerous occasions, and bringing in wounded Officers and Men.[100]

Graham's action differs from most VC citations of this period only in that he did not rescue someone with a horse—a means of rescue that appeared in most VC citations for carrying up until the First World War.

In 1900 at Transvaal, Australian trooper John Bisdee was in a scouting party that became caught in an ambush. In the fracas, "the horse of one of the wounded officers bolted and Trooper Bisdee dismounted, put the officer on his own horse and took him out of range of the very heavy fire."[101] Many more servicemen earned the medal in the wars of the nineteenth century for nearly identical feats. Carrying was the predominant act of martial heroism and in the British wars of the nineteenth century the most efficient means of saving a comrade's life was with the use of a horse.

The technology being used by armies on the Western Front in 1914 meant that horses used to attack the enemy were easily nullified by modern rifles, artillery, machine guns, and barbed wire.[102] Martin Gilbert notes that one of the major military changes brought about by the First World War was "the end of the cavalry as a weapon."[103] This also meant that horses had become an ineffective means of saving wounded or surrounded soldiers on the battlefield. With the notable exception of Lance Corporal Joel Halliwell of the Lancashire Fusiliers—who in 1918 rode a horse through no man's land at Muscourt

[100] "The London Gazette 21971," 656.

[101] "The London Gazette 27246," 13 November 1900, The Gazette Archives, 6927.

[102] Ulrich Raulff, *Farewell to the Horse: The Final Century of Our Relationship* (London: Penguin, 2017), 109.

[103] Martin Gilbert, *History of the Twentieth Century (1914-1989)* (Zurich: Compendio Bildungsmedien AG, 1997), 20.

and managed to save the lives of ten wounded men—the horse disappeared from VC citations from the Western Front.

The reasons that VC actions rarely involved horses during the First World War are exhibited in the British corporal Charles Garforth's VC citation. At Harmingnies, Belgium in September 1914, Garforth had "under constant fire…extricated a sergeant who was lying under his dead horse, and carried him to safety."[104] The same citation also described how "the next day, when another sergeant had lost his horse in a similar way, Corporal Garforth drew off the enemy fire and enabled the Sergeant to get away."[105]

Though there were fewer mentions of horses, VC citations for carrying in the early years of the First World War shared many similarities to those written in prior conflicts. The words and phrases used to describe specific acts in citations of the First World War were practically identical in nature with those of the nineteenth century. Scottish private Ross Tollerton was awarded the VC in 1914 after "he carried a wounded Officer under heavy fire as far as he was able into a place of greater safety" at the Battle of the Aisne.[106] In September 1915, Private Robert Dunsire of The Royal Scots:

> went out under heavy fire and rescued a wounded man from between the firing lines. Later, when another man considerably nearer the German lines was heard shouting for help, he crawled out again with utter disregard to the enemy's fire and carried him in also.[107]

In early 1916, the English army chaplain Noel Mellish was awarded the VC after he:

> repeatedly went backwards and forwards, under continuous and heavy shell and machine-gun fire, between our original trenches and those captured from the enemy, in order to tend and rescue wounded men. He brought in ten badly wounded men on the first day from ground swept by machine-gun fire…The battalion to which he was attached was relieved on the second day, but he went back and brought in twelve more wounded men.[108]

The statistics discussed earlier in this chapter show that carrying actions made up a significant proportion of total VC conferrals in 1914, 1915, and 1916. Many citations during these early years of the war were described in much the same way as the three extracts above and these themselves shared many of the same themes as carrying citations

[104] "The London Gazette 28976," 9374.

[105] *Ibid*.

[106] "The London Gazette 29135," 16 April 1915, The Gazette Archives, 3816.

[107] "The London Gazette 29371," 16 November 1915, The Gazette Archives, 11449.

[108] "The London Gazette 29555," 18 April 1916, The Gazette Archives, 4119.

from the nineteenth century. The citations of Tollerton, Dunsire, and Mellish do not mention horses and all refer to machine guns and trenches, but these differences are all that separate the descriptions of carrying acts in 1854 with those that took place in 1916. While the weapons and tactics of war had changed, the ideals that underpinned notions of heroism remained largely intact. Men were still acknowledged for carrying others out of the immediate combat areas while under fire themselves.

This important link between neo-chivalric ideals and acts that were recognised as heroic during the First World War is acutely apparent in the citation of Lance Corporal William Fuller of the Welsh Regiment. During the First Battle of the Aisne of 12–15 September 1914, under fire from enemy riflemen and machine gunners, Fuller carried a mortally wounded officer nearly 100 yards to a covered position.[109] The wounded man asked Fuller to retrieve his rifle from the battlefield because "he did not want the enemy to get it."[110] The Lance Corporal followed this order and risked his life in a symbolic act of courage.[111] The wounded officer was Captain Mark Haggard, nephew of the author Rider Haggard. Rider Haggard had written many popular stories of neo-chivalric heroes of the empire prior to the war and Captain Haggard's wounding, rescue, final request, and stoic death—at least as depicted by the VC citation—would have seamlessly fit the pages of one his uncle's novels. Indeed, the bravery and care shown by Fuller towards Captain Haggard was awarded the VC based on an official understanding of military heroism that writers like Rider Haggard had been so instrumental in popularising.

Removing explosives

While the act of carrying was awarded more VCs compared to any other action between 1856 and 1916, men who had removed or defused explosives in order to save their comrades from imminent death were also frequently conferred the medal during this period. In 1884 during the Crimean War, the same year that Charles Lucas had disposed of a live shell before it exploded on the deck of the Hecla, the British naval officer Captain William Peel had picked up "a live shell, the fuse still burning, from among several

109 "The London Gazette 28983," 20 November 1914, The Gazette Archives, 9663.
110 "The London Gazette 28983," 9663.
111 *Ibid*.

powder cases…and thrown it over the parapet (the shell bursting as it left his hands), thereby saving the magazines, and the lives of those immediately around it."[112] Fighting in the Anglo-Egyptian war with the Royal Navy, Israel Harding dragged a ten-inch unexploded shell, which had pierced the hull of the HMS Alexandra, into a bathtub and in so doing drastically reduced the damage and death caused by the explosion.[113] Indeed, throwing an explosive over the side of a vessel or parapet earned many VCs during the nineteenth century.

This trend continued into the First World War. At the Battle of Loos in September 1915, Corporal Alfred Burt of the Hertfordshire Regiment ran towards a minenwerfer bomb that had entered his trench and removed its fuse. His "presence of mind and great pluck saved the lives of others in the traverse."[114] A month earlier, Second Lieutenant George Boyd-Rochfort of the Scots Guards witnessed a mortar bomb land in his working party's communications trench. "Instead of stepping back into safety he…rushed at the bomb, seized it and hurled it over the parapet where it at once exploded."[115] Importantly to the success of his citation, through this act, Boyd-Rochfort had "saved the lives of many of the working party."[116] Other, almost identical examples of successful VC citations are found in the service files of David Lauder, Alfred Smith, William McFadzean, and Thomas Sage.[117]

With the exception of the dates, locations, and types of explosive devices, there is little difference between the nature and descriptions of First World War citations and those awarded for the same actions in the Crimean (1853–56), Indian (1857–58), or Boer wars (1880–82, 1899–1902).[118] All citations note that the recipients displayed courage or coolness during the action. Crucially their citations also mention how each man's deed directly led to the saving of other's lives at the risk of their own. Baden-Powell's *Scouting*

[112] "The London Gazette 21971," 651.

[113] "The London Gazette 25147," 15 September 15, The Gazette Archives, 4260.

[114] "The London Gazette 29447," 21 January 21, The Gazette Archives, 945.

[115] "The London Gazette 32230," 15 February 1921, The Gazette Archives, 1357.

[116] *Ibid.*

[117] "The London Gazette 30433," 14 December 1917, The Gazette Archives, 13223; "The London Gazette 29740," 8 September 1916, The Gazette Archives, 8871; "The London Gazette 29901," 12 January 1917, The Gazette Archives, 2156;" The London Gazette 25469," 12 May 1885, The Gazette Archives, 559."

[118] Denis Judd and Keith Surridge, *The Boer War: A History* (London: IB Tauris, 2013); Martin Bossenbroek, *The Boer War* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2018); Orlando Figes, *The Crimean War: A History* (Godalming: Picador, 2012); Jill C. Bender, *The 1857 Indian Uprising and the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

for Boys regularly stated the ideal that the "man who, at the risk of his own life, saves someone else's…is a hero."[119] The men who earned VCs for disposing or disarming explosives were recognised for actions that displayed Baden-Powell's chief ideals of valour. This was not just Baden-Powell's understanding of heroism or manliness. The continued theme of carrying and removing explosives that appeared in VC citations indicates that saving life was also an act that was considered the highest form of heroism within the military as well.

Killing

The act of killing the enemy in combat between 1854 and 1916 was acknowledged far less regularly as fulfilling the key aspects of neo-chivalry compared to saving life. This is clearly shown in the VC records, which indicate that while killing was not altogether unrecognised, the act of saving a comrade's life was far more likely to earn a soldier or sailor recognition as a hero. Frantzen has argued that violence was a core principle of British neo-chivalry, arguing that the view of war that had existed during the Crusades—that "war was defined as a form of worship and an act of penitence"—continued into the era of modern warfare.[120] The links between Christianity and neo-chivalry outlined in Frantzen's research offer an idea as to why killing was not as prominent an act of heroism in the neo-chivalric age—killing was a sin. While killing was not explicitly counter to the ideals of neo-chivalry, it was certainly not as prominently recognised or explicitly propagated as the act of saving life.

The low stature of killing in the neo-chivalric heroic model is obvious in the small number of VC citations awarded for the act prior to 1917. In addition to this, many VC citations that describe acts of killing prior to 1917 do so in an extremely distant and ambiguous manner. For example, at Lucknow in 1857 the British private Patrick McHale earned a VC for killing enemy combatants. McHale's VC citation described the action as such:

> On every occasion of attack, Private M'Hale has been the first to meet the foe, amongst whom he caused such consternation by the boldness of his rush, as to leave little work for those who followed to his support.[121]

[119] Baden-Powell, *Scouting for Boys*, 249.

[120] Frantzen, *Bloody Good*, 19.

[121] "The London Gazette 22396," 19 June 1860, The Gazette Archives, 2316.

McHale was awarded the VC for killing the enemy, but his citation did not directly state this. Instead, it explained how the private had caused "consternation" among the enemy and had left "little work" to do for those who followed.[122] In this example the term "work" describes the act of killing. It was through such linguistic distancing that the uncomfortable relationship between neo-chivalric values and killing was maintained.

Similar examples are found in the small number of VCs awarded during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries for killing the enemy. Privates James Pitts and Robert Scott of the Manchester Regiment were awarded the VC in January 1900 for holding a position and "keeping up their fire" on the enemy.[123] In the same year, Captain Beachcroft Towse of the Gordon Highlanders was awarded the Cross for "vigorously attacking the enemy."[124] In 1901, the British Army officer Lieutenant Llewelyn Price-Davies earned the medal after he approached a force of Boer soldiers and "dashed among them, firing at them in a most gallant and desperate attempt to rescue the guns."[125] Killing the enemy was rarely mentioned or described explicitly. Instead, such citations used vague turns of military phrase such as "vigorously attacking" or "keeping up their fire on" enemy combatants. Unlike citations describing the act of carrying, these citations were often strikingly lacking in detail.

Victoria Cross citations that obscured the act of killing in their accounts of battlefield actions continued to appear during the first years of the First World War. During the First Battle of Ypres that lasted from 19 October to 22 November 1914, Scottish lieutenant James Brooke earned the VC for "having regained the lost trench," and "led two attacks on the German trenches."[126] It is likely that this act would have required Brooke to have confronted, fought, and killed the enemy, as the citation describes the captured trenches as having contained enemy combatants. Yet, that Brooke was responsible for killing the enemy while carrying out this action is something that can only be guessed at from the information provided by his citation. Instead of the focus of the citation being on Brooke's killing German soldiers—the core reason his act was

[122] *Ibid*.
[123] "The London Gazette 27338," 26 July 1901, The Gazette Archives, 4949.
[124] "The London Gazette 27208," 6 July 1900, The Gazette Archives, 4196.
[125] "The London Gazette 27381," 29 November 1901, The Gazette Archives, 8409.
[126] "The London Gazette 29074," 16 February 1915, The Gazette Archives, 1700.

considered perilous and therefore worthy of the VC—he is simply described as having "regained the lost trench."[127]

In a similar action during the Battle of Aubers Ridge (9 May 1915) in France, Corporal Charles Sharp of the Lincolnshire Regiment:

> was in charge of a blocking party sent forward to take a portion of the German trench. He was the first to reach the enemy's position and using bombs with great effect he himself cleared them out of a trench 50 yards (46 m) long. By this time all his party had fallen and he was then joined by four other men with whom he attacked the enemy with bombs and captured a further trench 250 yards (230 m) long.[128]

Like Brooke, Corporal Sharpe was decorated for seizing a position as well as killing the enemy. In both citations, the killing of enemy combatants is described with extremely sanitised language. Sharp's action is portrayed merely as an act of cleaning—"cleared them out of a trench"—rather than the brutal and bloody combat that it was.[129]

Similarly, at La Boiselle during the Battle of the Somme in July 1916, British Army lieutenant Thomas Wilkinson earned the VC for having "held up the enemy" with a machine gun.[130] The citation also describes how later that day Wilkinson, under fire from enemy grenades, took control of another machine gun and "dispersed the bombers."[131] Wilkinson's case is another example of VC citations distorting and veiling the reality of violence in war. Wilkinson is not described as having "killed" the enemy, but as having "held up" their advance and "dispersed" their troops. That such language tended to focus on the soldier's deed rather than the action's effects, ensured that the bloody aftermath of a soldier's battlefield act was never clearly described in their citation.

Such terms were veiled in their descriptions because killing was not a core trait of neo-chivalric masculinity. Dave Grossman has noted in his excellent study on killing that by the late-Victorian era, "Western civilisation seemed to have decided that killing, killing anything at all, was increasingly hidden, private, mysterious, frightening, and dirty."[132] In his study of nineteenth-century civilian heroism in Britain, John Price has argued that by

127 *Ibid*.
128 "The London Gazette 29210," 29 June 1915, The Gazette Archives, 6270.
129 *Ibid*.
130 *Ibid*.
131 *Ibid*.
132 Grossman, *On Killing*, 17.

the late-Victorian period, some writers of juvenile literature were moving towards an approach "that promoted characteristics other than a life of action or recourse to violence in order to be considered heroic."[133] While empire building was a pursuit that required violence to succeed, Jeffrey Richards has argued that "it was British character which set the British, and particularly the imperial administrators and soldiers, apart from other peoples and justified their ruling a quarter of the globe."[134] In the late nineteenth century such character was informed by Christian and neo-chivalric ideals of self-sacrifice and humanitarianism. In such an environment, even military recognition of heroism—in which killing was a common and necessary act—used ambiguous language to sanitise the act of killing on the battlefield.

While citations for carrying actions were often very specific in the language used to describe details, citations for VCs awarded for killing usually used vague terms and phrases—such as "held up," "dispersed," and "regained." When considering the language used in citations for killing alongside the low number of VCs expressly awarded for that act, it is clear that killing was far less valued as a heroic action than saving life in the eyes of British military officials. This lower regard existed because the act of killing did not demonstrate the values that underpinned heroism in Victorian and Edwardian British societies—despite it being an essential part of warfare. The act of saving life, rather than the act of killing, was more often awarded the highest military honour for heroism between 1856 and 1916. In a culture where heroism was based on the ideals of neo-chivalry, the act of killing was only rarely acknowledged, and only in some circumstances, as being heroic.

Futile acts of heroism

Between the Crimean War and the first years of the First World War, the types of actions that were awarded the VC did not drastically alter. Yet one kind of battlefield act which had irregularly been awarded the VC throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries completely disappeared from citation records in 1914: acts characterised by good, but ineffective, intentions. Prior to the First World War, a serviceman could demonstrate heroism through the attempt to save a life or seize a position, whether they

133 Price, *Everyday Heroism*, 206.

134 Jeffrey Richards, *Films and British National Identity: From Dickens to Dad's Army* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 31.

were successful in their endeavour or not. By the time of the First World War far fewer VCs were awarded to men who had performed futile acts of heroism. More often after 1914, in order to be deemed worthy of the VC, one had to have been *successful* in carrying out the heroic enterprise in question.

In *Scouting for Boys*, Baden-Powell tells the story of Currie, an eighteen-year-old man who noticed a girl playing on a train line, unaware that a train was approaching.[135] Currie attempts to save the girl, but does not manage to get off the train track in time. Both Currie and the girl are struck and killed by the train. Despite his failure to save the girl, Baden-Powell assures the reader that "Currie's gallant attempt is a true example of chivalry."[136] It was not always necessary for an act of selflessness to succeed in its objective to be recognised as chivalrous or heroic.

Further evidence of this can be seen in a small number of VC citations awarded in conflicts prior to the First World War. One excellent example is that of the English boatswain Joseph Kellaway who earned his VC near the shore of Mariopol in August 1855. Kellaway was part of a five-man party who launched from the *Wrangler* with the intention of landing on enemy territory to burn boats, hay-stacks, and fishing stations. While they were ashore the men were attacked by a large party of Russian soldiers and were in danger of capture. The raiding crew had almost managed to make their escape when the Mate, Mr Odevaine, "accidentally fell." The citation describes how Kellaway:

> Apparently imagining him [Odevaine] to be wounded, without a moment's hesitation returned to his rescue, risking his own life to succour his Commanding Officer. Unfortunately, while lifting up Mr Odevaine, they were surrounded by the enemy, and, notwithstanding a gallant but hopeless resistance by Mr Kellaway, they were both made prisoners.[137]

Despite the objective of their mission being a complete failure and Kellaway's rescue attempt being both unnecessary and unsuccessful, Commander Burgoyne still wrote how "I was myself a witness and observer of the zeal, gallantry, and self-devotion that characterized Mr Kellaway's conduct."[138] At a time when the ideals of neo-chivalry were a far stronger influence than military success when deciding what acts constituted

135 Baden-Powell, *Scouting for Boys*, 174.

136 *Ibid*.

137 "The London Gazette 21971," 24 February 1857, The Gazette Archives, 650.

138 *Ibid*.

gallantry, Joseph Kellaway's action was viewed by the British military as representing the highest form of heroism.

In a similarly ineffective action during the Second Boer War, Private William Bees of the Derbyshire Regiment charged through enemy fire to a stream in order to retrieve water for his wounded comrades. According to his citation, in "going and returning he had to pass within 100 yards of some rocks also held by the Boers, and the kettle which he was carrying was hit by several bullets."[139] Thus the water from the stream did not make it back to the wounded men and Bees's exertions led to nothing. Yet, despite this lack of result, Bees was awarded the VC for his efforts.

There are few comparable examples in First World War VC citations to those of Kellaway and Bee. This disparity suggests that from the very beginning of the First World War, the definition of heroism was starting to alter. In order to be recognised as being of the highest heroism, one had to conduct an act that was not just gallant, but effective.

Conclusion

The military heroism that was recognised and rewarded so often during the nineteenth century was to prove impractical and counter-productive on the battlefields of the First World War. Such battlefields had substantially changed since Britain's most recent major conflict in 1902. The front was no longer a place of manoeuvre and movement, but one of stagnant trenches, machine guns and high-powered artillery.[140] In the battle conditions of 1914, a soldier venturing to no man's land to save a comrade was far less likely to succeed and survive the attempt than would have been the case at Ladysmith or Mafeking. Yet despite the significant modernisation and alteration of war technologies, the ideals of neo-chivalry continued to underpin recognition and understandings of heroism on the front lines. Heroism—as far as it was acknowledged and awarded by British military command—had changed little between the Crimea of 1854 and the Western Front of 1914, 1915, and 1916.

The two VC citations of the New Zealander Lieutenant Arthur Leake demonstrate how static heroic ideals were despite the new landscape of battle created by the First

[139] "The London Gazette 27388," 17 December 1901, The Gazette Archives, 8915.

[140] Ronald Haycock and Keith Neilson, *Men, Machines, and War* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2006), 12-31.

World War. Leake earned his first VC during the Second Boer War at Vlakfontein, when he "went up to a wounded man, and attended him under a heavy fire from about 40 Boers at 100 yards range" and then "went to the assistance of a wounded Officer…and was shot three times."[141] Leake survived his wounds and served again during in the First World War. Near Zonnebeke in November 1914, he was awarded a clasp to his VC—essentially earning the award a second time—for "rescuing, whilst exposed to constant fire, a large number of the wounded who were lying close to the enemy's trenches."[142] Leake's actions differed in that in 1902 he treated wounded soldiers on the front, while in 1914 he performed a carrying action. Yet both of Leake's acts exhibited the same core neo-chivalric value; he risked his own life to help others in need. What is significant about Leake's experiences is that the same ideal of heroism that so strongly influenced the Victorian era did not immediately or fundamentally alter in reaction to the new type of warfare being waged in 1914. Leake, like many others between 1914 and 1916, was decorated for following the neo-chivalric ideals that had become so strongly entrenched in British and dominion societies during the nineteenth century.

While social conceptions of masculinity and neo-chivalric ideals began the process of change in 1914, the war did not have a significant effect on widespread social concepts of heroism until 1916–17. Victoria Cross records indicate that the prerequisites for recognition of the highest battlefield valour had altered only marginally from the mid-nineteenth century to the first years of the First World War. Awards explicitly for killing the enemy proportionally increased during 1914–16 compared with earlier wars, but the shift was minor. Saving life remained the dominant ideal of heroism throughout this period. This point is further supported by analysis of the VC citations, which show that not only did the specific ideals that determined successful VC actions remain unchanged between 1854 and 1916, but specific battlefield acts were more likely to be deemed heroic than others. A soldier who carried a comrade away from the dangers of battle had a far likelier chance of earning the VC than a soldier who had killed several enemy combatants. This was the case at Ypres as much as it was at Sebastopol.

This chapter has shown how the VC awarded similar acts on the battlefield, in much the same proportions, between 1856 and 1916. In doing so it has demonstrated that

[141] "The London Gazette 27433," 13 May 1902, The Gazette Archives, 3176.
[142] "The London Gazette 29074," 16 February 1915, The Gazette Archives, 1700.

military heroism, insofar as it was recognised by British senior command, went largely unchanged during this sixty-year period. The ideals of neo-chivalry that have been shown by many historians and researchers to have permeated Victorian and Edwardian society's understanding of masculine and heroic values, also made up the core ideals of officially recognised martial valour.[143]

The result was that British and dominion troops entered the war in which the standard of heroism for which they were officially judged and recognised was much the same as it had been in the mid-nineteenth century. This was a prescription of heroism predicated on ideals of virtue, selflessness, abnegation, and above all else, the willingness to risk one's life in order to save or improve the lives of others. Under such a construction of heroism, killing was rarely recognised with the VC. Yet by the end of 1916 and beginning of 1917, it had become apparent to British military leaders that the rudiments for success in modern warfare had changed since the nineteenth century. With this realisation, and the changes in military strategy it provoked, the core ideals that underpinned the war hero were also reshaped.

As the next chapter will outline, the realities of combat and loss during the First World War significantly altered social understandings of the hero and the man. Robin Prior has written that the history of such an industrial war should "emphasise that the body of a trained soldier of high morale is no more capable of withstanding high explosive shell or machine gun bullets than that of a poorly trained soldier of low morale."[144] Prior has rightly argued that histories written about the conflict, "should admit that all virtues of the warrior—courage, persistence, morale, physical prowess—count for nothing in the face of unsubdued firepower."[145] The heroic ideals that Prior has identified represent the core notion of neo-chivalry: that selflessness, devotion, and courage could win the day, no matter the circumstances. Such ideals would gradually crumble and adapt in the face of trench warfare in late 1916. Neo-chivalric notions of military heroism could not survive a war based around technology, in which the machine was more important and effective than the most virtuous and selfless body of men.

143 Cohen, "'Manners' Make the Man;" Frantzen, *Bloody Good*; Cranfield, "Chivalric Machines;" Gopinath, *Scarecrows of Chivalry*.

144 Robin Prior, "The Heroic Image of the Warrior in the First World War," *War and Society* 23, no. 1 (2005): 51.

145 *Ibid*.

Chapter Two: British Command and the Victoria Cross (1916–1918)

During the Battle of the Menin Road Ridge (20–25 September 1917), Corporal William Johnson and Second Lieutenant Frederick Birks, both of the 6th Battalion AIF, advanced towards a German machine gun position while under heavy fire.[1] Johnson saw a grenade land near Birks and "recognising the danger, deliberately threw himself in front of the officer."[2] The blast seriously wounded the Corporal, while Birks, unscathed, "went on by himself, killed the remainder of the enemy occupying the position, and captured a machine gun."[3] Both men were recommended for the VC but only Birks's recommendation was successful. As we saw in Chapter One, Johnson's act of self-sacrifice to save his comrade would have been statistically far likelier to receive a VC in 1914. Yet by late 1917 the requirements for the award had changed. The ideals of neo-chivalry that had underpinned heroism in the first years of the conflict had shifted to suit a war of attrition fought with new and powerful weapons. In such an environment, the key requirement of heroism was the act of killing.

After the action that had led to Corporal Johnson's wounding, Second Lieutenant Birks led an attack against a position of twenty-five enemy soldiers, "of whom many were killed."[4] Birks's VC citation also described the Second Lieutenant's sacrificial death during the same battle, when he attempted to save the lives of men who had been buried by artillery fire. Yet while this act of sacrifice was far more in line with neo-chivalric ideals of heroism that permeated VC conferrals between 1914 and 1916, Birks's citation makes explicitly clear that his medal was awarded "for most conspicuous bravery in attack."[5] By the end of 1916, most VC citations were similar in nature to Second Lieutenant Birks's. Attacking the enemy had become far more regularly awarded the VC than acts of saving life. Recognised heroism had shifted in its ideals away from the saviour of neo-chivalry and towards the killer required to win a war of attrition.

1 "Service Record of Frederick Birks," 1914-1920, B2455, NAA, 11.
2 *Ibid*.
3 "The London Gazette 30372," 6 November 1917, The Gazette Archives, 11568.
4 *Ibid.*
5 *Ibid.*

Drawing upon a statistical analysis of acts awarded the VC between late 1916 and 1918, and a comparison of such figures with those discussed for the years 1854 to 1916 in Chapter One, this chapter shows that a significant change in the ideals that underpinned recognised heroism occurred in 1916. It also examines how the language of heroic action shifted towards more candid descriptions of killing in the latter years of the conflict. Each British and dominion force was affected by these changes, but—as we will see in Chapter Three—the shift in how heroism was officially recognised was particularly acute in the Australian forces.

This change in the recognition of heroism was driven by the battlefield conditions of the Western Front. It took British military and political leaders time to register and respond to these changes, which had been largely brought about by twentieth-century weapons.[6] A number of arms innovations had been introduced and mass-produced since the last major European war of 1871.[7] After a brief period in 1914, where armies in France and Belgium fought costly, highly mobile battles in the open, defensive trench networks began to form.[8] Modern weapons such as machine guns, repeating rifles, smokeless powder, barbed wire, high-explosive artillery, gas, and airplanes had rendered the front lines stagnant and defended positions almost impenetrable.[9] In a fighting environment where massed charges achieved few territorial gains at great costs to manpower, victory only seemed attainable through the methodical destruction of enemy forces rather than a more traditional "breakthrough" that had been expected by both sides at the beginning of the conflict.[10] In such an environment the nature of recognised heroism dramatically altered.

The major event that reshaped and recast ideals of heroism was the Battle of the Somme. The terrible waste and sacrifice of the Somme offensive, July to November 1916,

6 Haycock and Neilson, *Men, Machines, and War*, 53.

7 Michael Howard, "Men against Fire," 45; Peter Hart, *The Great War: A Combat History of the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 11; Haycock and Neilson, *Men, Machines, and War*, 59.

8 Keegan, *First World War*, 138–40.

9 Michael Howard, *The First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 21; Martin Van Creveld, *Command in War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), 168; Dominick Bidwell and Dominick Graham, *Fire Power: The British Army Weapons and Theories of War 1904-1945* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword, 2004), 1–2; Haycock and Neilson, *Men, Machines, and War*, 60.

10 Haycock and Neilson, *Men, Machines, and War*, 59; Ian Beckett, Timothy Bowman, and Mark Connelly, *The British Army and the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 187; Howard, *First World War*, 64; Keegan, *First World War*, 217.

reshaped British thinking about the nature of war and how it should be waged.[11] The battle drove the British government and Allied commanders to conduct a strategy of attrition on the Western Front.[12] Their ultimate plan was to wear their enemy's resources down to the point that a decisive breakthrough could occur.[13] The adoption of attrition strategy meant that the core purpose of British and dominion soldiers became to kill the enemy. As we have seen, the newly-appointed Commander-in-Chief of British and dominion forces, Field Marshall Sir Douglas Haig, saw no point in awarding medals to soldiers who had saved their countrymen's lives when their primary strategic role was to kill the enemy.[14] As this chapter will discuss in detail, Haig oversaw the issuing of an order that only "war-winning acts" should be recommended and awarded the VC.[15] Thus the Somme, Haig's ascent to leadership, and the implementation of an attrition strategy—all of which occurred between December 1915 and May 1917—fundamentally altered the type of acts that were predominantly awarded the VC.

This chapter outlines how British war strategy was connected to the British military's recognition of heroism. It examines the strategy employed by the British military in the early years of the war, how this was linked to broader concepts of an offensive-based military doctrine, and how such an approach to waging war was linked with neo-chivalric ideals of the military hero. Through this brief outline of British military strategy of 1914 to 1918, I show how war doctrine and recognised heroism were strongly linked and that the shift towards an attrition strategy in late 1916 profoundly reshaped the type of acts that were awarded the VC.

Such shifts in British strategy and recognised heroism directly affected Australian forces. This was because the AIF, as the historian Rhys Crawley has succinctly explained, "always operated as part of a British army, under British direction, with British support,

11 William Philpott, *Three Armies on the Somme: The First Battle of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Vintage Books, 2011), 8.

12 William Philpott, *Attrition: Fighting the First World War* (London: Hachette, 2014), 17; Allan Mallinson, *Too Important for the Generals: Losing and Winning the First World War* (London: Random House, 2016), 115; Philpott, *Bloody Victory*, 59.

13 Haycock and Neilson, *Men, Machines, and War*, 59.

14 Douglas Haig, *The Private Papers of Douglas Haig: 1914-1919* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1952), 79.

15 *Ibid*.

using British doctrine."[16] This meant that when four Australian infantry divisions were formed on the Western Front in March 1916—becoming five infantry divisions by November of that year—and fought in the Battle of the Somme in July, they did so under the ultimate command of British GHQ.[17] When British battle strategy adapted in late 1916 and early 1917 to better suit the conditions of the Western Front, such changes directly informed the way in which the AIF conducted battle. As Chapter One has also shown, Australian servicemen were subject to British ideals of heroism through the VC awarding process. Thus, the shift in both British strategy and its effects on how the VC was awarded, directly altered the official recognition of Australian heroism. It is important to note here that the shift in British war strategy of late 1916 and early 1917 disproportionately affected the way in which the VC was awarded to Australian forces compared to all other eligible nations. Australian servicemen were awarded more VCs for killing and fewer for lifesaving during this period than any other national force. This disparity between national forces will be discussed in detail in Chapter Three, whereas the focus of the present chapter is how the 1916/1917 shift in British war strategy profoundly influenced the manner in which the VC was awarded to all British and dominion forces.

The Victoria Cross: 1916–1918

The prerequisites for VC awards slowly adapted to suit the type of war being fought on the Western Front and the manner in which the Allies were fighting it. In assessing VC citations for this period, the same method of identification was used as detailed in Chapter One. The results showed a marked shift in proportions of VCs being awarded for saving and killing between 1916 and 1918.

Results of Victoria Cross Statistical Analysis: 1916 to 1918

The 1916 was a key turning point in the way that VCs were administered. Between January and the end of June, 29 VCs were awarded (see Chart 3 below). Of these 16 (55%) were awarded to men for having saved lives on the battlefield. Just five (17%) of these VCs were awarded to men for killing enemy soldiers. As Chapter One has

[16] Rhys Crawley, "'Backs to the Wall': Australians on the Western Front, January-June 1918," in *The AIF in Battle, How the Australian Imperial Force Fought, 1914-1918* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Publishing, 2016), 181.

[17] Bean, *Anzac to Amiens*, 187.

established, such high proportions of VCs conferred for life-saving actions had been the statistical norm since the inception of the medal. Yet in mid-1916, with the beginning of the Battle of the Somme and GHQ's shift towards a strategy of attrition, the traditional ideals that had underpinned how the VC was awarded began to alter. Between the first day of the Somme on 1 July and the end of 1916, 54 VCs were awarded. Of these, just 13 (24%) were conferred for actions that had explicitly saved or aimed to save life. Twenty-three (42%) of these VCs were awarded to men for having killed enemy combatants. More detailed statistics about the effect the Somme campaign had on the awarding of VCs will be discussed in a later section of this chapter. What is important to note from these figures here is that there was a distinct shift in the proportions of VCs awarded for life saving and killing, with killing now becoming the primary act of recognised heroism.

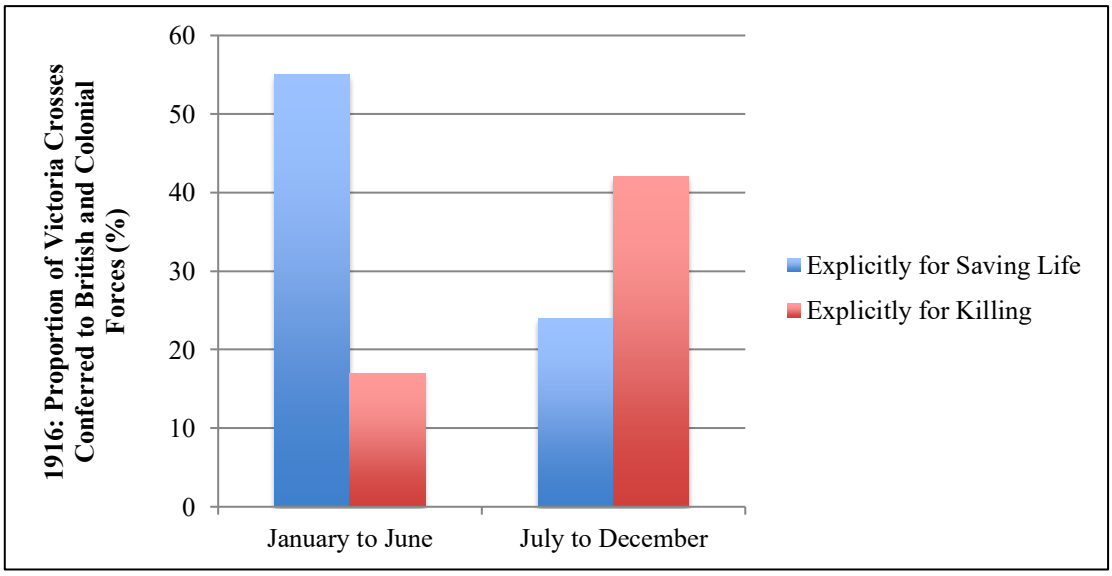


Chart 3 Proportion of Victoria Crosses Conferred to British and Colonial Forces (%) for Killing and Saving Life (1916). The proportion of Victoria Crosses awarded to British and dominion forces explicitly for acts of killing rose between June and July 1916. The proportion of VC awards explicitly for life saving also fell during this period.

Such a trend in VC conferrals continued and strengthened throughout the rest of the war. In 1917, 176 VCs were awarded to servicemen from all British and dominion nations (see Chart 4 below). These went predominantly to soldiers who fought in offensives along the Western Front at the Battle of Arras (9 April–16 May), the Second Battle of the Aisne (16 April–9 May and 24–26 October), the British Flanders Offensive (7 June–10 November), and the Battle of Cambrai (20 November–7 December). While some British commanders hoped to break through German lines during these campaigns—

most notably in the case of Haig's failed attempts to penetrate enemy defences at Flanders—the underlying or fallback strategy of such campaigns was attrition.[18] The VCs awarded during 1917 reflect this strategy, with 114 (64%) conferred specifically for acts of killing. While killing had become a far more important aspect of recognised heroism, the act of saving life had lost much of its value since early 1916. Just 26 (14%) of VCs awarded in 1917 were for actions that saved life.

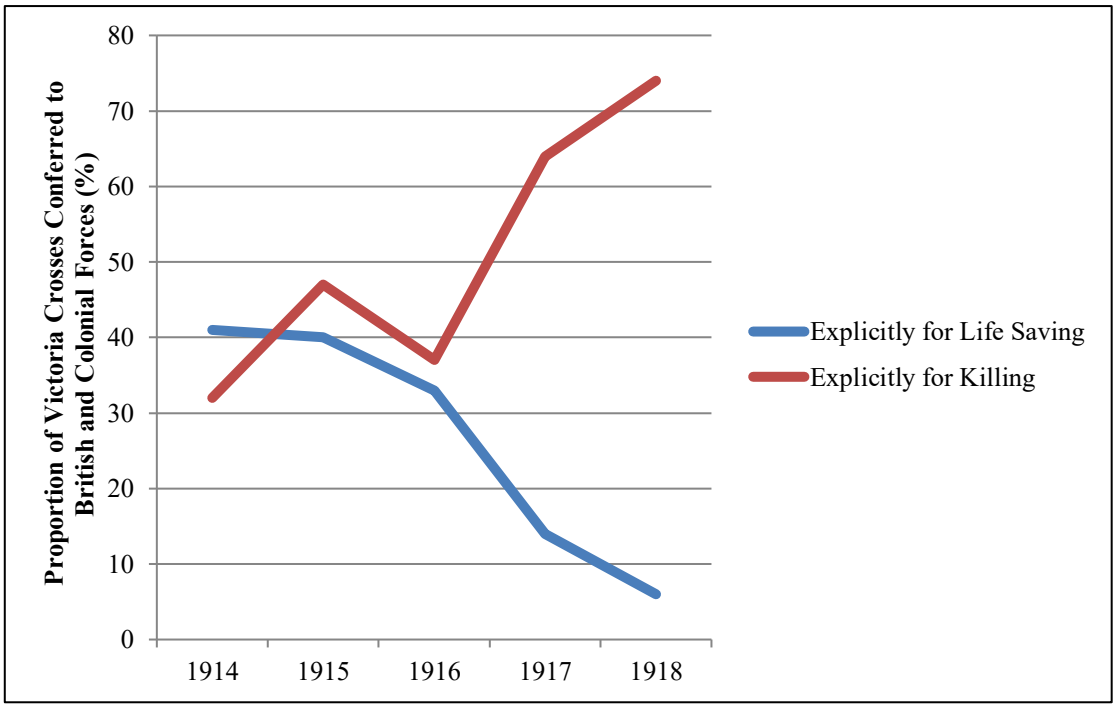


Chart 4 Proportion of Victoria Crosses Conferred to British and dominion Forces (%) for Killing and Saving Life (1914-1918). Between mid-1916 and November 1918, there was a steep rise in Victoria Crosses conferred to British and dominion servicemen explicitly for acts of killing, and a sharp decline in the proportion awarded explicitly for acts involving the saving of life.

The dramatic shift in conferrals explicitly for killing in 1917 continued into 1918 when the VC was almost exclusively awarded to men who had undertaken acts of killing. Just six percent (13) of the 206 VCs awarded during 1918 were explicitly for acts that saved life. When compared to the figures of 1914, in which 41 percent of VCs had been awarded for saving life, the statistics recorded for 1918 show how extreme the change in recognised heroism was over four years. Additionally, just 13 percent of VCs awarded to British and dominion servicemen in 1914 had been explicitly conferred for acts of killing, while in 1918 this proportion had risen to 74 percent (153). The figures for 1918 show a

[18] Beckett, Bowman, and Connelly, *The British Army and the First World War*, 187.

consistent trend in how VCs were awarded throughout the year, despite there being two distinct phases of warfare and battle strategies during the period.[19] Thus, while saving life had been the predominant act of high heroism at the start of the First World War, it was almost non-existent in VC citations in the year leading to armistice. In contrast, though killing had been an act that was recognised as heroic in 1914, by the end of the war it had become the key method by which a British or dominion serviceman could demonstrate their gallantry. British command had fundamentally altered the types of actions that were recognised as heroic between July 1916 and November 1918.

Victoria Cross Citations

Another notable change that occurred in the administering of VCs during the course of the First World War was the way soldiers' actions were described in official citations. As Chapter One outlines, VC citations of 1856 to 1916 depicted acts of killing with vague and obscure language. Such citations focused on the actions of the recipient and not the effects that such actions caused. But we find a sharp shift in 1916: for the first time, we find killing and death being named explicitly and on a regular basis in official VC citations.

As we saw in Chapter One, for decades VC citations had been characterised by their use of euphemism to describe acts of violence. An example of how killing was sanitised through language in VC citations from the early period of the First World War is found in Second Lieutenant Benjamin Geary's VC citation. The British Army officer was awarded the VC in 1915 after he and his men defended an exposed crater against continual enemy attacks. Geary was described as having "at one time…used a rifle to great effect, at another threw hand grenades."[20] What is exactly meant by "great effect" is not identified and the violence visited upon enemy soldiers is never explicitly named. Following the traditions of VC citations, the violent elements of Geary's act are diluted to better fit the neo-chivalric ideals that still underpinned recognised heroism in 1915. Within such a construct of heroism, acts of killing required linguistic tempering and this was true not just of VC citations but also, as we shall see in Chapters Four and Five, in newspaper depictions of the war.

[19] This point will be developed in greater detail later in this chapter.

[20] "The London Gazette 29328," 15 October 1915, The Gazette Archives, 10154.

