Job Skill, Manliness and Working Relationships in the Australian Imperial Force during World War I

Historical analyses of soldiers in the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) during World War I have focused overwhelmingly on combat experiences, the environment of the trenches, and the sense of "mateship" that developed between soldiers. In recent years, labour and cultural historians have begun to approach this environment in new ways, and their work is uncovering a hitherto unseen side of the Australian experience of war. This article continues this recent trend by considering the army as a workplace, and exploring the link between job skill, perceptions of manliness, and workplace relationships in the AIF during World War I. In particular, it will explore two common beliefs that linked work and manliness together in different ways, and consider how those beliefs contributed towards tension and conflict between soldiers of the AIF during World War I.

References

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Footnotes


10. Some soldiers even directly addressed their family members in their diary entries, or dedicated their diaries to a particular family member. For more detailed analysis of this, see Nathan Wise, "A Working Man's Hell: Working Class Men's Experiences with Work in the Australian Imperial Force during the Great War" (PhD diss., University of New South Wales, 2008), 74–76. Google Scholar

11. This is explored in more detail in Wise, "A Working Man's Hell," 48–50. Google Scholar


15. Ibid. Google Scholar

16. Ibid. Tosh notes that the three social environments where manliness was demonstrated were "home, work and all-male associations." Google Scholar


20. Ibid., 79. Google Scholar

22. See Martin Crotty, Making the Australian Male: Middle-Class Masculinity 1870–1920 (Melbourne University Press, 2001), 25. For a recent similar analysis of the situation in New Zealand, where soldiers were held up as the archetypal man during World War I, see Steven Loveridge, “Soldiers and Shirkers”: Modernity and New Zealand Masculinity During the Great War,” New Zealand Journal of History 46, no. 1 (April 2013): 59–79; for a British comparison, see Meg Albrinck, “Humanitarians and He-Men: Recruitment Posters and the Masculine Ideal,” in Picture This: World War I Posters and Visual Culture, ed. Pearl James (University of Nebraska Press, 2010), 312–39. Google Scholar


29. Ibid., see diary entries dated 5 March 1917 and 24 November 1917. Google Scholar

30. Ibid., see diary entry dated 18 September 1917. Google Scholar

31. Ibid., diary entries as dated. The RHA was the Royal Horse Artillery, and the RFA was the Royal Field Artillery. Google Scholar

33. Ibid., diary entries as dated. Google Scholar


40. Ibid., 270n. Google Scholar

41. Ibid. Google Scholar

42. Ibid. Google Scholar

43. See C. E. W. Bean, The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–1918, Volume 6: The Australian Imperial Force in France, during the Allied Offensive, 1918 (Angus and Robertson, 1942). See in particular chapter 2, “Peaceful Penetration’ Begins,” 32–61; chapter 10, “ ‘Peaceful Penetration’: Its Climax on the Somme,” 336–82; and chapter 11, “ ‘Peaceful Penetration’: Its Climax at Hazebrouck,” 382–41. See also Bean’s definition of the term “ Peaceful Penetration,” 42. Whilst having its origins in Germany’s “peaceful penetration” of their trade empire into British territory prior to the war, in 1918 it applied to attempts to advance the Allied front lines through the use of minimal violence. Google Scholar

44. Ibid., 43. Google Scholar

45. Ibid., 47. Google Scholar


48. Ibid., 2. Google Scholar


51. Goodwin, diary entry dated 13 December 1917. Google Scholar


54. Goodwin, diary entry dated 4 October 1915. Google Scholar

55. Ibid. Google Scholar

56. Ibid., diary entry dated 1 November 1915. Google Scholar

57. Frances, The Politics of Work, 2. Google Scholar


59. Parker, Leisure and Work, 30. Google Scholar

60. Stanley, Bad Characters, 66–69. Google Scholar
61. Seal, Inventing Anzac, 3. Google Scholar


63. Bruce, diary entries as dated. Google Scholar

64. There were exceptions, particularly in the latter months of 1918 when the German Army was on the verge of collapse. See for example Wise, "In Military Parlance," 167–71. Google Scholar

65. Goodwin, diary entry as dated. Google Scholar

66. Ibid., diary entry dated 4 October 1915. Google Scholar

68. Mike Noon and Paul Blyton, The Realities of Work (Palgrave, 2002), 88. Google Scholar

69. An example of this was at The Nek on 7 August 1915, where it has been argued that the artillery fire stopped too early, giving the Turkish defenders ample time to man the parapets and suitably prepare for the defence of the trenches, at a minimum only 20 metres away from the Australian lines, at a maximum only 65 metres away. See for example, John Hamilton, Goodbye Cobber, God Bless You: The Fatal Charge of the Light Horse, Gallipoli, August 7th 1915 (Macmillan Press, 2004), 270–76. Google Scholar

70. Bill Gammage, The Broken Years: Australian Soldiers in the Great War (Penguin Books, 1987), 214. In the more organised cases of "Peaceful Penetration" tanks and artillery support were used. The purpose of this, as Bean records, was sometimes to destroy specific enemy posts, and at other times to distract the enemy or to drown out the noise from a raid in some other section of the line. For an example of artillery support see Bean, Official History: Volume 6, 46, and for evidence of the use of tanks in the larger raids see ibid., 338–64. Google Scholar

71. Gammage, The Broken Years, 214. Google Scholar


73. Bean, Official History: Volume 6, 39. Google Scholar


75. Parker, Leisure and Work, 23. Google Scholar

76. Fox and Lake, Australians at Work, 11. Google Scholar

77. Bean, Official History: Volume 6, 45. Google Scholar
In Australia, the outbreak of World War I was greeted with considerable enthusiasm. Even before Britain declared war on Germany on 4 August 1914, the nation pledged its support alongside other states of the British Empire and almost immediately began preparations to send forces overseas to engage in the conflict. The first campaign that Australians were involved in was in German New Guinea after a hastily raised force known as the Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force was dispatched from "During the Second World War Australian forces made a significant contribution to the Allied victory in Europe and in Asia and the Pacific. The generation that fought in the war and survived came out of the war with a sense of pride in Australia's capabilities. Post-war prosperity. After the war Australia entered a boom period. Millions of refugees and migrants arrived in Australia, many of them young people happy to embrace their new lives with energy and vigour. The number of Australians employed in the manufacturing industry had grown steadily since the beginning of the century. Many women w Discover why so many Australian men joined the armed forces in World War I, and why many men didn’t want to enlist in the army after 1915. Enlistment standards for the Australian Imperial Force over the course of World War I. Minimum physical requirements. August 1914. needing to stay home and work family farms or stations. family decisions to keep one son at home when others went. But a large group of willing men was ready to enlist in the armed forces, even before the war was announced. Widespread empathy for Great Britain's cause. Large sections of the Australian community felt loyal to Britain when the war was declared. More than 90% of migrants to Australia in the 8 years before 1914 were from the United Kingdom."