Also fighting at Ypres in 1915, Private John Lynn of the Lancashire Fusiliers earned a VC when, "although almost overcome by the deadly fumes [of enemy gas], [he] handled his machine gun with very great effect against the enemy."[21] At one stage when Lynn had lost sight of the enemy he "moved his gun higher up on the parapet, which enabled him to bring even more effective fire to bear, and eventually checked any further advance."[22] The same month, Acting Corporal Charles Sharpe of the Lincolnshire Regiment earned a VC when he led a group to take a portion of German trench and "was the first to reach the enemy's position…using bombs with great determination and effect."[23] The cases of Geary, Lynn, and Sharpe are representative of hundreds of pre-1917 VC citations, which only vaguely allude to killing in their descriptions of medals awarded specifically for that act. In all three examples the act of killing is depicted as using a weapon with great "effect." Chapter One has already demonstrated how killing was commonly represented in vague terms such as "held-up," "cleared out," "dispersed," or "regained" in VC citations issued between 1856 and 1916. Such examples further demonstrate how VC citations omitted violence from depictions of acts that were awarded specifically for killing.

Yet, just as killing acts became more frequently awarded the VC after July 1916, VC citations increasingly depicted acts of killing with more candour. What can be determined from the VC citations of the first half of the war is that men were awarded for the valour of their actions rather than the effects that such acts had upon the enemy—such as leading to death. If this was the case in 1914 to 1916 it became far less so at the end of the Somme campaign in late 1916.

In September 1916 Acting Corporal Leo Clarke of the Canadian Expeditionary Force received a VC, the citation for which describes how:

> about twenty of the enemy with two officers counter-attacked. He boldly advanced against them, emptied his revolver into them and afterwards two enemy rifles which he picked up in the trench. One of the officers then, attacked him with the bayonet, wounding him in the leg, but he shot him

[21] "The London Gazette 29210," 29 June 1915, The Gazette Archives, 6270.

[22] *Ibid*.

[23] *Ibid.*

> dead. The enemy then ran away, pursued by Acting Corporal Clarke, who shot four more and captured a fifth.[24]

The tone of Clarke's citation is markedly different to those found in despatches between 1914 and the first half of 1916. Like earlier citations, it describes the protagonist's use of weapons and his successful defence of a position. What differentiates this account from those written earlier in the war is the blunt and graphic description of his action's effect on enemy combatants. In Clarke's fight with an enemy officer he is described as having "shot him dead"—a strikingly candid description of killing compared to past VC citations. We find here concrete descriptions of acts of violence featuring real human objects. Yet while Clarke's citation depicts killing more directly than those written earlier in the conflict, it still avoids the word "kill." Clarke's can be seen as an example of VC citations in transition between the chivalrous ideals and language used between 1856 and 1916 to describe heroism and the more direct depictions of killing that became the norm in VC citations during and after the implementation of an attrition strategy.

By 1917, the words "kill" and "killing" appeared far more regularly in VC citations than had been the case earlier in the war. An early example is that of Corporal William Clamp of the Yorkshire Regiment, who was posthumously awarded the VC after rushing an enemy position at the Battle of Poelcapelle in October 1917. The twenty-five-year-old's citation describes how he "was the first to reach the blockhouse and hurled in bombs, killing many of the occupants. He then entered and brought out a machine gun and about twenty prisoners, whom he brought back under heavy fire from neighbouring snipers."[25] Clamp's citation is typical of those that described killing acts in the latter part of the conflict in that it specifically mentions that the Corporal took the lives of enemy combatants. "Killing" was a term rarely seen in VC citations written earlier in the war, yet by 1917 it had become common.

Indeed, hundreds of the VC citations that were published between late 1916 and the end of the war use the terms "kill" or "killed." Among these citations is Private George McIntosh's of the Gordon Highlanders. At Ypres in July 1917, McIntosh is described as having "rushed forward under heavy fire, and, reaching the emplacement, he

[24] "The London Gazette 29802," 24 October 1916, The Gazette Archives, 10395.
[25] "The London Gazette 30433," 14 December 1917, The Gazette Archives, 13223.

threw a Mill's Grenade into it, killing two of the enemy and wounding a third."[26] Second Lieutenant Ernest Beal of the Yorkshire Regiment was awarded the VC for his actions at St-Léger, France on 21 and 22 March 1918 after:

> Organising a small party of less than a dozen men, he led them against the enemy. On reaching an enemy machine gun, 2nd Lt. Beal immediately sprang forward, and with his revolver killed the team and captured the gun. Continuing along the trench he encountered and dealt with another machine gun in the same manner, and in all captured four enemy guns, and inflicted severe casualties.[27]

Similarly, the Canadian Lieutenant John Brillant's VC citation describes how in August 1918 on the French lines, he "rushed and captured the machinegun, personally killing two of the enemy crew."[28] Later in the citation Brillant is again lauded for "personally killing five of the enemy" when attacking another position.[29]

The citation of Canadian officer Lieutenant George McKean also offers an excellent example of how a VC action that would once have been described ambiguously is portrayed in specific detail. In April 1918 at the Gavrelle Sector of France, the officer's squad:

> was held up at a block in the communication trench by the most intense fire from hand grenades and machine guns…Realising that if this block were not destroyed, the success of the whole operation might be marred, he ran into the open to the right flank of the block, and with utter disregard of danger, leaped over the block head first on top of the enemy. Whilst lying on the ground on top of one of the enemy, another rushed at him with fixed bayonet; Lt. McKean shot him through the body and then shot the enemy underneath him, who was struggling violently. This very gallant action enabled this position to be captured. Lt. McKean's supply of bombs ran out at this time, and he sent back to our front line for a fresh supply. Whilst waiting for them he engaged the enemy single-handed. When the bombs arrived, he fearlessly rushed the second block, killing two of the enemy, captured four others and drove the remaining garrison, including a hostile machine-gun section, into a dug-out. The dug-out, with its occupants and machine gun, was destroyed.[30]

The language and content used to define McKean's actions were far more graphic and direct than had been the case in the first half of the war, but not unusual for a VC citation

[26] "The London Gazette 30272," 4 September 1917, The Gazette Archives, 9260.

[27] "The London Gazette 30726," 31 May 1918, The Gazette Archives, 6572.

[28] "The London Gazette 30922," 24 September 1918, The Gazette Archives, 11429.

[29] *Ibid.*

[30] "The London Gazette 30770," 25 June 1918, The Gazette Archives, 7618.

of 1918. Where once McKean would have "dispersed" an amorphous "enemy," instead he now "shot him through the body." Where once the "enemy" would have offered "resistance," a specific enemy soldier is described as "struggling violently" in a desperate attempt to escape or subdue McKean. He too is "shot." McKean is not then described as using his bombs to "great effect" as was the case in many earlier citations, but as "killing two of the enemy" and ensuring that the remaining enemy soldiers were "destroyed."

There is nothing extraordinary or unusual about any of these men's citations. They were randomly selected from a list of servicemen who had received the VC explicitly for acts of killing between late 1916 and 1918. Indeed, far from being unusual, these cases are representative of the new norms that appeared in VC citations in late 1916. The actions of men were no longer described in isolation, but in connection to the specific damage that was caused to the enemy. In these examples all four men are clearly portrayed as having killed enemy combatants, thus the heroic act they undertook had also materially contributed to the war effort.

More common in the VC citations of late 1916 to 1918 were descriptions of men bayonetting the enemy. This specific trope underscores again how the general tone of VC citations had become more direct in their portrayals of killing after the Somme. The Royal Welsh Fusilier Lance-Sergeant William Waring's citation outlines how on 18 September 1918 during the Battle of Epehy, "in the face of devastating fire from flank and front, single-handed, [he] rushed a strong point, bayonetting four of the garrison and capturing 20 with their guns."[31] In a very similar action undertaken during the Battle of Passchendaele on 31 July 1917, Corporal James Davies, also of the Welsh Fusiliers, is described in his VC citation as having "attacked a machine gun emplacement…he bayonetted one of the machine gun crew and brought in another man," before he also "killed a sniper who was harassing his platoon."[32] Likewise, the English private Jack Harvey's VC citation, awarded for his actions in Peronne on 2 September 1918, describes how he "dashed forward through heavy enemy fire and rushed a machine gun post, shooting two of the team and bayonetting another."[33]

[31] "The London Gazette 31155," 28 January 1919, The Gazette Archives, 1504.
[32] "The London Gazette 30272," 4 September 1917, The Gazette Archives, 9260.
[33] "The London Gazette 31012," 12 November 1918, The Gazette Archives, 13473.

It is important to note that in each example—and in many VC citations like those for Waring, Davies, and Harvey—the soldiers' bayonetting and killing of the enemy form only part of the reason that they were reported to have earned the VC. Yet the fact that a description of these men bayonetting other soldiers is included in these citations, and many other citations from late 1916 onwards, shows how the language of VC citations had shifted from hiding the act of killing, to portraying it far more directly.

The Shift in Victoria Cross Awards

In Chapter One I identified how the heroic ideals that underpinned prerequisites for VC awards throughout the nineteenth century remained largely intact during the first years of the First World War. The analysis of VC awards and citations in the present section shows how these traditional ideals profoundly changed in late 1916 and early 1917. While humanitarianism and the saving of life were still deemed heroic in the latter half of the war, acts that embodied such values had been relegated to a lesser rung on the hierarchy of officially recognised valour.

As the figures in this section show, killing the enemy became, proportionally, the most commonly recognised act of courage on the battlefield for British and dominion troops. Seventy-four percent of VCs awarded in 1918 were for actions in which British and dominion soldiers had killed enemy combatants. In 1914 the proportion of actions awarded the VC for killing the enemy was a mere 13 percent. Thus, the type of action that was likeliest to earn a serviceman recognition as a VC hero altered dramatically between July 1914 and November 1918.

As we have seen, the way in which VC acts were described also dramatically changed between 1914 and 1918. Until the last years of the First World War, the official descriptions of VC actions had lauded exploits of "carrying" comrades out of danger and smothering bombs to protect others. During such years, killing actions were described in vague language that focused on a soldier's acts rather than the effects such acts had upon the enemy. By 1917, in the age of attrition strategy, VC citations portrayed the recipient's deed as well as the destructive results they had upon the enemy in equal measure. Killing had become the most important aspect of the VC award, both in the proportions in which it was awarded and in the official portrayals of the acts themselves.

Machine Warfare and British Battle Strategy 1914–16

That significant alterations occurred in Britain's highest military accolade for heroism during the First World War is clear. The question that arises from such statistical and textual data is, what caused this profound change? The remainder of this chapter sets out to answer this question. It shows that there were several factors which drove this shift, the most influential of which were the changes in British military strategy that took place during the Battle of the Somme (1 July–18 November).

Prior to the Somme, British First World War strategy had focused on achieving decisive advances through large assaults—a strategic concept subscribed to by most major European forces at the time and now referred to as the "cult of the offensive."[34] Offensive-focused strategy was closely connected with neo-chivalric ideals of the military hero. This is suggested by the fact that both the offensive-focused model of British war strategy and the neo-chivalric model of British military heroism endured the first years of the conflict, despite being unsuited to the realities of twentieth-century warfare.[35] Both models of war strategy and military heroism were also fundamentally adapted in late 1916 to better suit the war of attrition that had developed on the Western Front.[36] British military strategy had a key influence on how the VC was awarded because the commanders who were executing such strategies, such as the Commander-in-Chief of the BEF (1914–15) John French, the Secretary of the State for War (1914-15) Herbert Kitchener, and the Commander-in-Chief of the BEF (1915–18) Douglas Haig, were the same men responsible for approving or denying VC recommendations.[37] As this section will show, these commanders held traditional ideas of military strategy and heroism, believing that the morale, vigour, belief, and heroism of a body of men would overcome any obstacle on

34 On the Cult of the Offensive, see: Jack Snyder, *The Ideology of the Offensive: Military Decision Making and the Disasters of 1914* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), 10–11, 39, 216; James Joll and Gordon Martel, *The Origins of the First World War* (London: Routledge, 2013), 98, 124, 132; Stephen Van Evera, *Causes of War: Power and the Roots of Conflict* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), 137, 151; Azar Gat, *The Development of Military Thought: The Nineteenth Century* (London: Clarendon Press, 1992), 114, 139, 141; Trevor Nevitt Dupuy, *A Genius for War: The German Army and General Staff, 1807-1945* (London: Macdonald and Jane's, 1977), 12, 37; Azar Gat, *A History of Military Thought: From the Enlightenment to the Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 382, 407–9; Richard Frederick Hamilton, Richard F Hamilton, and Holger H Herwig, *The Origins of World War I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 150–54; Stephen Van Evera, "The Cult of the Offensive and the Origins of the First World War," *International Security* 9, no. 1 (1984): 58–107.

35 Snyder, *Ideology of the Offensive*, 10-11; Frantzen, *Bloody Good*, 135.

36 Mallinson, *Too Important for the Generals*, 82–105; William Philpott, *Bloody Victory: The Sacrifice on the Somme and the Making of the Twentieth Century* (London: Hachette, 2009), 102–25; John Mosier, *Verdun: The Lost History of the Most Important Battle of World War I* (London: Penguin, 2013), 219.

37 Smith, *Awarded for Valour*, 156–60; D'Alton, "Behind the Valour," 110.

the battlefield.[38] Such a strategy aligned with ideals of neo-chivalry, as it depended on men's coolness, bravery, self-sacrifice, and commitment to the cause of King and Country—all important attributes of the neo-chivalric hero.

This section briefly explores the battle strategy employed by the British military between 1914 and 1916, its foundation in nineteenth-century concepts of war, and its strong links with British neo-chivalric ideals of military heroism. By examining how British commanders executed the war between 1914 to 1916, this section establishes that the core British strategy during this time was to decisively break through the enemy lines.[39] As military strategy was strongly linked to ideals of the British military hero, when offensive-based strategy was replaced with a doctrine of attrition in late 1916, recognised military heroism also profoundly altered. Thus, through an examination of British strategy on the Western Front between 1914 and 1916, this section shows how war strategy was interlinked with military recognition of heroism. This link greatly influenced how British and dominion servicemen were awarded for heroism during the First World War, as the shift in strategy implemented by British GHQ affected the official requirements of recognised heroism for all forces fighting under their command. Thus, the shift in military strategy outlined in this thesis had a profound influence on the recognition and representation of Australian heroism.

The Cult of the Offensive

In the years leading up to the First World War, European armies had firmly adopted a belief that offensive doctrines, rather than defensive ones, were the key to victory in warfare.[40] The historian Stephen Van Evera's influential 1984 study into European commanders' strong prevalence for aggressive doctrines of attack, has persuasively shown how this "cult of the offensive" underpinned dominant military thinking and tactics in Europe in the lead up to war.[41] Van Evera provided a vast amount of primary evidence to

[38] Frantzen, *Bloody Good*, 155; Neilson, *Men, Machines, and War*, 42.

[39] Snyder, *Ideology of the Offensive*, 10–11, 39, 216; Van Evera, *Causes of War*, 137, 151; Gat, *A History of Military Thought: From the Enlightenment to the Cold War*, 407–9; Van Evera, "Cult of the Offensive," 58–107; Travers, *The Killing Ground*, 38, 257.

[40] Snyder, *Ideology of the Offensive,*, 10–11, 39, 216; Joll and Martel, *Origins of the First World War*, 98, 124, 132; Van Evera, *Causes of War,* 137, 151; Gat, *Development of Military Thought,* 114, 139, 141; Dupuy, *Genius for War*, 12, 37; Gat, *History of Military Thought,* 382, 407–9; Hamilton, Hamilton, and Herwig, *Origins of World War I*, 150–54; Van Evera, "Cult of the Offensive," 58–107.

[41] *Ibid*.

clearly outline the "offensive military doctrines that every major European military adopted during the period 1892-1913."[42] The best examples of how prominent the European belief that offensive action was the key to military victory are seen in the war strategies of Germany and France.

At the outbreak of war in 1914, the German Army initiated the Schlieffen Plan, a detailed war strategy designed to win the conflict in Europe.[43] Originally developed by the German Field Marshall Alfred von Schlieffen in 1905 and subsequently updated and enacted by General Helmuth von Moltke, the Schlieffen Plan was an offensive strategy that aimed to quickly envelop and defeat France's armies and end the war on Germany's Western Front within six weeks.[44] Believing that Germany would risk invasion by Russia and France in the event of war, Schlieffen based his plan on the idea that "attack is the best defence."[45] The German Chief of Staff, General Helmuth von Moltke, supported the "principle that the offensive is the best defence."[46] Thus when war looked unavoidable in September 1914—a situation brought about in no small part by such rigid adherence to the offensive military strategies of the German and Russian armies—Germany launched an attack on Belgium and France with the expectation that such an attack would bring about an overwhelming and abrupt victory.[47]

As Germany enacted their Schlieffen Plan, the French launched Plan XVII—developed in 1912 by French General Staff for implementation in the event of war with Germany.[48] The plan was based around the fast deployment of French troops to the frontier, so that they could invade Germany before their troops were fully mobilised.[49] The plan's principles were based around the French ideal of *élan*, a term that encapsulated

42 *Ibid*.

43 Ian Senior, *Invasion 1914: The Schlieffen Plan to the Battle of the Marne* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014), 12–28.

44 Arden Bucholz, *Moltke, Schlieffen, and Prussian War Planning* (London: Berg, 1991), 208; Van Evera, *Causes of War,* 21.

45 Gerhard Ritter, *The Schlieffen Plan: Critique of a Myth* (Westport: Greenwood Press, [1958] 1979), 100.

46 Van Evera, "Cult of the Offensive," 59.

47 David W Ziegler, *War, Peace, and International Politics* (New York: Little, Brown, 1987), 22–24; Barbara W Tuchman, *The Guns of August* (New York: Macmillan, 1962), 72; Michael E Brown *et al., Offense, Defence, and War* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2004), 96; Keegan, *First World War*, 123.

48 Richard F Hamilton and Holger H Herwig, *War Planning 1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 157; Dong Sun Lee, *Power Shifts, Strategy and War: Declining States and International Conflict* (London: Routledge, 2007), 69–72.

49 Hamilton and Herwig, *War Planning 1914*, 157; Lee, *Power Shifts, Strategy and War,* 69–72.

the supposed vigour, liveliness, and zeal of the French people. According to French civilian and military leaders, *élan* was a trait that could only be expressed on the battlefield through spirited attack.[50] The Commander-in-Chief of French forces on the Western Front in 1914, General Joseph Joffre, claimed that the French Army "no longer knows any other law than the offensive," and that "any other conception ought to be rejected as contrary to the very nature of war."[51] Marshall Ferdinand Foch, who would serve as the Allied Commander-in-Chief in 1918, recalled that the French Army had one "single formula for success, a single combat doctrine, namely, the decisive power of offensive action undertaken with the resolute determination to march on the enemy, reach and destroy him."[52] The belief in the effectiveness and superiority of offensive action compared to defensive doctrines of war was not only held by Joffre and Foch, but was emblematic of understandings of war throughout the French and German militaries.[53]

The cult of the offensive was also a prevailing tactical doctrine within the British army. Prior to the outbreak of war, many senior generals in the British army had voiced their belief that attacking the enemy with a force of soldiers who were well-disciplined and had high morale was the key to victory on the battlefield. General Haig wrote in 1907 that "success in battle depends mainly on moral[e], and a determination to conquor [*sic*]."[54] General RCB Hawking professed his belief that the offensive "will win as sure as there is a sun in the heavens."[55] General William Robertson was reported to have advised a class of army officer graduates that in battle they should "go for your man as soon as you can; only by the offensive can you win."[56]

The men who held these beliefs made up the central command of the British army for most of the First World War and their conviction that the offensive was a war-winning

50 Tuchman, *Guns of August*, 31.

51 Holger H Herwig, *The First World War: Germany and Austria-Hungary 1914-1918* (London: A&C Black, 2014), 36; Van Evera, "Cult of the Offensive," 60.

52 Richard D Challener, *The French Theory of the Nation in Arms, 1866-1939* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1965), 81; Roger L Ransom, *Gambling on War: Confidence, Fear, and the Tragedy of the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 58.

53 Snyder, *Ideology of the Offensive*; Van Evera, "Cult of the Offensive;" Van Evera, *Causes of War*; Travers, *Killing Ground*.

54 Douglas Haig, *Cavalry Studies: Strategical and Tactical* (London: Hugh Rees, Ltd., 1907), 142.

55 Timothy Travers, "Technology, Tactics, and Morale: Jean de Bloch, the Boer War, and British Military Theory, 1900-1914," *Journal of Modern History* 51, no. 2 (June 1979): 257.

56 Travers, *Killing Ground*, 53.

tactic was shared widely throughout BEF leadership.[57] The adherence to offensive action is evident in the tactics used during the British battles of 1914 to 1916. Wherever possible, British command opted for large-scale offensive actions that they hoped would prove decisive.[58] As will be discussed, by 1916 the belief that an irrepressible offensive action could win the war had been abandoned by many British commanders and far more nuanced military strategies for victory were beginning to gain support.[59] Yet prior to the Somme, and in the years leading up to the war, British generalship followed Europe in its wholehearted belief in the power of the offensive. As the historian Timothy Travers has convincingly argued, "while the British army in general rejected any fixed doctrine of war…a doctrine did emerge…this was the doctrine of offensive at all costs."[60] While the doctrine of offensive warfare that was practised by British military command has been a source of widespread criticism from military historians, some have also argued that it was the only reasonable strategy available to the British army in the first years of the war.[61] Whatever the case, in August 1914 technology had rendered the cult of the offensive an obsolete strategy for modern war.

The Weapons of Modern War

There had been several signs prior to the first shots of 1914 that warfare had fundamentally changed. The French Revolutionary Wars had offered an example of the vast armies that were possible through widespread conscription.[62] The American Civil

[57] Paul Harris and Sanders Marble, "The 'Step-by-Step' Approach: British Military Thought and Operational Method on the Western Front, 1915—1917," *War in History* 15, no. 1 (January 2008): 17–21; Spencer Jones, *From Boer War to World War: Tactical Reform of the British Army, 1902–1914* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2013), 156–59; Paddy Griffith, *Battle Tactics of the Western Front: The British Army's Art of Attack, 1916-18* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 50, 229; David T Zabecki, *The Generals' War: Operational Level Command on the Western Front in 1918* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2018), 32; AJ Echevarria II, "The 'Cult of the Offensive' Revisited: Confronting Technological Change Before the Great War," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 25, no. 1 (March 2002): 199–203; Timothy Travers, "The Offensive and the Problem of Innovation in British Military Thought 1870-1915," *Journal of Contemporary History* 13, no. 3 (1978): 531–42; Travers, "Technology, Tactics, and Morale:" 264–69; Van Evera, "Cult of the Offensive," 60–65; Van Evera, *Causes of War*, 195–98; Joll and Martel, *Origins of the First World War*, 132; Travers, *Killing Ground*, 16–20; Snyder, *Ideology of the Offensive*, 24–30; Dixon and Dixon, *On The Psychology Of Military Incompetence*, 372.

[58] Hart, *Great War*, 139.

[59] *Ibid*.; Harris and Marble, "'Step-by-Step' Approach," 19–21.

[60] Travers, *Killing Ground*, 60.

[61] Griffith, *Battle Tactics of the Western Front*, 41–42; Echevarria II, "'Cult of the Offensive' Revisited," 199–206.

[62] Meyer Kestnbaum, "Citizen-Soldiers, National Service and the Mass Army: The Birth of Conscription in Revolutionary Europe and North America," *Comparative Social Research* 20 (January 2002): 117–44.

War had shown how steam trains and ships could quickly transport large numbers of troops and amounts of material to a battle zone.[63] The Russo-Japanese war demonstrated the scale of destruction that could be wrought by accurate carbine rifles, fast-loading, long-range artillery, and the widespread use of machine guns.[64] The Second Boer War provided evidence that a dug-in enemy that used smokeless powder—and were therefore difficult to detect when firing their weapons—and employed barbed wire as a defensive barrier were nearly impossible to overcome through frontal assaults.[65] The conflicts that preceded the First World War had clearly shown that modern weaponry favoured defensive tactics and had rendered offensive manoeuvres extremely costly and unlikely to succeed.

The Polish entrepreneur and economist Jan Bloch was one of the few pre-war figures to accurately predict the effects that such advances in weapons technology would have on the nature of war. Bloch's popular book of 1899 asked in the title of its English edition, *Is War Now Impossible?* The author confidently asserted that war between two large European states was impossible, as the cost to each belligerent's economy and manpower would prove catastrophic. Bloch envisioned a scene of battle fought with modern weapons:

> The firing lines will advance one after the other, battalions will march after battalions; finally the reserves will follow. Yet with all this movement in the two armies there will be a belt of a thousand paces wide, separating them as by neutral territory, swept by the fire of both sides, a belt which no living being can stand for a moment. The ammunition will be almost exhausted, millions of cartridges, thousands of shells will cover the soil. But the fire will continue until the empty ammunition cases are replaced with full…The battle will continue with ferocity. But still that thousand paces unchangingly separate the foes.[66]

Bloch's prediction was a prescient vision of the trenches and no man's lands that would make up the Western Front fifteen years later. His belief was that modern weaponry would overwhelmingly favour defensive rather than offensive tactics in war and that the result would be a long and destructive stalemate. Such calculations of the modern battlefield served to "illustrate a thought which, since the perfection of weapons, has occupied the

63 Robert R. Hodges Jr, *American Civil War Railroad Tactics* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2012).

64 John W. Steinberg, "Was the Russo-Japanese War World War Zero?" *Russian Review*, no. 1 (2008): 7.

65 Howard, "Men against Fire," 46.

66 Jan Gotlib Bloch, *Is War Now Impossible? Being an Abridgment of "The War of the Future in Its Technical, Economic and Political Relations"* (London: Richards, 1899), xxix–xxx.

minds of all thinking people."[67] Yet while Bloch understood that the innovations in weapons and war technology would lead to an impassable no man's land, he was also aware that most of the government and military leaders of Europe were "constrained to admit that between combatants will always be an impassable zone of fire deadly in an equal degree to both the foes."[68] Thus Bloch was proven correct not just in his vision of early twentieth-century warfare, but also in the reluctance of military commanders to understand and adapt to such realities.

Bloch's views were ignored or disparaged by the military classes. The British Lieutenant General Ian Hamilton wrote in 1910 that a "blindness to moral forces and worship of material forces inevitably lead in war to destruction."[69] Hamilton's key point was that despite the advances made in weapons technology since the last great conflict, victory in war remained dependent on the men who fought it rather than the machines they fought it with. This was a view shared by most military commanders in Europe and one that bolstered belief in the idea that overwhelming offensive actions undertaken by men with high morale could win any war. Hamilton therefore dismissed "all that trash written by M. Bloch before 1904 about zones of fire across which no living being could pass."[70] Hamilton instead reflected the dominant belief throughout European military commands that "war is essentially the triumph…not of a line of men entrenched behind wire entanglements and fireswept zones over men exposing themselves in the open, but of one will over another weaker will."[71] Despite the lessons provided by wars of the late nineteenth century, British army command still believed in the cult of the offensive.

The Second Boer War had taught British commanders some lessons about modern weapons, manoeuvre, and soldiering. The historian Spencer Jones notes that the BEF began training soldiers to use their initiative in response to the large chaotic battles of the Second Boer War, where men had often been separated from their leaders.[72] Yet while the Second Boer War had shown BEF leaders a glimpse of the destructiveness wrought by

[67] *Ibid.,* xxx.

[68] *Ibid*.

[69] Ian Sir Hamilton and RB Haldane, *Compulsory Service: A Study of the Question in the Light of Experience* (London: J. Murray, 1910), 121.

[70] *Ibid*.

[71] *Ibid*., 122.

[72] Jones, *From Boer War to World War,* 114–117.

modern weaponry, little was done to prepare the force to face such weapons in the future. In a 1902 committee on the training of officers, one committee member declared that the Second Boer War was "altogether on a different plane from what a war in Europe would be, and therefore you will not learn much by it."[73] The experience of the Second Boer War did lead to organizational restructuring and better training practices in the BEF, but the predominant British battle strategy—insofar as such a thing existed—remained based upon the belief that a spirited attack launched by men and cavalry would always prove victorious over machines.[74]

Britain in the War of Manoeuvre 1914

The scale of the Western Front battlefields was unprecedented in European history, yet for a nation that had largely defended its interests through the navy and relatively small colonial land wars, Britain was especially ill prepared for a mass modern conflict. The country entered the war without a firm or coherent strategy for victory and were unsure of the part that they were to play on the Western Front. The military historian Aimée Fox has argued that "historically, the [British] army was an institution averse to doctrine," and this was especially the case in their cooperation with the French.[75] William Philpott's study into *Anglo-French Relations and Strategy on the Western Front* has also shown that "while steps had been taken to provide France with military support against Germany since 1905, the vital questions of strategic deployment and military coordination remained unresolved when war broke out."[76] Indeed arguments between British military and government leaders about war strategy raged until as late as 12 August, John French, Herbert Kitchener, the Director of Military Operations at the War Office Sir Henry Wilson, and a small delegation of French officers, arguing over where they should concentrate BEF troops in France.[77]

[73] "Report of the Committee Appointed to Consider the Education and Training of Officers of the Army," Cmnd Paper 982, Parliamentary Papers (His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1902), 101.

[74] Evera, *Causes of War*; Evera, "Cult of the Offensive;" William Philpott, *Anglo-French Relations and Strategy on the Western Front, 1914–18* (New York: Springer, 2016); Travers, *Killing Ground*; Howard, "Men against Fire;" Jones, *From Boer War to World War*.

[75] Aimée Fox, *Learning to Fight* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 20–21.

[76] Philpott, *Anglo-French Relations*, 1.

[77] Roy A Prete, *Strategy and Command: The Anglo-French Coalition on the Western Front, 1914* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's Press, 2009), 88.

The ambiguity over Britain's role in the war meant that their four infantry divisions and one cavalry division disembarked in France from 16 August without a clear strategy for victory.[78] There was uncertainty over the role British forces were to play in the European war, which can be seen in Kitchener's contradictory orders to French in August. Kitchener explained that the "special motive of the Force under your control is to support and cooperate with the French Army against our common enemies," but he also stressed that "the greatest care must be exercised towards a minimum of losses and wastage."[79] "The gravest consideration will devolve upon you," wrote Kitchener, "as to participation in forward movements where large bodies of French troops are not engaged and where your Force may be unduly exposed to attack."[80] Kitchener's concern was the small number of men in the BEF and the limited reserves that were immediately available. Unlike most, Kitchener believed that the war would be long and so in 1914 his primary ambition was to keep the BEF in existence. Thus, while he ordered the British force to help their French allies, he also stressed the need to keep losses low and to therefore avoid large-scale offensive actions.

Kitchener believed that the war would be long and destructive and subsequently attempted to keep the BEF intact through 1914 by avoiding costly engagements.[81] One of the "most striking phenomena of August 1914," Travers has observed in his thorough study of the BEF, was that British officers had believed the war "would be short in duration, tactically simple, and structured in well-understood stages" and that the "army with the right offensive spirit would prevail."[82] Yet though many British officers entered France eager to launch offensives against the enemy, in their first engagement of the war they undertook a holding action at Mons, eventually retreating in order not to lose touch with the withdrawing French Army.[83] On 26 August the BEF continued their fighting retreat with French forces at the Battle of Le Cateau.[84] During the BEF's withdrawal, French refused to support General Lanrezac's successful offensive against Germany's

78 Philpott, *Anglo-French Relations*, 10–11.

79 Sheffield and Bourne, *Douglas Haig*, 43.

80 *Ibid.*

81 George H Cassar, *Kitchener's War: British Strategy from 1914-1916* (Lincoln: Potomac Books, Inc., 2014), 182.

82 Travers, *Killing Ground*, 251.

83 Beckett, Bowman, and Connelly, *British Army and the First World War*, 49.

84 Richard Holmes, *The Little Field Marshal: A Life of Sir John French* (London: Orion Publishing Group, 2005), 226.

Second Army on 27 August and moved the BEF much further behind the fighting lines than Kitchener or Joffre thought necessary.[85]

After over a week of retreat, the French Army were determined to launch a counter-attack at the Marne to defend Paris.[86] Despite the pre-war belief in the offensive, French was planning a full retreat of the BEF from France.[87] It required invocations from Kitchener and a heartfelt plea from Joffre at a meeting on 5 September to convince French to deploy his forces in the successful Marne counter-attack.[88] Yet even in this operation the BEF advanced slowly against little opposition. Despite comprehensively outnumbering the enemy, the BEF advanced a mere forty kilometres in three days.[89] The force's key contribution at the Marne was therefore the threat that they had posed to the German army rather than any actual offensive engagement.[90] Thus, after nearly a month of fighting on the Western Front, the BEF had yet to launch an offensive action that resembled their pre-war tactical ethos of warfare.

Finally, in the wake of the success of the Marne, British forces launched an offensive against German positions at the Aisne between 12 and 15 September 1914.[91] The attack was repelled largely through enemy machine-gun fire, inflicting heavy losses.[92] In their first proper offensive action, the BEF underwent an experience that proved to be a taste of what was to come in the next three years of frontal assaults. The failure of an Allied offensive led to the entrenchment of both sides at the Aisne and a "Race to the Sea" between 22 September and the end of November, in which each side attempted to encircle the other's northern flank.[93] This succession of attempted flanking movements led to battles at the Somme, Artois, French Flanders, Ypres, and the Belgian coast.[94] At Ypres the BEF carried out a hard-fought, costly, and ultimately successful defence that resulted

85 *Ibid*.

86 Holger H Herwig, *The Marne, 1914: The Opening of World War I and the Battle That Changed the World* (London: Random House Publishing Group, 2009), 254.

87 Beckett, Bowman, and Connelly, *British Army and the First World War*, 50–51.

88 Herwig, *The Marne, 1914*, 254.

89 *Ibid*.

90 *Ibid*.

91 Stevenson, *1914–1918*, 61.

92 *Ibid*.

93 Andrew Rawson, *British Expeditionary Force: The 1914 Campaign* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword, 2014), 247.

94 *Ibid*.

in both sides entrenching their positions.[95] By the end of the Battle of Ypres, the Western Front had become a largely static system of defensive trenches.[96] The war of manoeuvre had ended and with it, ironically, the portion of the conflict in which British command had been most hesitant to commit to their pre-war doctrine of offense and manoeuvre. In 1915, when the Western Front had transformed into vast arrays of near-impenetrable defensive trench networks, the British were at last ready to launch their own offensive operations.

Britain and the War of Defence 1915–1916

After the French victory at the Marne, the race to the sea, and the settling into rigid frontlines of trenches, British strategy in 1915 centred upon the idea of breaking through the German lines—preferably using cavalry—and throwing their enemy's armies into disarray.[97] This was a method that had no chance of victory on the battlefields of 1915. Military machines had become more powerful than the most spirited of frontal assaults, yet this new reality of warfare was not fully appreciated by British General staff until the last phases of the Somme campaign. Between 1915 and 1916, British and dominion commanders waged war with tactics that were unsuited to the conflict on the Western Front.

In planning the first British-only offensive of the war at Neuve Chapelle, French believed that the BEF could effect a decisive breakthrough of the German lines.[98] He also assumed that British cavalry would play an important role in creating this breach.[99] Initially, French's plan looked to be coming to fruition, when British forces broke through the first lines of German defence and quickly seized Neuve Chapelle on the morning of 10 March.[100] German defences eventually reorganised just as the British encountered their own operational problems, such as a shortage of artillery ammunition. Though the plan had been to advance into German territory as far as Aubers Ridge or Lille, the attack faltered and was eventually called off on 13 March.[101]

95 Philpott, *Anglo-French Relations*, 106–40.

96 *Ibid*.

97 Stephen Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform in the British Cavalry 1880–1918* (London: Routledge, 2016).

98 Holmes, *Little Field Marshal*, 272.

99 *Ibid.*

100 Paul Kendall, *The Battle of Neuve Chapelle: Britain's Forgotten Offensive of 1915* (Barnsley: Frontline Books, 2016), 44.

101 *Ibid.,* 45–46.

On 9 May the British launched an assault in support of the French Tenth Army with the hope of capturing Aubers Ridge.[102] The Germans had learned lessons from their defensive lapse at Neuve Chapelle and had increased the depth of their barbed wire and made better use of their machine gun positions.[103] The result was a disaster for British forces, sustaining over eleven thousand casualties while seizing no ground.[104] A week later another attempt was made to support the French Tenth Army's offensive commenced at Festubert. Again, the result was minimal gains—just three kilometres were captured from the Germans—at the cost of over 16,648 casualties.[105]

Despite the battles of early 1915 being either partial successes or abject failures, French believed they had "proved that a breakthrough could be achieved."[106] On 25 September the BEF launched an offensive at Loos, again with the objective of breaking through the German lines and causing the enemy to retreat in disarray.[107] This offensive was the largest British attack of 1915, with freshly arrived infantry and cavalry divisions as well as more artillery ammunition than had been the case in prior battles.[108] Despite these advantages, the Battle of Loos lasted until 13 October and cost the BEF 59,247 casualties with only marginal gains in territory.[109] The overarching lesson of Neuve Chapelle, Aubers Ridge and Festubert was that it was very difficult on the Western Front for an attacking force to overcome entrenched defensive positions and impossible to achieve the type of war-ending breakthrough envisioned by John French. This lesson was, and would remain, unheeded by British command.

The belief that a spirited attack would create a breakthrough in the German lines and win a decisive victory that could hasten the end of the war was one that should have been discarded by British commanders early in 1915. Quartermaster General William Robertson documented the issues with such a strategy in February, before the British had

102 Adrian Bristow, *A Serious Disappointment: The Battle of Aubers Ridge 1915 and the Munitions Scandal* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword, 1995), 162.

103 *Ibid*.

104 *Ibid*.

105 James Edwards Edmonds (Major.), *Military Operations: France and Belgium, 1915. Battles of Aubers Ridge, Festubert, and Loos, Maps and Sketches* (London: Macmillan, 1928), 74.

106 Hugh Montagu Butterworth, *Blood and Iron: Letters from the Western Front* (Philadelphia: Casemate Publishers, 2011), 69.

107 Nick Lloyd, *Loos 1915* (Gloucestershire: History Press, 2008), 61.

108 *Ibid.,* 77.

109 Edmonds (Major.), *Military Operations*, 392–93.

made a major assault. His view was that "if the Germans are to be defeated they must be beaten by a process of slow attrition, by a slow and gradual advance on our part, each step being prepared by predominant artillery fire and great expenditure of ammunition."[110] His views were supported by the subsequent failures at Aubers Ridge (9 May) and Festubert (15–25 May) and costly, partial gains at Neuve Chapelle (10–13 March) and Loos (25 September–8 October).[111]

The reasons such campaigns did not manage to break through the enemy lines were manifold. A lack of supplies of both men and munitions rendered it difficult to achieve any great success against the strength of the German army. Artillery strategy was still an evolving art that was not yet efficient at clearing battlefield defences such as barbed wire.[112] Attacks led on narrow fronts also contributed to the high casualties and limited gains achieved by the British during these assaults. All such limitations would have been less severe had British command not continuously attempted to seek extensive gains outside their lines of communication and artillery support.[113] Despite successive failures and expensive, limited successes occurring as a result of the strategic flaw of overreaching, British commanders stuck to the traditional principles of warfare.

The British did develop tactical improvements after their initial experiences on the Western Front. Through the battles of 1915, British generalship realised the necessity of preparatory artillery attacks before infantry assaults and the territorial objectives of the Battle of Festubert had been comparatively lower than at Neuve Chapelle and Aubers Ridge.[114] Yet "what is striking about senior British army officers before and during the First World War," Travers has surmised, "was their ready acceptance of new weapons, but their emotional difficulty in coming to mental grips with the tactical and command changes implied by the new or improved technology."[115] Even in the face of stark military defeats, French and his staff believed that a decisive British breakthrough of the German lines, the sort that had been taught at officer training colleges and in field manuals during the nineteenth century, remained an attainable goal. It was this stubborn rigidity in the

110 Travers, *Killing Ground*, 20.
111 Rawson, *British Expeditionary Force,* 247–331.
112 Fussell, *First World War and Modern Memory,* 11.
113 Travers, *Killing Ground*, 24–25.
114 Cassar, *Kitchener's War,* 234–71.
115 Travers, *Killing Ground*, 16.

British military that had led Bloch to claim in 1901 that the "steadfastness with which the military caste clings to the memory of a state of things which has already died is pathetic and honorable…unfortunately it is also costly and dangerous."[116] Just as Bloch's vision of the Western Front had proven portentous, his belief that there would be a human cost to the British military's strategic rigidity was also proven correct in the battles of 1915.

The Neo-Chivalric Hero in Modern War

Intractably linked with the traditional military belief in offensive action was the conviction that a disciplined force of men with high morale could overcome any defensive obstacle. Van Evera has explored pre-war and wartime strategy manuals, diaries, and despatches that strongly indicate British officers believed "superior morale on the attacking side could overcome superior defensive firepower…mind would prevail over matter; morale would triumph over machine guns."[117] The widespread belief that heroism could overcome modern weapons was a driving force behind the numerous frontal attacks launched by British commanders against firmly entrenched enemy positions throughout the First World War. Despite the clear shift in warfare that had occurred as a result of weapon developments, the conviction that soldiers could influence the outcome of a battle through individual heroism remained largely unchanged.

This continued belief in the importance of individual heroism is clear in the types of acts that earned VCs during 1914 and 1915. As outlined in Chapter One, VCs were conferred for much the same reasons in the first years of the First World War as they had been since the medal's inception in 1856. Two years of modern war and modern weapons did not profoundly reshape the prerequisites or widespread understandings of established heroic ideals. This is despite such weapons rendering acts of individual heroism far less likely and far less relevant to the outcome of battles.

The historian and theorist Omer Bartov has also noted how heroic ideals in the first years of the First World War only marginally altered, when such brutal warfare "might have been expected to erase forever all romantic notions of battle, since that vast factory of death seemed to have destroyed the very elements of human individuality: courage,

116 Ham, *1914*, 20.
117 Van Evera, "Cult of the Offensive," 61.

hope, enterprise, and a sense of the heroic possibilities in moral and physical conflict."[118] Yet, the factory of death wrought by machines on the Western Front had very little effect on the ideals that underpinned military tactics and military heroism. What the combat of 1914 and, particularly, 1915 should have shown British leadership, was that the discipline, training, and morale of men had only a partial effect on the outcomes of modern battles. Bartov quotes a German soldier who noted that during a British attack on his entrenched position, "we just had to load and reload. They went down in their hundreds. You didn't have to aim, we just fired into them."[119] The heroism, discipline, and morale of a British soldier mattered little when he was walking across an open field towards an entrenched machine-gun position or huddled to the earth during an artillery bombardment. Men were, obviously, essential to the waging of war, but in the First World War it was machines that often determined the results of battles.

Despite this clear dominance of military machines over the heroic man, the model of neo-chivalric heroism continued to be applied by commanders and many of the men in the trenches themselves.[120] Bartov has stated that, "in 1914, chivalry was annihilated in a mechanical war," but, as he later notes, this was not immediately appreciated.[121] Certainly, the ideals of neo-chivalric heroism should have died at Neuve Chapelle, but they lingered. In his study of the predominant role of weapons in determining military outcomes on the Western Front, Prior has argued that, "the primacy of the martial virtues of the warrior as the determinant of victory should have ended in 1914. But it did not."[122] British commanders of 1914 and 1915 believed that the discipline, morale, and courage of soldiers, if properly harnessed, would eventually overcome any amount of modern weaponry.

While in 1907 Douglas Haig had written of "the increased range and killing power of modern guns," he still stated his belief that success in modern war, just as the "successes of Napoleon, Alexander, Hannibal, and Caesar were based on…moral

[118] Omer Bartov, *Murder in Our Midst: The Holocaust, Industrial Killing, and Representation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 23.

[119] Bartov, "Man and the Mass," 109.

[120] *Ibid.*

[121] *Ibid.*, 111.

[122] Prior, "Heroic Image," 43.

force."[123] Haig viewed the morale of soldiers as being the most important prerequisite to success in battle. A similar understanding of war tactics was displayed by British Commander-in-Chief John French when he assessed the outcomes of small patrol skirmishes early in the war as demonstrating the "moral superiority of British over German" soldiers, which offered "good grounds for confidence" in an overall victory.[124] Travers has noted how steadfastly "John French and then Haig clung to an earlier paradigm of war," in their times as Commander-in-Chief of the BEF.[125] At the centre of this traditional paradigm for war was the soldier's courage, discipline, morale, and agency on the battlefield. It would take another major military calamity at the Battle of the Somme before serious concessions in British war strategy were made to accommodate and counter-act the effects of modern weapons. Accompanying this shift away from the traditional ideals of military tactics came a profound alteration to the traditional ideals of military heroism.

"Idealism perished": The Somme

The carnage and waste of the four-month Somme offensive created a fissure in British values and ideals. Among the hundreds of thousands of dead on the Somme battlefields lay the principles of honour and neo-chivalry that had been crafted by Victorian elites and enhanced by their Edwardian counterparts.[126] Whether or not the battle itself can be seen as a failure or success, its sheer destruction and meagre territorial gains instigated a general strategic rethink in British command and a subsequent alteration of the heroic model. Hew Strachan has convincingly argued that in a strategic sense, "1916 is more significant than even 1914," as it has been generally agreed by scholars that the Somme "represented a caesura in the history of modern war."[127] The aftermath of the battle not only caused a change in British strategy but a change in British ideals. With the grim realities and full force of mechanised battle so starkly demonstrated, the Somme served as a breaking point between the pre-war emphasis on morale, honour, and courage with what

123 Haig, *Cavalry Studies*, 8, 175.

124 John Denton Pinkstone French and Winston Churchill, *1914* (London: Constable, 1919), 55.

125 Travers, *Killing Ground*, 252.

126 Philpott, *Bloody Victory,* 602–3; Connor, *Someone Else's War*, 174.

127 Hew Strachan, "The Battle of the Somme and British Strategy," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 21, no. 1 (March 1998): 80.

Watson and Porter have labelled the "irony and cynicism" of the twentieth century.[128] AJP Taylor's observation that "idealism perished on the Somme" was a reflection of both the strategic and Victorian ideals that informed the concepts of martial heroism.[129] By the end of the campaign it had become clear to many that the machine would conclusively beat the man and consequently pre-war, neo-chivalric traits could no longer serve as features of the effective, modern soldier.

The experience of the Somme was nearly as disillusioning for Australian forces as it was for the British. The failed Anglo-Australian diversionary attack on Fromelles (19–20 July) and the costly successes of the I Anzac Corps at the Battles of Pozières and Mouquet Farm (23 July–3 September) had led to 23,000 Australian casualties in just 45 days.[130] The fighting on the Somme had been more intense and almost as costly as the Gallipoli campaign for Australian forces. The historian Bill Gammage has shown, through Australian soldiers' letters and diaries from the Western Front, that the "monstrous sacrifice…tumbled the romances and grand illusions into the dust, whence they rarely rose again."[131] Gammage described how after the Australian battles at the Somme "many soldiers looked back to their boyhood, and saw an unfamiliar world."[132] Thus, while it was British idealism that perished at the Somme, Australian understandings of war had also altered. Yet, as will be discussed, the disillusionment experienced in British high command had a profound influence on how Australians were encouraged to fight the war.

At least at the planning stages of the Somme, the lessons offered by the costly failures and limited successes of 1915 appeared to have been heeded. The plan determined by Entente commanders at the Chantilly conference of December set the overall strategy for 1916 to be the exhaustion of German supplies, both in munitions and men.[133] The proposed means for achieving such an objective was through broad and simultaneous attacks against the German army.[134] Thus the Somme campaign, as was noted by the

128 Watson and Porter, "Bereaved and Aggrieved," 146.

129 AJP Taylor, *The First World War: An Illustrated History* (London: Penguin, 1974), 140.

130 Jeffrey Grey, *A Military History of Australia*, 3rd ed. (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 103.

131 Gammage, *The Broken Years* , 169.

132 *Ibid*.

133 Strachan, "Battle of the Somme," 91.

134 *Ibid.*

British official historian, "had no strategic object except attrition." [135] Given the experiences of 1914 and 1915, many in the French and some within British commands viewed a decisive battle in 1916 as unlikely. This strategy appears to have remained unchanged until at least June 1916, when Douglas Haig—who had succeeded John French as Commander-in-Chief of British and dominion forces in December 1915—issued orders that described the key objective of the Somme campaign as "inflicting loss on the enemy."[136]

While not new in itself, a strategy wholly focused on attrition was novel in British war practice. It signalled a departure from the traditional strategy of utilising attrition for a brief period before attempting to decisively break through enemy lines. Attrition has frequently been devalued as the strategic recourse of the unimaginative military commander. Harris and Marble have pointed out that to the historian the concept of attrition "has sometimes proved almost as unattractive as it was to Sir Douglas Haig at the time…it offered no speedy escape from the unglamorous, often depressing business of positional warfare." [137] Yet attrition was, at least according to Generals Kitchener, Robertson, Rawlinson, and Montgomery, the only manner in which the war could be won.[138] Robertson particularly advocated the "bite and hold" method, where a force would take a limited and predetermined amount of ground with the aid of heavy artillery support, then reinforce the position in anticipation of a German counter-attack. The strategy called for commanders to, as Robertson explained in a letter to Rawlinson, "not be too hide-bound by the books we used to study before the war."[139] Such a dramatic departure from the traditional ideals of decisive, offensive warfare was not universally accepted during preparation for the Somme.

Crucially, Haig was opposed to the limited gains and limited success offered by attrition strategy. Despite his open support of the French plan for attrition warfare at Chantilly, Haig's plans for the Somme were far more ambitious than the mere wearing

135 Quoted in Christopher M Deverell, "Haig versus Rawlinson – Manoeuvre versus Attrition: The British Army on the Somme, 1916," *Defence Studies* 5, no. 1 (January 2005): 127.

136 *Ibid*.

137 Harris and Marble, "'Step-by-Step' Approach:" 19.

138 *Ibid.*

139 *Ibid.*, 33.

down of enemy reserves.[140] Haig supported the plan for attrition and limited gains when it was diplomatically prudent but hoped the Somme would prove a decisive victory and, as Strachan has shown, "continued to contemplate an early breakthrough."[141] Kitchener attempted to quell such an ambition, relating to Haig's intelligence chief that "someone at GHQ had been talking about a break-through and it must stop."[142] According to Kitchener, no matter the strength of the attack, "there will be no breakthrough."[143] Despite such dissent within British command, Haig enjoyed the support of a British government that was divided, in debt and increasingly unpopular.[144] The prospect of a decisive campaign, even if it was an unlikely one, appealed to a government desperately in need of a politically and economically settling victory.

With the government's support, Haig was free to plan towards achieving a breakthrough at the Somme. His strategy, as Foley has identified, stuck to the guidelines of the 1909 *Field Service Regulations* that he had himself written.[145] This doctrine encompassed a three-week attrition phase, followed by "decisive attacks at several points."[146] The offensive would allow for a cavalry charge that would break through the enemy lines and result in a decisive victory.[147] Yet the ongoing campaign in Verdun that had been raging since February convinced Haig that a decisive attack was immediately possible.[148] This meant that the attrition phase, the key strategy determined at Chantilly, was no longer an element of Haig's strategy. Instead the Somme campaign would be focused on achieving an unlikely objective in that stage of the war, a breakthrough.

Haig's desire for a quick and decisive victory is evident in a letter to Rawlinson less than a fortnight before the campaign began. In it, Haig stressed that victory would be achieved by "opening a way for our cavalry and then as quickly as possible pushing the

140 *Ibid.*, 29.

141 *Ibid.*

142 Charteris, *At GHQ,* 137.

143 *Ibid.*

144 Strachan, "Battle of the Somme," 93.

145 Robert T Foley, "What's in a Name?: The Development of Strategies of Attrition on the Western Front, 1914–1918," *Historian* 68, no. 4 (December 2006): 743.

146 Haig, *Private Papers of Douglas Haig*, 125.

147 Foley, "What's in a Name?," 738.

148 *Ibid.*, 742.

cavalry through to seize Bapaume."[149] Rawlinson had planned to penetrate 1,000 to 2,000 yards into enemy lines across a 20,000 yard front, but Haig contested the proposed plan and doubled the distance of Rawlinson's expected gains.[150] The new and far more ambitious plan would enter deeper into enemy territory at the cost of effective artillery cover.

Haig's strategy and ambition had seemingly not been deterred by his bloody experiences on the Western Front in 1915 as commander of I Corps. While he might have conceded that the nature of battle had changed, it seems that Haig still believed the strategies he had written in 1909 could accomplish a quick and decisive victory in 1916. Travers has observed that the unwillingness of British command to adjust to modern battlefield conditions might have been a result of the "anxiety of a profession whose political and social standing was threatened by the obsolescence of those qualities…in Victorian faculty psychology those qualities were moral: manliness, courage, self-sacrifice, duty, loyalty—all particularly useful for the offensive assault."[151] Haig held the traditional belief that a body of men who were well disciplined and high in morale need not worry with the opposition and their weapons, as victory through the offensive was likely.[152] Strachan has pointed out that the strategy for the Somme was sound when a quick victory was considered unlikely, yet "it became deeply flawed when it set off in pursuit of an illusion."[153] This illusion became far more visible after the terrible losses of the first weeks of the Somme. After the early attempts of the campaign to enact a breakthrough, the trench lines again became static and an unplanned battle of attrition began.[154] This involuntary strategic move into an attrition campaign—what Haig would later disingenuously describe as part of his "wearing down war"—delegitimised the traditional battle doctrine of the offensive and subsequently marked the beginning of a shift in heroic ideals.[155]

149 Deverell, "Haig versus Rawlinson," 128.

150 *Ibid.*, 128.

151 Travers, "Technology, Tactics, and Morale," 286.

152 Travers, *Killing Ground*, 166.

153 Strachan, "Battle of the Somme," 93.

154 Robin Prior and Trevor Wilson, *The Somme* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), xix.

155 *Ibid.*, xix, 189, 306; Carter Malkasian, *A History of Modern Wars of Attrition* (Santa Barbara: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2002), 37.

The VC statistics I have developed and analysed for this study demonstrate just how profound an influence the Somme campaign and attrition warfare had on British recognition of heroism. Before the Somme, between the start of January and the end of June 1916, eight of the 13 VCs awarded to British and dominion servicemen on the Western Front were specifically for life-saving acts, while five were awarded specifically for killing. During the first two months of the Somme campaign, 29 VCs were awarded for acts that occurred on the Western Front, of which ten were for life-saving actions and ten were explicitly for acts of killing. The results for both periods show minor change in the proportions of how the VC was awarded and are consistent with how the medal was conferred throughout 1914 and 1915. As explored in Chapter One, the types of actions that were awarded the VC had barely altered since the medal's inception and were an intricately linked part of the cult of offensive. The ideals of neo-chivalry fundamentally underpinned common understandings of the hero and belief in the offensive.

By the third phase of the Somme (15 September to 18 November 1916), and after a series of abortive attacks, British commanders were coming to understand that even the best infantry and cavalry units could not overcome the defensive power of modern weaponry in entrenched positions. With attrition having forcibly replaced the traditional tactic of the offensive, new types of behaviours were required of British and dominion soldiers and a marked shift in the types of actions that were awarded the VC occurred. Between the start of September and the end of the campaign in November, 12 of the 21 VCs awarded on the Western Front were conferred explicitly for acts of killing. Just one VC was awarded for a life-saving act that occurred during the same period (see Chart 5 below). This abrupt shift coincided with the growing realisation among commanders that to be victorious in modern battle, as Robin Prior has written, "courage is no longer enough, or, on such occasions as the first day of the Somme, not anything at all."[156] The defensive power of new weapons had rendered offensive warfare, at least for the foreseeable future, ineffective and costly.

With the forced shift to attrition strategy, the key role of British and dominion soldiers had become to diminish the enemy's strength. In very little time the core ideals of heroism had transitioned from those of neo-chivalry, such as self-sacrifice, humanitarianism and self-abnegation, to a simpler model driven by the main objective of

[156] Prior, "Heroic Image of the Warrior," 51.

attrition warfare: to kill the enemy. As Bartov notes of the First World War, "whenever an image of war began to disintegrate, another was already evolving."[157] This was the case during the battle of the Somme, in which the neo-chivalric hero began to disintegrate and a far more aggressive genus—the killer—took his place.

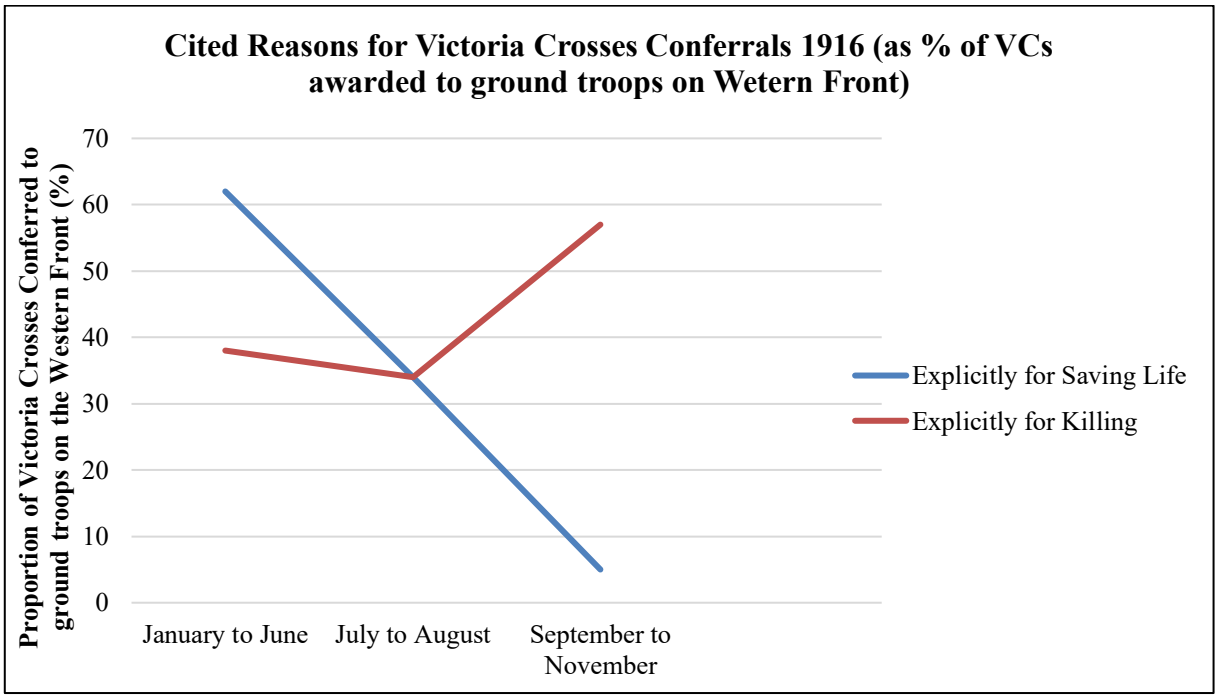


Chart 5 Cited Reasons for Victoria Cross Conferrals to Ground Troops on the Western Front (%) for Killing and Saving Life (1916). While the proportion of Victoria Crosses awarded for acts of saving life steadily dropped throughout 1916, the proportion of VCs awarded to acts of killing rose sharply in July 1916.

Attrition and the Hero: 1917–1918

In a letter to Haig in April 1917, Robertson reiterated a sentiment he had propagated for over a year and one that was slowly being adopted by many at British GHQ:

> To my mind no war has ever differed so much from previous wars as does the present one and it is futile, to put it mildly, hanging on to old theories when facts show them to be wrong. At one time audacity and determination

[157] Bartov, "Man and the Mass," 100.

> to push on regardless of loss were the predominating factors but that was before the days of machine guns and other modern armaments.[158]

The British War cabinet accepted Robertson's long-term strategy of attrition on 1 May 1917.[159] The failure at the Somme had slowly forced British focus towards the destruction of the enemy rather than the seizing of ground. Lloyd George—the recently elected British Prime Minister—hoped that an attrition strategy might bring the Germans "to a frame of mind in which they would agree to a peace on terms acceptable to the Allies."[160] It was also rumoured that at least one member of the Cabinet's War Policy Committee would only support the July offensive at Flanders if Haig used a bite and hold strategy.[161]

Political and military leaders gathered at Paris for the Anglo-French Conference of 4–5 May 1917 to develop a coordinated military plan for the year. The conference agreed that while offensives remained necessary, it was "no longer a question of aiming at breaking through the enemy's front and aiming at distant objectives. It is now a question of wearing down and exhausting the enemy's resistance."[162] No longer aiming to achieve victory through a massive offensive, the Allies agreed that the key objective for 1917 was "destroying the enemy's divisions…by relentlessly attacking with limited objectives, while making fullest use of our artillery."[163] On 7 May, Haig reported the outcomes of the conference to his Generals in Doullens.[164] Despite Haig's belief that a decisive offensive could be undertaken in 1917, he had temporarily ceded to the idea that "the enemy must first be worn out before a decisive attack is launched."[165] The western Allies were now in agreement that a breakout was unlikely and that only attrition, with the doctrine that "our furthest objective must not only be within the power of our artillery, but within the power of our infantry," could win the war.[166] With the implementation of battle strategies no

158 Sir William Robert Robertson, and David R Woodward, *The Military Correspondence of Field-Marshal Sir William Robertson, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, December 1915-February 1918* (London: Bodley Head, 1989), 151.

159 David French, *The Strategy of the Lloyd George Coalition, 1916-1918* (London: Clarendon Press, 1995), 96.

160 *Ibid.,* 97.

161 Harris and Marble, "'Step-by-Step' Approach," 38.

162 "Anglo-French Conference. May 4 and 5, 1917. Resolutions Proposed by the Prime Minister" (May 5, 1917), BNA222, CAB 24/12/57, BNA.

163 *Ibid.*

164 Haig, *The Private Papers of Douglas Haig*, 226.

165 *Ibid.*

166 Order of General Kiggell in Simon Robbins, *British Generalship on the Western Front 1914-1918: Defeat into Victory* (London: Routledge, 2004), 127.

longer interlinked with the spirit and abilities of the soldier but the range in distance of modern weapons, the martial hero continued to change.

The battles of 1917 saw British GHQ seek more modest objectives compared to their offensives of 1915 and 1916. They adopted the use of the bite and hold strategy, as well as the "creeping barrage," in which soldiers advanced closely behind artillery assaults.[167] These doctrines, among other lessons learned by British command during 1914, 1915, and 1916, led to early successes during the Battle of Third Ypres. Yet, such adherence to attrition strategy and its corresponding tactics came undone after the early successes of the campaign. Encouraged by the initial gains, and believing that the Germans were near collapse, British command drastically increased the territorial objectives of their forces and failed to readjust such goals after heavy rains made any meaningful advance difficult.[168]

Just as at the Somme, the attempt to enact a decisive breakthrough of German defences led to a costly quagmire that once again forced British command into pursuing an attrition strategy. Thus, while there was a period in 1917 in which British command attempted to apply the traditional strategy of breaking through and turning back the enemy, throughout most of the year British GHQ had waged a strict war of attrition. On the Western Front, VCs continued to be awarded for the same types of acts as in the closing stages of the Battle of the Somme. Of 110 VCs conferred to actions of British and dominion ground forces on the Western Front in 1917, 14 (13%) were for life saving, while 74 (67%) were awarded for killing. Just as in the final months of the Somme campaign, this attrition strategy continued to have an influence on how heroism was recognised.

On 21 March, the German Army launched Operation Michael in an attempt to push British and dominion forces back to the sea, create a decisive breakthrough, and end the war before United States forces entered the Western Front *en masse*.[169] The Allies managed to stop the offensive and in August launched a counter-attack against the depleted German army. This 100 Days Offensive saw the Allies breakthrough German

[167] Harris and Marble, "'Step-by-Step' Approach," 38.

[168] Robin Prior and Trevor Wilson, *Passchendaele: The Untold Story; Third Edition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016); Ham, *Passchendaele*.

[169] Stevenson, *1914-1918,* 284, 311–14.

defences on multiple occasions, leading to battles of far greater manoeuvre than had been witnessed since 1914 and ultimately resulting in the end of the conflict.[170] Thus, British and dominion command had adapted their strategy during 1918 from one of attrition to a far more traditional war of attack and manoeuvre.

Of the 191 VCs awarded to men fighting on the ground on the Western Front, 134 (70%) were awarded specifically for killing the enemy. Just 13 (7%) VCs were awarded to men specifically for saving life during the last year of the war. What such figures show is that while the war had reverted to battles of manoeuvre—albeit with the use of new tactics that had evolved through the attrition doctrine—the ideals that had formerly underpinned neo-chivalric heroism did not return.

The Influence of Haig's Leadership and the 1916 VC Directives

Thus far the shift that occurred in VC conferrals has been explained as a result of the introduction of attrition strategy. Yet there were three other factors that contributed to the dramatic shift in the type of actions that were awarded the VC: Douglas Haig's appointment as Commander-in-Chief of British and dominion forces on the Western Front in December 1915, Lord Kitchener's death in 1916, and the issuing of VC directives in 1916. While each event certainly had an effect in the dramatic alteration of VC conferrals that occurred over 1916 and 1917, statistics indicate that the most influential driver of such change was the Allied implementation of attrition strategy.

In December 1915, General Haig replaced French as leader of British and dominion forces on the Western Front.[171] Haig's personal opinion was that the VC should serve primarily for war-winning actions such as the killing of enemy combatants and seizing of ground.[172] Haig noted during the conflict that he was "not in favour of this reward being granted for bringing in wounded officers or men in European warfare."[173] As all VC recommendations required the approval of the Commander-in-Chief before progressing to the next stages of review—the British War council and the King—Haig's

170 Nick Lloyd, *Hundred Days: The End of the Great War* (London: Penguin, 2013), 241.
171 Philpott, *Anglo-French Relations,* 82.
172 D'Alton, "Behind the Valour," 110.
173 Cited in Smith, *Awarded for Valour,* 158.

appointment to the role had some influence on how the VC was awarded.[174] In his study of British and dominion VC awards, Melvin Charles Smith has argued that it was the influence of French and Kitchener that assured the VC remained available to soldiers who undertook life-saving acts and that this influence explains the high proportions conferred for humanitarian actions in the first years of the conflict.[175] Smith posits that the plunge in VCs awarded for humanitarian acts in 1916 and 1917 was likely a result of Haig replacing French in late 1915 and the death of Kitchener in 1916.[176] Yet a statistical analysis of the VC between 1915 and 1918 does not support Smith's case.

Comparing the ratios of life saving to killing actions that were awarded the VC in the periods after Haig's appointment as Commander-in-Chief, Kitchener's death, and the official implementation of attrition, offers an indication of just how influential such events were on the shift in recognised heroism (see Chart 6 below). Between the beginning of January and November 1915—immediately before Haig's appointment as Commander-in-Chief—45 percent of VCs awarded to ground forces on the Western Front were explicitly for killing, while 34 percent were for the saving of life. Between Haig becoming Commander-in-Chief on 10 December 1915 and the official implementation of attrition on 4 May 1917, 30 percent of the 104 VCs awarded were specifically for life-saving acts. Actions that explicitly took life accounted for 59 percent of the VCs awarded during this period. Of the 96 VCs awarded in the time between the death of Kitchener on 5 June 1916 and the enactment of an attrition doctrine, 28 percent were conferred specifically for life saving and 76 percent specifically for killing. The 18 months between the implementation of attrition on 4 May 1917 and the end of the war on 11 November 1918 saw 69 percent of VCs awarded to ground forces on the Western Front primarily for the killing of enemy combatants. During this period, just nine percent of VCs were explicitly awarded for acts that saved Allied soldiers' lives, such as carrying.

174 *Ibid.*, 156–60; D'Alton, "Behind the Valour," 110.
175 *Ibid*., 160.
176 *Ibid.*

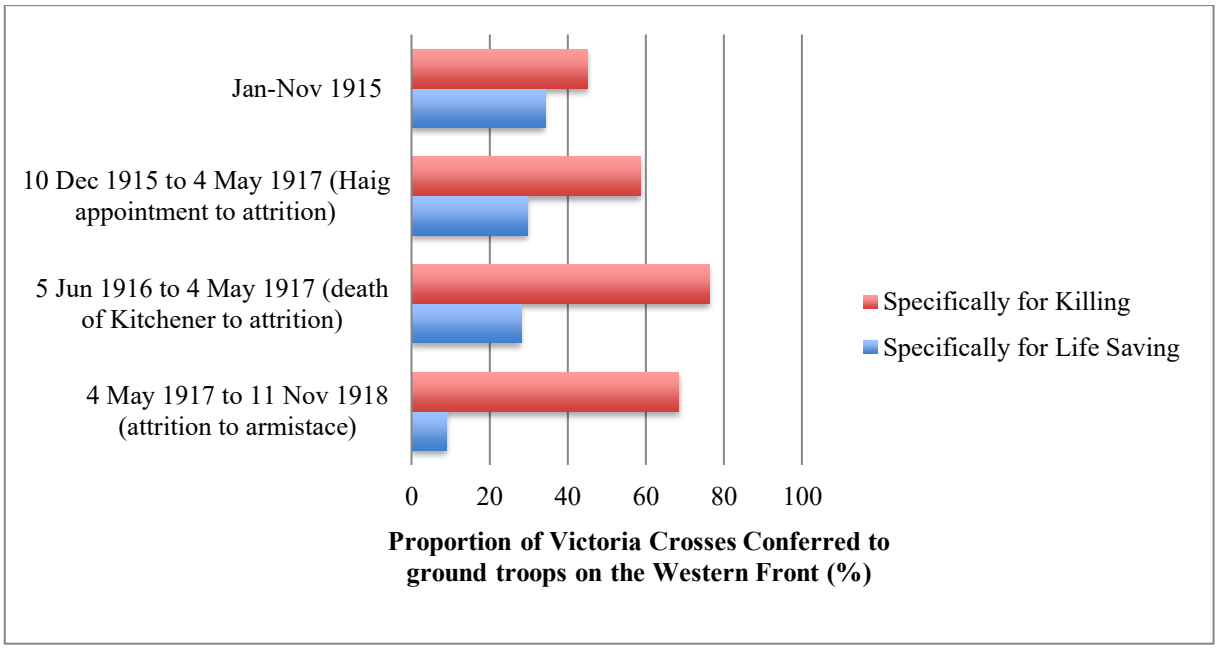


Chart 6 Proportion of Victoria Crosses Conferred to British and Dominion Ground Troops on the Western Front (%) for Killing and Saving Life (1915-1918). The proportion of Victoria Crosses awarded for acts of life saving and killing greatly altered immediately after the death of Lord Kitchener and the official implementation of attrition.

What such figures show is that while Haig's appointment to Commander-in-Chief and Kitchener's death had some influence over the manner in which the VC was awarded, the most decisive turning point, by far, was the official implementation of an attrition strategy. Haig's appointment coincided with a 13 percent rise in VC awards for acts of killing and a four percent decrease in awards for saving life between December 1915 and May 1917. The period after Kitchener's death (June 1916) saw a significant rise in awards for killing acts and another small decline in VC awards for saving life. These figures are significant, as they show that both Haig's appointment and Kitchener's death influenced the ideals that underpinned VC awards. Yet it was after the official implementation of attrition that the most important shift to the VC occurred. While awards for killing actions remained high in comparison to the period before Haig's appointment and Kitchener's death, there was a significant drop in the number of VCs conferred for actions that saved life.

Haig's rise to authority in 1915 influenced the recalibration of high military heroism towards killing and away from life-saving acts. Yet Haig did not believe that the VC should be disallowed for all life-saving deeds. As he explained to the King over dinner when discussing the merits and risks of awarding VCs to soldiers who rescued their

wounded comrades, "each case must be judged on its merits."[177] Smith has posited that it was Haig's ideology that largely changed the nature of the VC, yet Haig was not against the awarding of VCs to all acts of life saving. The statistics for VCs awarded in the period immediately after Haig's becoming Commander-in-Chief clearly demonstrate this. While Haig may have approved more recommendations for actions in which enemy combatants were killed, there was only a minor decrease in the number of VCs awarded for saving life. Thus Haig's influence on the way the VC was awarded does not, in isolation, explain the profound shift that occurred in the administering of the award in 1916 and 1917.

Perhaps Haig's chief influence on the awarding of the VC was his oversight of GHQ's VC directives of August and September 1916. These directives were drafted by General William Peyton, Haig's Military Secretary, and issued to British and dominion divisional commands on the Western Front. The 29 August directive informed divisional commanders that, "Cases of gallantry in life saving, of however fine a nature, will not be considered for the award of the VC."[178] One month later this order was expanded upon, stipulating that:

> The Victoria Cross or other immediate reward will not be given for the rescue of wounded, excepting to those whose duty it is to care for such cases. Such attempts, more often than not, result in the death of the would-be rescuer and rescued. Moreover it depletes the fighting strength of Units perhaps at most critical moments.[179]

Such orders may well have emerged as a result of Haig's stated belief that the VC should only be awarded to soldiers for saving life in special circumstances. Yet it is also likely, given that the orders were issued in late August and September 1916, that the directives were also a response to the growing quagmire in the Somme and a step towards facilitating a strategy of attrition. By late September, the Somme campaign had entered its third and final phase and had clearly become a battle of attrition. As discussed earlier in the chapter, the Somme also demonstrated that a traditional breakthrough via a determined offensive was unlikely on the Western Front in 1916 or 1917. Thus, the directives should be seen as both a reflection of Haig's ideals, as well as bolstering an attrition strategy that was already unofficially accepted as necessary among British government and GHQ

[177] Haig, *Private Papers of Douglas Haig*, 79.

[178] "Honours, Awards, and Special Distinctions," 1916, AWM 25 391/2, AWM; D'Alton, "Behind the Valour," 118.

[179] "Routine Order, Announcement by Birdwood," 1916, AWM 27 368/23, AWM, 9.

figures. Thus, while the 1916 directives had a pronounced influence on how the VC was awarded on the Western Front, they served as a component of Haig's values as well as the broader attrition strategy that ultimately reshaped heroism during the First World War. More than this—and as will be discussed in detail in Chapter Three—the order was largely misunderstood or seemingly ignored by some divisional commands. This can be seen by the fact that British and dominion combatants were still awarded the VC for cases of saving life even when the acts violated the VC directives.

The 1916 VC directives clearly show the evolution of British command's expectations of frontline soldiers during their transition towards an attrition strategy. The directives appeared at a time when British and dominion armies were locked in a battle of attrition at the Somme and can therefore be seen as part of British command's move towards reshaping soldiers' behaviours to better suit the conditions of the Western Front. Indeed, while it is Smith's view that Haig's appointment was the key driving force behind the changes in prerequisites made to the VC, he has also written that the official implementation of attrition in May 1917 "meant that the primary virtue of the British soldier was now killing Germans." [180] The statistics examined show that Haig's appointment as Commander-in-Chief in 1915 and Kitchener's death in 1916 were both influential in the alteration of VC requirements. Yet what such statistics also clearly indicate is that the enactment of attrition strategy by British command, both unofficially in late 1916 and officially in May 1917, had a far more transformative influence on the ideals and prerequisites that underpinned the award.

Conclusion

Before the Battle of the Somme, the VC had been awarded based upon a largely static and unwritten set of prerequisites. The prescription of heroism that such prerequisites underpinned was strongly linked to the ideals of British neo-chivalry. Thus, in the first years of the war, the VC was awarded for similar reasons, and in similar proportions, as it had been in the Crimean War of the mid-nineteenth century. Married to the ideals of neo-chivalric heroism was the belief that high troop morale, discipline, and courage could drive an offensive that would defeat any entrenched opponent. In 1915, when the war of manoeuvre had ceased and Western Europe had become a system of defensive trenches,

[180] Smith, *Awarded for Valour*, 156.

the cult of the offensive proved inadequate against the firepower of modern weaponry. By the closing stages of the Somme campaign, the battlefield had deteriorated into a conflict of attrition and the once widespread belief among British command that a decisive breakthrough of the enemy lines could end the war had been largely abandoned.[181] It was during this attritional phase of the Somme that the prerequisites of the VC, as well as the language used to describe VC acts, fundamentally shifted.

With Britain's Navy blockade of Germany crippling their enemy's imports, the growth and effectiveness of British war manufacturing during 1916, and the entry of the United States into the war on the side of the Allies in April 1917, many within British parliament and military command adopted the belief that attrition was the most likely pathway to victory.[182] This meant that the role of British soldiers had transformed from seizing enemy ground and affecting a breakthrough of enemy forces, towards a focus on the destruction of enemy men and material. The strategy of attrition placed less importance on the morale, moral superiority, and courage of the British soldier—as was the case with the cult of offensive—and therefore the act of saving comrades' lives in battle became untied from the prescribed ideals of heroism. Instead, the soldier's chief purpose under attrition strategy became to kill the enemy and destroy their supplies. These changes to the role of British and dominion soldiers on the Western Front are evident in the VC statistics explored over the last two chapters.

Attrition was by no means the only reason that the prerequisites for earning VCs transformed during 1916. Douglas Haig brought his own ideals of battlefield heroism to the role of Commander-in-Chief and likely applied his views of heroism when approving or denying VC recommendations. The death of Lord Kitchener also brought about a shift in how the award was distributed. Both events led to sharp increases in the number of VCs awarded for acts of killing for all British and dominion soldiers.

Yet the statistics clearly show that it was the implementation of attrition, and the 1916 VC directives that accompanied attrition warfare, which fundamentally altered the VC. After 1916, and particularly after May 1917, it became extremely rare for a VC to be awarded for the act of saving life. On the attritional battlefield such an act no longer

181 Deverell, "Haig versus Rawlinson," 135.

182 French, *Strategy of the Lloyd George Coalition*, 97.

served a military or ideological purpose. Over the same period the most common action to be awarded the VC was the killing of enemy soldiers. This shift in heroism was shaped by Haig's personal views and sustained by the transition from a traditional strategy of warfare linked with discipline and morale, to one focused on machines and the destruction of the enemy. The recognised hero of 1917 no longer saved the lives of comrades on the battlefield but was instead suited for the modern war of attrition. He had become a killer.

Chapter Three: Influence and Representation of the Australian Victoria Cross Hero (1914–1918)

While the change in VC requirements influenced how all British and dominion servicemen were officially recognised for heroism, the transformation particularly affected those serving in Australian forces. Over the course of the conflict, Australian servicemen were awarded more VCs for acts of killing the enemy and fewer for acts of saving comrades' lives than any other British or dominion nation. By the last year of the war almost all of the VCs awarded to Australian servicemen were for acts of killing. This severe shift in the way Australian military heroism was officially recognised had a profound influence on how ideals of heroism were represented to both Australian soldiers and civilians.

The importance of this shift arises out of the prestige and high visibility of the VC. The VC was used as a tool of influence by the British and Australian militaries on the front lines as well as by Australian governments and newspapers at home. Australian commanders saw the VC as a mechanism for communicating heroic standards of behaviour for their men to emulate on the battlefield.[1] Thus, whenever a VC was awarded to an Australian, the details of their action were printed among routine orders and read to other Australian servicemen.[2] The Australian military, the federal government, and state governments also co-opted VC recipients to return to Australia in order to undertake recruitment tours of the country. On many such tours VC recipients publicly spoke in favour of the implementation of conscription—a key aim of the Australian government during 1916 and 1917.[3] At every such event, VC recipients' actions were described to the crowd and then subsequently reported in the Australian press. Australian newspapers also published official VC citations in full whenever an Australian serviceman had received the award as well as printed letters and articles written by recipients, who used the platform to advocate for the introduction of conscription. Through these examples—which will be examined in greater detail throughout this thesis—we see that VC recipients were

1 *Ibid*.,182-185; Smith, *Awarded for Valour*, 156–58.

2 "Special Orders, announcement by Walker, 1st Division," n.d., AWM 25, 713/17/1, AWM; "Routine Order, announcement by Birdwood," 29 July 1915, AWM 27, 368/23.

3 Archer *et al., The Conscription Conflict and the Great War*, 2–15.

prominent figures in the Australian military and media landscapes during the First World War. Such men were also viewed by militaries and governments as being capable of influencing people's actions and beliefs.

The shift in requirements for the VC played a major role in influencing the transformation of how heroism was represented in Australia during the First World War. That Australian soldiers were awarded more for killing and less for life saving acts is also important in understanding the broader representations of heroism that were being conveyed to Australian soldiers and the Australian public throughout the conflict. This chapter will outline how the VC was used as a tool for shaping the conduct of soldiers and the support of civilians. British GHQ, Australian federal and state governments, and Australian newspapers all used the VC to influence the behaviours and beliefs of those under their command, governance, and readership. An inadvertent effect was that when VC conferrals shifted towards promoting acts of killing, and largely disregarded acts involving the saving of life, mainstream representations of heroism in Australian society were also transformed. This chapter will show that the VC was seen and used as a tool of influence for shaping servicemen's actions on the front and civilians' opinions at home; that Australian servicemen were awarded the VC almost exclusively for killing the enemy and very rarely for saving life by 1917 and 1918; and that due to the widespread coverage and adulation of VC recipients in the Australian military and on the Australian home front, this shift in how the VC was awarded inadvertently but profoundly changed how the military hero was represented to Australians.

The Victoria Cross as a Tool of Influence

As discussed in the previous chapter, during the Crimean War, the British Secretary of State for War, the Duke of Newcastle, wrote a letter to Prince Albert appealing for the instigation of a medal for all ranks in the armed services. Newcastle hoped the VC would act as an official congratulatory gesture for all servicemen, regardless of rank, who undertook exceptionally heroic combat actions.[4] Most recent historical and reference literature about the VC has focused on this one reason for the award's instigation and

[4] T Robert Fowler, *Valour in the Victory Campaign: The 3rd Canadian Infantry Division Gallantry Decorations 1945* (Burnstown: General Store Publishing House, 1995), 218.

described the VC's purpose as being solely to acknowledge the heroism of recipients.[5] Bryan Perrett has echoed the sentiments of all popular histories of the VC in his suggestion that the medal was a means of "rewarding individuals with visible devices in recognition of their courage."[6] Yet, the belief that the VC served only to recognise and reward brave actions provides only a partial understanding of its wartime role.

Lord Newcastle envisioned that the VC would act as an official acknowledgement of the recipient's bravery, but he also believed that such a medal would influence the actions of combatants. In his letter to Prince Albert, Newcastle reasoned that "the value attached by soldiers to a little bit of ribbon is such as to render any danger insignificant and any privation light, if it can be attained."[7] From its conception, the VC was designed as a tool of motivation and behavioural influence. Awarding the VC for a certain type of action immediately validated the deed performed as being the highest recognised ideal of heroism. Particularly in the prolonged, highly-publicised First World War, the VC shaped the type of characteristics that were widely represented to soldiers and the public as being ideally heroic and thus worthy of emulation.

That medals and awards could influence the behaviours of soldiers was an established military theory at the time of the First World War. Valarie A Maxfield has shown that commanders in the Roman Empire saw medals as having a crucial part in controlling the behaviour of soldiers.[8] Napoleon Bonaparte stated his belief in 1815 that, "a soldier will fight long and hard for a bit of coloured ribbon."[9] The sentiment that heroes were necessary to an army for providing behavioural examples was also held by the leaders of British command during the First World War.

5 Nicolas Brasch, *For Valour: Australia's Victoria Cross Heroes*, Our Stories (Newtown: Walker Books Australia, 2013); Kevin Brazier, *The Complete Victoria Cross: A Full Chronological Record of All Holders of Britain's Highest Award for Gallantry* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword Military, 2010); Fowler, *Valour in the Victory Campaign*; Staunton, *Victoria Cross*; Dennis Pillinger and Anthony Staunton, *Victoria Cross Presentations and Locations* (London: Woden, 2000); Ashcroft, *Victoria Cross Heroes*; Charlotte Mitchell, *Victoria Cross, 1868-1952 : A Bibliography*, (Brisbane: University of Queensland, 2002).

6 Bryan Perrett, *For Valour: Victoria Cross and Medal of Honor Battles* (London: Cassell Military, 2005), 1.

7 Macklin, *Bravest,* 8.

8 Valerie A Maxfield, *The Military Decorations of the Roman Army* (London: Batsford, 1981), 14.

9 Doug Sterner and Pam Sterner, *Restoring Valor: One Couple's Mission to Expose Fraudulent War Heroes and Protect America's Military Awards System* (New York: Skyhorse Publishing, 2013).

As the principal commanders of the BEF, John French and Douglas Haig had the most influence on decisions about awarding the VC during the First World War.[10] As we have seen, as Commanders-in-Chief of British and dominion ground forces on the Western Front, French and Haig had crucial parts in deciding which VC recommendations were accepted or rejected.[11] There are no known cases in which the War Office or the British government rejected a recommendation and, as such, the judgment of the Commander-in-Chief over which actions should be allowed or disallowed appears to have been important.[12] Very few rejected VC recommendations detail the stage at which the application was denied. Yet, both men viewed the VC as having an effect on the actions and morale of the soldiers who they commanded, indicating that they used the VC as a tool for influencing and motivating their forces.[13]

John French had been in the British Army since 1870 and served as Commander of the 1st Cavalry Brigade during the Second Boer War.[14] His experiences and understandings of conflict were firmly rooted in ideals of the Victorian era. According to the historian Gary Mead, this understanding of warfare meant that French entered the First World War, as Commander-in-Chief of the BEF, "unable to grasp that honour and glory died with the birth of the machine gun, and that beastliness was endemic to the new battlefield."[15] French was aware that war "obviously meant killing, but that it need not, should not, entail bestiality."[16] He believed the conflict would be quick, decisive, and chivalrous.[17] This nineteenth-century understanding of warfare also seems to have shaped the way that French viewed heroism.

There is a lack of written evidence providing detailed insight into the reasoning followed by French in vetting VC recommendations, but one source from 1914 is highly revealing. In 1914 French noted, in a letter to Kitchener, his belief that the "Victoria Cross should not be awarded for the rescue of wounded in the case of officers unless under very

10 Smith, *Awarded for Valour*, 156–60; D'Alton, "Behind the Valour," 110.
11 *Ibid*.
12 Halliday, *Valour Reconsidered*, 20–21.
13 Smith, *Awarded for Valour*, 159; Haig, *Private Papers of Douglas Haig*, 79.
14 Holmes, *The Little Field Marshal*, 59–60.
15 Mead, *Victoria's Cross*, 126.
16 *Ibid*.
17 Holmes, *The Little Field Marshal,* 199-201.

exceptional circumstances."[18] French also stated that cases where soldiers had rescued men, "lying exposed to fire between two trenches, or in a retreat…are cases in which recommendations would be given."[19] French therefore believed that actions of saving life on the battlefield, at least in specific situations, were worthy and should be eligible for the VC. His belief that officer should not be awarded the medal for saving life was probably because he did not wish to encourage officers, whose role in battle was to manage and guide their soldiers, to relinquish their leadership when carrying men away from the battlefield. Outside of battlefield practicalities, it is difficult to ascertain what influenced French's process for measuring the level and type of valour required to earn a VC. Certainly, his previous war experiences and the masculine code of neo-chivalry informed his ideals of high heroism.

In late 1915, Douglas Haig replaced French as Commander-in-Chief of the BEF. Haig had fought with French as a senior officer in the 1st Cavalry Brigade during the Second Boer War and was also strongly influenced by Victorian-era ideals. Yet Haig appears to have had different ideas about military heroism to French. Haig oversaw and awarded more VCs than any other commander in British history and it is likely that he believed medals could be used as a tool to support military operations and strategy. Haig used medals, Melvin Charles Smith has argued, "as tools of command which he could control in order to encourage particular actions."[20] MJ Crook, in his study of the VC, has also argued that Haig believed the medal had a "direct tendency to induce young men in the army to do things."[21] These arguments are supported by Haig's diary entry of 4 December 1914—discussed in Chapter Two—in which he detailed a discussion about the VC with King George V. Haig wrote how the monarch had:

> expressed the opinion that the grant of the Victoria Cross for carrying a wounded man out of action was justified and was beneficial. I replied that each case must be judged on its merits but, as a rule in civilised war such efforts did the wounded man harm and also tended to increase loss of valuable lives. On the other hand, in the case of a building containing wounded catching fire, and troops going under fire to remove the wounded, they would merit the VC. As a matter of fact we have to take special

[18] Sir John French, "Letter from Field Marshall Sir John French to the Secretary, War Office," November 25 1914, WO/32/4993, BNA; Smith, *Awarded for Valour*, 158.

[19] French, "Letter from Field Marshall Sir John French"; Smith, *Awarded for Valour,* 158.

[20] *Ibid.,* 186.

[21] Crook, *Evolution of the Victoria Cross*, 253.

> precautions to prevent more unwounded men than are necessary from accompanying a wounded man back from the trenches.[22]

Haig believed it was poor policy to reward men who conducted rescues, because such actions often resulted in more casualties and jeopardised the outcome of more important military objectives. In this entry, we see that Haig viewed contributions to the attainment of strategic objectives and the preservation of his most "valuable" military resource—manpower—as being more important to reaching objectives on the battlefield than acts of saving life. It also clearly shows that Haig did not wish to encourage acts of life saving by awarding such behaviour the VC, from which we may conclude that he believed the medal influenced men's behaviours in battle. In the same diary entry, Haig described his wish to "prevent more unwounded men than are necessary from accompanying a wounded man back," and it is inferred that one of the mechanisms for achieving this was to withdraw such an action's eligibility for the VC.[23] Thus, in this diary entry Haig outlines his belief that the conferring and denial of VC awards for particular actions could encourage and discourage specific deeds on the battlefield.

Haig appears to have put such beliefs into practice after taking control of the BEF. As we have seen in the previous chapter, in his role as Commander-in-Chief, Haig was able to assert influence over how and why the VC was awarded and his appointment quickly led to a shift in how the medal was conferred. Statistics developed and analysed for this study show that under Haig proportionally fewer VCs were awarded for actions that involved the rescuing of men when compared with French's command. Thus Haig's theory of 1914, that the VC should be awarded for specific actions to complement broader strategic goals and dissuade obstructive battlefield behaviour, was put into practice under his leadership in 1915 and became even further entrenched with the implementation of an attrition strategy in 1916 and 1917.

Victoria Cross heroism on the AIF's front lines

Given that a chief purpose of the VC was to inspire soldiers to emulate the combat actions of medal recipients, it was important that details of each medal, and the actions that earned them, were circulated among soldiers. Haig himself was evidently aware that for the VC to influence soldiers' actions, the particulars of each recipient's success needed to be

[22] Sheffield and Bourne, *Douglas Haig,* 78–79.
[23] *Ibid*.

widely broadcast. The British private Arthur Proctor received a VC from Haig on the Western Front in 1916 and was immediately instructed by the Field Marshall to "take this Victoria Cross back to your unit and show it to your commanding officer and your friends."[24] Haig's enthusiasm for the dissemination of details about VC awards among front line troops was shared by Australian corps and division commanders. Men of the AIF were regularly informed through official channels of countrymen who had been awarded the medal.[25] For Australian servicemen, news of VC awards and actions was an everyday feature of life on the front.

Lance Corporal Albert Jacka earned Australia's first VC of the First World War during the Gallipoli campaign and news of his success and action was quickly spread through the AIF. Jacka's official citation was published in *The London Gazette* on 23 July 1915:

> For most conspicuous bravery on the night of the 19th-20th May, 1915, at "Courtney's Post," Gallipoli Peninsula.
>
> Lance-Corporal Jacka, while holding a portion of our trench with four other men, was heavily attacked. When all except himself were killed or wounded, the trench was rushed and occupied by seven Turks. Lance-Corporal Jacka at once most gallantly attacked them single-handed, and killed the whole party, five by rifle fire and two with the bayonet.[26]

This citation was republished in the AIF Army Corp Routine Orders of 20 July 1915.[27] Such orders were dispersed among the men of the AIF and Jacka's actions were likely to have been widely read within the force. Jacka's citation, as noted in his service file, was further "promulgated in Divisional Orders 425" on 30 July.[28] It was also again "promulgated in Australian Military Orders No. 99 of 1916," along with the details of other Australian VCs awarded during the Gallipoli campaign.[29] Through official military and government publications, the details of Jacka's actions at Gallipoli were repeatedly made available to Australian service personnel on the front lines. The service files of each Australian VC recipient contain notes confirming that the award details had been

[24] Roderick Bailey, *Forgotten Voices of the Victoria Cross* (London: Random House, 2011), 22.

[25] D'Alton, "Behind the Valour," 78–79.

[26] "The London Gazette 29240," 23 July 1915, The Gazette Archives, 7279.

[27] "Routine Order," AWM 27, 368/23.

[28] "Service Record of Albert Jacka," 1914–1920, B2455, NAA, 4.

[29] "Service Record of William Dunstan," 1914–1920, B2455, NAA, 10; "Service Record of William John Symons," 1914–1920, B2455, NAA, 25.

promulgated in Australian military orders. Therefore, all Australian VC recipients during the war had their citations made available to AIF commanders for distribution among their forces.

The practice of keeping Australian soldiers informed of gallantry medals awarded to AIF service personnel was continued throughout the war. By 1916 it had become standard practice in the Australian army that all VCs awarded to members of the AIF be announced to soldiers at the front.[30] D'Alton has shown that most commanders in the Australian army ensured medal announcements were placed in Divisional Routine Orders or Special Orders.[31] The citations of VC recipients also often appeared in the *Anzac Bulletin*, a newspaper printed between 1916 and 1919 that was, as stated in the publication's header, "issued to members of the Australian Military and Naval Forces in Great Britain, France, and elsewhere."[32] Through such publications and announcements, AIF men learned the specific requirements that were necessary to earn a VC.[33] These publications reveal that senior officers in the Australian military viewed the broadcasting of gallantry decorations as a way to inspire and encourage their men. By publishing full citations, and thereby circulating the specific nature of actions that had been awarded, the military were able to broadly exhibit ideals that they hoped would serve as examples to be replicated.

Whether the VC actually influenced soldiers' combat behaviours is more difficult to gauge. Paul Robinson is likely correct in his assertion that rather than directly influencing behaviour, "the impact of medals was probably more indirect, raising morale by creating the impression that courage and excellence gained suitable recognition."[34] That more VCs were awarded in 1918 than in any other year, a time when casualties were at their highest and morale at its lowest among British and dominion forces, indicates that it was used as a tool for improving soldiers' morale as well as setting behavioural

30 "Special Orders," AWM 25, 713/17/1.

31 D'Alton, "Behind the Valour," 78–79.

32 "Anzac Bulletin: Issued to Members of the Australian Imperial Forces in Great Britain and France by Authority of the High Commissioner for Australia," 1916-1919, NLA, http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-1037567.

33 D'Alton, "Behind the Valour," 77–79.

34 Paul Robinson, *Military Honour and the Conduct of War: From Ancient Greece to Iraq* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 151.

examples.[35] Yet, whether or not the VC did influence soldiers to undertake certain actions on the battlefield, for our purposes, what is important is the fact that British and Australian commanders clearly believed that it did.

In late 1916 and early 1917, such prescriptions and representations of heroism were profoundly altered as the type of acts awarded the VC shifted. The favouring of killing actions and disregarding of life saving ones in the VC awarding process—as has been clearly identified in the statistics discussed in Chapters One and Two—meant that the representations of heroism provided to soldiers on the front lines propagated a behavioural model better suited to attrition warfare. For Australian soldiers, the representations of heroism modelled by the VC shifted even further towards killing and away from saving life than they did for other national divisions. Due to the VC being awarded to Australians more frequently for killing and less often for life saving compared to other national forces, the propagation of VC citations on the front lines created particularly aggressive standards of heroism for AIF troops.

Australian Victoria Crosses before and during the First World War

This section examines how Australians were recognised for heroism, through the VC, compared to other British and dominion forces. It is important to note that the number of VCs awarded to Australian servicemen between 1901 and 1918 (70) is small and that quantitive analysis of Australian VCs offers only a small insight into the broader trends of prescribed heroism. Yet, the Australian statistics largely follow the broader trends of the 1,180 VCs awarded to all British and Dominion forces between 1901 and 1918, making it possible to identify the shift in Australian military heroism as part of a broader, Allied shift while also allowing for a greater understanding of Australian awarded heroism in relation to other nations. It shows that Australian servicemen were disproportionately awarded the VC explicitly for acts of killing throughout the First World War. As will be discussed in detail later in this chapter, there is evidence to suggest that Australian divisional commanders had misunderstood GHQ directives in 1916 regarding the requirements for VC awards.[36] It is likely that the disparities uncovered in this section were the result of this divisional misinterpretation rather than a purposeful strategy of

[35] JG Fuller, *Troop Morale and Popular Culture in the British and Dominion Armies, 1914-1918* (London: Clarendon Press, 1990), 170.

[36] D'Alton, "Behind the Valour."

British commanders at GHQ. This is supported by the fact that Australian servicemen had been awarded in-line with broader VC statistics from the Second Boer War up to late 1916.

The Second Boer War

The first foreign conflict that the colonies of Australia took part in was the Second Boer War. Australians fought within units from six different Australian colonies—and which came under the control of the Australian Commonwealth after federation in 1901—as well as with British and South African dominion forces.[37] During the course of the conflict, six of these men were awarded the VC, all for actions that explicitly saved life in the face of enemy fire. Sergeant James Rogers of the South African Constabulary epitomised the type of action that Australians were awarded for during the conflict. At Thaba'Nchu in June 1901, Rogers saw that his Lieutenant had been dismounted by enemy fire and "carried him for half-a-mile on his horse. The Sergeant then returned to within 400 yards of the enemy, and carried away, one after the other, two men who had lost their horses…all this was done under a very heavy rifle fire."[38] Rogers's actions were nearly identical to those of the five other Australian soldiers who fought in the Second Boer War, only differing from Neville Howse's feat because Howse "picked up a wounded man, and carried him to a place of shelter" without the aid of a horse.[39] Australians who fought in the Second Boer War were therefore awarded for actions that represented the central British ideal of neo-chivalry at the time—a willingness to save others despite the risk such actions posed to their own safety.

Of the VCs awarded to other British and dominion forces during the Second Boer War, 13 percent were for killing the enemy and 45 percent for saving life. The act of saving life was, by a large margin, recognised as the most heroic deed a soldier could perform on the battlefield and this was clearly true for both British and Australian soldiers. While it is not possible to draw any solid conclusions from just six VC examples, that all Australian VCs of the Second Boer War were awarded for saving life shows that Australian military heroism—at least as it was officially recognised and awarded—was

[37] See further: Craig Wilcox, *Australia's Boer War: The War in South Africa, 1899-1902* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

[38] "The London Gazette 27426," 18 April 1902, The Gazette Archives, 2600.

[39] "The London Gazette 27320," 4 June 1901, The Gazette Archives, 3769.

dictated by British values and prescriptions.[40] This connection between British and Australian martial heroism continued into the First World War.

Australian Victoria Crosses 1915

The Gallipoli campaign was the first major action of the war for the AIF. Between the Allied storming of Turkish beaches on 25 April 1915 and their withdrawal in December of the same year, Australian soldiers were awarded nine VCs. Five of these VCs were conferred for killing enemy soldiers, such as in the case of Lieutenant William Symons, who earned the medal after he "led a charge and retook the sap, shooting two Turks with his revolver."[41] Captain Alfred Shout was similarly awarded for having "charged down trenches strongly occupied by the enemy, and personally threw four bombs among them."[42] John Hamilton, Albert Jacka, and Leonard Keysor also earned the VC for acts of killing. Four other VCs were awarded to Australians at Gallipoli, all for acts that, according to their citations, helped to keep troop morale high or held a contested strip of territory.[43] Notably, no Australian was decorated for saving life at Gallipoli.

The proportion of VCs awarded to Australians for killing in 1915 (50%) was higher than the amount awarded to all forces for killing in the same year (40%). Of the 37 VCs awarded to English, Welsh, Scottish, Irish, and New Zealand forces at Gallipoli, 16 (43%) were for acts of killing and ten (27%) for saving life (see Chart 7 below). Seventy-two VCs were granted to servicemen on the Western Front in 1915, 33 (46%) of which were awarded for acts of killing and 25 (35%) for actions that saved life. Just one VC was awarded to an Australian soldier outside of the Gallipoli theatre in 1915 and his was an example of humanitarian sacrifice that adhered to the highest neo-chivalric principles. On 3 September 1915, Temporary Lieutenant Wilbur Dartnell was wounded in a mounted infantry engagement at Maktau in present day Kenya.[44] Dartnell was being carried from the field when enemy troops closed to within a few yards of the force's position. The

[40] "The London Gazette 27362," 4 October 1901, The Gazette Archives, 6481; "The London Gazette 11250," 16 November 1900, The Gazette Archives, 1111; "The London Gazette 27320," 4 June 1901, The Gazette Archives, 3769; "The London Gazette 27405," 11 February 1902, The Gazette Archives, 843; "The London Gazette 27426," 18 April 1902, The Gazette Archives, 2600; "The London Gazette 27249," 23 November 1900, The Gazette Archives, 7385.

[41] "The London Gazette 29328," 15 October 1915, The Gazette Archives, 10154.

[42] *Ibid*.

[43] Where no details of killing or violence have been specifically mentioned, these citations have not been included in the "killing" category.

[44] "The London Gazette 29414," 21 December 1915, The Gazette Archives, 12797.

Lieutenant "insisted on being left behind in the hopes of being able to save the lives of the other wounded men…he gave his own life in the gallant attempt to save others."[45] His award meant that the proportion of Australian VCs for saving life in 1915 was ten percent.

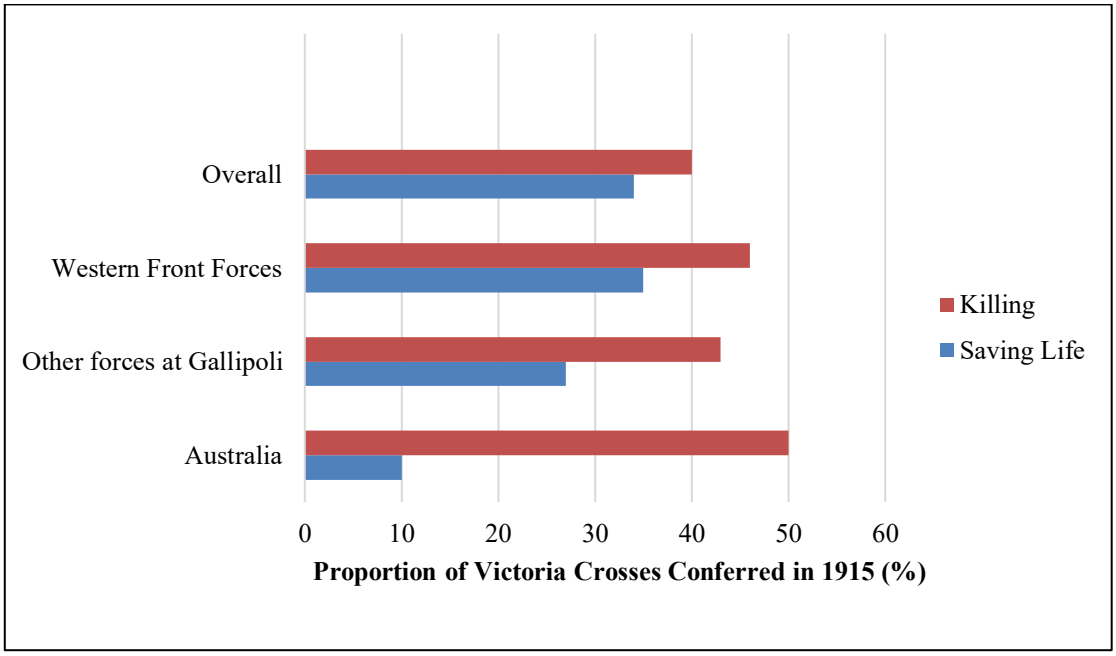


Chart 7 Proportion of Victoria Crosses (%) Conferred for Killing and Saving Life (1915). Australian forces were awarded a higher proportion of VCs for killing, and a lower proportion of VCs for saving life in 1915 than all other British and dominion forces both on the Western Front and fighting alongside the AIF at Gallipoli.

Comparatively, the proportion of VCs awarded to all forces for acts of life saving was 34 percent. Such figures show that there existed a distinct contrast in the types of acts that were recommended and awarded the VC in different national forces. They show that Australian servicemen were far more likely to earn the medal for killing, and less likely for saving life, when compared to all other British and dominion forces. Despite such statistics, there is no evidence to suggest that Australian and British commands purposefully recognised Australian servicemen for particular acts compared to the men of other national forces.

Australian Victoria Crosses 1916–1918

In March of 1916, AIF troops began arriving on the Western Front.[46] Private William Jackson was the first Australian to earn a VC in Europe and his award represented an ideal

[45] *Ibid*.

of heroism still coveted on the battlefields of France and Belgium. Having conducted a successful raid on an enemy trench, Jackson was accompanying a German prisoner back to Allied lines when his raiding party came under an intense artillery barrage.[47] Jackson managed to guide his prisoner to the Allied trench, but once again entered no man's land to aid those wounded in the attack.[48] After helping carry one wounded soldier to safety, Jackson was hit by an artillery shell that severed his right arm. Though wounded, Jackson entered no man's land again to continue looking for wounded comrades.[49]

Unlike at Gallipoli, humanitarian acts became expected and rewarded behaviours for Australian soldiers on the Western Front in 1916. Of the six VCs awarded to men of the AIF during that year (all on the Western Front), three were for saving life and two were awarded for killing.[50] Yet 1916 would be the only year of the war that life-saving actions made up the majority of VC conferrals in the AIF. As has been shown, Haig's rise to Commander-in-Chief, the Somme campaign, and the official implementation of attrition in early 1917 marked the end of a traditional war of manoeuvre and brought about a strategic focus on destroying the enemy.[51] Overall, VC statistics for 1917 show the value placed on killing over saving life on the Western Front, but this focus was even starker in the case of Australian servicemen.

Nineteen VCs were awarded to Australian servicemen during 1917 and all but two of these VC acts involved the killing of enemy soldiers. Lieutenant Frank McNamara, a pilot in the Royal Flying Corp, was the only Australian awarded the VC in 1917 explicitly for saving life.[52] In June of that year, McNamara was taking part in a bombing attack near Tel-el-Hesi in Egypt when he observed that a fellow pilot had been forced to land.[53] Badly wounded by ground defences, McNamara landed his plane under a heavy fire, flipped and destroyed his machine when attempting to take off with his comrade holding onto its

46 Bean, *Anzac to Amiens*, 197.

47 "The London Gazette 29740," 9 September 1916, The Gazette Archives, 8870–8871.

48 *Ibid*.

49 *Ibid*.

50 *Ibid*, 1870, 1871; "The London Gazette 29765," 26 September 1916, The Gazette Archives, 9418.

51 "Anglo-French Conference. May 4 and 5, 1917," 222, CAB 24/12/57; Haig, *Private Papers of Douglas Haig*, 226; Order of General Kiggell in Robbins, *British Generalship on the Western Front*, 127; Harris and Marble, "'Step-by-Step' Approach," 38.

52 "The London Gazette 30122," 8 June 1917, The Gazette Archives, 5701.

53 *Ibid.*

wing, eventually helped to fix and start the downed pilot's damaged plane and managed to fly both men away from a position that was nearly encroached by Turkish forces.[54] McNamara then, "although weak from loss of blood, flew this machine back to the aerodrome, a distance of seventy miles, and thus completed his comrade's rescue."[55] McNamara's citation offers an example of just how extraordinary an act of life saving was required to receive a VC in the latter half of the war. His action is also exceptional compared to the other Australian VCs awarded in 1917 as he was a pilot and therefore, unlike ground forces, may not have been as strictly held to the same strategic prerequisites of heroism that influenced the awarding of VCs to men of the AIF.[56]

Private Jørgen Jensen was the only other Australian to earn a VC during 1917 for an act that did not explicitly involve killing. Fighting at Noreuil in April, Jensen charged a German barricade by himself and yelled in German to its occupants that they were surrounded and should surrender.[57] According to Jensen's VC recommendation, the Private then "sent a German prisoner to tell another enemy party who were fighting…to surrender and they too gave in."[58] A group of Australian soldiers were unaware of the surrender and continued firing upon Jensen's prisoners. Jensen, "at considerable risk…stood up on the barricade waved his helmet, and then sent the german [*sic*] prisoners back to our line under an escort of our lightly wounded men."[59] While Jensen's VC was primarily earned by capturing a position and large body of prisoners, he was also commended in his citation for having saved lives.

What is unusual about Jensen's case, compared to every other VC assessed, is that Jensen risked his own life to save enemy prisoners and not wounded or stranded comrades. This act therefore both conformed to and detracted from the overall strategy of attrition. While Private Jensen did weaken German manpower, he also risked his own life in order to save enemy troops. Jensen's VC may therefore not have been unusual by the

54 Alan Stephens, *The Royal Australian Air Force: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 14–15.

55 "The London Gazette 30122," 5701.

56 As the act of saving life was an unusual one within air forces during the First World War, it is difficult to ascertain the outcome of the Allied strategic shift on the RFC.

57 Paul Oldfield, *Victoria Crosses on the Western Front - 1917 to Third Ypres: 27 January–27 July 1917* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword, 2016), 37.

58 "Victoria Cross: Private JC Jensen, 50 Battalion, AIF," *Australian War Memorial*, accessed 10 October 2018, //www.awm.gov.au/collection/C244313?search.

59 *Ibid.*

standards of 1914, but it is an outlier compared to the types of acts that other Australian servicemen fighting on the Western Front were being awarded for in 1917. It is, in short, an exception to the rule that acts of killing had become the Australian heroic norm on the Western Front by that stage in the war.

With the exception of Jensen's award, every VC conferred to Australians fighting on the Western Front in 1917 involved killing. Two of these VC citations—awarded to Patrick Bugden and John Carroll—mentioned both the taking and saving of life as reasons for their conferral and cannot therefore be classified as having been awarded specifically for either. Yet the descriptions of Bugden and Carroll's acts clearly identify killing as the core reasons for their awards. Bugden's citation describes how the Private destroyed several machine gun crews with bombs, captured a garrison, and on noticing that an Australian Corporal was being taken prisoner by German troops, "rushed to the rescue of his comrade, shot one enemy, and bayonetted the remaining two."[60] Near to the end of his citation, Bugden is also described as having "on five occasions…rescued wounded men under intense shell and machine gun fire."[61]

Private Carroll's citation similarly describes how the soldier, "rushed the enemy's trench and bayoneted four of the enemy. He then noticed a comrade in difficulties and at once proceeded to his comrade's assistance and killed one of the enemy."[62] Carroll then "came across a machine gun and team of four men in a shell-hole. Single-handed he attacked the entire team, killing three of the men and capturing the gun."[63] The end of Carroll's citation describes how "two of his comrades were buried by a shell, and in spite of very heavy shelling and machine gun fire, he managed to extricate them."[64] Like Bugden's citation, Carroll's life-saving action is mentioned briefly and only at the end of his award description. In keeping with the methodology of this thesis, neither Bugden nor Carroll's VCs have been counted in either the "explicitly awarded for killing" or the "explicitly awarded for saving life" categories, yet their citations demonstrate that both cases were awarded predominantly for their acts of killing rather than for saving life.

60 "The London Gazette 30400," 23 November 1917, The Gazette Archives, 12329.
61 *Ibid*.
62 "The London Gazette 30215," 31 July 1917, The Gazette Archives, 7906.
63 *Ibid*.
64 *Ibid.*

Therefore, of the 18 VCs awarded to Australians on the Western Front in 1917, 15 (83%) were conferred for actions that explicitly killed the enemy and two were for acts that both killed the enemy and saved lives. Seventy-four percent of VCs awarded to all British and dominion forces in 1917 were specifically conferred for acts of killing. McNamara's was the only VC (5%) awarded to an Australian in 1917 for an act that saved life, compared with 19 percent of the VCs conferred to all British and dominion forces in 1917 for that reason.

This trend of Australian servicemen receiving more VCs for acts of killing, and fewer for acts of saving life, than any other eligible national force continued and increased through 1918. Just two (7%) of the twenty-nine Australian men awarded the VC during 1918 received the medal for actions that included saving life. Strikingly, however, even in these instances the focus of Sergeant Percy Statton and Corporal Arthur Hall's citations is on their aggressive acts. Statton's citation describes how the NCO, "armed only with a revolver, in broad daylight…at once rushed 4 enemy machine gun posts in succession, disposing of two of them, killing 5 of the enemy."[65] Statton's destruction of men and munitions is described over four detailed paragraphs, before his citation mentions that, "later in the evening, under heavy machine gun fire, he went out again and brought in two badly wounded men."[66] Like Statton's, Corporal Hall's citation also describes his destruction of enemy emplacements in detail. His carrying a man "out of the barrage…to a stretcher bearer" is likewise mentioned only briefly, near the end of his official despatch.[67]

Through the VC the AIF was encouraged and rewarded, more than any other British or dominion force, to kill the enemy on the battlefields of 1918. Of the 29 Australian VCs awarded in 1918, 93 percent were for acts of killing. The proportion of VCs awarded to all other national forces for the same act was 65 percent (n. 115). During the same year, no Australian received a VC explicitly for saving life, while six percent (n. 13) of the VCs awarded to all other nations were conferred for that act. What such figures indicate is that while the neo-chivalric concept of the humanitarian hero had significantly diminished throughout all British and dominion forces, by 1918 such ideals were no longer officially recognised within the AIF at all.

[65] "The London Gazette 30922," 24 September 1918, The Gazette Archives, 11429.
[66] *Ibid*.
[67] "The London Gazette 31067," 13 December 1918, The Gazette Archives, 14778.

When comparing the types of acts that earned Australian servicemen VCs to those of all other forces between the start of the war and armistice, it is clear that Australian heroism was judged on a far narrower set of prerequisites (see Chart 8 below). At the end of the First World War, Australian servicemen had been awarded just four VCs for acts of saving life. This figure represents a mere six percent of Australia's 64 VC conferrals of the First World War. Of the 564 VCs awarded to all other forces, 21 percent (n. 118) were explicitly for acts of life saving. Seventy-seven percent (n. 49) of Australian VC awards were conferred specifically for acts of killing, while the figure for all other British and dominion forces was 54 percent (n. 302).

Similar disparities in VC statistics between other British and dominion forces are also evident. For example, India was the only national force to be awarded more VCs for acts of saving life than for acts of killing. Of the 15 VCs conferred to Indian servicemen, 57 percent were for life saving and just 27 percent were for killing the enemy. Of the 12 VCs awarded to New Zealand servicemen, nine (75%) were for explicit acts of killing and none were awarded for explicitly saving life. Yet neither India's or New Zealand's examples provide a large enough sample size to draw any meaningful conclusions from their VC statistics. Canada provides a much larger sample size, with its forces receiving 66 VCs over the course of the war. With just eight percent of these awarded for life saving and 75 percent for killing, the Canadian figures closely resemble the Australian statistics.

While such comparative figures offer several interesting points of inquiry, what is important for the purpose of this study is Australia's place within them. Proportionally, Australian forces earned more VCs for acts of killing than any other British or dominion nation. With the exception of New Zealand, Australian forces also earned the fewest VCs for acts of saving life. What such figures suggest is that Australians were held to a more rigid standard of heroism than many other British and dominion forces. Yet, while this discrepancy had a profound influence on how heroism was propagated among Australian servicemen and the Australian public, evidence suggests that such a divergence was the result of misunderstanding on the part of Australian Command rather than calculation.

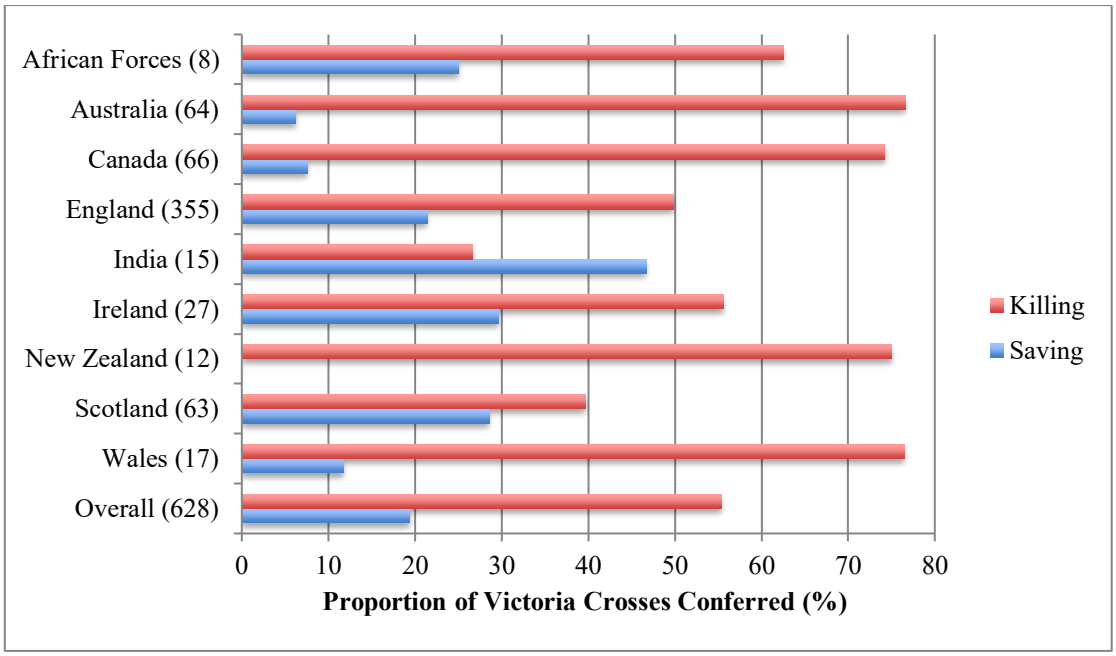


Chart 8 First World War: Proportion of Victoria Crosses Conferred (%) for Killing and Saving Life by Nation (1914-1918). Of all the British and dominion national forces to receive Victoria Crosses during the war, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and Wales were awarded higher proportions of Victoria Crosses for killing and lower proportions for life saving than the average overall. With the exception of New Zealand's 12 VCs, Australian servicemen were awarded proportionally more VCs for killing and proportionally fewer VCs for life saving than any other national force.

Australian Command and the Victoria Cross Directives

In two directives sent to British and dominion divisional commands in August and September 1916, GHQ redefined the prerequisites for the VC. The directive of 29 August, instructed that, "Cases of gallantry in life saving, of however fine a nature, will not be considered for the award of the VC."[68] A month later, on 29 September, these orders were further refined, with a GHQ directive stipulating that:

> In future, the Victoria Cross or other immediate reward will not be given for the rescue of wounded, excepting to those whose duty it is to care for such cases. Such attempts, more often than not, result in the death of the would-be rescuer and rescued. Moreover it depletes the fighting strength of Units perhaps at most critical moments.[69]

As the previous chapter identified, these GHQ orders contributed to a broad shift in the types of actions that were considered eligible, and recommended for, the VC. Yet due to misinterpretations of GHQ's VC directives within Australian divisional commands, it was

[68] "Honours, Awards, and Special Distinctions," 1916-1918, AWM 25 391/2, AWM, 3; D'Alton, "Behind the Valour," 118.

[69] "Honours, Awards, and Special Distinctions."

widely believed that acts of life saving of all types had been rendered ineligible for the award.

D'Alton has provided strong evidence to show that Australian divisional commands misinterpreted the GHQ directives of August and September.[70] She has demonstrated that while GHQ's orders stipulated servicemen "whose duty it is to care for such cases" remained officially eligible to earn the VC for acts of saving life, both Australian First and Second divisional headquarters failed to include this information when disseminating the order down the chain of command.[71] D'Alton shows that, "as a rule, senior AIF commanders interpreted the August 1916 instruction as a blanket ineligibility for any feat involving saving life and rescuing comrades"[72] Archival evidence brought to light by D'Alton shows a trail of correspondence between GHQ, Australian divisional command, and Australian brigades and battalions in which the Australian divisions failed to properly relay the changes made to VC eligibility.[73]

Staff at GHQ recognised that there was confusion among the Australian divisions in relation to the August and September directives and in November issued another order to clarify the VC prerequisites:

> In continuation of my No.MS/H/3631 of the 29th September 1916, some uncertainty appears to exist as to the orders therein stated. The objects of the Commander-in-Chief had in view are-
>
> To ensure that the rescue of wounded should not be allowed to interfere with the use of every available man for any operations in course of execution.
>
> To avoid unnecessary loss of life.
>
> To discourage attempts to win honours for the sake of honours themselves.
>
> It is somewhat difficult to differentiate, but the Commander-in-Chief will be ready to consider for some reward such cases as:
>
> Rescuing men buried in the trenches.
>
> Bringing wounded men back from a raid.
>
> Any act specially ordered by an Officer to help stretcher bearers in their duties.

70 D'Alton, "Behind the Valour."

71 *Ibid.*, 118.

72 *Ibid.*, 115.

73 "Honours, Awards, and Special Distinctions."

> Beyond this, any act which is bona fide and not in contravention of the spirit of the above provisos.[74]

While this order clearly shows that acts of life saving remained eligible for the VC in certain circumstances—whether or not the man who undertook such an act was a combat soldier—there are no records of this clarification being passed down to Australian brigadier or battalion commands. It is therefore likely that many Australian officers believed acts of saving life remained ineligible for the VC as a result of the August directive passed down to them by Australian divisional commands. These misinterpreted and miscommunicated orders surely contributed to the higher proportion of Australian VCs awarded for killing and lower proportion awarded for saving life compared to other national forces. D'Alton has therefore posited that "the blame lay with the AIF itself—not Haig" for the prevalence of aggressive acts and dearth of humanitarian ones that make up Australia's VC conferrals during the First World War.[75]

Despite the miscommunicated VC directives originally issued from divisional commands, many officers in the AIF continued to recommend the award for acts of life saving. Thirteen Australian men had VC recommendations lodged for undertaking acts that explicitly saved life after the VC directives of 1916. Only one of these recommendations—Lieutenant McNamara's—was subsequently awarded the VC. Such recommendations show that many Australian officers either understood the requirements for eligibility outlined in GHQ's clarifying orders of September and October, or that they did not adhere to the VC directives incorrectly relayed by their divisional commands in August 1916. Only one of the 13 Australian men recommended for acts of saving life after the VC directives were issued was a member of a medical battalion, with the rest of the recommended men having served in combat roles. This further indicates that many Australian officers either did not know of or did not adhere to any of the VC eligibility orders that had been passed down through their divisional commands.

D'Alton has also outlined a case in which a VC recommendation for an act of life saving undertaken by a combat soldier was forwarded to GHQ, only to be denied by Haig.[76] What this example shows is that VC recommendations for acts of life saving were

74 *Ibid.,* 10.
75 D'Alton, "Behind the Valour," 119.
76 *Ibid.*, 122–23.

not only lodged by frontline and battalion officers, but were also being approved and forwarded to GHQ by Australian divisional commands in spite of the awarding guidelines stipulated in the VC directives. That recommendations for life saving were making it through to GHQ for assessment shows that, for whatever reason or reasons, the misunderstanding of GHQ's VC eligibility orders did not stop recommendations for such humanitarian acts being made by Australian divisions. Thus, while the AIF's misunderstanding of VC eligibility requirements was undoubtedly a contributing factor to no member of the AIF earning a VC in 1917 or 1918 for saving life, GHQ denied Australian recommendations for acts of life saving during this period and were therefore also partly responsible.

Australian servicemen were subject to the same shift in requirements for the VC as other members of British and dominion forces. This was a shift away from life saving and towards killing the enemy. It was a change sparked by the adoption of an attrition strategy on the Western Front and the application of Haig's personal understanding of heroism. While Australian servicemen were exceptional among British and dominion forces for the proportion of VCs they earned for acts of killing, and the low proportion of awards they received for acts of saving life, this aberration was driven by a misunderstanding of VC eligibility requirements rather than any intentional attempt to influence battlefield behaviours. As discussed earlier in this chapter, prescriptions of the types of acts that constituted officially recognised heroism were the prerogative of GHQ and not the AIF.

Yet both GHQ's witting changes, and Australian commanders' accidental misunderstanding of VC eligibility rules, profoundly influenced how heroism was represented to Australian soldiers. Victoria Cross citations distributed to Australian servicemen contained proportionally more descriptions of killing and proportionally fewer of life saving acts compared to any other national force. The result was that Australian VC awards both rewarded and set new standards of heroism on the front lines. By 1917, Australian servicemen were being encouraged, through the publication and reading out of VC citations, to kill the enemy and concern themselves little with the saving of comrades' lives.[77] The same VC citations that were distributed among Australian servicemen were

[77] This is not to suggest that acts of saving of comrades' lives stopped due to changes in Victoria Cross eligibility requirements. Far stronger motivations for acts of saving existed on the Front Lines than the approval of GHQ.

also enthusiastically and repeatedly reported in the Australian press and spoken about at recruitment and conscription rallies. Subsequently when the shift in VC prerequisites occurred in 1916, both Australian soldiers and the Australian public were exposed to more representations of heroism framed around acts of killing than had ever been the case.

The Victoria Cross on the Home Front

While commanders at GHQ believed the VC could influence soldiers' behaviour and morale in combat, Australian civilian leaders and newspapers used the VC as a means to influence public support for the war effort. Australian state recruitment bodies organised for returned VC recipients to undertake tours of the country in an effort to encourage civilians to enlist. Prime Minister Billy Hughes attempted to bring the nation's first VC recipient, Lance Corporal Albert Jacka, back to Australia in both 1916 and 1918 in efforts to bolster public support for conscription, recruitment, and the war generally.[78] The Australian government attempted to introduce conscription in two national plebiscites in 1916 and 1917, which divided the country and prompted Australian mainstream papers to print thousands of pro-conscription articles during the war. Many VC recipients also wrote articles in support of conscription that were published across the country. In the articles by and about VC recipients, as well as at the recruitment drives and conscription rallies that they attended, descriptions of such men's VC actions were often retold. Due to the extensive use of VC recipients to promote enlistment and conscription, VC acts were the most widely and regularly publicised examples of heroism on the Australian home front. This meant that when attrition policy was enacted, the VC eligibility rules changed, and an exceptionally high proportion of VCs were awarded to Australian servicemen for killing, widespread representations of the hero in Australia also transformed.

As the first Australian to earn the VC during the First World War, Albert Jacka also became the preeminent figure of government and press propaganda during the war. His VC act at Gallipoli in May 1915, in which he killed seven Turkish soldiers—"five with rifle fire and two with the bayonet"—was widely reported in the Australian press.[79] Yet most of his plaudits from the Australian press came after he won a Military Cross for his action on the Western Front on 7 August 1916, in which he helped to captured 50, and

[78] Macklin, *Bravest,* 129.

[79] "The London Gazette 29240," 23 July 1915, The Gazette Archives, 7279.

personally killed at least 12, German soldiers.[80] Damien Powell has argued that Jacka's rural background, strong physique, and proven courage, "seemed to many to embody the best qualities of the Australian citizen soldier," and that as such his "value as a propagandistic tool was seized upon in local and national politics."[81] Several recruitment posters (see Figure 1 below) featured the image of Jacka—VC pinned to his chest—imploring men of Australia to "Join together, train together, embark together, fight together…Enlist in the sportsmen's thousand."[82] Another poster with Jacka's image reads, "He kept his pledge…you buy peace bonds."[83] Such examples show a clear belief among polemicists working for the federal and state governments that Albert Jacka held influence over the Australian public's opinion of the war. The campaign posters specifically targeted men who aspired to emulate the heroic ideals that Jacka and his VC embodied. Yet Jacka's image was also used in attempts to shape the opinions of the broader Australian public.

In August 1916, as fierce campaigns were underway in the lead up to the first conscription referendum, Jacka, as Robert Macklin has asserted, "found himself under siege from the government of Billy Hughes, who…wanted the Australian hero home to speak on behalf of the cause."[84] Hughes believed that in order to gain the necessary public support to pass conscription, he needed "the kind of moral authority that would come from the support of heroes like Jacka and his fellow VC winners."[85] The young Lieutenant was reluctant to use his VC fame for political purposes and refused the offer of returning home.[86] In 1918 Hughes influenced AIF command to issue an order that would force Jacka back to Australia to take part in recruitment drives.[87] Jacka refused to obey the order and remained in Europe until armistice.[88]

[80] "The London Gazette 29824," 14 November 1916, The Gazette Archives, 11074; Snelling, *VCs of the First World War*, 118.

[81] Damian Powell, "Albert Jacka VC and the Conscription Debate," *The La Trobe Journal* 63 (Autumn 1999): 8.

[82] "Enlist in the Sportsmen's Thousand," 1915, H2001.34/A, State Library of Victoria.

[83] "He Kept His Pledge You Buy Peace Bonds," 1919, H40458, State Library of Victoria.

[84] Robert Macklin, *Jacka VC: Australian Hero* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2006).

[85] *Ibid.,* 214.

[86] EJ Rule, *Jacka's Mob* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1933), 113; Macklin, *Jacka VC*, 129.

[87] "Service record of Albert Jacka," 21.

[88] *Ibid*.

Figure 1 Troedel & Cooper, *Enlist in the Sportsmen's Thousand. Show the enemy what Australian Sporting Men can do. Lieut. Jacka V.C.,* 1915, lithograph, 101.4 x 75.2 cm. SLV, H2001.34/1.

As a result of his absence from Australia, Jacka had little knowledge of and no control over the way his name and image were used throughout the conscription campaigns.[89] Pro-conscription journalists and campaigners displayed a readiness, as Powell has shown, "to fabricate Albert Jacka's unsolicited opinion on conscription."[90] Such constructions were especially frequent prior to the second conscription referendum of 1917, with the *Argus* claiming that "Captain Jacka VC … is a conscriptionist," and that the soldier had told the paper how he was "sure it is out of pure ignorance that people

89 Powell, "Albert Jacka VC and the Conscription Debate," 34.
90 *Ibid.*

voted 'No'" to conscription.[91] In an article entitled, "VC Winners: Captain Jacka's Opinion," which was published in newspapers around the country, Jacka was not only described as being in favour of conscription but quoted as having stated his "admiration for WM Hughes…I only wish we had more statesmen like him."[92] There is little evidence to suggest that Jacka had publicly offered his opinion on conscription and less to suggest the letters that newspapers of the time attributed to the war hero were genuine. Glenn Withers's study of the conscription debates during the First World War has convincingly shown that all such statements were fabrications and, unbeknownst to the man still fighting on the Western Front, the media had taken "full liberty in using Jacka's name to support a pro-conscription campaign."[93]

It was not just those rallying for conscription that used the VC recipient to further their cause. Nathaniel Jacka, Albert's father, was a staunch opponent of conscription and became a prominent campaigner. He and his fellow anti-conscription supporters regularly invoked Albert Jacka in an attempt to rally support. "Never in any letter" recorded Nathaniel Jacka in a sworn statement, "have any of my sons supported conscription and in my belief they are all still opposed to it."[94] The statement was written largely in response to the claim made by a Reg W Turnbull in the *Argus* that Jacka had pleaded with him, "Do what you can, Reg, to urge all your friends to vote 'Yes.'"[95] In the same edition, the *Argus* claimed that Jacka had sent a cable message to the Prime Minister stating his hope that "Australia will not leave us in the lurch…strong regiments mean light losses."[96] It is highly unlikely that Jacka sent either message and in his study of Jacka and the conscription debate, Powell has speculated that both messages were fabrications of either the government or the *Argus*.[97]

At no point were Jacka's opinions presented without his status as a VC recipient being mentioned. In many of the articles written about the officer, whether reporting on his VC conferral in 1915 or his subsequent—and suspect—opinions on conscription and

[91] "Wednesday, December 19, 1917," *The Argus*, 19 December 1917, 8.

[92] "VC Winners. Captain Jacka's Opinion," *The Argus*, 19 December 1917, 8.

[93] Withers, *Conscription, Necessity and Justice*, 5.

[94] "Lieutenant Jacka, VC and Conscription. Sworn Declaration by His Father," *The Australian Worker*, 2 November 1916, 14.

[95] "Lieut. Jacka, VC on Conscription," *The Argus*, 27 October 1916, 6.

[96] "Spirited Message. 'Do Not Leave Us in the Lurch,'" *The Argus*, 27 October 1916, 6.

[97] Powell, "Albert Jacka VC and the Conscription Debate," 18.

recruitment later in the war, details of his VC actions were often included. In one article that appeared in the *Argus*, the newspaper claimed that Nathaniel Jacka's views on conscription were inconsequential, as it was "not what the father thinks of the situation, but how it appears to the son who wears the Victoria Cross."[98] Indeed, if Jacka was an influential figure in Australian society, it was the VC that had made him so. Yet while he was certainly the most prominent, Jacka was by no means the only VC recipient used by the Australian government to bolster public opinion on war issues.

Private William Jackson earned his VC at Armentières on the Somme in 1916. Having lost his arm above the elbow in the action that earned him his VC, Jackson was invalided back to Australia, arriving in Sydney on 5 July 1917.[99] His return received national press coverage. The State Recruiting Committee of New South Wales capitalised on Jackson's popularity and influence as a war hero by organising for the young soldier to tour the state on a recruitment drive. Jackson was met with cheers and standing ovations in every town he visited and was reported to have held his "audience gripped in admiration."[100]

In November 1917, after Billy Hughes officially began his campaign for a second conscription referendum, it was hoped by the government that admiration for VC heroes might easily convert into influence over the populace. A large banner (see Figure 2 below) was printed in the *SMH* in December 1917 in which Jackson appealed "To the People of Australia," to "vindicate our national honour by keeping our pledge to our soldiers by voting 'Yes'."[101] At the time of the publication Jackson was on another speaking tour throughout rural areas of New South Wales, describing his own actions during the Gallipoli and Somme campaigns and urging all that had come to listen to support the push for a national draft.[102]

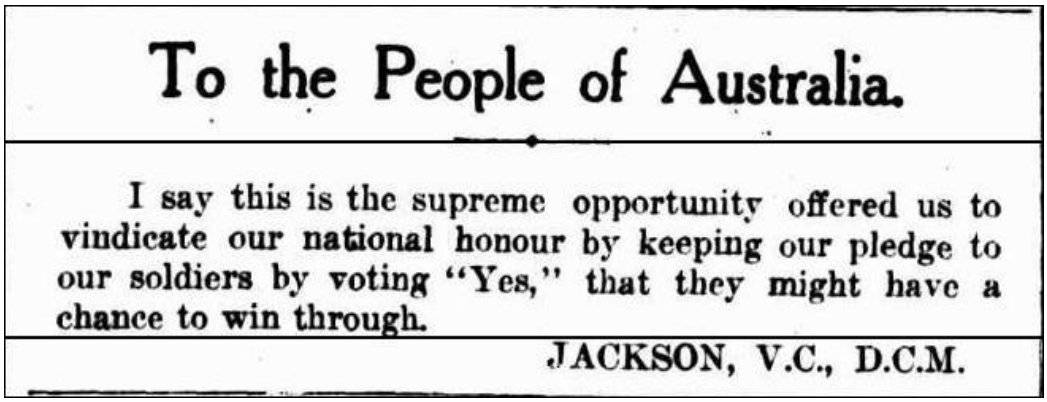
98 *Ibid.*, 23.

99 "A Returned Victoria Cross Hero," *SMH*, 11 July 1917, 12.

100 "The Rally. How Jackson Won the VC," *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, 20 August 1917, 7.

101 "To the People of Australia.," *SMH*, 19 December 1917, 12.

102 R. Sutton, "Jackson, John William Alexander (1897–1959)," in *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (Canberra: National Centre of Biography, Australian National University), accessed 9 June 2014, http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/jackson-john-william-alexander-6813; "Folly of Youth," *The Bathurst Times*, 17 December 1917.



To the People of Australia.

I say this is the supreme opportunity offered us to vindicate our national honour by keeping our pledge to our soldiers by voting "Yes," that they might have a chance to win through.

JACKSON, V.C., D.C.M.

Figure 2 William Jackson, *To the People of Australia*, Wednesday 19 December 1917, Sydney Morning Herald (NSW: 1842–1954), page 12. NLA, http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article15788081.

Just like Jackson, Hugo Throssell—who had received the VC for defending a trench at Gallipoli—was considered "a stirring figure" due to his "riding boots, breaches, the emu-feather-tufted slouch hat, the modest purple tab of the Victoria Cross on the left breast of his tunic."[103] Throssell was also the son of the former Premier of Western Australia, George Throssell,[104] His status within his home state alongside his heroic actions at Gallipoli led the governor Western Australia to claim in 1916 that Throssell "had only to appear for enlistments to improve."[105] Throssell's biographer John Hamilton has shown how, as well as campaigning for enlistment, the soldier was used by the Australian military and government "in a mounting political campaign over the need for conscription," over a "months-long marathon of receptions and speeches."[106] Throssell was not a comfortable public speaker. Still suffering from the psychological scars of war, his speeches would sometimes descend into rambling and horrific details of combat.[107] Jackson too was described as an uneasy orator. Even with the generosity offered to war heroes in the national press at the time, a *SMH* headline claimed that Jackson "fails as a speaker."[108] Yet the VC, which these men carried, and which granted them hero status in society, was "handed around with reverence wherever they stopped."[109]

[103] John Hamilton, *The Price of Valour* (Sydney: Pan Macmillan, 2012), 243–44.
[104] *Ibid*., 21.
[105] *Ibid.*, 244.
[106] *Ibid.*, 244, 247.
[107] *Ibid.*
[108] "Private Jackson VC Fails as a Speaker," *SMH*, July 10, 1917, 6.
[109] Hamilton, *Price of Valour*, 248.

Other VC recipients were sent by either the Australian or state governments on pro-conscription campaign tours of the country and were regularly described by Australian newspapers as supporting conscription. Captain Arthur Blackburn VC was quoted in a *Sunday Times* article as having asked the reporter whether voters were "prepared to condemn these heroes in the trenches."[110] In an address to a crowd in his home town of Euroa, Major Tubb VC stated his belief that conscription was necessary in ensuring that Germany did not "wipe England off the map."[111] Lieutenant William Dunstan VC told a reporter for the *Argus* that had he "a thousand votes I would give every one of them in favour for conscription."[112] Captain James Newland VC also reportedly told the *Argus* that he considered compulsory national service the "only method by which the men who have played the game can get any respite."[113] A letter from Captain Robert Grieve VC to his brother fighting in Europe was printed in the *Farmer and Settler* and stated that "we want the men…it will save thousands of lives."[114] The opinions of these VC recipients were sought out, displayed and propagated for the same reason that Jacka's name was hijacked during divisive conscription debates: such men were believed to have influence over the opinions of the Australian public.

Influence

Government and press use of VC recipients as figures for war propaganda was logical as such men held prominent places in Australian wartime society. Victoria Cross recipients were reported on regularly. Songs and poems created by the public about such men were frequently published. Businesses used the fame of recipients to help sell their products. Many thousands of people across the country attended recruitment drives and events to hear them speak. What level of influence such men had on the ideas and opinions of the Australian population is, of course, impossible to ascertain, yet many Australian citizens publicly exhibited their adoration for such VC recipients during the course of the war. This widespread propagation and adulation of VC recipients, and the actions they

110 "The Case for National Service," *Sunday Times*, 22 October 1916, 2.

111 "Our Heroes. Masonic Welcome to Major Tubb," *Shepparton Advertiser*, 11 May 1916.

112 "VC Winners. Recent Opinions," *The Argus*, 30 November 1917, 6.

113 *Ibid*.

114 "We Want the Men. For the Suring Offensive," *The Farmer and Settler*, 14 December 1917, 3.

undertook to earn their medal, shows that the VC was an important marker of heroism for many Australians during the First World War.

Shortly after arriving back in Australia, and being compelled to speak to a crowd of thousands in Sydney's Martin Place, William Jackson was on a train bound for his hometown of Gunbar, New South Wales.[115] The train briefly stopped at the small town of Narandera where, "some hundreds of citizens, besides the pupils of the Public and Convents schools, and the Citizens' Band," were waiting to welcome the VC hero.[116] Jackson was invited by the town mayor for tea and was given fifteen pounds that had been donated to him by the citizens of Narandera.[117] The young private was similarly met in the town of Hay, as well as in his hometown of Gunbar.[118] During his recruitment tour of regional New South Wales in 1917 and 1918, the VC recipient drew large crowds in nearly every town he visited.[119]

Hugo Throssell was met by much the same enthusiasm as Jackson. Throssell had returned to Australia in 1916 from the Dardanelles campaign and immediately undertook a recruitment and pro-conscription tour of towns around the country. Like Jackson, Throssell was regularly greeted by large crowds to hear him speak and, like Jackson, Throssell was usually asked to describe the details of his VC action.[120] The widely publicised acts of these men, usually directly quoting their VC citations, drew interest and adulation. On their tours, both Throssell and Jackson were regularly congratulated and cheered for their conduct on the battlefield. Jackson was handed a poem written by an

115 "Private Jackson VC Fails as a Speaker," 6.

116 "Private Jackson, VC Reception at Narandera Railway Station," *Narandera Argus and Riverina Advertiser*, 13 July 1917, 3.

117 *Ibid*.

118 "Jackson VC. Gunbar's Modest Hero," *SMH*, 6 July 1917, 6.

119 "Recruiting in Illawarra," *South Coast Times and Wollongong Argus*, 1 March 1918, 7; "Referendum Campaign for 'Yes,'" *Wellington Times*, 17 December 1917, 3; "Jackson VC. Gunbar's Modest Hero," 6; "Jackson VC to Visit Inverell," *The Inverell Times*, 14 December 1917, 4; "Maitland Show. Official Opening Day," *The Newcastle Sun*, 11 April 1918, 5; "Private W Jackson VC. Welcome at Carrathool," *The Riverine Grazier*, 13 July 1917, 2; "The Rally. How Jackson Won the VC," *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, 20 August 1917, 7.

120 "A VC Hero. Arrival of Lieutenant Throssell. Welcomed at Port Adelaide," *Daily Herald*, 8 June 1916, 6; "Hugo Throssell VC. Visits Fermoy," *Goomalling-Dowerin Mail*, 7 March 1916, 3; "Lieutenant Throssell, VC. Return to Northam," *Western Mail*, 5 May 1916, 4; "Lieut. Hugo Throssell, VC. Welcomes at Dowerin, Korrelocking and Cowcowing," *Northam Courier*, 9 May 1916, 4; "Lieutenant Throssel's Visit," *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 5 June 1916, 3; "Lieut. Throssell, VC. Attends To-Night," *The Evening Star*, 31 May 1916, 2; "Lieut. HV Throssell VC Welcomed. At Mount Barker," *The Mount Barker Courier and Onkaparinga and Gumeracha Advertiser*, 11 August 1916, 4; "Welcome to Lieutenant Hugo Throssell, VC, at Muresk," *The Northam Advertiser*, 31 May 1916, 3.

admirer while visiting Maitland, which was subsequently published in several Australian newspapers:

> I envy you the title
> You write behind your name,
> I envy you the knowledge
> That you have played the game.
>
> The glorious name of Anzac
> Would be enough for me,
> But you have added to it
> Jackson, Anzac, V.C.[121]

In November 1917 another poem about Jackson, penned by an EM Ward, appeared in the *Gilgandra Weekly* and described how:

> He lost his arm in battle
> Fighting for you and me,
> He did a brave and glorious deed
> And won the coveted VC.[122]

One member of the public wrote a three-verse song about Jackson's VC citation, which was also published in numerous Australian newspapers. The song lauded "Dinkum Bill," for having "proved himself the bravest of the brave."[123] Such large crowds and public displays of adoration offer some indication of the respect held among many in Australian society for VC recipients and suggest that the messages such men had to share about the need for recruitment and conscription may well have reached a receptive audience.

Australian businesses also attempted to capitalise on the influence VC recipients were seen to wield. Frederick Gladdish and WL Werden wrote a ballad about Jacka's actions at Gallipoli and sold copies of the songbook.[124] Sniders and Abrahams Pty Ltd produced cigarette cards with the faces of Australian VC recipients printed on them (see Figure 3 below).[125] Comic books and paintings that detailed the actions of Australian VC recipients were also produced and sold during the war.[126] There are no sales records of

[121] "Jackson VC," *The Bathurst Times*, 23 October 1917, 3; "Envies Jackson, VC Most of All His Name," *The North Western Courier*, 31 August 1917, 5.

[122] "Private Jackson VC," *Gilgandra Weekly*, 16 November 1917, 14.

[123] "Over There. Dedicated to Private Jackson, VC, DCM," *Daily Examiner*, 22 August 1918, 7.

[124] Frederick E Gladdish and WL Werden, "He Was Only a Private, That's All," 1916, 784.71994 G542, NLA.

[125] Snider and Abrahams Pty Ltd, "Cigarette Card of Captain A Jacka, VC MC," 1916, RC00750, AWM.

[126] D'Alton, "Behind the Valour," 31.

such items, that so many products were made indicates at least a perceived market for such merchandise.

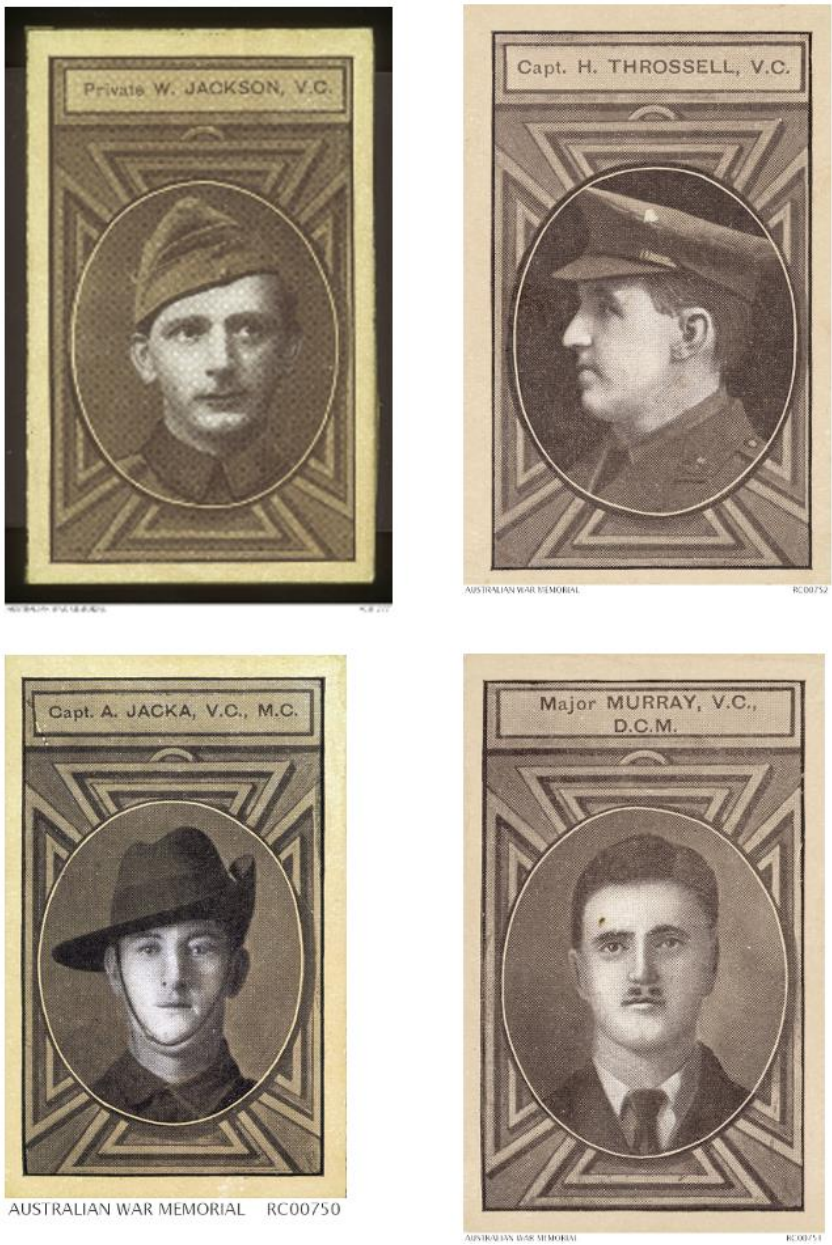


Figure 3 Cigarette cards featuring Australian First World War VC Recipients. Top left: Sniders and Abrahams Pty Ltd, *Cigarette card of Private W. Jackson, V.C.*, *c*1916–18, cigarette/trade card, 6.6 x 4.3 cm. AWM, RC01777. Top right: Sniders and Abrahams Pty Ltd, *Cigarette card of Capt H Throssell, VC*, *c*1916–18, cigarette/trade card, 6.6 x 4.3 cm. AWM, RC00752. Bottom left: Sniders and Abrahams Pty Ltd, *Cigarette card of Captain A Jacka, VC MC*, *c*1916–18, cigarette/trade card, 6.6 x 4.3 cm. AWM, RC00750. Bottom right: Sniders and Abrahams Pty Ltd, *Cigarette card of Major Murray, VC DCM*, *c*1916–18, cigarette/trade card, 6.6 x 4.3 cm. AWM, RC00751.

Of all these businesses, it was Australian newspapers that most frequently used VC recipients to sell publications and push war propaganda. Major Australian newspapers provided the public with extensive, regular coverage of VC recipients and made such men prominent figures in Australian society. Each VC earned by a member of the AIF was

widely reported and repeatedly praised by Australian newspapers. During the course of the war the *Sydney Morning Herald* alone published at least 380 articles that featured news of the VC.[127] Melbourne's the *Age* printed almost 400.[128] The Victoria Cross citations that described official military accounts of VC actions were almost always included in articles about the VC and its Australian recipients. Thus, the type of heroism recognised by British GHQ was repeatedly disseminated among the Australian civilian population. Such consistent reporting was one of the key factors that led to the widespread interest and adulation among the Australian public for VC recipients.

The many newspaper articles and government speaking tours that relied on VC recipients' reputations and opinions to carry pro-war and pro-conscription sentiments reveals the level of influence such men were seen to wield over public opinions by the press, the government and military officials. Such belief in VC recipients' influence was not specious. These men's influence might not have been limited to opinions on recruitment and conscription but possibly extended to understandings of heroism too. The widespread and regular reporting of VC citations in Australian newspapers and at rallies largely drove the public knowledge of, and reverence for, the highest awarded ideals of heroism. Thus, when the types of actions that were predominantly awarded the Victoria Cross changed, the citations read aloud at recruitment meetings, printed by Australian businesses, and published in Australian newspapers also altered. With this shift in VC representations, Australian popular understandings of the hero may have also transformed.

Conclusion

The VC was used by British GHQ to shape battlefield behaviour, by Australian commanders to motivate their men, and by governments and newspapers within Australia to promote the war, recruitment, and conscription. This chapter has shown how both GHQ and Australian governments believed that the VC, and its recipients, could influence actions and beliefs and repeatedly used these representations to achieve such aims. In such an environment, the misunderstanding of GHQ's VC directives in 1916 led not only to higher proportions of VCs being awarded to Australians for killing and lower proportions

127 The first and last of these articles were: "Victoria Cross. Gallant Warrant Officer," *SMH*, 12 November 1914, 9; "VC Heroes," *SMH*, 1 November 1918, 7.

128 The first and last of these articles were: "Germans Shot Like Rabbits," *The Age*, 3 September 1914, 7; "About People," *The Age*, 11 November 1918, 8.

awarded for saving life, but resulted in the dominant representation of heroism on Australian front lines and the Australian home front focusing on heroes who killed the enemy. In 1917, when the prerequisites for VC awards shifted to focus even further on aggressive actions, representations of the VC changed further. The type of VC heroism that was so widely publicised by the Australian press and government, and adulated by the Australian public, overwhelmingly shifted to a new genus of hero more suited to attrition warfare. Yet, as Chapters Four and Five will show, this shift in dominant heroic representation from the neo-chivalric humanitarian to the Western Front killer was not solely the result of the VC, but of a broader change in how the hero was reported.

Part II

Chapter Four: Censorship, Collaboration, and Representations of Heroism in the Australian Press (1914–1916)

On 4 August 1914, a large crowd gathered outside the offices of Melbourne's *Argus* newspaper. The broadsheet later reported how police had been "unable to stop the Crowd which sought to gain access to the Delivery Counter…where copies of the Special Edition were being handed out."[1] This crowd was one of many around Australia that had gathered outside newspaper offices—and in this case even attempted to break in—for information about the recently declared war.[2] Such scenes were repeated outside the *Argus's* offices several months later (see Figure 4 below), when another gathering awaited news of the Gallipoli landings and its casualty list.[3]

Alongside letters sent to friends and relatives from those serving abroad, newspapers were a principal source of information about the war available to Australians.[4] Large newspapers, like the *Argus*, provided the public with the broadest and latest coverage of war news from all active theatres. Many Australians relied on newspapers for information about the war that was taking place across the globe.[5] Newspapers were therefore an important part of the war campaign and governmental control over the information that was published about the war was considered necessary to achieving overall victory. The Australian government were also aware of the influence the press had on civilian understandings and opinions of the conflict and at the outbreak of war immediately worked to control its output. The prompt implementation of the *War Precautions Act* in October 1914 severely limited the way in which the war could be reported in the Australian press and ensured that only positive accounts of the conflict were presented to the Australian public.

1 "'What's the News?' The Rush at 'The Argus,'" *The Argus*, 5 August 1914, 7.

2 Joan Beaumont, *Broken Nation: Australians in the Great War* (Crows Nest: Allen and Unwin, 2014), 20.

3 "Scenes at 'The Argus' Office," *The Argus*, May 3, 1915, 8; The Argus, "The Crowd Waiting Outside the Argus Office on News from Gallipoli," 1915, A03152, AWM.

4 Fewster, *Expression and Suppression*, 131.

5 *Ibid.*

Figure 4 The *Argus*, The crowd waiting outside the *Argus* Office on news from Gallipoli, one Sunday late in 1915, 1915, photograph. AWM, A03152.

The need to control information about the war was particularly important on the Australian home front. Australia was one of the few nations involved in the conflict that had not instituted compulsory military service. The Australian government, led by Prime Minister Billy Hughes, twice attempted to implement conscription by gaining a mandate through two unsuccessful national plebiscites in 1916 and 1917.[6] There was particular pressure on Australian newspapers to present the war in the most positive manner possible in order to ensure that men continued to enlist in high numbers throughout the conflict as well as to persuade Australians to vote for the implementation of conscription. While major mainstream newspapers were supportive of the war effort, the Australian government ensured that reporting of the war was controlled through the introduction of

[6] On the conscription referenda, see Robin Archer *et al., The Conscription Conflict and the Great War* (Melbourne: Monash University, 2017); Glenn Withers, *Conscription, Necessity and Justice: The Case for an All Volunteer Army* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1972); Beaumont, *Broken Nation*; Oliver, *Peacemongers: Conscientious Objectors to Military Service in Australia*; Lake, *A Divided Society: Tasmania During World War I.*

strict censorship laws as part of the *War Precautions Act* of 1914. These censorship laws existed alongside British army censorship rules, to which Australian correspondents were also subject. As we will see, correspondents struggled to find prose that adequately described the war, and many also believed it important to self-censor their work in order not to alarm readers at home. These factors ensured that only positive representations of the war were published in Australian newspapers.

Working within the restrictions of government, military, and self-censorship, Australian newspapers focused representations of the First World War on heroes and heroism. Stories of battlefield valour were a key means for diluting the realities and casualties of the war, a fact of which Field Marshall Douglas Haig may have been conscious. In April 1916, the Commander-in-Chief held a meeting with British and dominion correspondents and stated his belief that their roles were to "get hold of little stories of heroism, and so forth, to write them up in a bright way to make good reading for Mary Ann in the kitchen, and the man in the street."[7] Haig's idea of war reporting was one that Australian correspondents largely followed throughout the war, for most depictions of the front lines that were published in Australian newspapers framed the events of the conflict around acts of heroism. Through such stories of heroism, correspondents offered readers positive images of battle as well as an idealised representation of Australian masculinity.

The long casualty lists also printed in newspapers could be, to a degree, justified and valorised by correspondents who showed their audiences that such men had heroically sacrificed themselves for the cause of King, country, and Empire. For example, in April 1917 the Australian war correspondent and managing editor of the news distribution company United Cable Service (UCS), Keith Murdoch, wrote to the Australian general William Birdwood that, "of course it has not been wise to say much about our heavy losses on the Wednesday, but in any case the gallantry of the man is our first consideration."[8] As Murdoch clearly understood, heroism was an important facet of Australian war reporting because writers were unable and often unwilling to describe the

[7] Brian Best, *Reporting from the Front: War Reporters During the Great War* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword, 2014), 149.

[8] Keith Murdoch, "Murdoch to Birdwood, 24 April 1917," 1917, MS 2823, NLA; John F Williams, *ANZACS, the Media and the Great War* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 1999), 103; Kerry McCallum and Peter Putnis, "Media Management in Wartime: The Impact of Censorship on Press–government Relations in World War I Australia," *Media History* 14, no. 1 (2008), 21.

conflict they were witnessing in its full detail. Stories of heroism could, as Murdoch insinuated in his letter to Birdwood, distract readers from the casualties of war by presenting them with tales of heroic derring-do.

Heroism was a key theme in Australian mainstream newspapers' representations of the war, yet, as the following two chapters will demonstrate, the qualities that were reported as being heroic significantly altered during the conflict. These shifts in the representation of heroism were similar in nature to the changes that occurred in the way VCs were conferred. The gradual shift in how military heroism was represented in Australian newspapers also occurred around late-1916, roughly the same time that official military recognition of heroism profoundly altered. Thus, what the following two chapters demonstrate is that the shift in heroism outlined in Chapters One, Two, and Three not only influenced the way heroism was awarded, but also affected how it was reported.

This chapter shows that representations of military heroism in Australian newspapers between 1914 and 1916 depicted the same neo-chivalric ideals of valour and selflessness that so greatly influenced the awarding of the VC during the same period. Acts in which servicemen saved lives, displayed coolness under attack, or demonstrated their devotion to duty made up many of the articles written about Australian heroism during this period.

I argue that such newspaper depictions of heroism were strongly influenced by Victorian-era heroic literature, the restrictions imposed by government censorship, the reliance of newspapers on information provided by the British military, and war correspondents' self-censorship. Chapter Three has demonstrated how the Australian press used the image of the military hero to influence popular opinion about war issues, this chapter continues that theme by examining how neo-chivalric representations of the hero were used to soften the realities of the First World War. I also demonstrate that newspaper representations of the hero were aligned with official military standards of heroism—as measured through the VC. Just as neo-chivalric ideals influenced how the VC was awarded between 1914 and 1916, so too did they influence how the military hero was represented in Australian newspapers. Thus, this chapter reveals how officially recognised heroic traits were in alignment with mainstream Australian representations of heroism during the First World War, and that such traits, as we saw in Part I of this thesis, were strongly informed by ideals of neo-chivalry between 1914 and 1916.

The Press and the First World War

More than any conflict that had occurred before it, public opinion was an essential factor in prosecuting the First World War. Suffrage had been broadened and standards of literacy had significantly risen in many British and dominion nations in the mid to late nineteenth-century.[9] This meant that by the time of the First World War, as the historians ML Sanders and Phillip M Taylor have noted of British society, "public opinion was not only an increasingly important factor in British political life but also was better informed than ever before."[10] In such conditions, national governments took actions during the war to moderate public opinion by controlling the information that reached civilians. The Ministry of Information in Britain and the Bureau of Public Information in the United States were specific government bodies established during the conflict to create, control, and manipulate information that reached the public.[11] Such state-run propaganda efforts were unprecedented and "by the time the First World War ended," as Gary S Messinger has noted in his influential history of British war propaganda, "a great historical divide had been passed in the development of opinion manipulation."[12] Newspapers were a widely-read source of information in western democracies at the outbreak of the war and were therefore central to these manipulation efforts.[13]

Unlike Britain or the United States, the Australian government did not establish a propaganda unit during the war, but instead relied on strict censorship rules and the complicity of editors and correspondents from Australia's mainstream press to ensure that the conflict was represented in a positive light. For this reason, it is problematic to view the Australian government's attempts to influence public opinions of the war as being propaganda. Taylor has defined propaganda as:

> The deliberate attempt to persuade people to think and behave in a desired way…the conscious, methodical and planned decisions to employ

9 ML Sanders and Philip M Taylor, *British Propaganda during the First World War, 1914–18* (New York: Macmillan, 1982), 2–3.

10 *Ibid*.

11 These departments and their propaganda efforts in the First World War are best explored in Harold Lasswell's classic: Harold D Lasswell, *Propaganda Technique in the World War* (Mansfield Centre: Martino Fine Books, [1938] 2013).

12 Gary S Messinger, *British Propaganda and the State in the First World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), 2.

13 Sanders and Taylor, *British Propaganda during the First World War*, 27–33.

> techniques of persuasion designed to achieve specific goals that are intended to benefit those organising the process.[14]

While mechanisms of information control, such as the censorship restrictions applied to Australian newspapers, certainly aimed to present the war in a positive way, censorship restrictions were not "methodical…techniques of persuasion." It is for this reason that I argue that the Australian government and press did not enact a program of propaganda during the First World War, but instead used devices such as press campaigns around heroism to boost enlistment, soften the realities of the conflict, and distract from the terrible loss of life and livelihood.

The nature of the Australian press during the First World War is a subject that has been explored in Australian historiography since 1980. Kevin Fewster's *Expression and Suppression* was the first thorough and critical investigation of the wartime relationship that existed between Australia's press and the federal government.[15] Fewster explored how the Hughes government used wartime censorship laws stipulated in the *War Precautions Act* to promote recruitment, advocate for conscription, and ensure that the conflict was presented in the best possible light. He also used records of censorship fines and trials to demonstrate how the government extended its use of censorship laws beyond war-related matters. Fewster outlined how the government suppressed information about civil unrest from being reported in newspapers, with the aim of promoting social harmony. While *Expression and Suppression* is an important work about Australia's press history, it only briefly touches upon how censorship influenced the image of the Australian serviceman on the home front.

John Williams's *ANZACS, the Media, and the Great War* built upon Fewster's research and presented a broader examination of the Anzac mythology created through Australian wartime reporting. Williams examined the representations of Australian servicemen in wartime newspapers and argued that Australian correspondents and reporters "used the communication potential of modernity to describe a war in pre-modern terms."[16] Williams discussed the restrictions presented by censorship but focused on the self-censorship practised by correspondents and editors. In Williams's opinion, the most

[14] Philip M Taylor, *Munitions of the Mind: A History of Propaganda* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 6.

[15] Fewster, *Expression and Suppression*.

[16] Williams, *ANZACS, the Media and the Great War*, 6.

influential of these writers, the Australian official war correspondent Charles Bean, deliberately self-censored his work in a way that propagated an Anzac myth built upon the Australian bush legend and British nineteenth-century ideals of masculinity.[17] Williams argued that Bean disregarded the Australian victories achieved through careful planning, organisation, and the innovative use of modern arms, which were best exhibited by the Australian General John Monash in 1918. Such oversight ensured that a "modernistic, birth-giving legend that accommodated military victories and not just moral ones…was not to be."[18]

In his study, Williams did not focus specifically on representations of heroism in Australian newspapers. Yet he did conduct a cross-national study of Allied war reporting to ascertain whether Australian soldiers were represented as exceptional in other national newspapers. He found that Canadian, British, and French wartime newspapers tended to praise their own men as heroes, with little mention of Australian soldiers' achievements.[19]

Peter Putnis and Kerry McCallum's 2008 article, "Media Management in Wartime" further explored the relationships that existed between the Australian government and editors of the nation's major newspapers.[20] They provided additional support to the argument—made by Fewster and Williams—that Australian newspapers willingly supported the government's war aims. Putnis and McCallum have shown that while correspondents and editors were sometimes frustrated by the restrictive nature of Australian censorship laws, they were willing and eager to support the war effort.[21]

In 2013 they argued that despite the restrictive nature of censorship, the Australian government never specifically commissioned the writing or publication of propaganda materials.[22] Putnis and McCallum classed First World War propaganda as content purposefully created by the state to enhance an agenda. Unlike Britain or the United States, the Australian government did not have a department specifically for the creation

17 *Ibid.*, 166.

18 *Ibid.*, 167.

19 *Ibid*., 141, 210, 266.

20 McCallum and Putnis, "Media Management in Wartime."

21 *Ibid*., 20.

22 Peter Putnis and Kerry McCallum, "Reuters, Propaganda-Inspired News, and the Australian Press During the First World War," *Media History* 19, no. 3 (August 1, 2013): 284–304.

of propaganda during the First World War.[23] This is why the authors termed Australian newspaper content as being "propaganda-inspired news" rather than propaganda proper.

Putnis and McCallum's study outlined that while there existed no program of propaganda run by the Australian government, British propaganda was regularly sent through the Reuters cable service and published in Australian newspapers during the latter half of the war. The article investigated how Reuters served as a means for distributing government-created propaganda during the conflict and that there was a concerted attempt on the British government's part to have such propaganda published in Australian newspapers.[24]

In 2011, Fay Anderson and Richard Trembath's book *Witnesses to War* provided greater detail about the experiences of Australian correspondents and photographers during the First World War.[25] Their analysis on the Australian press between 1914 and 1918 has offered the most detailed insight into the influence that British and Australian censorship restrictions had in forging representations of the war in Australian newspapers. They argued that it was "censorship that most profoundly defined reportage of World War I" and showed how the British War Office controlled and restricted war correspondents—from both Britain and the colonies—to ensure that they would not be "betrayed" by the press.[26] Anderson and Trembath have also further shown that while British Army and Australian government censorship was stringently applied to Australian correspondents, the restrictions journalists placed on themselves meant that there effectively existed a "triple layer" of censorship in Australian newspaper war reporting.[27]

The result of this triple layer of censorship was that Australian reporting of the First World War was overwhelmingly positive. Anderson and Trembath have shown how such censorship resulted in the war being reported in Australian newspapers "with traditional language"—like that outlined by Fussell.[28] They argued that by focusing on acts of Australian "valour and courage, the press obliterated the terror, the sounds and

23 Lasswell, *Propaganda Technique in the World War*.
24 Putnis and McCallum, "Reuters, Propaganda-Inspired News," 285.
25 Anderson and Trembath, *Witnesses to War*.
26 *Ibid.*, 44.
27 *Ibid.*, 51–52.
28 *Ibid.*, 66.

stench, the bodies in death and the soldiers' vulnerabilities."[29] While Anderson and Trembath noted that the tone of Australian war reporting slowly shifted towards representing the war in a wholly positive light by 1916, they did not outline how representations of Australian heroism profoundly changed in newspapers between 1914 and 1918. Thus, the following chapters of this thesis offer an original contribution to the field of Australian press history by examining how wartime newspapers represented the Australian hero, as well as how and why such representations changed during the conflict.

Official War Correspondents

In the early months of the war, British authorities decided against allowing correspondents near the battlefield and initially believed that official military communiques released to the press would sate the national desire for war news.[30] Eventually it was decided that war correspondents were required in order to depict the conflict in a heroic and positive image.[31] The British military selected official war correspondents who were allowed within the theatre of war, if never really near the battlefields.[32] Through this process of accreditation, the British government was able to control who was appointed as a war correspondent and how many correspondents were attached to military forces during the war.[33] While they were given greater access to the conflict than other reporters, official war correspondents were severely restricted in where they could go, what they could see, who they could interview, and, through censorship restrictions, what they could write.[34]

In the lead up to the Gallipoli campaign of April 1915—Australia's first major involvement in the war—the British government stipulated that only three official war correspondents were to accompany the British and dominion militaries during operations.[35] Only one of these positions was open to a colonial reporter, an arrangement which, as Anderson and Trembath have noted, "took no account of the realities of the Australian newspaper industry, which was highly decentralised and subject to state

29 *Ibid.*, 66–67.
30 Williams, *ANZACS, the Media and the Great War*, 56.
31 *Ibid*., 56-57.
32 *Ibid*.
33 Anderson and Trembath, *Witnesses to War*, 59.
34 Williams, *ANZACS, the Media and the Great War*, 3.
35 Anderson and Trembath, *Witnesses to War*, 60.

preferences and rivalries."[36] The Australian government organised in September 1914 for members of the Australian Journalists Association to run a ballot in order to select, from among their ranks, who would represent Australia as its official war correspondent at Gallipoli.[37] Charles Bean was elected and attached to the AIF.

Captain Bean was a bespectacled, tall, red-haired, Oxford graduate, making him a conspicuous figure among the men of the First AIF.[38] He had started work as a journalist for the *SMH* in 1908, where he wrote a number of articles that detailed the unique Australian characteristics found in outback and rural workers—characteristics that he also used to describe Australian military heroes during and after the war, as official correspondent and then as Australia's official historian of the conflict.[39] Bean's descriptions of Australian soldiers during the war may have contributed to the development of the Anzac legend—although Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett's copy from Gallipoli was far more effusive and influential at the time. What is certain is that his writing and oversight of the official history of Australia's war, and his role in the establishment of the AWM after the conflict, solidified the central place of Anzac characteristics in post-war Australian consciousness.[40]

He may have been selected by his peers, endorsed by his government, and disembarked with the Australian forces to Gallipoli in 1914, but Bean was not approved as an official correspondent by the British government until 18 April.[41] His accreditation took another eight days to process and, as such, Bean's report on the Gallipoli landings was not permitted to be sent for publication until days after the Allied invasion on 25 April.[42] Bean's experience demonstrates the level of control that the British government and military had over Australian war correspondents during the First World War.

The *Advertiser*, *Sydney Morning Herald*, and *Argus*

For this study, three Australian newspapers were surveyed for articles that depicted military heroism between 1914 and mid-1916. The Adelaide *Advertiser*, *Sydney Morning*

36 *Ibid*.
37 "Australian War Correspondent," *The Brisbane Courier*, 28 September 1914, 7.
38 Anderson and Trembath, *Witnesses to War*, 60.
39 *Ibid*.; "The Wool Land," *SMH*, 10 September 1909, 6.
40 Thomson, *Anzac Memories*, 166-169.
41 Williams, *ANZACS, the Media and the Great War*, 82.
42 Anderson and Trembath, *Witnesses to War*, 61.

Herald (*SMH*), and Melbourne *Argus* were selected for this study as they had high readerships, were the major newspapers in Australia's three most populous cities and were well-established sources of news before July 1914.[43] As outlined in the thesis introduction, this study focused on three major newspapers in order to make possible a thorough analysis of every issue published during the First World War. Thus, every article that depicted or referenced heroism in these publications between August 1914 and November 1918 has been examined. Themes and phrases that appeared regularly (in more than three articles) have been examined in the following two chapters.

The *Advertiser* was Adelaide's most read newspaper during the war, with circulation figures that fluctuated between 42,000 and 56,000 between 1914 and 1918.[44] The *SMH* also boasted the largest readership in the city, with a wartime circulation of roughly 120,000.[45] Wartime circulation figures for the *Argus* are unknown, yet the paper had one of the highest readerships in Melbourne—a city of roughly 670,000 people in 1914—both before and after the war.[46]

As major mainstream newspapers, all three publications produced a large number of original articles that were syndicated to other newspapers throughout the nation. For example, Philip Gibbs's positive review of the Somme operations "On the Western Front" in 1916 for the *SMH* also appeared in newspapers across the country.[47] Gibbs's assertion that the Germans "themselves appreciate the potency of the Anzacs' attack," could have been read in the *Wickepin Argus*, *Scone Advocate*, *Geraldton Guardian*, W*est Australian*, and twenty-five other publications.[48] Similar syndication and correspondent arrangements

[43] Gavin Souter, *Company of Heralds: A Century and a Half of Australian Publishing by John Fairfax Limited and Its Predecessors, 1831-1981* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1981); EJ Prest, *Sir John Langdon Bonython: Newspaper Proprietor, Politician and Philanthropist* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2011); Muriel Porter, "The Argus: The Life and Death of a Great Melbourne Newspaper, 1846-1957: Papers from a Conference at RMIT University," (Melbourne: RMIT University, 2001).

[44] EJ Prest, *Sir John Langdon Bonython*, 41.

[45] Sybil Nolan, "Manifest Editorial Differences: The Age and The Argus in the 1920s and 30s;" Porter, "Argus: The Life and Death of a Great Melbourne Newspaper," 13; Victor Isaacs and Rod Kirkpatrick, *Two Hundred Years of Sydney Newspapers: A Short History* (Sydney: Rural Press Limited, 2003), 10.

[46] Thomas Tooke, *A History of Prices and of the State of the Circulation During the Nine Years 1848 to 1856* (Sydney: Longman, Orme, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1857), 41; "Argus Newspaper," *eMelbourne: The Encyclopedia of Melbourne Online*, n.d., accessed 12 November 2015, http://www.emelbourne.net.au/biogs/EM00085b.htm.

[47] "On the Western Front. Month's Operations Reviewed," *Leader*, 5 August 1916, 2.

[48] "Advance from Pozieres," *Week*, 11 August 1916, 6; "Australians Praised," *Northern Miner*, 4 August 1916, 4; "Australian Valour," *Geraldton Guardian*, 3 August 1916, 4; "Australia Was There,"

for the *Advertiser* and *Argus* mean that every article discussed in this chapter appeared in numerous other newspapers across the nation. The ideals of war and heroism that appeared in the selected newspapers were therefore circulated to wide Australian audiences.

All three newspapers were, at the outset of the war, independently owned. James Oswald Fairfax and James Reading Fairfax jointly ran Fairfax and Sons, which owned the *SMH*.[49] John Langdon Bonython was both sole proprietor and editor of the *Advertiser*, and Lauchlan Mackinnon was the proprietor of the *Argus*.[50] While the *Advertiser* was often progressive in its politics, the *SMH*, under editor Edward Cunningham, and the *Argus*, edited by Thomas W Heney, both promoted far more conservative views.[51] Despite the differences between these papers' politics, owners, and editors, all three publications were supportive of the war effort as well as the push for military conscription.[52]

McCallum and Putnis have shown that the *SMH* and *Argus* were, during the war, "deeply patriotic and had overtly supported the introduction of compulsory overseas military service."[53] Such support was not unique to these newspapers, as general acquiescence to censorship and strong support for the war was typical of the broader nature of national war reporting in Australia.

Queenslander, 12 August 1916, 2; Philip Gibbs, "Consolidating Gains," *Brisbane Courier*, 4 August 1916, 2; "Earlier Messages," *Grafton Argus and Clarence River General Advertiser*, 7 August 1916, 3; "Earlier Wires," *Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate*, 4 August 1916, 2; "East of Pozieres," *Daily News*, 3 August 1916, 5; "Evidence of German Desperation on All Sides," *Albany Advertiser*, 5 August 1916, 3; Philip Gibbs, "French Take German Post," *Observer*, 5 August 1916, 33; Philip Gibbs, "French Take German Post," *Journal*, 3 August 1916, 3; "German Tribute to the Anzacs," *Capricornian*, 12 August 1916, 6; "Latest War Cables," *Western Mail*, 4 August 1916, 33; "News in Brief," *Examiner*, 4 August 1916, 1; "On the Western Front. Month's Operations Reviewed," 33; "Pozieres Again," *Tweed Daily*, 4 August 1916, 3; Philip Gibbs, "Progress of The War," *Sydney Mail*, 9 August 1916, 26; Philip Gibbs, "Review of Situation," *Mercury*, 4 August 1916, 5; Philip Gibbs, "The British Army," *Argus*, 4 August 1916, 7; "The Latest War News," *Nor-West Echo*, 5 August 1916, 7; "The War," *Land*, 11 August 1916, 7; Philip Gibbs, "The Western Front," *Daily Post*, 4 August 1916, 5; "The Western Front," *Daily Mercury*, 4 August 1916, 1; Philip Gibbs, "West Front Battles," *Cairns Post*, 4 August 1916, 5.

49 In 1916, James Oswald Fairfax became the director of Fairfax and Sons Ltd. after the company was made public: Caroline Simpson, "Fairfax, Sir James Oswald (1863–1928)," in *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (Canberra: National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, 1981); John Fairfax and Sons, *A Century of Journalism: SMH and Its Record of Australian Life 1831-1931* (Sydney: John Fairfax and Sons Limited, 1931), NK10310, Rex Nan Kivell Collection.

50 Prest, *Sir John Langdon Bonython*, 16–17; Nolan, "Manifest Editorial Differences," 10.

51 Quote: Nolan, "Manifest Editorial Differences," 4; John Fairfax and Sons, *A Century of Journalism*; Prest, *Sir John Langdon Bonython*, 31.

52 McCallum and Putnis, "Media Management in Wartime," 17.

53 *Ibid.*, 23.

The focus of this chapter is on articles that reported Australian military actions during the first years of the conflict. Most of these were written by official war correspondents.[54] While there were eventually eleven Australian correspondents reporting on the war from all theatres, this thesis focuses on the portrayals of Australian soldiers written by correspondents who reported in the surveyed newspapers from Gallipoli and the Western Front.[55] These include Charles Bean, Keith Murdoch, and Gordon Gilmour, as well as official English correspondents who regularly wrote about the Australians such as Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett and Philip Gibbs. Their stories were passed to the Australian press via cable news outlets such as Reuters, who formed syndication deals with Australian newspapers and provided copious amounts of copy about the war. More will be said about these services in Chapter Five. All official war correspondents shared the burden of military and government censorship and felt an obligation—whether to protect readers at home or actively support the war effort—to glorify the events of the conflict in their writing.[56]

Dissenting voices existed within Australia, most notably in the Victorian trade union journal *The Labor Call*, but such publications had extremely limited distributions and were constantly interrupted in their operations by government censorship orders.[57] The result of such strict censorship laws was a homogenous and sanitised depiction of the war among Australia's mainstream press. Writers for these major newspapers tended to use neo-chivalric terms and concepts to depict war and heroism, which served to obscure the true nature of the conflict and therefore pass the censor's office. This meant that the First World War, its broad scale, mechanised brutality, and incredible losses were represented in the same manner as a Victorian-era boys' adventure story. Thus, the reported hero of 1914 to 1916 was one who was cool under pressure, happy to sacrifice his life, and—unlike the later genus of hero that would emerge to dominate reporting in late 1916 to 1918—saved the lives of his comrades during battle.

54 Anderson and Trembath, *Witnesses to War*, 108.

55 *Ibid*.

56 *Ibid.*, 108.

57 Fewster, *Expression and Suppression*, 131.

The Australian Newspaper at War

Representations of the war and heroism in the Australian mainstream press were wholly shaped by what Anderson and Trembath have called a "triple-layer" of censorship.[58] These were the British army censors, the Australian home censors, and the correspondent who censored their own copy. Australian domestic censorship was driven by the *War Precautions Act* of 1914, which greatly broadened the range of areas in which the Australian government could exercise direct control over the press. A core segment of the act was dedicated to preventing "the spread of reports likely to cause disaffection or alarm."[59] In order to achieve this aim, legislation guidelines prohibited newspapers from reporting about the movement of military forces, offering specific information about military operations, making claims deemed harmful towards recruitment, or generally criticising the war effort.[60] These parameters meant that Australian censors had the power to cut any copy that they deemed militarily or politically negative. Such laws applied to all citizens—there were many charges laid against men who had spoken out against the war while drinking in bars—but they particularly affected journalists and war correspondents and fundamentally shaped how Australian newspapers reported the war.[61] Censors had such total control over the press that they were to search newspaper offices and destroy materials, including printing presses, they considered potentially damaging to the prosecution of the war.[62]

The Department of Defence established censorship agencies in every capital city, staffing them with members of the Australian military.[63] These offices were tasked with assessing the content of vast amounts of war-related reports and articles submitted for official approval by newspaper editors.[64] As a result of Australian censors having "less precise knowledge" of censorship guidelines than the censors of other war nations, they had, according to Fewster, "far less scope for flexibility in administering policy…which

58 *Ibid.*, 51–52.

59 "War Precautions Act 1914. Passed No. 10/1914," 1914, A2863, 1914/10, NAA, 5.

60 *Ibid.*

61 "War Precautions Act - Returns of Prosecutions Instituted," 1917, A2, 1917/3907, NAA.

62 *Ibid.*

63 McCallum and Putnis, "Media Management in Wartime," 29; CEW Bean *et al.*, *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1921), 61.

64 Fewster, *Expression and Suppression*, 132.

resulted in the censorship being often stricter in Australia than Britain."[65] This led to cases in which articles cabled from British sources, and that had been approved by British censors, were prohibited from publication in Australian newspapers.[66] Those in breach of such guidelines were punished via fines. In 1916 the editor of Sydney's *Mirror*, JM Myers, was fined one hundred pounds for the charges of "failing to submit to censor" and "making statements likely to cause public alarm."[67] While the Australian government seldom made efforts to publish propaganda through newspapers, the exceptionally stringent censorship restrictions were designed to ensure that the war would be reported in a wholly positive manner.[68]

While Myers was charged for disobeying censorship laws, his example was not representative of the broader, mainstream newspaper landscape that existed in Australia. Wartime articles from Australian newspapers, as well as academic investigations of the Australian press during this period, indicate that editors and owners of major Australian newspapers were consistently supportive of the war effort.[69] This is clear in the records of the War Precautions trials that occurred during the conflict. Of the 71 individuals charged on the "Returns of prosecutions under the War Precautions Act," only seven were newspaper editors, and only Meyers and J McDonald of Brisbane's *The Daily Standard* were in charge of mainstream publications. Other editors were from much smaller left-wing newspapers such as *The Labor Call*, *The Barrier Daily Truth*, and *The Socialist*.[70]

Australian newspapers' support for the war and the government is evident in the many articles and reports that strongly encouraged citizens to vote for forced enlistment in the lead up to the conscription plebiscites. Though frustrated by censorship laws, mainstream newspapers continued to support the war by explicitly advocating recruitment and compulsory service.[71] In the lead up to the 1916 conscription plebiscite—in which the

[65] *Ibid.*, 126.

[66] McCallum and Putnis, "Media Management in Wartime," 20.

[67] "War Precautions Act - Returns of Prosecutions Instituted," A2, 1917/3907.

[68] McCallum and Putnis, "Media Management in Wartime," 21.

[69] Peter Putnis and Kerry McCallum, "The Role of Reuters in the Distribution of Propaganda News in Australia during World War I," in *Australian Media Traditions Conference* (Canberra, 2005), 24–25: McCallum and Putnis, "Media Management in Wartime;" Bean and Fewster, *Bean's Gallipoli*; Fewster, *Expression and Suppression*; Williams, *ANZACS, the Media and the Great War*.

[70] "War Precautions Act - Returns of Prosecutions Instituted," 1917, A2, 1917/3907, NAA.

[71] Souter, *Company of Heralds*, 118; Robert Pullan, *Guilty Secrets: Free Speech and Defamation in Australia* (Sydney: Pascal Press, 1994), 150; McCallum and Putnis, "Media Management in Wartime," 23.

"yes" campaign advocated for the institution of conscription and the "no" campaign rallied against forced enlistment—an article that appeared in the *Argus* argued that to vote "'yes' for Australia," meant "no" for Germany.[72] The *SMH* also urged Australians to "vote 'yes' to maintain our ideals."[73] Adelaide's *Advertiser* warned, somewhat prophetically, that a war would erupt in future decades without the immediate introduction of conscription, claiming: "if it does occur the children who are now Australia's hope will be flung upon the slaughterheaps in sacrifice which may, perhaps, have been made too late to keep Australia free."[74] From the push for recruitment, the demonization of Germany, and the full-throated support for conscription, Australian mainstream newspapers served as organs of the pro-war government.

This cooperation was made clear in an official government report that noted of a meeting between Melbourne newspaper editors and the Deputy Chief Censor in early 1918, that there was an "evident devotion of the Press of Australia to the public interest, and an unswerving loyalty to the cause of the Allies unexcelled in any other part of the world."[75] Stringent censorship and a willingness of the mainstream press to support the war effort meant that Australian war-related news was consistently misleading in its depictions of the conflict. Yet, such deceptive representations were also a result of the first-hand reports newspapers received from their correspondents at the front.

While censorship was strict for those writing within Australia, war correspondents' copy was further restricted through the control of military information and even more rigorous and frequently inconsistent scrutiny. The Australian and British militaries managed to control both the bulk of information journalists used to write their articles and, through censorship, a writer's final despatch. The military communiqué relied on so heavily by most correspondents for war information was, according to Williams, "the cog upon which the whole publicity-propaganda machine depended."[76] Even despite their

[72] Elebert Anthony Winton, "Vote: 'Yes' for Australia. 'No' for Germany," *The Argus*, 16 October 1916, 6.

[73] "Australia's Peril. Vote 'Yes.' To Maintain Our Ideals," *SMH*, 24 October 1916, 6.

[74] "Why Women Should Vote Yes," *The Advertiser*, 27 October 1916, 13.

[75] Australian Department of Defence. Office of the Deputy Chief Censor, *Rules for the Censorship of the Press: Revised to 30th June, 1918* (Melbourne: H.J. Green, Acting Government Printer, 1918), iv; McCallum and Putnis, "Media Management in Wartime," 17.

[76] Williams, *ANZACS, the Media and the Great War*, 2.

distrust and cynicism of such military communiqués, "no correspondent or editorialist could openly contradict its contents even when these were known to be untrue."[77]

Correspondent reports were also subject to several levels of censorship: GHQ, the War Office, the London Press Bureau, and the Australian censor offices all scrutinised copy submitted by correspondents to Australian newspapers.[78] So many levels of censorship meant that censorship rules were often applied inconsistently between bureaus and, subsequently, there was no single set of guidelines for Australian correspondents to follow. Such a discordant process infuriated correspondents. While reporting from the Dardanelles, Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett, the official English war correspondent based at Gallipoli, mused that before dealing with Army censors he had, "thought there were limits to human stupidity…the censorship has now passed beyond all reason."[79] The official Australian war correspondent, Charles Bean, wrote in his diary that censorship had restricted Allied correspondents' ability to report on what they saw to such a degree "that the German Official accounts are far truer than our own."[80] Bean believed that the level of censorship imposed by the military was an example of why "we don't deserve to win wars."[81]

In many of his diary entries during the Gallipoli campaign, Bean criticised the imposing of censorship on reports he considered to be in support of the operation and its commanders.[82] According to Williams, the Australian press were placed "under particular pressure to glamorise war or present it as sport in a way foreign to, and often beyond the comprehension of French and Germans."[83] This pressure existed because Australian forces were reliant on voluntary enlistments and thus needed to present the war as heroic, glamorous, and fun. The Australian government ran two national plebiscites in 1916 and 1917, seeking a mandate to introduce compulsory military service.[84] On both occasions the majority of Australians voted "no" to the introduction of conscription and the

77 *Ibid.*

78 McCallum and Putnis, "Media Management in Wartime," 21.

79 Quoted in Jenny Macleod, *Reconsidering Gallipoli* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 129.

80 CEW Bean, *Frontline Gallipoli: Diaries from the Trenches* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1990), 131.

81 Bean, *Frontline Gallipoli,* 161.

82 Bean and Fewster, *Bean's Gallipoli,* 6.

83 Williams, *ANZACS, the Media and the Great War*, 1.

84 Archer *et al.*, *Conscription Conflict,* 2–4.

Australian military remained an all-volunteer force throughout the war.[85] Censorship in Australia was particularly severe then because, as Arthur Ponsonby has explained, "the weapon of falsehood is more necessary in a country where military conscription is not the law of the land."[86]

Censors might have frustrated Bean, but he also saw his position as one of describing Australian combatants' actions and "not needlessly distressing their families at home."[87] As we have seen, this self-censorship, which Bean described in his diary as an attempt to spare the Australian public the macabre realities of war, aligned with Haig's ideal of how war correspondents should behave. Fewster has argued that "even when this meant grossly distorting the horror which confronted them," correspondents reported in "the earlier tradition, firm in the belief that the people at home should be spared the gruesome actuality of modern attrition warfare."[88] Whether this distortion of the war was to protect the public or assist the war effort, the result was a continuation of Victorian-era war writing. This meant that war reports found in the mainstream Australian press during the first years of the First World War differed little from the heroic depictions of warfare written in the adventure fiction of the late nineteenth century, or from the VC citations published from 1856 to 1916.

Heroism at Gallipoli

The first major action undertaken by Australian forces during the war was the Gallipoli Campaign. Australian reporters were required to quickly adapt in order to frame the hardships, casualties, and the ultimate military loss in a positive way. On 31 October 1914 the Ottoman Empire entered the First World War on the side of the Central Powers, opening a new front for the already strained Russian military and closing off supply routes through the Black Sea for Russia, Britain and France.[89] In response, the Allies determined to seize the Ottoman-controlled Dardanelles Straits.[90] When the British and French navies

85 *Ibid*.

86 Arthur Ponsonby, *Falsehood in Wartime: Propaganda Lies of the First World War* (Costa Mesa; Bloomfield Books, 1991), 15.

87 Bean quoted in Bean and Fewster, *Bean's Gallipoli*, 9.

88 *Ibid.*, 17.

89 Michael McKernan, *Gallipoli: A Short History* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 2010), 33; Robin Prior, *Gallipoli: The End of the Myth* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2009), 10, 17.

90 Beaumont, *Broken Nation*, 65.

were unable to clear Ottoman fortifications along the Dardanelles in March, it was decided by Allied command that an infantry offensive was necessary.[91] The landings and subsequent campaign at the Gallipoli Peninsula between April and December 1915 represented the first major military action undertaken by Australian forces. As part of the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force, over 50,000 Australians fought in the campaign and 8,709 died.[92] Throughout the operation, correspondents and reporters filled Australian newspapers with hundreds of articles that praised the heroic acts of Australian soldiers and most of these were similar in tone, language, and the specific characteristics they depicted and adulated as representing heroism.

Self-sacrifice and Duty

Underpinning many of the reports that praised Australian heroism during the Gallipoli campaign were the ideals of self-sacrificial duty. Dying or being wounded in battle—provided one was stoically cheerful in their response—was represented as demonstrating one of the highest forms of selflessness and heroism. As has been identified in earlier chapters, to happily and willingly suffer in the name of King, Country, and Empire represented the height of neo-chivalric heroic ideals. The well-worn feudal language associated with neo-chivalric ideals allowed Australian correspondents to frame the terrible military failures, wounds, and deaths at Gallipoli in a sanitised and heroic way.

One of the chief tropes associated with the neo-chivalric ideal of heroic military self-sacrifice was that of the doomed charge. From the first landings at Gallipoli, Australian journalists began regularly alluding to Alfred Lord Tennyson's poem, *The Charge of the Light Brigade*, when describing costly and failed attacks on enemy positions undertaken by men of the AIF. Tennyson's poem recounts the bungled charge of British cavalry at the Battle of Balaclava during the Crimean War, lauding the cavalrymen who knew that though "Someone had blundere'd," it was:

> Theirs not to make reply,
> Theirs not to reason why,

91 McKernan, *Gallipoli*, 33; Prior, *Gallipoli: The End of the Myth,* 58–61.

92 Edward J Erickson, *Gallipoli: The Ottoman Campaign* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword, 2010), 59; Great Britain. War Office, *Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire during the Great War, 1914–1920* (London HM Stationery Off, 1922), 346.

> Theirs but to do and die:
> Into the valley of Death[93]

Such obedience, regardless of how absurd or potentially fatal, remained a key theme in heroic Edwardian literature and was consistently praised by Australian journalists writing about actions at Gallipoli. One report that was printed in newspapers around the country in November 1915 detailed the order given to Australian troops not to fire their weapons during the initial beach landings. The article detailed how, "we found some of our men out in the bad country around Quinn's Post dead with their rifles beside them; the bayonet fixed, and not a round fired. They had obeyed orders until the last, because they were orders."[94] The piece went on to declare that such men had, "died like soldiers, with red-tipped bayonets and clean barrels."[95] The tradition of obediently following orders, so popularised by the Light Brigade and Tennyson, remained a theme in the Australian reporting of Gallipoli.

Soon after the initial landings at Gallipoli, reports of Australian soldiers depicted them as transcending and not simply equalling the archetypical hero set by writers like Tennyson. In August, at the Battle of the Nek, elements of a dismounted Australian 3rd Lighthorse Brigade were essentially destroyed in repeated and disastrous bayonet charges on well-entrenched Turkish positions.[96] While the New Zealand Lieutenant Colonel, William Meldrum, believed he had seen "no greater record of crass stupidity," the attacks at the Nek were reported by Australian newspapers to have been a more glorious episode than the action Tennyson had lauded sixty years earlier.[97] Charles Bean declared that the Nek "differed from the charge of the Light Brigade in that it was made by horsemen who had volunteered to fight on foot or in any other way."[98] In another article (see Figure 5 below) Bean added that, "there was never a deed in history that surpassed the charge."[99] A

[93] Alfred Lord Tennyson, *The Charge of the Light Brigade and Other Poems* (New York: Dover Publications, 1992).

[94] "The War by the Day: Brave Australians," *The Argus*, 2 November 1915, 5.

[95] *Ibid*.

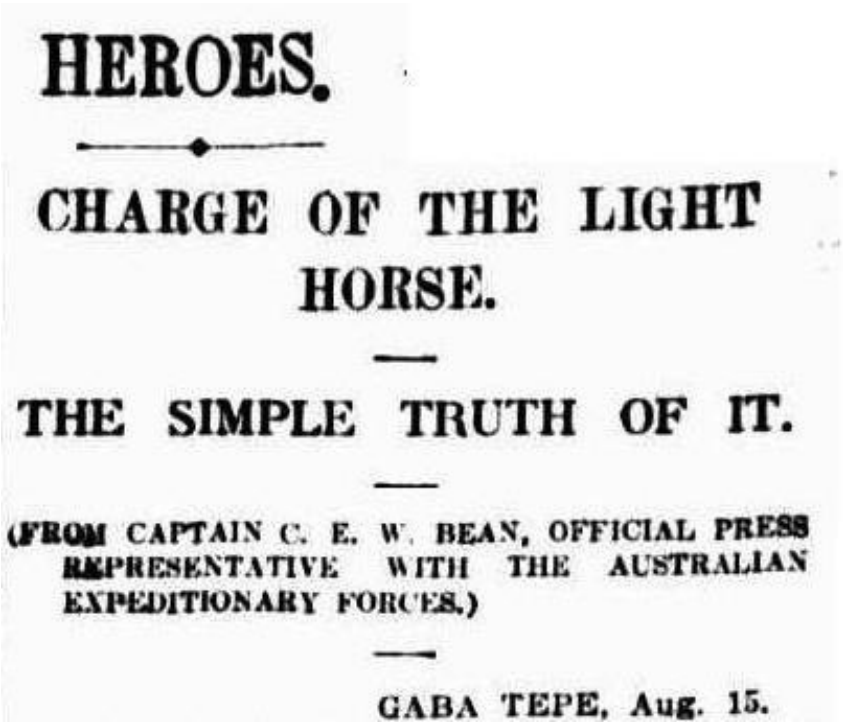
[96] Peter Burness, *The Nek: A Gallipoli Tragedy* (Sydney: Exisle Publishing, 2012), 9–12.

[97] "Light Brigade Outdone," *The Argus*, 10 June 1915, 5; "Gallant Light Horse," *The Argus*, 5 October 1915, 7; "Charge of the 3rd Brigade," *The Argus*, 9 June 1915, 12; CEW Bean, "Heroes. Charge of the Light Horse," *SMH*, 28 September 1915, 5; CEW Bean, "Gallant Australians. Charge of Light Horse," *The Argus*, 28 September 1915, 5; "Soldiers Stories. From the Front. Charge of the Light Horse," *SMH*, 14 October 1915, 5; CEW Bean, "The Peninsular War. Australian Light Horse," *The Advertiser*, 30 September 1915, 9.

[98] "Heroes. Charge of the Lighthorse, the Simple Truth of It," *SMH*, 28 September 1915, 9.

[99] "Gallant Light Horse," 7.

report tellingly titled "Light Brigade Outdone," proudly declared that, "the charge of the light brigade was a skirmish to the charge of the glorious 9th," directly comparing the valour of actions at Balaclava and the Nek and declaring Australians the heroic victors.[100] The Nek, presented as an action "never surpassed" by any event in military history, showed Australian soldiers to be unique in their devotion to duty.[101] Newspapers' focus on Australian soldiers' obedience shows how Australian soldiers were judged on British neo-chivalric standards of heroism.



HEROES.

CHARGE OF THE LIGHT HORSE.

THE SIMPLE TRUTH OF IT.

(FROM CAPTAIN C. E. W. BEAN, OFFICIAL PRESS REPRESENTATIVE WITH THE AUSTRALIAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCES.)

GABA TEPE, Aug. 15.

Figure 5 CEW Bean, Heroes: Charge of the Light Horse, Tuesday 28 September 1915, *Sydney Morning Herald* (NSW: 1842–1954), page 9. NLA, http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article15616431.

Even those who had been wounded were depicted as being happy to have both shown their devotion to duty and participated in the war. Australian wounded being evacuated from the peninsula after the ANZAC landings were described by British war correspondent Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett as having, "in spite of their sufferings…cheered the ship from which they had set out in the morning."[102] In his first despatch, Ashmead-Bartlett mentioned courage only in reference to the wounded. Bean, despite his reputation

[100] "Light Brigade Outdone," 5.

[101] "Charge of the Light Horse," *SMH*, 14 October 1915, 5.

[102] Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett, "Mr. Ashmead-Bartlett's Story," *SMH*, 8 May 1915, 17.

as the Anzac myth-maker, was the most measured of correspondents when considering the heroism of Australians. He noted in one of his first despatches that, "the work done, especially in the early days of the landing, was tremendous, and sometimes heroic."[103] The description of Australian soldiers at Gallipoli as being "sometimes heroic" offered a more nuanced view of the battle that the depictions provided from other correspondents, who consistently praised all Australian forces for their heroism in the first days of the campaign. The most important measure of heroism for Bean was coolness, especially when men were severely wounded: "Today, one man belonging to a machine-gun section was lying down in the trench when a very large shell struck his, carrying off his leg and part of his arm. The man was not killed, and cheerfully discussed how he would get a living in Australia afterwards by selling newspapers in the streets."[104]

Bean's accounts of wounded men also painted an image of joviality: "Every wounded man I've seen was smiling. A staff officer said the other day…'It's only when they're killed that these Australians cease laughing.'"[105] The cheer and laughter of wounded soldiers was a consistent theme in Australian war reporting that continued throughout the Gallipoli campaign.[106] Importantly for the enlistment drive, newspapers lauded all wounded men as heroes, while making it seem that those unlucky enough to suffer a wound were still enjoying the war. One man whose "foot riddled with shrapnel…was being assisted down a gully to Gaba Tepe," when he joked to the reporter, "I'm a blooming kangaroo now."[107] Articles such as these brought the image of troops stoically accepting their wounds to Australian civilians. Soldiers who did not accept their wounds with good humour and stoicism were not reported on in mainstream Australian newspapers.

[103] CEW Bean, "The Situation," *SMH*, 24 June 1915, 7.

[104] CEW Bean, "Operations Last Week," *The Argus*, 24 June 1915, 9.

[105] CEW Bean, "Gallipoli. Fight in the Hills. The First Day," *SMH*, 18 June 1915, 10.

[106] "Cheerful Wounded," *SMH*, 19 June 1915, 14; CEW Bean, "In the Trenches. Cheerful Australians. Stories That Will Never Die," *SMH*, 20 July 1915, 9; "Arrival of Wounded. Scenes at Alexandria," *The Argus*, 11 June 1915, 7; "Wounded Reach England," *The Argus*, 25 August 1915, 9; "The Wounded. Another Transport Arrives," *SMH*, 9 October 1915, 18; "General Bridges Badly Wounded," *SMH*, 19 May 1915, 11; "At Heliopolis. When the Wounded Arrived," *SMH*, 19 July 1915, 10; "After the Fight. Amazing Fortitude," *SMH*, 10 June 1915, 6; "Happy and Cheerful," *The Argus*, 10 August 1915, 5; "A Cheerful Soldier," *The Argus*, 16 December 1915, 7; "Story Told by 'Eye Witness'. Consciousness of Victory," *The Argus*, 15 March 1915, 9; "Caring for the Wounded," *The Argus*, 15 April 1915, 7; "Wounded Man's Bravery," *The Argus*, 12 November 1915, 5; "Empire's Finest Fighting Force," *The Advertiser*, 18 November 1915, 6; "Letters from the Troops," *SMH*, 12 June 1915, 14; "Soldiers' Letters Home," *The Argus*, 9 June 1915, 5.

[107] "Australians in Battle," *The Argus*, 22 June 1915, 7.

As long as a soldier jovially accepted his wounding, the mere act of having been wounded was represented as a trait of heroism. Of just the newspapers surveyed, thirteen articles had the explicit term "wounded heroes" in their title during the Gallipoli campaign.[108] Hundreds more lauded the wounded for their bravery without offering any more detail of the men, their wounds, or their actions. The *SMH* ran a series of 134 articles entitled "Heroes of the Dardanelles" in which pictures and names of Australians killed and wounded were featured.[109] One published letter from a soldier to his mother offered no details of his actions or role at Gallipoli, but was subtitled "Legless Hero" by the *Advertiser*. These men were represented as war heroes through the sole fact they had been wounded. Such a model of heroism made it easier for correspondents to describe and praise wounded men without needing to discuss the wounds or their effects in any explicit detail. Thus, the language and ideals of neo-chivalric heroism assisted Australian newspapers to describe the battle of Gallipoli without needing to detail its brutality.

Albert Jacka and John Simpson Kirkpatrick

With self-sacrifice and obedience at the forefront of reported heroic ideals, acts of heroism within the AIF were often attributed to groups of Australian soldiers rather than individuals. There were two notable exceptions to this approach by newspapers, Lance Corporal Albert Jacka and Private John Simpson Kirkpatrick. As was discussed in the previous chapter, Jacka was the first Australian to earn a VC in the war when he, alone, killed seven Turkish soldiers and managed to hold a portion of trench at Gallipoli. Yet, while Jacka earned the VC for his heroism, Kirkpatrick—who saved lives at Gallipoli—was overlooked for a medal but enthusiastically praised by the Australian press. Kirkpatrick was lauded for using a donkey to rescue and evacuate wounded soldiers at the front. Both Jacka and Kirkpatrick won fame for performing these dissimilar types of

[108] "Wounded Australian Heroes," *The Advertiser*, 14 May 1915, 17; "Wounded Australian Heroes," *The Advertiser*, 15 May 1915, 12; "Wounded Heroes. Welcome at the Town Hall," *The Argus*, 11 December 1915, 6; "Melbourne's Welcome to Her Wounded Heroes," *The Argus*, 11 August 1915, 11; "Arrival of Wounded Heroes from the Dardanelles," *SMH*, 19 July 1915, 9; "Homeward Bound. Returning Sick and Wounded Heroes," *The Advertiser*, 1 January 1916, 4; "Arrival of Wounded Heroes in Sydney," *SMH*, 27 December 1915, 10; "Our Wounded Heroes. Red Cross Appeal," *SMH*, 25 May 1915, 4; "Our Wounded Heroes. Entertained in London," *SMH*, 15 October 1915, 4; "Wounded Heroes Return. Hearty Welcome Given," *The Argus*, 11 September 1915, 4; "The Home-Coming. More Wounded Heroes Return," *The Advertiser*, 29 November 1915, 9; "Home Again. Wounded Heroes Return.," *The Advertiser*, 19 July 1915, 10; "Home Again. Wounded Heroes. From Gallipoli," *SMH*, 31 August 1915, 12.

[109] The first and last publications of this series: "Heroes of the Dardanelles," *SMH*, 4 May 1915, 5; "Heroes of the Dardanelles," *SMH*, 21 December 1915, 5. It was continued during Australian operations on the Western Front under the title, "Australian Heroes."

actions under enemy fire, yet it was Kirkpatrick who was reported on more than any other Australian soldier at Gallipoli.

Albert Jacka appeared widely in Australian newspapers in the weeks immediately after news of his VC conferral. Yet after those weeks of fame he was rarely mentioned in the Australian press until late 1916. Despatches of Jacka's actions at Gallipoli were often confined to short descriptions of the act itself, usually taken directly from his VC citation:

> Lance-corporal Albert Jacka, of the 14th Australian Battalion, has been given the V.C. for conspicuous bravery. On the night of May 19, and during May 29, at Courtney's Post, Gallipoli, Jacka was holding a portion of a trench with four men. They were heavily attacked, and when the men were killed seven Turks rushed the trench. Jacka gallantly killed five with rifle fire and two with the bayonet.[110]

Most articles written about Jacka during the Gallipoli campaign resembled the one above.[111] They were concise, unemotional, and rarely over one hundred words in length.[112] The reasons for this were two-fold. First, correspondents relied on the small amount of information regarding the action that was available through the official military citation. Second, Jacka represented a genus of military heroism that did not comfortably fit with neo-chivalric ideals. Jacka had killed to save a position rather than lives.[113] He was also described as having acted under his own initiative rather than being dutiful to specific orders. Neo-chivalric heroic literature tended not to focus on the protagonist's violence without there being human lives at stake, or a clear devotion to duty. The hero, at least to newspapers at that point in the war, was compassionate, selfless, and only ever forced into aggression as a means of saving battles or lives. Jacka's actions were in defence of self and a strategically unnecessary position and did not therefore entirely fit the mould of the Gallipoli hero.

110 "For Bravery. Australian Earns VC Lance-Corporal Jacka.," *SMH*, 26 July 1915, 9.

111 There is though the notable edition of Charles Bean's lengthy report: CEW Bean, "Second Edition. How the VC Was Won," *The Argus*, 10 August 1915, 4.

112 "Jacka VC Letter to His Mother," *SMH*, 3 September 1915, 9; "Victorian VC Lance-Corporal Jacka," *The Argus*, 27 July 1915, 9; "'World Will Never Forget'. Hero Who Fought with Jacka," *SMH*, 9 November 1915, 6; "For Bravery. Australian Earns V.C. Lance-Corporal Jacka," 9; "Australian Hero. Lance-Corporal Jacka. Awarded Victoria Cross for 'Conspicuous Bravery,'" *The Argus*, 26 July 1915; "Modest VC Hero," *The Argus*, 3 September 1915, 7; "Victoria's VC Ministry's Congratulations," *The Argus*, 28 July 1915, 9; "Australian VC," *SMH*, 28 July 1915, 6; "For Valor an Australian Hero," *The Advertiser*, 26 July 1915, 7; "The VC Hero," *SMH*, 29 July 1915, 4; "From the Front. Landing at Gallipoli," *The Argus*, 3 September 1915, 7.

113 Robert Macklin, *Jacka VC: Australian Hero* (Crows Nest, N.S.W: Allen and Unwin, 2006), 52.

Instead it was the stretcher-bearer Kirkpatrick who became the foremost Australian hero of the Gallipoli campaign. Kirkpatrick received far more detailed attention and praise from chief correspondents writing for Australian newspapers than any other soldier during the operation.[114] Kirkpatrick, also known as Simpson and Murphy, was a stretcher-bearer who used donkeys to transport wounded men from the front lines.[115] To the Australian newspapers, Kirkpatrick was the AIF hero personified. In an *SMH* published on 18 June, Charles Bean described how:

> It was a terribly heavy pull up and down Shrapnel Gully from the cove to the top of Brand's Hill. So "Murphy" pinched a couple of mules and did yeoman service. He used to leave the mules just under the brow of the hill, and dash forward himself to the firing line to save the wounded. "Murphy's" voice near them sounded like a voice from Heaven. Time after time he climbed the hill, and did his noble work. Day after day he smiled and carried on.[116]

Kirkpatrick demonstrated the core qualities of neo-chivalric heroism. Importantly, he had risked his own life to save the lives of his comrades. Bean had also described Kirkpatrick as having "smiled and carried on" in dangerous situations, thereby displaying the characteristic of coolness under fire.[117] On 19 May Kirkpatrick was hit by shrapnel and killed.[118] His death satisfied another neo-chivalric ideal of heroism and solidified his already forming legend in Australian folklore.

Newspapers printed stories about Kirkpatrick for the rest of the campaign. Many articles wrote about the pride his mother had for her son.[119] Letters to the editor sections also provided a platform for growing public requests to return Kirkpatrick's heroic donkey back to Australia:

[114] "The Donkey Man. A Humble Hero," *The Argus*, 19 July 1915, 4; "Anzac Donkey Man. Letter from His Mother," *The Argus*, 24 November 1915, 7; "The 'Sydney Mail,'" *SMH*, 28 September 1915, 6; "The 'Sydney Mail,'" *SMH*, 2 November 1915, 6; "The Mad Reckless Charge," *The Advertiser*, 11 August 1915, 8; "The Mule Train," *SMH*, 27 December 1915, 6; CEW Bean, "The Peninsula War. Australians Under Fire," *The Advertiser*, 22 July 1915 9; CEW Bean, "In the Trenches. Cheerful Australians. Stories That Will Never Die," 9; "The War. The War Loan. The Prospectus," *The Advertiser*, 22 July 1915, 9.

[115] Peter Cochrane, *Simpson and the Donkey: The Making of a Legend* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1992); Graham Wilson, *Dust Donkeys and Delusions: The Myth of Simpson and His Donkey Exposed*, Australian Army History Collection (Newport: Big Sky Publishing, 2012).

[116] CEW Bean, "Gallipoli. Fight in the Hills. The First Day," 10.

[117] CEW Bean, "In the Trenches. Cheerful Australians. Stories That Will Never Die," 9.

[118] Wilson, *Dust Donkeys and Delusions*, 19.

[119] "Anzac Donkey Man. A Letter from His Mother," *The Argus*, 24 November 1915, 7.

> The authorities could easily have "Murphy" sent here to end his days in peace and quietness, where he would be well looked after. This would in some way recompense him for his noble work amongst the wounded soldiers. I think he would be looked upon as one of the greatest heroes in Australia.[120]

Although among a force of heroes, the Australian press deemed Kirkpatrick to have been unique. An unnamed reporter for the *Argus* believed Kirkpatrick to have been, "one of the noblest men, and, in my opinion, the most fearless and the greatest hero that set foot on Gallipoli Peninsula."[121] Effusive articles about Kirkpatrick appeared so regularly in Australian newspapers, and built his status to such an extent, that he has since become "the preeminent legend of Australian heroism and sacrifice."[122]

There was a distinct contrast in Australian newspapers' presentations of Kirkpatrick, who was frequently written about as the greatest hero of Gallipoli, and Jacka, who—at least during the Gallipoli campaign—was presented with summary and dispassionate praise. As we have seen, Jacka became a national hero used in the conscription debates of 1916 and 1917, but this, as Chapter Five will show, was largely due to his actions on the Western Front. The difference in the representations of Kirkpatrick and Jacka offers insight into the hierarchy of heroic ideals understood by reporters, the press, and perhaps the public, at that time.

Medical Personnel and Stretcher-bearers

Kirkpatrick's actions were represented as being unique, but he was just one of the collective of medical corps and stretcher-bearers at Gallipoli who were consistently and explicitly praised by Australian newspapers for their heroism. While men who attacked and killed the enemy featured in the Australian print media during the Gallipoli campaign, it was, again, acts of saving life that were principally represented as being exceptionally heroic.[123] During the nine-month Gallipoli campaign, over one hundred articles were

[120] "The Donkey Man. A Humble Hero," 4.

[121] *Ibid.*

[122] Cochrane, *Simpson and the Donkey*, 1.

[123] The number of articles praising humanitarian actions are too numerous to list in full, but good examples are: "Heroic Stretcher-Bearers," *SMH*, November 26, 1915, 10; "Brave Stretcher-Bearers," *SMH*, 21 September 1915, 7; "Brave Stretcher-Bearers," *The Advertiser*, 2 October 1915, 16; "Battle Phases. Perversities of War," *The Argus*, 4 October 1915, 8; "Stretcher-Bearer's Work," *The Argus*, 19 July 1915, 6; "Twice Wounded," *SMH*, 5 January 1916, 12; "Stretcher-Bearers Praised," *SMH*, 18 January 1916, 5; "The Dog in the Trench," *SMH*, 27 March 1915, 17; "The AAMC," *SMH*, 28 June 1915, 8; "Returned Officers Entertained at Luncheon," *The Advertiser*, 20 November 1915, 16; "Trench Comforts," *The Advertiser*, 15

printed in the surveyed newspapers that explicitly praised the heroism of the Australian stretcher-bearers and men of the Medical Corps. Such men were sometimes even described as displaying a higher level of heroism than the combat soldiers on Gallipoli.

A 1915 article in the *SMH* considered the place of humanitarian and fighting roles within a heroic hierarchy: "The heroism of the actual fighting men is almost more than equalled by the stretcher-bearers, who get nothing but admiration wherever they go."[124] Another writer for the *Advertiser* believed that the stretcher-bearers' role required "greater daring and…greater risk than those of any other rank, and they perform them to a man without a flinch."[125] In an article entitled "Heroic Stretcher Bearers," the *SMH* argued that, "stretcher-bearers are the bravest of the brave…they never hesitate to go out under fire." [126] The argument made by some Australian reporters that stretcher-bearers demonstrated the highest forms of heroism at Gallipoli were supported by the consistent and widespread newspaper adulation of such men.

One of the most exhaustive accounts of the stretcher-bearers and medical men on Gallipoli was Charles Bean's article "The Stretcher-Bearers: Their Magnificent Work," which ran over 3,600 words and was published in at least eleven newspapers across the country. [127] Bean began the article by describing the heroic acts of John Simpson Kirkpatrick and argued that while Kirkpatrick was "worth a hundred men…the man with the donkeys was not by a long way the only stretcher-bearer."[128] Bean then described how he witnessed two stretcher-bearers enter a fire-swept zone to check on a wounded man, "one man strolled down with his hands in his pockets, lighting a pipe, and the other

February 1916, 6; "Gunner Perry. 'Get Up and Walk,'" *The Advertiser*, 2 October 1915, 16; "Army Medical Corps. The Work in the Field," *SMH*, 15 March 1916, 9; "Doctor in the Firing-Line," *SMH*, 19 July 1915, 10; Trooper Bluegum, "Shell Green," *SMH*, 16 December 1915, 8; CEW Bean, "In the Trenches. Cheerful Australians. Stories That Will Never Die," *SMH*, 9; "At the Hospital. Comfort and Attention," *SMH*, 12 August 1915, 8 "Soldiers' Letters. Artillery Officers Experience," *The Argus*, 26 June 1915, 18; "Red Cross Work," *SMH*, 4 November 1915, 8; "Red Cross Work," *SMH*, 21 August 1915, 12; "The War by the Day: Brave Australians," *The Argus*, 5; "South Australian Wounded in England," *The Advertiser*, 22 July 1915, 10; "The Turks. Tribute to a Humane Foe," *SMH*, 9 September 1915, 10; "Human Side of War. The Doctors' Part," *The Argus*, 2 November 1915, 9; "Sari Bair. Desperate Attack," *SMH*, 22 September 1915, 11; "Rank and File. Work of the Army Medical Corps.," *SMH*, 12 July 1915, 11; "Gallant Conduct. Australian Medical Corps.," *SMH*, 24 June 1915, 9.

124 "Brave Stretcher-Bearers," *SMH*, 21 September 1915, 8.

125 CEW Bean, "The Australian Army. The Stretcher Bearers: Their Magnificent Work," *SMH*, 22 July 1915, 6.

126 *Ibid*.

127 *Ibid.*

128 *Ibid.*

alongside him." As we have seen, Bean valued coolness under fire more than any other trait and believed that "to a mass of men straight off the ships, thrown right into the middle of that shrapnel, there could have been nothing more comforting than to see the absolute indifference of these men to danger." [129] For Bean, the example of heroism set by the stretcher-bearers offered soldiers a guarantee that should they become wounded, they too would have such fearless men to save them.

Like other reporters and correspondents, Bean also lauded Australian medical personnel for their bravery at Gallipoli. He cited the "conspicuous example" of a Captain Mathieson, who had tirelessly treated men in a dressing station before entering a fire trench to assist wounded men on the front lines.[130] A correspondent for the *Argus* argued that "every medical officer at Anzac [Cove] deserves a hero's crown" for their "unexampled bravery." [131] The correspondent offered several examples of Australian military doctors performing heroic deeds, detailing how a Captain Benn displayed "glowing self-sacrifice…unselfish daring as he went to dress the hurts of wounded in a bullet-swept zone," how a Captain Jackson repeatedly "went to the assistance of wounded soldiers where certain death seemed to bar the way," and how a Doctor Loughran carried wounded men "one after the other" over a patch of ground under a heavy sniper fire.[132] Such praise for the doctors and medical officers serving at Gallipoli regularly appeared in Australian newspapers during the campaign.

That stretcher-bearers and medical personnel received such editorial praise was a result of the traditional military values and ethos that continued to permeate understandings of war and valour. In an article that appeared in the *SMH* that investigated the nature of "The Military Spirit," the writer argues that military heroism is made up of "the spirit of self-sacrifice, of devotion to duty…conquering the self and living for others, and not the self alone."[133] While fighting soldiers could certainly display such qualities, no role best encompassed this widely understood view of military heroism than those held by stretcher-bearers and medical personnel. Such men put themselves in danger for the direct and sole purpose of saving life, and were consequently praised by the Australian press for

[129] *Ibid.*
[130] *Ibid.*
[131] "Human Side of War. The Doctors' Part," 9.
[132] *Ibid*.
[133] "The Military Spirit," *SMH*, 20 March 1915, 16.

being, "unremitting in their deeds of heroism, self-sacrificing to what appeared like madness."[134] In a war still reported through the prism of neo-chivalric ideals and language, it was the heroic actions of the saviour more than the killer that were applauded by Australian newspapers.

Conclusion

For a young federated nation yearning to solidify a national identity, the Gallipoli campaign offered a chance to create Australian heroes. While the AIF man at Gallipoli was represented in Australian newspapers as being an exceptional soldier, his heroic actions were still reported through the prism of British neo-chivalric values, and the language of Victorian-era literature. Those in the AIF showed their heroism by sacrificing health and life for the Allied cause and their comrades. If anything, this sacrifice only became more heroic when the cause was doomed to fail, as it did at the Battle of the Nek. Stoic, unquestioning devotion to duty and a laconic coolness under fire were also key tropes of the Australian newspaper hero as much as they were of the literary heroes of pre-war British literature. The linking factor was neo-chivalry. The prominence and nature of the Australian military hero as represented by Australian newspapers during the Gallipoli campaign were also the result of intense censorship, applied by the British military, the Australian government, and the self-editing of the correspondents themselves. Guided by a nineteenth-century vocabulary of heroism and warfare, and restricted from reporting the horrible realities of combat, Australian newspapers focused their coverage of the war on neo-chivalric heroes.

After the Australian contingents evacuated from Gallipoli in December 1915 and were redeployed on the Western Front in 1916, the Australian hero as represented by newspapers such as the *Argus*, *SMH*, and *Advertiser*, began to alter. While many of the same overarching heroic tropes were still used by Australian newspaper writers during the AIF's time on the Western Front, a gradual and profound shift in the types of actions that were primarily represented began. The continued censorship of the press, the reliance of newspaper correspondents on official military reports for information, and the implementation of an attrition strategy on the Western Front all contributed to a major shift in Australian representations of heroism.

134 "The Donkey Man. A Humble Hero," 4.

Chapter Five: "Antipodean fury": Representations of Heroism in the Australian Press (1916–1918)

In an August 1916 report printed in the *Advertiser*, Charles Bean described the different opinions Australian soldiers had of their Turkish enemy at Gallipoli compared to the Germans on the Western Front. He believed that the men had held no "special grudge against the Turks, whom, as a rule, they found to be chivalrous opponents." [1] According to Bean, Australian soldiers had originally joined the war effort in the hope of having "a go at the Germans." [2] Bean's article is an example of how Australian newspapers' representations of fighting and heroism changed between Gallipoli and the Western Front. Gallipoli had been reported as a chivalrous battle, where the Victorian-era model of the humanitarian hero was a prominent feature in Australian newspapers. While the reported heroes of Gallipoli had primarily been stretcher-bearers and those who saved their comrades' lives, articles that detailed the Western Front praised soldiers who seized enemy ground and took enemy lives. The Western Front was depicted as a far more savage and merciless theatre than Gallipoli had been, particularly in the wake of the Battle of the Somme.

This chapter examines the way in which the *Argus*, *SMH* and *Advertiser* represented heroism between 1916 and 1918. It also explores the media changes that shaped the way representations of the Australian hero altered from being humanitarian saviours, fighting infantrymen, and wounded soldiers on the Gallipoli Peninsula, to almost exclusively being men who fought and killed the enemy on the Western Front. It therefore shows that the shift that occurred in official military recognition of heroism—identified through the examination of VC conferrals and citations in Chapters One and Two—also occurred in Australian newspapers' dominant representations of heroism over the same period of time.

For the Australian public, the Western Front heroes that they read about in daily newspapers were no longer the humanitarian soldiers depicted during the Gallipoli campaign, but new and more aggressive figures, fighting in a war of unprecedented scale

1 CEW Bean, "Australians in France," *The Advertiser*, 8 August 1916, 6.
2 *Ibid*.

and destruction. While the reported heroes of Gallipoli exemplified the neo-chivalric ideals of heroism, in the wake of the Somme, the reported heroes of the Western Front represented a type of valour better suited to the mechanical, scientific, attritional war they were fighting. The core focus of this chapter is to demonstrate that a shift in representations of the hero in Australian newspapers occurred between the AIF's fighting in Gallipoli to their deployment on the Western Front. This chapter offers some suggestions as to why this dramatic shift in the representations of heroism occurred during 1916. By identifying and examining this shift, I will show that the military hero as represented by Australia's wartime newspapers transformed in 1916 from the neo-chivalric hero outlined in Chapter Four, to the type of hero whose key attribute was their proficiency in fighting and killing the enemy.

Heroic Killers: The Press and the Australian Fighting Soldier

In May 1917, the *Advertiser* quoted a "military expert" who summarised the situation for Allied forces on the Western Front as being, "not at present a question of breaking through, but of smashing the German army."[3] With the shift in strategic focus that had occurred during the Battle of the Somme, the aim to "wipe out the German reserve of 1,000,000 men" had become a core objective of British and Allied command.[4] As a result, within months of entering the Western Front, AIF soldiers were involved in a focused war of attrition. The Australian soldier's primary function had shifted from taking enemy ground, as had been the military strategy at Gallipoli, to reducing enemy manpower and munitions.

Those writing for Australian newspapers were largely reliant on British military information such as communiqués, despatches and medal citations. This reliance on military information was one of the key factors in the transformation of Australian newspaper representations of heroism. As we saw in Chapter Two, changes to how the VC was administered show that the British military altered the prerequisites of recognised heroism, focusing on acts that materially contributed to the war of attrition that was taking place by late 1916. As Australian correspondents and reporters were largely reliant on military information for their publications, when the nature of VC citations changed—as

[3] "Great Object of the Allies to Dissipate Hindenburg's Reserves," *The Advertiser*, 8 May 1917, 5.
[4] *Ibid.*

Chapters One and Two have demonstrated—so too did the reporting of VC heroism. Thus, the reported Australian hero of late 1916 to 1918 was predominantly one who conformed to the strategy of attrition and deprived the enemy of men and munitions.

Inflicting casualties on the enemy was the core responsibility of a soldier fighting in a war of attrition and Australian newspapers frequently represented killing as being demonstrative of heroism in their reports on the Western Front. A 1918 article that appeared in the *Advertiser* entitled "The Australians. Killing Germans," described how heroic Australian soldiers at Morlancourt had "out-fought the Huns hand-to-hand, killing 12 and bringing back two prisoners…several were shot as they ran."[5] Another 1918 article described how "the enemy were cut to pieces" when "a party of South Australian troops rushed and almost annihilated a strong German outpost…the Australians killed 30 Germans and took back three prisoners."[6] In an article entitled "The Australians. Germans Slaughtered," an unnamed reporter described an example of "the outstanding superiority of the Australians over the enemy in open warfare" during a fight at Garr Wood, in which Australian soldiers had inflicted "heavy losses…it is estimated that the German casualties easily reached 700 men." [7] While thirty-three articles published in the examined newspapers between 1916 and 1918 described Australian forces and men as having "inflicted casualties," the term was not used once in any article printed about Australian forces during the Gallipoli campaign. As the articles cited also show, numbers of enemy killed and captured had become important measures for defining the heroism of an action.

War correspondents on the Western Front were important to this shift in how the Australian war hero was represented. Many focused their reports from the Western Front on the heroism of combat soldiers. As we will see, Charles Bean remained the only Australian correspondent who continued to write positively about stretcher-bearers, yet the focus of his praise, more-so than in his reports from Gallipoli, was focused on the fighting men. In a 1917 article by Bean, the official Australian war correspondent described AIF soldiers as having displayed "extraordinary gallantry" when they "with bombs and bayonet, swarmed out of the trench, and the German, good fighter that he was, could not face them." Bean described how, unable to overcome the exceptional and heroic fighting

5 "The Australians. Killing Germans," *The Advertiser*, 25 June 1918, 5.
6 "The Australians. Rush by Adelaide Men," *The Advertiser*, 1 July 1918, 8.
7 "The Australians. Germans Slaughtered," *The Advertiser*, 15 April 1918, 8.

abilities of the Australian soldiers, "some Germans were bayonetted, more were bombed."[8] In this article, Bean linked the ideal of "extraordinary gallantry" directly to the Australians' prowess at fighting German soldiers. Similarly, in a report on the Australians' actions at Villers-Bretonneux in 1918, Bean connected heroism to the act of killing when describing the Australians' "glorious enterprise" that had created "heaps of dead Germans."[9] In July 1918, Bean considered the battles he had seen and offered this appraisal:

> I defy anyone who has followed the infantry this year from battlefield to battlefield, watched them go in time after time with light heart to an audacious attack, which only their complete confidence in their own strength and courage could carry through, watched them come out cheerful and literally without a grumble, spend a week in comparative comfort in some French barn before moving off again some morning, with battle kit, to plunge cheerfully into another spell of vigorous fighting, such as made their country's name ring right, even through America—I defy any Australian who has watched that infantry this year to speak or think of it with dry eyes or without a lump in his throat.[10]

In this hefty sentence, Bean implored his readers to appreciate the hardships and heroics displayed by Australian soldiers on the Western Front. He also outlined the core traits of the Australian hero as he saw and reported them. At the heart of these heroic traits were the Australians' enjoyment and adeptness at battle, their ability to "plunge cheerfully into another spell of vigorous fighting, such as made their country's name ring right." To Bean, Australian soldiers possessed a natural tenacity and ardour for fighting, "that no other troops have ever excelled."[11]

It was not just Bean who represented the Australians as a force of "born warriors."[12] Most correspondents who wrote copy for Australian newspapers, and many reporters within Australia, also depicted AIF soldiers as being both eager and exceptional fighters. Philip Gibbs, one of Britain's five official war reporters of the conflict, wrote copy that was printed in both Australian and British newspapers and detailed his unwavering "admiration of the fighting qualities of the Australians."[13] Gibbs frequently

[8] CEW Bean, "The Australians. Fight at Guedecourt," *The Advertiser*, 17 April 1917, 8.
[9] CEW Bean, "The Australians. A Glorious Enterprise," *The Advertiser*, 29 April 1918, 9.
[10] CEW Bean, "The Australian Record Another Glowing Chapter," *SMH*, 9 July 1918, 7.
[11] CEW Bean, "The Australians. The Way to Amiens," *The Advertiser*, 25 June 1918, 4.
[12] "Born Warriors Australians Praised," *The Advertiser*, 20 May 1918, 5.
[13] Philip Gibbs, "Back in Villers-Bretonneux," *SMH*, 27 April 1918, 14.

described the actions of AIF soldiers and his reports regularly appeared in newspapers across Australia. In one typical Gibbs article of 1916, he praised the Australians for "still fighting in a way which wins the admiration of the generals, staff, and all the army," as well as the "heroic quality which keeps them steady."[14] Earlier in 1916 he showed that Australian soldiers were not just good at fighting, but keen to do it, when he described AIF men as "craving for action."[15] In a description of fighting at Lagnicourt in 1917, Gibbs described how the "Australians swept forward, and, with irresistible spirit, flung themselves upon the Prussians," causing "dead bodies piled upon dead bodies."[16] In 1918 Gibbs described the Australians as "raiding experts…they again went into the German trenches on Friday, with the most successful results," and argued that Australian soldiers were "top dogs in any fighting man against man."[17] Gibbs again alluded to the superiority of the Australian's fighting ability compared to the enemy's in another 1918 article in which he detailed how entrenched German riflemen and machine-gunners "fought for their lives in these holes, but the Australians routed them with bayonet and bomb."[18] While the Australian losses were described as being "very light," the AIF had inflicted on the enemy "an hour of terror, during which many poor wretches were killed."[19]

Gibbs, like Bean, represented the heroic Australian soldier as being the best and most enthusiastic fighting man on the Western Front. Yet, this was not unusual for Gibbs, who had also reported on the "unparalleled heroism" of British, Canadian, and New Zealand troops in other articles.[20] As Williams has shown, British reporting on different nation's contributions to the war was driven in part by which national forces had succeeded in their objectives in battle, and in part as a means of responding to German propaganda that aimed to weaken the relationships between Britain and its dominion allies.[21] In his articles praising the Australians, Gibbs also consistently linked the Australians' fighting abilities with the numbers of Germans they had killed and captured,

[14] Philip Gibbs, "The Australians. How They Meet Counter-Attacks," *SMH*, 15 August 1916, 7.
[15] Philip Gibbs, "The Australians. Craving for Action," *The Advertiser*, 11 May 1916, 7.
[16] Philip Gibbs, "1,500 Germans 'Off the Rifle,'" *The Advertiser*, 4 July 1917, 7.
[17] Philip Gibbs, "The West," *The Argus*, 18 March 1918, 5.
[18] Philip Gibbs, "The Australians. A Daring Enterprise," *SMH*, 8 May 1918, 11.
[19] *Ibid*.
[20] Philip Gibbs, "Canadian Attack on Bellevue," *The Daily Post*, 31 October 1917, 5; Philip Gibbs, "Soldiers Christmas," *The SMH*, 27 December 1916, 9; Philip Gibbs, "Flers. Heroic Dash," *The Bathurst Times*, 26 September 1916, 2.
[21] Williams, *ANZACS, the Media and the Great War*, 197-199.

which handily quantified their heroism while also—though probably unintentionally—forming a direct connection between heroism and attrition strategy.

Gordon Gilmour, the special war correspondent for the Australian and New Zealand Press Association, also represented Australian soldier heroes as men who enjoyed and excelled at killing Germans. After an apparently slow period on the front line in early 1918, Gilmour reported that the AIF had "its tail up and is spoiling for a fight."[22] In a 1917 report on gains made by the Allies at Passchendaele, Gilmour wrote that the "main credit for this fine advance," was owed to the "remarkable speed and notorious man-to-man fighting capacity of our dauntless infantry."[23] By 1918, Gilmour depicted Australian soldiers as being so proficient at fighting as to be unstoppable. In one article he described how surrendering German troops "might easily have overpowered their captors, but nothing of the kind was attempted. All were glad to be relieved from the nerve-racking strain of endeavouring to defend the position against the Australians, whose vigour and dash make almost any trenches unsafe."[24] War correspondents represented Australian soldiers as heroes based on their keenness and aptitude for killing the enemy—or as Gilmour described it, their "vigour and dash"—and these regular tropes of Australian heroism were not confined to just correspondents' copy, but also appeared in the publications of many unattributed reporters.

In an *Argus* article that detailed the vicious "man-to-man and hand-to-hand fighting" that took place in Pozières in 1916, the Germans were reported to have been "no match for the Australians, who simply love it as a thing they have been waiting for."[25] The same article reported that, "one and all the Anzacs are sterling fighters, and are making their name throughout the Empire."[26] In an *SMH* article that also reported on the operations at Pozières, a reporter described how occurrences of vicious hand-to-hand fighting undertaken by "the gallant Australians" had demonstrated that the "Anzacs love in-fighting."[27] In the same year, an *Advertiser* article reported that AIF men had performed

22 Anderson and Trembath, *Witnesses to War*, 45; Gordon Gilmour, "The Australians. Spoiling for a Fight," *SMH*, 13 March 1918, 11.

23 "Haig's Success. Germans Stunned," *The Argus*, 24 September 1917, 7.

24 Gordon Gilmour, "Australians on New Ground," *SMH*, 23 September 1918, 7.

25 "'Hail Anzacs!' A British Tribute," *The Argus*, 28 July 1916, 7.

26 *Ibid*.

27 "A Wild Coo-Ee," *SMH*, 28 July 1916, 7.

heroically "under conditions of unexampled violence," and concluded that, "the Australians are not ordinary fighters…they seem to be super soldiers."[28] In 1917, the *Argus* described how the coming of spring on the Western Front had led to weather that meant Australian soldiers could better "enjoy fighting in the open."[29] The emergence of such reports presented the Australian hero as one who was adept at killing and found such bloody engagements with the enemy to be enjoyable.

One *SMH* article explained that this enjoyment of fighting the enemy derived from the opportunity soldiers had to affirm their masculinity on the battlefield.[30] One young, "gallant Australian," the article reported, was keen to fight the enemy so that he might, "stand up with these gallant heroes of our dear old land and prove myself a man."[31] Both the young man quoted in the article and the reporter writing about him considered it obvious that the act of fighting and killing represented a core ideal of Anglo-Australian masculinity and a driving force behind the eagerness of Australian soldiers to engage the enemy. This concept has been examined in detail by the historians JA Mangan and Michael Paris, who have both argued that pre-war and wartime representations of heroism had offered young men models of masculinity that they were encouraged to imitate.[32] Yet, this link between the Australians' reported eagerness to fight and manliness only appeared once in the surveyed newspapers. More commonly, newspaper reports that indicated men were enjoying battle attributed this to the fact that the Australian soldier was a far superior fighter, and therefore less likely to be killed in action, compared to his German counterpart.[33]

28 "Terrible Carnage. Worst of the War," *The Advertiser*, 28 July 1916, 7.

29 "Springtime in France," *The Argus*, 2 May 1917, 9.

30 Private Wallace, "The Grand Cause. A Gallant Australian," *SMH*, 18 January 1918, 6.

31 *Ibid*.

32 JA Mangan, *Manliness and Morality: Middle-Class Masculinity in Britain and America, 1800-1940* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991); Mangan, "'Muscular, Militaristic and Manly,'" 28–47; *Militarism, Sport, Europe : War without Weapons*, ed. JA Mangan (London: Routledge, 2003); JA Mangan, *A Sport-Loving Society: Victorian and Edwardian Middle-Class England at Play* (Oxfordshire: Taylor and Francis, 2006); JA Mangan, *Making European Masculinities: Sport, Europe, Gender* (London: Routledge, 2013); Paris, *Warrior Nation*; Michael Paris, *Over the Top: The Great War and Juvenile Literature in Britain* (Santa Barbara: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2004).

33 "Terrible Carnage. Worst of the War," 7; "A Wild Coo-Ee" 7: Bean, "The Australians. The Way to Amiens," 4; Gilmour, "The Australians. Spoiling for a Fight," 11; "Haig's Success. Germans Stunned," 7; WJ Denny, "With the Australians. On the Track of the Huns," *The Advertiser*, 30 September 1916, 8; "'Hail Anzacs!' A British Tribute," 7.

Supporting the argument that Australian soldiers were eager and exceptional fighters, the examined newspapers published numerous British and German accounts of battle that praised the Anzacs. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, so prominent in shaping the late Victorian-era heroic model, was reported by Gordon Gilmour in the *Advertiser* to have remarked that the Australians' "reckless dare-devilry is combined with a spice of cunning which gives them their place in their own imperial rank."[34] General Haig was also regularly reported as having heaped praise upon the Australians' attacking abilities.[35] Australian newspapers predictably basked in British appraisals of the AIF, yet similar compliments from German prisoners, whether real or imagined, were also regularly published. German prisoners were said to have had "many times admitted that the Australian soldiers are the swiftest troops in Europe."[36] The *Argus* claimed that a captured German officer had been awed by the Australians' attacking qualities and had stated that while "other troops utilised all available cover, the Australians charged through the open indifferent, even contemptuous of danger."[37] As discussed in Chapter Four, Williams has examined other Allied nations' newspapers and found that while Australian soldiers were sometimes mentioned and praised in French, British, and Canadian newspapers, each national press depicted their own forces as being especially heroic.[38]

Emblematic of newspapers' focus on the aggressive Australian hero was the re-emergence of Lance-Corporal Albert Jacka in Australian newspapers. Jacka had received press attention in 1915 for his actions at Gallipoli, yet many of these reports simply republished his official VC citation and did not offer him the type of praise extended to stretcher-bearers like John Simpson Kirkpatrick. In 1916, Jacka was reported as having undertaken an "amazing exploit" during the battle at Pozières, which involved "a bit of tough bayonet fighting."[39] He had found himself outnumbered and, "without hesitating, called out to his six comrades, who advanced upon the surprised Germans, menacing them

[34] Gordon Gilmour, "The Australians. Conan Doyle's Praise," *The Advertiser*, 5 October 1918, 10.

[35] "The Australians. Praise from Sir Douglas Haig," *The Advertiser*, 9 January 1918, 7; "Praise for Australians," *The Advertiser*, 3 February 1917, 7; "Australians at Messines. Sir D Haig's Message," *SMH*, 30 June 1917, 3; "The Australians. Field-Marshall Haig's Message," *SMH*, 10 October 1917; 12 "Australians at Messines. Sir D. Haig's Message," 13; "Bullecourt. Praise for Australian Troops," *SMH*, 16 July 1917, 6; "Review of Battle. Heroic British," *SMH*, 25 April 1918, 7.

[36] Gordon Gilmour, "Flanders Success. Australians Win Glory," *SMH*, 24 September 1917, 7.

[37] "The ANZACS. German Praise," *The Argus*, 29 January 1917, 7.

[38] Williams, *ANZACS, the Media and the Great War*, 210.

[39] "Road to Baupaume," *The Argus*, 2 October 1916, 8.

with their bayonets and shouting."[40] Jacka's actions had led to the killing and capture of scores of German soldiers and earned him a Military Cross.[41] While Jacka's heroic actions at Pozières had been similar in nature to those that had earned him a VC at Gallipoli, Australian newspapers printed far more praise for the Lance-Corporal in 1916 than they had done in 1915.

Forty-eight articles were published about Jacka in the examined newspapers during the Gallipoli Campaign and almost all of these were full or abridged transcripts of his VC citation. By contrast, after Jacka's actions on the Western Front, 62 articles about him were printed in the surveyed newspapers. The majority of these 62 articles enthusiastically lauded Jacka for his fighting skill and heroism.[42] The war correspondent, Arthur Mason, described Jacka as the model of "a gallant soldier."[43] A writer for the *SMH* argued that, "he deserves another Victoria Cross."[44] Another article in the *SMH* claimed that Jacka's act was heroic enough to "render ordinarily brave deeds commonplace."[45] As Chapter Three has discussed, Jacka had become such a well-known and highly respected hero in Australia by 1916 that newspapers and the Australian Government attempted to use his status to bolster recruitment and build support for conscription. In late 1916, Jacka's aggressive actions fitted the model of heroism necessary for a war of attrition. At Gallipoli he had killed enemy combatants and earned a VC, but—as we have seen in Chapter Four—his status as a hero was dwarfed in comparison to the stretcher-bearer Kirkpatrick. By 1916 the conditions of the Western Front and the implementation of an attrition strategy had eroded the neo-chivalric model of heroism that was so prominent in 1915. Thus, when Jacka received another medal for his actions in France, he was praised by the Australian press far more than had been the case during Gallipoli. This offers a clear example of how representations of heroism in Australian newspapers had profoundly altered between 1915 and 1916.

[40] "Jacka. VC Further Heroism," *SMH*, 16 August 1916, 11.

[41] "The London Gazette 29824," 14 November 1916, The Gazette Archives, 11074.

[42] "Jacka, VC Decorated by King," *The Argus*, 20 November 1916, 7; "Continued Russian Offensive," *The Advertiser*, 16 August 1916, 7; "The Australians Fine Work in Egypt," *The Advertiser*, 16 August 1916, 9; "Road to Baupaume," *The Argus*, 2 October 1916, 3; "At Wandsworth. Heroes of Pozieres," *SMH*, 15 November 1916, 5; "Jacka's Message to Australia," *SMH*, 27 October 1916, 7; "Jacka VC Further Heroism," *SMH*, 16 August 1916, 8; "Private Jacka. More Fine Work," *The Bathurst Times*, 16 August 1916, 5.

[43] Mason, "At Wandsworth. Heroes of Pozieres," 7.

[44] "Jacka, VC," *SMH (NSW : 1842 - 1954)*, 16 August 1916, 3.

[45] "Victoria Cross Hero Wounded," *SMH*, 16 August 1916, 8.

Killing the enemy was reported as being a heroic act by Australian newspapers during both the Gallipoli campaign and the AIF's time on the Western Front. Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett had lauded the Australians for their fighting prowess at Krithia in 1915 just as Philip Gibbs did at the Somme in 1918. The difference between how the Australian press represented heroism at Gallipoli compared to the Western Front was that many types of battlefield acts were represented as being heroic in Australian newspapers during 1915. By 1916, these same newspapers represented acts of killing and capturing the enemy as the central—almost sole—exemplification of heroism on the battlefield. Stretcher-bearers and doctors were regularly depicted as heroes in Australian newspaper reports of Gallipoli, possibly more often and with more admiration than compared to the fighting infantry. Wounded servicemen were also regularly depicted as war heroes in the Australian press throughout 1915. By late 1916 the war had transformed into one of attrition and there grew an understanding among the Allies that they would need to diminish German manpower in order to win. In these conditions the represented hero in Australian newspapers became the man who was eager and able to "have a go at the Germans."[46]

Representations of Wounded Men

The shift in reported heroism that took place on the Western Front also had an effect on how wounded servicemen were represented in Australian newspapers. During the Gallipoli campaign, wounded Australian soldiers were regularly described as heroes, often for their cool and jovial acceptance of terrible injuries. For example, there were thirteen instances during the Gallipoli campaign in which the headline "wounded heroes" appeared in the examined newspapers.[47] During Gallipoli, wounded soldiers were almost always represented as heroes in the Australian press. In comparison, reports that appeared in the examined Australian newspapers throughout mid-1916 to December 1918 used the term

[46] Bean "Australians in France," 6

[47] "Wounded Australian Heroes," *The Advertiser*, 14 May 1915, 12; "Wounded Australian Heroes," *The Advertiser*, 15 May 1915, 17; "Wounded Heroes. Welcome at the Town Hall," *The Argus*, 11 December 1915, 19; "Melbourne's Welcome to Her Wounded Heroes," *The Argus*, 11 August 1915, 7; "Arrival of Wounded Heroes from the Dardanelles," *SMH*, 19 July 1915, 5; "Arrival of Wounded Heroes in Sydney," *SMH*, 27 December 1915, 6; "Our Wounded Heroes. Entertained in London," *SMH*, 15 October 1915, 6; "Our Wounded Heroes. Red Cross Appeal," *SMH*, 25 May 1915, 8; "Wounded Heroes Return. Hearty Welcome Given," *The Argus*, 11 September 1915, 17; "The Home-Coming. More Wounded Heroes Return," *The Advertiser*, 29 November 1915, 8; "Home Again. Wounded Heroes Return.," *The Advertiser*, 19 July 1915, 9; "Home Again. Wounded Heroes. From Gallipoli," *SMH*, 31 August 1915, 9; "Homeward Bound. Returning Sick and Wounded Heroes," *The Advertiser*, 1 January 1916, 10.

"wounded heroes" only twice.[48] Even these articles did not describe actual wounded soldiers, but reported that the term "our wounded heroes" was—like the term "ANZAC"—prohibited from being used "in connection with trade, business, calling, or profession."[49] Reporting on wounded men during the AIF's engagements on the Western Front had therefore significantly altered since the Gallipoli campaign. With Allied strategy throughout 1916 and 1917 focused on killing the enemy while sustaining as few casualties as possible, soldiers were less frequently described as heroic solely for having been wounded.

On the Western Front, wounded men were often represented as being burdensome to their fellow combatants. One *SMH* writer believed that the best example of "fighting spirit" a wounded soldier could display on the Western Front was when, "the wounded man, if he can possibly walk, moves away leaning on a stretcher bearer, rather than allow himself to be carried by those already worn out by continuous work."[50] This article demonstrates the profound transformation that occurred in how Australian newspapers represented wounded soldiers between the Gallipoli and Somme campaigns. Throughout 1915, a series of 134 articles printed in the *SMH* entitled "Heroes of the Dardanelles" listed Australian men who had been killed or wounded at Gallipoli.[51] The Western Front equivalents to this series dissociated heroism with wounded soldiers. Instead, news of wounded men was reported in colourless series such as "Australian Soldiers. Wounded," which appeared fourteen times in the *Advertiser*, and "Australians on Service. Wounded," which appeared forty-three times in the *Argus*.[52]

Examples of men praised for their heroism directly as a result of being wounded are not present in the examined newspapers between July 1916 and December 1918, yet there are examples of acclaim for men who continued to fight despite their wounds. One "aviator hero" was lauded when, finding "that both legs and one arm were disabled, he

[48] "'Our Wounded Heroes' Prohibited Words," *SMH*, 21 February 1917, 11; "'Our Wounded Heroes,'" *SMH*, 20 April 1917, 5.

[49] "'Our Wounded Heroes' Prohibited Words," 11.

[50] "The Fighting Line," *SMH*, 28 December 1916, 8.

[51] The first of this series was: "Heroes of the Dardanelles," *SMH*, 4 May 1915, 5.

[52] The first and last articles of these series were: "Australian Soldiers. Wounded," *The Advertiser*, 29 December 1917, 7; "Australian Soldiers. Wounded," *The Advertiser*, 4 October 1918, 9; "Australians on Service. Wounded," *The Argus*, June 15, 1917, 11; "Australians on Service. Wounded," *The Argus*, 24 December 1918, 9.

thrice attempted to ram the enemy machines in order to die fighting."[53] A Midshipman Gyles (first name unknown) was praised as a hero when he, "though wounded in one eye, kept all the foremost guns in action."[54]

Similarly, "though wounded in the leg during a trench raid," Lieutenant Laughlin from Victoria, "pushed on with great dash," and "accounted for several of the enemy."[55] An Australian man simply referred to as "Ross" by the *Advertiser*, acted as an "Australian hero" when: "though severely wounded… continued firing his machine gun at a critical stage in a counter-attack, and thus materially assisted to defeat it."[56] Unlike the reports of maimed heroes printed in Australian newspapers during Gallipoli, wounded soldiers on the Western Front were required to do more than just be cheerful. To be presented by the Australian press as a hero of the Western Front, a serviceman needed to contribute to victory and this was predominantly achieved through an aggressive, attacking action. The newspaper trope of the wounded hero that was so consistently printed in 1915 had all but disappeared by the time of the Somme. This change in reported heroism also extended to the depictions of soldiers returning home to Australia.

Newspaper descriptions of returned sick and wounded soldiers had also noticeably altered between the campaigns at Gallipoli and those of the Western Front. Full reports of wounded men returning from the Dardanelles rarely failed to mention that such men were gallant, brave, or heroic. Yet such fanfare was infrequent for those sick and wounded arriving home from Europe. In a July 1918 article, simply titled "Wounded Return," the *Argus* reported that: "at 10 o'clock yesterday morning Victorian and Tasmanian soldiers invalided home from the front for wounds or sickness disembarked at Port Melbourne."[57] This article was part of a series run by the *Argus* that reported on sick and wounded servicemen who had returned from the Western Front, as well as the receptions they had received.[58] Similar to this collection was a series of eleven articles entitled "Returning

[53] "Aviator Hero Fights 50 Machines," *The Argus*, 8 November 1918, 7.

[54] "Hero of Destroyer Fight," *SMH*, 28 April 1917, 13.

[55] "Rewards of Valour Won by Australians," *The Argus*, 28 July 1916, 8.

[56] "Australian Heroes," *The Advertiser*, 25 September 1916, 17.

[57] "Wounded Return," *The Argus*, 1 January 1918, 4.

[58] "Wounded Return," *The Argus*, 14 November 1917, 6; "Wounded Return," *The Argus*, 25 October 1917, 6; "Wounded Return," *The Argus*, 31 December 1917, 7; "Wounded Return," *The Argus*, 23 February 1917, 11; "Wounded Return," *The Argus*, 22 November 1917, 11; "Wounded Return," 1 January 1918, 13;

Wounded."[59] No article in either of these series described the returning wounded men as heroes. This was a stark contrast to the way in which returned wounded had been reported on in 1915 and early 1916, where almost every article published in Australian newspapers lauded the bravery and stoicism the returning wounded men. Just as receiving a wound on the Western Front no longer qualified a soldier to be recognised by the Australian press as heroic, the once automatic heroism that accompanied wounded soldiers who returned home no longer applied.

There remained some articles within the examined newspapers that described returning wounded from the Western Front as heroic, yet almost all of these omitted the word "wounded" from their headlines.[60] Titles such as, "Home Again Heroes from France," "Welcome Home Passchendaele Heroes," and "Heroes Return from the Firing Line," were just some of the articles that did not disclose that such men were wounded in their headline banners.[61] While these headlines were misleading, the articles attached usually indicated that the heroes described had returned home due to their wounds. Yet, some writers believed it best to exclude the information about wounds altogether. When wounded and sick South Australian servicemen arrived home from the Western Front, an article entitled "Returned Heroes Welcomed by Citizens" simply reported that: "another contingent of soldiers who have done their duty for King and country returned to Adelaide on Friday morning by the Melbourne express."[62] Many other articles that appeared in the examined newspapers did not concede that the men returning from the war had been

"Wounded Return," *The Argus*, 1 January 1918, 9; "Wounded Return," *The Argus*, 4 January 1918, 6; "Wounded Return," *The Argus*, 5 September 1918, 9; "Wounded Return," *The Argus*, 11 January 1918, 10.

[59] "Returning Wounded," *The Argus*, 29 December 1917, 11; "Returning Wounded," *SMH*, 13 April 1917, 13; "Returning Wounded," *The Argus*, 7 June 1918, 9; "Returning Wounded," *The Argus*, 4 September 1918, 6; "Returning Wounded," *The Argus*, 24 May 1918, 5; "Returning Wounded," *The Argus*, 18 March 1918, 9; "Returning Wounded," *The Argus*, 3 September 1918, 11; "Returning Wounded," *The Argus*, 15 March 1918, 6; "Returning Wounded," *The Argus*, 20 September 1918, 5; "Returning Wounded," *The Argus*, 21 January 1918, 11; "Returning Wounded," *The Argus*, 9 January 1918, 13.

[60] The only instance found within the examined newspapers in which an article carried the words "wounded" and "hero" in its title was: "More Wounded. Arrive Home from France," *SMH*, 4 December 1916, 6.

[61] All such articles found in this study are: "Home Again Heroes from France," *The Advertiser*, 16 May 1917, 7; "Returned Heroes," *The Advertiser*, 24 July 1916, 7; "Home Again. More Returned Heroes," *The Advertiser*, 10 March 1917, 11; "Welcome Home. Passchendaele Heroes," *SMH*, 13 March 1918, 11; "Veterans Return from the Front. Gallipoli and Flanders Heroes," *SMH*, 29 October 1917, 6; "Heroes Return. From the Firing Line," *SMH*, 13 April 1917, 6; "Returned Heroes. Happy Scenes in Melbourne," *The Advertiser*, 17 September 1917, 6.

[62] "Returned Heroes Welcomed By the Citizens," *The Advertiser*, 25 August 1917, 11.

wounded.[63] In all cases, the reports that overlooked repatriated soldiers' wounds also insisted that such men were war heroes. This was in direct contrast to most articles that described returning men as having been wounded but did not label them as heroic. Thus, in the newspapers of 1916 to 1918, a man returning to Australia was described as wounded or heroic, but very rarely both.

"Don't make us heroes": Stretcher-bearers on the Western Front

As stories of heroic Australian fighters became a far more regular feature of war reporting from late-1916, those performing humanitarian roles on the Western Front received fewer accolades than they had throughout the Gallipoli Campaign. At Gallipoli, stretcher-bearers were regularly reported as showing, "greater daring and…greater risk than those of any other rank, and they perform them to a man without a flinch."[64] Kirkpatrick had become the standout hero of Gallipoli for ferrying wounded soldiers away from danger, yet no figure attracted any such accolades for humanitarianism on the Western Front. Charles Bean remained an unerring supporter of Australian stretcher-bearers, but was alone in his continued, if infrequent, praise for such men. The heroic Australian stretcher-bearer largely disappeared from reports of the Western Front. Bean claimed that the stretcher-bearers had asked that the press, "not make us heroes. We can stand anything but that."[65] Yet those with such a stance need not have worried, as the examined newspapers rarely linked the role of Western Front stretcher-bearers to the ideal of heroism. When describing the work of stretcher-bearers, most Australian newspapers focused on the futility of such men's work and the "barbarism" of their German killers. Representations of stretcher-bearers in Australian newspapers had largely shifted from their depictions as peerless heroes at Gallipoli, to becoming victims in the attritional combat of the Western Front.

In the first months of the AIF entering Europe, stretcher-bearers and medical personnel were still described in Australian newspapers as heroes. In early July, an article was published in the *SMH* that praised AIF doctors for having: "worked like heroes

[63] "War Heroes. Australian Soldiers Return," *SMH*, 18 February 1918, 8; "Our Soldiers Welcomed in Sydney. Heroes of the Western Front," *SMH*, 6 July 1917 6; "The Anzacs Heroes Return A Cordial Welcome," *The Advertiser*, 25 November 1918, 7; "Home Again. More Returned Heroes," 11; "Returned Soldiers. From France and Egypt," 4; "Returned Heroes Welcomed by the Citizens," 11; "General News. More Returned Heroes," *The Advertiser*, 17 June 1918, 11.

[64] "Brave Stretcher-Bearers," *The Advertiser*, 2 October 1915, 16.

[65] CEW Bean, "The Australians. Battlefield Pictures," *SMH*, 28 July 1916, 7.

separating the living from the dead, and attending to the wounded."[66] Yet even in these early days of the Somme campaign, the fighting infantry were the focus of most of the press's plaudits. The same article that praised doctors for having "worked like heroes" also described how heroic Australian soldiers "dashed in the end trench with bayonets."[67]

After the fighting at Pozières in October 1916, Charles Bean reported his belief that "the Australian stretcher-bearer has not degenerated since he made his name glorious amongst his fellow soldiers at Gallipoli."[68] Such praise for servicemen who undertook humanitarian duties continued, almost unabated, from Gallipoli into the first months of the Somme campaign. Yet by the time of the VC directives of 1916, and the official British implementation of attrition in early 1917, those performing benevolent roles on the Western Front had become far less prominent in Australian newspapers' coverage of the war.

Bean was the only major Australian reporter who consistently voiced his admiration of AIF stretcher-bearers throughout the conflict. In September 1916, he reported that the "work of these Australian stretcher-bearers is simply glorious."[69] Writing from the Hindenburg Line in May 1917, Bean reported on stretcher-bearers that: "I can only say that I saw three shells burst within four yards of a group of them…they did not even turn to look."[70] The next month, Bean described the stretcher-bearers as having "worked manfully throughout the night."[71] After an operation in October 1917, he labelled stretcher-bearers as "brave Australians," who, "however close a shell fell, never turn a head or quicken pace by a second."[72] In many of these articles, Bean admiringly reported on the stretcher-bearers' capacity for coolness under fire. This made him the only Australian war correspondent who regularly praised such men. Yet despite Bean's clear admiration of these humanitarian troops, his articles outlined here represent all of the positive reports about Australian stretcher-bearers and medical personnel written by him between 1916 and 1918. From October 1917, medical personnel and stretcher-bearers

66 "The Doctors. Worked Like Heroes," *SMH*, 6 July 1916, 9.

67 *Ibid*.

68 CEW Bean, "Fight at Pozieres After the Battle," *The Advertiser*, 16 October 1916, 6.

69 CEW Bean, "Australian Stretcher-Bearers. 'Work Simply Glorious,'" *The Argus*, 26 August 1916, 17.

70 CEW Bean, "Anzacs in Hindenburg Line," *SMH*, 7 May 1917, 8.

71 "The Australians. Gains Secure. Heroic-Stretcher-Bearers," *SMH*, 17 October 1917, 11.

72 CEW Bean, "Stretcher-Bearers. The Brave Australians," *The Advertiser*, 20 October 1917, 12; "The Glorious Anzacs. Unflinching Courage," *The Advertiser*, 7 May 1917, 4.

were not mentioned in any great detail by the only war correspondent that had consistently praised their work on the Western Front. Thus, those in humanitarian roles, and the dangerous and brave actions they undertook, went largely unreported and uncelebrated during the last year of the war.

When stretcher-bearers did appear in newsprint between 1916 and 1918, the salient feature of their contribution to the war appears to have been their sacrifice. Philip Gibbs described how "out of 250 stretcher-bearers in one sector 100 were killed or wounded."[73] Reports indicated that in a vicious modern war, saving life was an act that usually led to death. This is shown in a 1917 *Argus* article that detailed how "an unusually large percentage of the stretcher-bearers gave up their lives on errands of mercy."[74] Such humanitarianism in the midst of merciless warfare was sometimes presented as naivety. Gibbs claimed that one reason "the percentage of mortality among the Red Cross is higher than in the infantry," was because "stretcher parties who had faith in German chivalry walked conspicuously into the open."[75] According to the Australian press, the German enemy did not adhere to rules of chivalry in warfare, and therefore acts of chivalry no longer had a place on the battlefield. Those who undertook errands of mercy quickly became victims of an unchivalrous enemy.

That stretcher-bearers represented the merciful side of warfare meant that their deaths at the hands of the enemy provided excellent fodder for newspaper propaganda. There was, in some articles' estimations, no better example of German barbarity then their killing of stretcher-bearers. While Gibbs had partially attributed the high losses among stretcher-bearers as being a result of their own trusting naivety, he was also sure to blame the fact that, "unfortunately, the Germans did not respect the Red Cross Corps, which they sniped and shrapnelled deliberately."[76] A "story of German savagery," which described how German soldiers "poured rifle fire on our stretcher-bearers," was an account frequently told in the examined newspapers.[77] Bean, who usually refrained from demonizing the enemy in his reports, noted that during the battle of Pozières, "they fired

[73] Philip Gibbs, "Brave Stretcher-Bearers," *SMH*, 12 October 1917, 7.
[74] "Australian Red Cross. Work at the Front," *The Argus*, 6 June 1917, 9.
[75] Philip Gibbs, "Australian Valour Bullecourt Battle," *SMH*, 15 May 1917, 7.
[76] Gibbs, "Australian Valour Bullecourt Battle," 7.
[77] "Story of German Savagery," *SMH*, 11 July 1917, 12.

on our stretcher-bearers."[78] A 1918 *SMH* article entitled "Hun Cruelties," described how the Germans were "deliberately firing on stretcher-bearers," and appeared to be "addicted to sniping or turning the machine-guns upon the men removing the wounded."[79] It is likely that many of the articles describing such violence towards stretcher-bearers were reporting actual occurrences on the Western Front, yet they also offer examples of how newspaper representations of the stretcher-bearers had fundamentally changed since Gallipoli. Stretcher-bearers were presented regularly as victims, undertaking futile acts of mercy on a battlefront where compassion was deadly and pointless.

Accounts of stretcher-bearers being killed by the enemy tended to be used in Australian reports as a justification for the violence exhibited by AIF infantrymen. A story detailing the actions of "gallant Queenslanders" explained how the enemy, "machine-gunned and killed a stretcher-bearer when he walked out to bring in a wounded officer."[80] The article noted of the Australian infantrymen that, "these lads do not forgive the Germans for firing on the Red Cross."[81] A piece outlining how "the Huns played a desperate game and adopted the methods of a desperate loser" by pouring "rifle and machine gun fire on our stretcher-bearers," later summarised that a subsequent charge and "heroic dash, in full sight of these atrocities, is all the more wonderful."[82] Such accounts framed stretcher-bearers as victims while the infantrymen served as avengers, protectors, and in some instances, saviours.

On the Western Front stretcher-bearers were no longer the preeminent heroes of the Australian press, as they had been in 1915. The regular reports of humanitarian feats of courage that had been such a primary aspect of Gallipoli reporting had almost disappeared from newspaper accounts of Australia's conflict in Europe. When stretcher-bearers were reported on, it was not always in a positive light. Instead, such men were frequently depicted as victims of the enemy's unchivalrous conduct on the battlefield. Their trust in German chivalry was presented as valiant but naïve, as this modern enemy, along with modern combat, had undergone a recent, fundamental and violent transformation.

78 CEW Bean, "The Australians. Pozieres Quieter," *SMH*, 4 August 1916, 7.
79 "Hun Cruelties," *SMH*, 8 November 1918, 7.
80 "The Australians. Gallant Queenslanders," *SMH*, 17 August 1918, 13.
81 *Ibid*.
82 "Story of German Savagery," 12.

British Propaganda and Australian Newspapers

The dramatic shift in how heroism was represented in Australian newspapers was likely influenced by the introduction of British propaganda into the Australian press in July 1916. The introduction of British propaganda meant that Australian newspapers became even greater advocates for the aims of the British military. This meant that as the British military began to officially recognise killing as the primary act of the hero in late 1916—through VC conferrals—Australian newspaper representations of heroism also altered in conformity with the shift. While the introduction of an Allied attrition strategy was the primary driving force behind the change in newspaper representations of heroism—as will be discussed—British propaganda likely facilitated the shift.

At the start of the war, most major newspapers in Australia held subscriptions with one of the two major news cable services available, the Australian Press Association (APA) and United Service Limited (USL).[83] The role of these services was to cable daily reports, sourced from various newspapers in London, to their Australian subscribers. While British propaganda was irregularly published in Australian newspapers through these cable services, such articles were not controlled or direct enough to satisfy officials in the British Foreign Office. Putnis and McCallum have shown that in 1916 the British government worked to increase the amount of propaganda printed in Australian newspapers and used the Reuters cable service for this end.[84]

Although Reuters was an independent company, the service had developed a deal with the British Asquith government in 1911 for its Imperial News Service (INS) to distribute propaganda throughout the British dominions.[85] Propaganda articles were hidden among regular Reuters news cables in an attempt to provide camouflage. Putnis and McCallum have shown the Reuters cable service "became an integral component of the British government's propaganda effort…while maintaining an aura of independence."[86] On 1 July 1916—the first day of the Battle of the Somme—Reuters began to supply reports to Australian newspapers through a deal brokered with APA's

[83] Putnis and McCallum, "Reuters, Propaganda-Inspired News," 285.
[84] Putnis and McCallum, "Role of Reuters," 3.
[85] *Ibid.*
[86] *Ibid.*, 13.

chief competitor, USL.[87] In October 1916 the British government declared that there was too much congestion along the Eastern and Pacific cable lines and ordered that reports were to be jointly compiled by staff members from both the APA and Reuters/USL.[88] The outcome was a single cable news feed called the Unicab Service.[89] Staff from APA, Reuters, and USL worked together to compile and deliver cables to Australian subscribers, and the newspapers attributed these cables to the service with which they had subscribed.[90] By 1917, through the use of this new service, Reuters was able to supply reports to newspapers in every major city in Australia as well as many publications in rural areas.[91] In March 1917, Reuters established an additional Supplementary Imperial Service and issued a set of operational instructions which ordered that the service should promote "imperial unity, and…. the continued vigorous prosecution of the war."[92] By May 1918, Reuters Supplementary Service alone was issuing 35,000 words a month to newspapers across Australia.[93]

The Australian government used stringent censorship laws as a tool for propaganda, but unlike Britain and the United States, it did not attempt to create propaganda through a governmental body. So, while the Australian government did disseminate newspaper propaganda, the research has clearly shown that the British government was able to exert influence in Australian publications through the use of Reuters cable services. Such research is important for the present study, as it shows that British war aims could be, and likely were, directly and influentially transmitted to Australian newspaper readers. Putnis and McCallum have shown that it is impossible to identify which articles printed in Australian newspapers were British propaganda pieces and it is therefore very difficult to ascertain what sort of influence such articles sought to have.[94] Yet, because such propaganda was being sent through the British government, and that government was prosecuting a war of attrition in early 1917, it may have been the case that British propaganda that depicted heroes and heroic actions aligned with the

87 Putnis and McCallum, "Reuters, Propaganda-Inspired News," 285.

88 Putnis and McCallum, "Role of Reuters," 7.

89 *Ibid.*

90 *Ibid.*

91 *Ibid.*

92 "Editorial Orders," 19 March 1917, Reuters Company Archive, cited in Putnis and McCallum, "Role of Reuters," 13.

93 Putnis and McCallum, "Role of Reuters," 9.

94 Putnis and McCallum, "Reuters, Propaganda-Inspired News," 286,

model of military heroism officially recognised by the British military in late 1916 and 1917. Thus, British propaganda may have, at least partially, influenced the shift that occurred in how Australian newspapers represented heroism in 1916.

Australian soldiers entered the Western Front four months before Reuters established newspaper subscriptions in the Antipodes. Thus, the Western Front was represented to Australians in a far more propagandised and pro-British manner than the Gallipoli campaign had been. More direct distribution of propaganda from abroad, alongside strict Australian censorship laws, likely contributed to the shift in the way the First World War was reported. As battlefield developments and British military policy changed in late 1916 and early 1917, leading to a transformation in the way official military heroism was recognised, British propaganda articles may have played a role in changing the way Australian military heroism was represented in print.

Conclusion

Chapter Four detailed how military heroism was represented in Australian newspapers during the Gallipoli campaign. These were representations of men who fought, killed and captured the enemy, men who saved their comrades' lives on the battlefield, men who remained calm under extreme conditions, and men who were wounded in the course of serving their country. By contrast, this chapter has outlined how heroism was represented in the same Australian newspapers after the AIF's entry onto the Western Front in 1916. These representations of heroism focused primarily, almost solely, on men who fought, killed, and captured enemy combatants, while representations of stretcher-bearers and men who were wounded in battle were no longer linked with the ideal of heroism. Chapters Four and Five therefore show the swift transformation of the military hero during the First World War as reported by and represented to Australians.

There is no direct evidence to show that changes in British military strategy influenced the shift in Australian newspaper representations of heroism. Yet it is clear that Australian newspapers were reliant on British military information and often—as in the cases of medal citations and mentions in despatches—re-printed official military text that detailed heroic actions verbatim. Thus, when the British military altered the types of actions that were officially recognised and cited as heroic in late-1916, the official medal citations and mentions in despatches printed verbatim in newspapers profoundly altered

the type of heroism that was widely represented to Australians. As Chapter Four has shown, the British military also controlled the information that was available to war correspondents through official communiqués and censorship of copy. Correspondents abroad and reporters in Australia were also restricted by the stringent censorship imposed by the Australian government through the original and updated versions of the *War Precautions Act*. All such military and governmental controls meant that the representations of heroism that Australians read in newspapers were strongly influenced by the British military and firmly controlled by the Australian government. Such restrictions on the press likely meant that the models and ideals of heroism represented in Australian newspapers throughout the war were supportive of the war aims of both the British military and the Australian government. From late 1916 to the end of the war, the aim was the attrition of enemy forces.

It is likely that the British and Allied adoption of an attrition strategy directly and indirectly influenced the way in which heroism was reported in Australian newspapers from late-1916 onwards. It is also possible that Australian censorship laws and the British use of Reuters to spread propaganda in the Australian press may have also influenced this change in representations of heroism. Whatever the cause of the shift in heroism, what is made clear in the last two chapters is that a shift in how heroism was reported in Australian newspapers occurred. The Australian newspapers that had praised stretcher-bearers, doctors, and wounded soldiers for their heroism during Gallipoli and in the first months of the AIF's entry into the European theatre, rarely mentioned such servicemen after late-1916. Scores of articles had described the heroic acts of stretcher-bearers at Gallipoli, but these had almost completely vanished from print by 1918. Hundreds of articles were published in the examined newspapers during 1915 that lauded the wounded heroes of Gallipoli, but the term "wounded hero" did not appear in these newspapers again from late 1916 to armistice. Killing and capturing the enemy had been acts that were lauded as heroic during the Gallipoli campaign, but after 1916 they became the only actions regularly represented as heroic. In short, the last two chapters have shown that representations of heroism and heroes in Australian newspapers changed during the First World War. Together, the shift in prerequisites for the VC award and the changes in newspaper representations of heroism show how the First World War profoundly recast the role and nature of the military hero in Australia.

Conclusion

On the evening of 24 April 2015, an estimated 24,000 people slept outside in parks and showgrounds around Australia. Throughout the night they enjoyed live music, watched the Russell Crowe film about the Gallipoli campaign, *The Water Diviner*, and listened to speakers describe and discuss the Anzac spirit.[1] This was Camp Gallipoli, an event created—with the help of 2.5 million dollars of federal government funding—to commemorate the centenary of the Gallipoli landings.[2] In the lead up to the event, the Afghanistan War (2001–present) veteran and VC recipient Corporal Mark Donaldson explained that Australians did not "need to have fought in a war to have the Anzac spirit…their spirit and determination can be transferred to everyday life."[3] The Australian newsreader, Peter Overton, supported Donaldson's comments when he told a crowd at the Sydney site of Camp Gallipoli that they did not have to be part of the military to "possess the Anzac spirit."[4] This sentiment was part of the mission statement of Camp Gallipoli, to "instil the Anzac ideals of mateship, courage, inclusiveness and self-sacrifice into the youth of Australia."[5] Camp Gallipoli offers one example of a broader trend in Australian commemoration of the First World War. This is a trend that commemorates and celebrates the ideals represented by the Anzacs during the First World War, while encouraging modern Australians to emulate such virtues.

During the centenary of the Gallipoli campaign, Camp Gallipoli was not alone in advocating that Australians should both commemorate and imitate the examples set by the nation's First World War soldiers. The Australian Governor-General, Sir Peter Cosgrove, used his speech at the Australian War Memorial to remind those gathered that, "the spirit of Anzac lies not in a place that you visit, or a book that you read…the spirit of Anzac lies

1 Jill Stark, "Defining the Anzac Spirit: Celebration or Commodification?," *SMH*, 18 April 2015, accessed 28 January 2016, http://www.smh.com.au/national/ww1/defining-the-anzac-spirit-celebration-or-commodification-20150418-1mntwp.html.

2 *Ibid.*

3 Craig Cook and Peter Law, "'It Is Where You've Come from,'" *Perth Now*, 26 September 2014, accessed 29 January 2016, http://www.perthnow.com.au/anzac-centenary/have-you-got-the-anzac-spirit-victoria-cross-heroes-light-a-new-flame-to-spark-australian-pride/news-story/1154468070e93a816536026ceb03e0f1.

4 "Camp Gallipoli 2016 – Centenary Commemoration," *Camp Gallipoli*, accessed 28 January 2016, https://www.campgallipoli.com.au/; Stark, "Defining the Anzac Spirit."

5 *Ibid.*

in us all."[6] In Lieutenant General David Morrison's centenary address, the chief of the Australian Army stated his belief that commemorating the fallen "makes us who we are…and reminds us who we can be."[7] Prime Minister Tony Abbott wrote an article for the *SMH* in which he shared his "hope that in striving to emulate their values, we might rise to the challenges of our time."[8] In all cases the Anzac spirit was described as something that has shaped modern Australia, representing values that we, as individuals and as a nation, both innately possess and should also strive to emulate.

Such messages had a large audience. At Gallipoli, Abbott spoke to a crowd of over 8,000 Australians.[9] Cosgrove addressed 120,000 at the Australian War Memorial.[10] A further 85,000 had faced the Melbourne rain and a terrorist threat to see the service at the Shrine.[11] These were just some of the hundreds of thousands who participated in services held around the country. Thus, the message that Australians should not only commemorate but also emulate the heroes of the First World War has reached a large audience.

But what examples did the Anzacs set? What ideals, values, and behaviours are Australians being asked to follow when they are told to emulate the Anzacs of the First World War? The answers to such questions have changed since the end of the First World War as the characteristics that underpin the Anzac legend have evolved and transformed to suit shifting Australian social values. In the decades after the conflict, Australian literature was saturated with memoirs and novels depicting Anzac soldiers' heroism on the

6 Sir Peter Cosgrove, "Commemorative Address at the National Ceremony," *Australian War Memorial*, 2015, accessed 29 January 2016, https://www.awm.gov.au/talks-speeches/commemorative-address-national-ceremony-2015/.

7 David Morrison, "Dawn Service Address," *Australian War Memorial*, 2015, accessed 29 January 2016, https://www.awm.gov.au/talks-speeches/dawn-service-address-25-april-2015/.

8 Tony Abbott, "Anzac Spirit Shows Pathway for Future Challenges," *SMH*, 22 April 2015, accessed 1 February 2016, http://www.smh.com.au/comment/exemplary-anzac-spirit-guides-successive-generations-tony-abbott-20150421-1mpmps.html.

9 Lisa Cox, "Ballot for Passes to Anzac Commemorations at Gallipoli Now Complete," *SMH*, accessed 1 February 2016, http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/ballot-for-passes-to-anzac-centenary-commemorations-at-gallipoli-now-complete-20150416-1mm5lm.html.

10 "Anzac Day 2015: Australia Commemorates Centenary," Scr*ibble*Live, accessed 1 February 2016, http://livenews.abc.net.au/Event/Anzac_Day_2015_Australia_commemorates_centenary.

11 "Rain Fails to Deter Massive Crowds at Melbourne's Anzac Services," *ABC News*, 25 April 2015, accessed 1 February 2016 http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-04-25/record-crowd-expected-at-melbournes-anzac-day-dawn-service/6420488.

battlefield.[12] Yet by the 1960s, many First World War veterans were gone and their children and grandchildren began to openly question their "unthinking allegiance to the British Empire and…pride in the fighting ability of the First AIF."[13] Alongside this generational shift, Australia's controversial involvement in the Vietnam War, the rise of anti-war and counter-culture movements, and ever-declining turnouts to Anzac Day commemorative events led some to believe that Anzac Day would soon cease to be remembered at all.[14] Instead of disappearing, the Anzac legend gradually adapted over the 1970s and 1980s, encompassing morals and ideals that better suited to the social values of the time. Through popular literature such as Lyn McDonald's *1915* and David Malouf's *Fly Away Peter*, works of social history such as Lloyd Robson's *The First AIF* and Bill Gammage's *The Broken Years*, and the extremely influential 1981 film *Gallipoli*, the Anzac legend was remade and repopularised in Australian society.[15]

It was Peter Weir's film *Gallipoli* that did most to repackage and promote the new Anzac legend. The film ends with Archie, a young, tanned, Anzac archetype, dropping his rifle and charging futilely into enemy fire. Archie is not portrayed as a skilled warrior but a victim of war and the forces of British Imperialism. The film blatantly lays the blame for such sacrifice at the feet of the British, and thus remakes the Anzac as a well-meaning and valorous victim of "British bullying and incompetence."[16] This new view of Anzac perfectly suited its time, for as the historian Christina Twomey has noted, the "1980s were a period when new cultural meanings attached to trauma and victimhood, and they coincided exactly with the revival of interest in the Anzac tradition."[17] Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the ideals and language that underpinned the Anzac legend shifted away

12 Tomasz Gadzina, "The Anzac Legend and Australian National Identity One Hundred Years After the Great War," 238.
13 Carolyn Holbrook, ""Remembering with Advantages": The Memory of the Great War in Australia," *Comillas Journal of International Relations*, no. 2 (January 1, 2015): 18.
14 Holbrook, ""Remembering with Advantages", 23; Christina Twomey, "Trauma and the Reinvigoration of Anzac," *History Australia* 10, no. 3 (January 1, 2013): 86, https://doi.org/10.1080/14490854.2013.11668482; Gadzina, "The Anzac Legend and Australian National Identity One Hundred Years After the Great War," 239; Graham Seal, *Great Anzac Stories*, 28.
15 Daniel Reynaud, "Film and National Mythology: The Anzac Legend in Australian Films," *In A. Sarwal & R. Sarwal (Eds.), Creative Nation: Australian Cinema and Cultural Studies Reader (111-120). New Delhi: Sports and Spiritual Science*, January 1, 2009, 9.
16 Holbrook, ""Remembering with Advantages"," 24; Jenny Macleod, "The Fall and Rise of Anzac Day: 1965 and 1990 Compared," *War & Society* 20, no. 1 (May 1, 2002): 150–55, https://doi.org/10.1179/072924702791201935; Reynaud, "Film and National Mythology," 192–94.
17 Twomey, "Trauma and the Reinvigoration of Anzac," 108.

from the traditional idioms of nationalism and glory, and instead embodied ideals and experiences of trauma, suffering, endurance, and mateship.[18] The Australian public were more receptive to this new Anzac legend, and, sensing this, Australian Governments from the 1980s onwards sought to use Anzac as a means for defining and politicising a national identity. Lake has astutely pointed out that since 1990 "political leaders of all persuasions, government departments…national institutions such as the Australian War Memorial, mass media, opinion makers, publishers and schools in every state and territory now either actively fund or promote the commemoration of Australians at war."[19] Yet, while this renewed and popular version of the Anzac legend remains central to remembrance and commemoration in modern Australia, it is not hegemonic.

Twomey has argued that "in the post-1980s incarnation of Anzac, the warrior-like capacity of Australian veterans is seriously underplayed – it is the suffering of veterans, their psychological fragility and the horrors they have witnessed that provide an important, if not exclusive, framing device."[20] Twomey's point is representative of broader academic understandings of the modern Anzac legend, yet it is important to note that she does not consider the core Anzac ideal of trauma to be "exclusive". In 2018 the historian Tomasz Gadzina noted that while there have been "numerous attempts by artists, writers and historians to demythologise the legend in the last decades of the 20th century, the majority of Australians preferred the version of the legend popularised in the media where the Anzac was ideologically closer to CEW Bean's historical journalism…an epic narrative of heroism, sacrifice and patriotism."[21] While it is undoubtedly the case that the Anzac legend transformed in the 1980s to commemorate the trauma and loss created by war, other ideals have also come to be popularly associated and reassociated with Anzac in the twenty-first century. Key among these is the ideal of martial heroism that has recently served not to displace memory of trauma, but to sit alongside it.

[18] Mark McKenna, "Anzac Day: How Did It Become Australia's National Day?," in *What's Wrong With Anzac?*, ed. Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2010), 126; Inglis and Brazier, *Sacred Places: War Memorials in the Australian Landscape*, 458–630; Twomey, "Trauma and the Reinvigoration of Anzac," 88, 95; Macleod, "The Fall and Rise of Anzac Day," 168.
[19] Lake *et al.*, *What's Wrong with ANZAC?, 102*
[20] Twomey, "Trauma and the Reinvigoration of Anzac," 108.
[21] Gadzina, "The Anzac Legend and Australian National Identity One Hundred Years After the Great War," 243.

Increasingly, Australia's commemoration of the First World War has focused on men who performed heroically in combat and, in particular, VC recipients. The military historian Peter Stanley has contended that, "since the 1980s, the Australian War Memorial has strongly promoted the VC, which has done much to enhance the medal's stature."[22] Evidence for Stanley's argument can be seen throughout the country, as the VC has increasingly become a focal point in how Australians remember and commemorate the events of 1914 to 1918.

In 2015 a two-part series hosted by the Victoria Cross recipient Ben Roberts-Smith, provided audiences with dramatic re-enactments of the ten VC actions undertaken by Australian and New Zealand soldiers during the Gallipoli campaign—five of which were awarded to Australians for killing the enemy[23]. In 2018, the *Weekend Australian* newspaper printed a commemorative lift-out magazine detailing the names, stories, and deeds of all of Australia's 100 Victoria Cross recipients. Most of the stories that appeared in this magazine described brutally violent combat in the same heroic and sanitised manner that was used by Bean and Ashmead-Bartlett a century prior.[24] As the introduction to this thesis outlines, there have been dozens of books, aimed at a range of audiences, specifically about Australian VC recipients of the First World War and their battlefield actions.

As well as the many books and newspaper articles recently published about Australian VCs and their recipients, monuments and plaques dedicated to these men can be found around the country. In Western Australia, Hugo Throssell has monuments at Greenmount, Northam, and Waroona, which all commemorate his VC-awarded act at Gallipoli. The City of Vincent in Western Australia commemorated the centenary of armistice at Axford Park, named after the VC recipient of the First World War, Thomas Axford.[25] At the VC Memorial Park in the small town of Euroa, Victoria stand the statues

22 Peter Stanley, "A Hundred in a Million: Our Obsession with the Victoria Cross," *The Conversation*, 17 April 2015, accessed 11 December 2015, http://theconversation.com/a-hundred-in-a-million-our-obsession-with-the-victoria-cross-38589.

23 James Law, "Who Our Fiercest Soldier Looks up To," NewsComAu, April 10, 2015, http://www.news.com.au/entertainment/tv/tv-shows/the-power-of-ten-the-heroes-ben-robertssmith-vc-looks-up-to/news-story/1e9c3b64bc9e282a16a6521652c44bf0.

24 Steve Waterson, "A History of Courage: Australia's 100 Recipients of the Victoria Cross," *The Weekend Australian*, November 10, 2018.

25 "Remembering the End of WWI at Axford Park," accessed 3 November 2018, https://www.vincent.wa.gov.au/news/remembering-the-end-of-wwi-at-axford-park/570.

of Frederick Tubb, Alexander Burton, and Leslie Maygar, all men from the region who earned the VC during the First World War. Also found in Victoria is a statue of Robert Mactier VC at the VC Memorial Garden in Tatura and the Rupert Vance Moon VC Memorial Garden in Mount Duneed. Work on this thesis began in an apartment close to Jacka Boulevard in Melbourne—dedicated to Albert Jacka —and will be completed in an office just a kilometre away from Jackson Road in Brisbane—named after William Jackson. These are just some of the sites of remembrance and commemoration of Australia's First World War that focus on VC recipients; there are hundreds more around the country.

Memorials to, publications about, and promotions of VC recipients of the First World War in Australia are so numerous that Stanley has argued such "adulation of the VC is skewing the traditional Australian egalitarian emphasis on service and sacrifice" by focusing chiefly on the war's heroes.[26] Due to the "recent concentration on Victoria Cross heroes as major 'carriers' of the Anzac legend"—as Stanley rightly contends—VC recipients of the First World War have become prevalent exemplifications of the Anzac spirit.[27] Thus, when Australians have been prompted to emulate the Anzac spirit—as they were at the centenary of the Gallipoli landings in 2015—the actions and ideals demonstrated by Australian VC recipients of the First World War may be what many contemporary Australians look to as a reference point. They may have read about such men's actions on a plaque in one of hundreds of parks or roadside rest stops, in one of the hundreds of newspaper articles or books about Australia's First World War VCs, or on a wall in the Australian War Memorial's Hall of Valour. As this thesis has shown, if an Australian does read or see a depiction of First World War VC heroism, it is statistically likely to be a depiction of violence.

Military heroism was, and has again become, important to the way we commemorate the Anzac spirit, understand national identity and judge Australian masculinity. It is therefore important to examine just what types of behaviours and ideals were represented as constituting heroism during the course of the First World War. To understand the heroism that was officially recognised and represented in Australia during the war is to better understand the nature of masculinity and identity that became

[26] Stanley, "A Hundred in a Million."
[27] *Ibid*.

dominant in wartime society and which continue to have reverence as the Anzac spirit in Australian society today. For these reasons this thesis has investigated the ideals and acts that underpinned, and were represented as underpinning, Australian hegemonic heroism during the First World War.

Through textual analysis of VC citations, it has been possible to categorise the types of battlefield acts that were seen to constitute the highest form of heroism in British and dominion militaries between 1856 and 1918. This study looked primarily at two types of battlefield actions awarded the VC: the saving and taking of life. The data that emerged from this approach clearly demonstrates the influence that neo-chivalric ideals of masculinity had upon representations and conceptions of military heroism during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. While Chapter One outlined how such Christian and Imperially-influenced neo-chivalric ideals continued to influence understandings of heroism in the early years of the First World War, Chapter Two further explored VC statistics to identify the significant rupture in these ideals and understandings that occurred during 1916.

With the ascension of Field Marshall Douglas Haig to Commander-in-Chief of British and dominion forces on the Western Front in late 1915, the devastating British loss at the Somme in 1916, and the subsequent Allied shift in war strategy towards attrition between 1916 and 1917, the prerequisites of the VC—and thus recognised heroism—underwent a dramatic change. Neo-chivalric ideals of martial heroism did not promote the type of acts required of soldiers to win a war of attrition, and the statistics outlining the types of acts that were awarded the VC during this period show that the act of life saving, once the pinnacle of neo-chivalric masculine behaviour, was no longer considered worthy of receiving the VC. Instead, the act of killing began to be awarded in far higher proportions to British and dominion soldiers and particularly to Australian servicemen.

Chapter Three has demonstrated how the VC was awarded to Australian servicemen at a far higher proportion for acts of killing and a far lower proportion for acts of saving life compared to any other eligible nation. The shift towards a more aggressive archetype of recognised heroism that occurred between 1916 and 1917 affected all British and dominion forces, but none more than the Australian services. Thus, when VC citations were celebrated within national units, brigades, and divisions, and reported on widely in Australian newspapers, it was a highly aggressive genus of hero being represented to

servicemen and the public. Australian governments' belief that VC recipients could influence opinion at home meant that VC acts were repeatedly used in posters, newspapers, and recruitment tours. This led to further representations of VC recipients and their acts being propagated across Australia. With such an onslaught of heroic representations, widespread understandings of the ideals that constituted heroism may well have shifted in Australia in the latter half of the war.

Yet it was not just the widespread reporting of VC acts in newspapers that changed the representation of heroism in Australia. Chapters Four and Five have evaluated war-related reports published in three major Australian newspapers to identify a distinct shift in how the hero was presented by the press during the course of the war. Just as it changed the prerequisites of the VC award, the Somme campaign and attrition strategy coincided with changes in the way heroism was represented in Australian newspapers. Stretcher-bearers and men who had saved life—like John Simpson Kirkpatrick—were widely lauded as heroes in the Australian press during the Gallipoli campaign. But by the time Australians began fighting on the Western Front, descriptions of humanitarian heroism had all but disappeared from such publications, and plaudits of heroism were reserved for men who attacked, killed, and captured the enemy.

In short, this thesis has shown that during the First World War the recognition and representation of Australian heroism shifted focus from the neo-chivalric act of saving life to the act of killing and capturing the enemy. Given the links between masculinity and martial heroism that existed in the early twentieth century, and which were particularly strong during the war, it is likely that this shift in heroic recognition and representation also transformed the way many Australian men—and Australian society more broadly—viewed the ideal traits of masculinity. With such a transformed masculine model in place at the war's conclusion, and a continued sanctification of heroic men and acts of the war, this transition of heroism towards a far more violent ideal may have influenced ongoing ideals of Australian masculinity. Australian men left for war having been told repeatedly throughout their lives that the greatest demonstration of their manliness was to risk their wellbeing for the betterment of others. By the end of the war, many of these same men had spent years being encouraged to kill and being told that such an act represented the highest form of gallantry. When the survivors returned home, they arrived in a country that had similarly been exposed to repeated representations and adulations of the hero as a killer.

Recent studies of Australian society have shown that violence remains a core facet of modern Australian masculinity. In an analysis of Australian barroom violence, Peter Miller and colleagues argue that, "both qualitative and quantitative research have shown direct links between concerns with social identity and displays of masculinity and aggression in bars."[28] Pam and Rob Gilbert have shown that in Australian secondary schools, "violence has become integrally associated with masculinity and with desirable masculine behaviour." [29] Michael Salter has similarly established a link between masculinity and domestic violence, showing that in the sphere of domestic abuse "violence is a key practice through which masculinity is constructed and embodied."[30] Veysel Bozkurt and colleagues have found that among Australian university students, "masculinity is positively related with violence endorsement."[31] Ben Wadham has also explored the violent model of masculinity that currently pervades the Australian military, while Brett Hutchins and Janine Mikosza argue that the behaviours of Australian professional athletes demonstrate the "issues of masculine identities, and the role that violence plays in the formation and construction of these identities."[32] In their study on the behaviours of Australian workers in regional mining towns, Kerry Carrington and John Scott argue that a "desirable status in the local hierarchy of masculinity finds expression in harmful activities that compromise the safety of the men themselves, others, and their communities."[33] What is starkly apparent in this survey of modern Australian masculinity is just how far removed such ideals are from those that permeated Australian society prior to the First World War. While violence has always been a part of Australian masculinity, it was only during the war that it became the dominant ideal.

28 Peter Miller *et al.*, "Alcohol, Masculinity, Honour and Male Barroom Aggression in an Australian Sample," *Drug and Alcohol Review* 33, no. 2 (2014): 137.

29 Rob Gilbert and Pam Gilbert, *Masculinity Goes to School* (London: Routledge, 2017), 17.

30 Michael Salter, "Real Men Do Hit Women: The Violence at the Heart of Masculinity," *Meanjin* 75, no. 1 (Autumn 2016): 97–98.

31 Veysel Bozkurt, Safak Tartanoglu, and Glenn Dawes, "Masculinity and Violence: Sex Roles and Violence Endorsement among University Students," *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences* 205 (2015): 256.

32 Ben Wadham, "Violence in the Military and Relations Among Men: Military Masculinities and 'Rape Prone Cultures,'" in *The Palgrave International Handbook of Gender and the Military*, ed. Rachel Woodward and Claire Duncanson (London: Palgrave, 2017), 241–256; Ben Wadham, "The Dark Side of Defence: Masculinities and Violence in the Military," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Criminology and* War, ed. Ross McGarry and Sandra Walklate (London: Palgrave, 2016), 269–287; Brett Hutchins and Janine Mikosza, "Australian Rugby League and Violence 1970 to 1995: A Case Study in the Maintenance of Masculine Hegemony," *Journal of Sociology* 34, no. 3 (1998): 248.

33 Kerry Carrington and John Scott, "Masculinity, Rurality and Violence," *The British Journal of Criminology* 48, no. 5 (September 1, 2008): 114.

One hundred years on, representations of Australian First World War heroism continue to serve the same function they did on the home front during the conflict itself: to create a positive perception of the war. As Stanley incisively argues "the emphasis on 'Anzac VC heroes' ensures that Australia sees glory in its war history rather than horrific reality."[34] Just like the propaganda on the Australian home front during the conflict, modern propagation of the heroes of the First World War intractably, if unintentionally, links the Anzac spirit and modern Australian identity with violence. When reading of the heroic exploits found on VC citation inscriptions in the Hall of Valour, or one of the many VC commemoration sites around the country, Australians predominantly read accounts of vicious fighting in which Australian heroes were braver and more skilled killers than their adversaries. How much effect this legacy has had on modern Australian hegemonic masculinity is unknown, but the status of First World War heroes as markers of national identity in modern Australia, the continuous political and media encouragement for Australians to emulate Anzac heroes, and the underlying fact that most of those Anzac heroes were recognised and publicised for killing, has likely contributed—if only in part—to the dominant ideals of masculinity that exist in Australian society today. This thesis suggests that we should look to 1916 as a key moment in the development of Australian hegemonic masculinity. It suggests that we must understand the role that the military strategy, propaganda and political exigency of the First World War have played in valorising violence as the chief hallmark of heroism. Finally, it asks that we consider the implications of commemorating, let alone emulating, the violent heroism of the First World War.

[34] Stanley, "A Hundred in a Million."

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